

A preliminary budget meeting was held with the Clarence Center Vol. Fire Company on Tuesday, September 11, 2012 at the Clarence Town Hall, One Town Place, Clarence, New York.

Councilman Patrick Casilio opened the meeting at 3:45 p.m. Other Town officials present were Supervisor David Hartzell, Jr., and Director of Administration and Finance Pam Smith.

Members of Clarence Center Fire Company present were Thomas Brady, William Metzger and Joseph Schoellkopf Jr.

Tom Brady stated that their 990 form is not finished, the auditor filed for an extension. They have started doing preliminary numbers and finding areas where they are short and where money can be redirected.

Councilman Casilio stated that the Town Board would like to see no increases in the tax rate.

Supervisor Hartzell stated that he has told all town departments and the other fire departments to bring their budgets in flat, there are no increases this year and everyone has complied.

Joseph Schoellkopf stated that Clarence Center VFC budget has remained flat for the last two years. They have concerns because all of their fixed costs (fuel and insurance) are increasing. Councilman Casilio stated that their tax base has increased as well. Mr. Schoellkopf stated that they do not know what the 2013 tax rate will be. Director of Administration and Finance Pam Smith stated that they could get that information from the Assessor's office.

Mr. Schoellkopf said that no one has mentioned the increase that was included in 2003 because of the EEOC lawsuit which was an additional \$65,000. They were led to believe that would be decreased at some point. Pam Smith stated that 2013 is the last year they will be taxed for that.

Councilman Casilio stated that when he is talking fire company budgets, he is not talking about LOSAP (Length of Service Award Program). Pam Smith stated that for 2013 she will be budgeting \$146,580. for LOSAP for Clarence Center VFC.

Tom Brady stated that there are currently 75 members on the roster. There is a 60 member active base. They handle over 300 calls per year. Approximately 75% - 80% are EMS calls, the rest being rescue and fire. They had approximately 5 or 10 structure related fires last year. Clarence Center VFC is an automatic mutual aid with Clarence Fire District. The equipment is used for training all the time.

Clarence Center VFC has two Class A Pumpers, one aerial, heavy rescue, light rescue and an ambulance. The Benevolent Association donated a pickup truck as a utility vehicle to the fire department. Their specialized equipment includes a snowmobile, 2 mountain bikes and a hover craft (the hover craft was also donated to the fire department by the Benevolent Association).

Mr. Schoellkopf stated that the fire department needs either a major roof repair or a new roof. They estimate the cost at \$100,000. for a 20,000 square foot building.

Supervisor Hartzell asked what the revenue is from the Labor Day picnic. Mr. Brady stated that the Benevolent Association runs the picnic. The Benevolent Association consists of all former members that qualify; most of them are not active members. The Benevolent Association was set up to give some benefits to them within the law over the years and that is what the money they make on labor day gets used for, they do all the work as well as the active members. The Benevolent Association lent \$350,000 tax free to the fire department when the fire hall was refurbished of which now the Benevolent Association will forgive \$100,000 of that loan. The loan is being paid back interest free. The Benevolent Association pays for things such as eye glasses for firemen that need them and they pay out small death benefits etc. that is where any funds that are raised by the Benevolent Association is used for. Tax payer dollars are not used for anything to run the Labor Day Fair, it is all benevolent funds.

Supervisor Hartzell stated that one of the complaints from the merchants in Clarence Center is the lack of parking. He questioned whether or not the fire company would be interested in having the Town pay for the new roof on the fire hall and in turn, the fire company sell back to the town the property that Williams Hall was located on to be converted to a parking lot for the merchants in Clarence Center. Tom Brady stated that the town did not donate the property to the fire company; it was donated by Mr. Williams in the 1900's. Supervisor Hartzell stated that he had not even discussed this with the Town Board yet. He had a meeting with County Legislature Ed Rath and the merchants in Clarence Center. The merchants ask if there was any way they could get more parking and the Williams Hall lot was brought up. Mr. Schoellkopf stated that it is a reasonable idea however; he did not know what the property was currently assessed for. He would have to take the request back to the members to see if there was any interest.

Councilman Casilio asked if there was a mortgage on the building. Mr. Brady stated that there is approximately 4 – 5 years left on the mortgage - \$480,000. Councilman Casilio suggested refinancing; several of the other fire companies are doing so. Mr. Brady stated that they have refinanced once already and shaved five years off the original loan.

Pam Smith stated that the building is not that old to have to be replacing the roof. Mr. Brady stated that they did not rebuild the entire building; they basically built around the original building some of the roof is original.

All the fire trucks are paid for. The only equipment that is not paid for are the extraction tools, they have two years on that loan. They are currently looking at replacing their self contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA), they are out of compliance. They tried applying for a grant but were not successful.

Mr. Schoellkopf stated that CCVFC would be willing to go to a multi-year contract except the multi-year contract would have to include an increase of at least \$30,000; they need to close some holes in their budget. Mr. Schoellkopf would like the town to seriously consider giving the fire company a 2% increase each year for two years. Last years' budget amount was \$775,000. Councilman Casilio asked if Mr. Schoellkopf wanted the 2% over and above what their assessment figure is. One year tax assessments in CCVFC district will reach \$32,000 – meaning their tax revenue will increase by \$32,000.

Pam Smith stated that the Supervisor's budget is due by September 30th. Pam further reminded Mr. Schoellkopf to add in LOSAP and Worker's Compensation when calculating their budget. The LOSAP number they have to work with this year is \$146,580. The VFBL number is split out by the assessed value of the districts. Tom Brady stated that the rate for VFBL policy is based on population, (if they were a fire district, their premium would be based on the population in that district). Mr. Brady wanted to know how Pam Smith was coming up with the figure CCVFC is being charged for Workers Compensation. Councilman Casilio asked if anyone knew what the population in Clarence Center district is, all Pam knows is the property values. Mr. Brady suggested using 2 ½ people per household as a basis.

Mr. Schoellkopf requested last year's LOSAP amount and the 2012 and 2013 VFBL amount.

Pam Smith stated that she will need Clarence Center VFC budget before September 30th otherwise she will have to submit their budget to the Supervisor using last year's figures.

The meeting adjourned at 4:26PM.

Darcy A. Snyder
Deputy Town Clerk