

Trustees OK budget with a bump

Written by MARK JAEGER

Tuesday, 20 November 2012 18:58

Board content with slight levy hike; refuse to make up for lost tax value

The Fredonia Village Board approved a 2013 budget last week that calls for a slight hike in the tax levy, but only after a “how low can you go” debate.

The spending plan calls for expenditures of \$965,234, a drop of \$12,000 from the 2012 budget and more than \$256,000 from 2011 when preliminary money for the Fredonia Avenue reconstruction was included.

Although spending is down, the budget called for a .24% levy hike for operating expenses because of a drop in local valuation.

According to the state Department of Revenue, the value of the village’s manufacturers dropped by \$1 million during the year. Residential values also fell by about \$750,000, according to the village assessor.

With the reduced tax base, the budget called for a tax levy of \$477,395.

Following a public hearing that failed to attract any residents, Village President Chuck Lapicola asked trustees if they wanted to draw from the village’s cash reserves to follow through on the plan to prepare a no-increase budget.

When officials began preparing the 2013 budget, they said their intention was to hold the tax rate at \$4.68 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.

Lapicola said a budget adjustment of \$10,600 would be needed to keep the tax rate stable.

Trustee Don Dohrwardt, a member of the Finance Committee, said tampering with the carefully crafted budget to make a minor impact on the tax bill was not worth the effort.

The complexity of the budget process makes it virtually impossible to come up with a levy that would exactly represent a zero increase

“You are talking about pennies and nickels, and then you are never really going to hit the bulls’ eye,” Dohrwardt said.

“We are talking about public perception,” countered Lapicola.

Trustee Scott Ehaney said he is confident the board took a conservative approach in preparing the spending plan.

“I don’t think we should have to take on the burden of the fallen assessment. We kept spending flat,” Ehaney said.

As the board unanimously approved the proposal without making any adjustments, Lapicola

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characterized it as “a well thought-out budget.”

The operating budget is \$965,234, with an additional \$176,924 for debt service and \$205,000 for capital projects. The net levy increase was .14%.

The tax rate for village purposes will be \$4.73 per \$1,000 of assessed value.