

Village's tight budget leaves little road work

Written by Mark Jaegar

Wednesday, 11 November 2009 18:21

Village of Fredonia officials succeeded in holding the line on taxes in the 2010 village budget, which was unanimously approved by the Village Board last week.

However, that austerity plan came at a price.

Although nobody spoke at a public hearing on the budget, the Finance Committee's decision to pull money to fix a recurring drainage problem on Meadowbrook Drive was soundly criticized by two neighbors during the board session.

Cathy Jones, 229 Meadowbrook Dr., said pooling water at the foot of her driveway regularly causes a hazard, especially when it freezes in winter.

Jones said the ice that frequently forms is higher than the curb, making it impossible to get up her driveway and preventing the Postal Service from delivering her mail.

Water collects even when it hasn't rained, and village officials speculate it may be linked to springs in the area.

There is no storm sewer in the road. Blacktopping a section of the road failed to remedy the situation.

The village originally earmarked \$50,000 in the 2010 budget for an engineering study of the Meadowbrook Drive drainage problem, but that money was cut to avoid a hike in taxes.

"I love Fredonia, but there is something not right here. I don't know how I am going to use my driveway this winter. This doesn't feel like the way things should be done in Fredonia," Jones told trustees.

Failing to correct the problem poses a liability for the village, she said, especially when vehicles try to avoid the slippery pavement.

"A school bus passes four times a day. When it ices up, it will be interesting to see where it ends up," Jones said.

Her protests were echoed by a neighbor, former village president Bob Rathsack.

The problem, Rathsack said, is a substandard road with an insufficient base was installed in 1975. As proof, he said heaved catch basins sit higher than the pavement.

"There were no standards for that road when it was put in. Someone should have been there to stop it," Rathsack said.

Trustee Chuck Lapicola said engineering for the project was cut because the village had to set priorities at a time when many people are facing financial difficulties.

"We cut where we felt we could for the good of all the residents of the village," Lapicola said.

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He said the Finance Committee would try to include money to fix the problem in the 2011 budget.

"If you had to decide between fixing your street or Fredonia Avenue, which would you choose?" Lapicola asked.

"A lot of worthy things were cut from the budget. There are several things we could do, but all of them are expensive. To fix this problem the correct way is going to require a rebuild," said Lapicola, who is an engineer by trade.

"I don't know anything about engineering, but there is definitely something wrong," Jones replied.

The protests had no affect on the budget, which included total expenditures of \$977,463, a 1.1% increase over 2009.

A tax levy of \$464,314 is needed to support that spending plan.

Based on the village's assessed valuation, the new tax rate will drop two cents per \$1,000 of property value, to \$4.68.