

The minutes of the Public Hearing by the Village of Haverstraw Board of Trustees on Monday, April 14th, 2014, beginning at 8:00 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL	Trustee Batista	- Present
	Trustee Bueno	- Present
	Trustee Watson	- Absent
	Trustee Dominguez	- Present
	Mayor Kohut	- Present

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor announced the purpose of the Public Hearing, which is a requirement for a municipality to approve a budget, was exclusively to discuss the Mayor's Proposed Budget for the year starting June 1, 2014 through May 31, 2015, to be followed with a review by the Village Trustees. He then explained the timing and process required to approve a budget for any municipality. There were copies of the proposed budget available for the public. The Mayor then reviewed his proposed increases as follows:

- 1) A contractual increase of 3% for all CSEA village employees, which would be followed through with non-union employees, including the elected officials.
- 2) Expenses have been reduced wherever possible such as in the "Contractual" expenses and "Traffic Tickets" line of the Justice Court.
- 3) Personnel has been reduced over the past year by one full-time employee in the Village Hall, adding that expenses have gone down in the Finance Department due to this reduction in staff.
- 4) Estimates have been raised on the cost of utilities due to the increase in utility rates for gas, electric and water, as well as an increase in postage fees, which must all be accommodated for.
- 5) On Page 4 of the budget, the "Judgments and Claims" line has been decreased by 60% due to the processing of a large number of certiorari and other claims against the Village.
- 6) The "On Street Parking Services" line has increased due to the enforcement employees being given more hours to work, thereby affording more revenue for the Village and keeping parking under control in the downtown business district especially, but also throughout the Village.
- 7) Page 6, the "Contractual" line has increased including costs for street maintenance and general repairs on all village streets by the DPW, which have and continue to rise.
- 8) The ball park expenses have decreased since its installation three years prior.
- 9) The cost of fuel has increased at the Community Center due to extended usage and the rate increase by Orange & Rockland.
- 10) There is an increase in services for the Village's summer camp program, based upon actual expenses over the past several years.
- 11) The cost factor for Sewage & Treatment contractual expenses and Refuse Collection/Disposal contractual expenses has been reduced.

- 12) There is a large increase in the Employee Benefits line due to the increase in New York State Retirement, which is a function of the NYS Comptroller's Office, who dictates what the Village is required to contribute. Also under this line is a large increase in the Worker's Compensation Fund due to our switch of Worker's Compensation carriers which was necessitated because of the volatility of the other carrier. The Mayor explained that the previous carrier would reduce and increase fees with no consistency making it hard to determine the cost factor from year to year. He also reported that the cost of Worker's Compensation for the Fire Department has increased by 16%.
- 13) Debt Service has gone down and the Village is saving approximately \$50,000.00.
- 14) The total proposed budget is \$8,100,000.00. The Mayor is hopeful that with proposed revenues, besides taxes, that income will increase noticeably. He then mentioned that his proposed budget for the previous year was \$8,801,000.00, so there is a definitive decrease for the upcoming fiscal year. He also mentioned that over the past years that this Board has been together, a position has been cut in every department to save the taxpayers' money by doing more with less, which is becoming increasingly hard to do.

Mayor Kohut entertained a motion to open the Public Hearing.

RESOLUTION #108-2014

Motion by: Rafael Bueno

Seconded by: Emily Dominguez

Motion Carries: All

Ramon Soto, 13 Broadway: Mr. Soto wanted to know what happened to the \$5M the Village was supposed to save when the Police Department left the Village.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor responded it was not that much money that was saved, however, he explained that the savings have been going to the Village's Fund Balance and drawn down when necessary to help stabilize taxes.

Ramon Soto: Mr. Soto feels that the taxes have continued to increase and he has seen no reduction in his taxes.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor stated that there were a couple of years when the taxes were not increased and the Board tries every year to keep taxes as low as possible, however, the Village has no control on the rising costs of utilities, insurance, health benefits and peoples salaries, which are mainly mandated by the union, therefore, there is not a lot of space for cutting major expenses.

Ramon Soto: Mr. Soto feels that most of the people in the Village are on the losing end of the scale and cannot afford to keep paying these taxes. He believes the Village can do more to help the residents.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor repeated that employees have been cut over the past several years, eliminating those salaries. In order to keep providing services there is only so much that can be cut.

Ramon Soto: Mr. Soto then inquired if he could see the salaries of the staff to which the Mayor responded "yes".

Angel Ferraira, 10 West Street: Mr. Ferraira commented about the 2% tax cap from the Governor. He stated that so many people in Rockland County are

losing their homes because they cannot pay their taxes and mortgages. He then mentioned that the people working for the Village are lucky, because they have insurance and receive a good salary, which he believes the Village could freeze.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor responded that most of the employees belong to the union and their salaries cannot be frozen due to specifics of the union contract. He also mentioned that most of the employees are also village residents, who are also taxpayers.

Angel Ferreira: Mr. Ferreira stated that he had his salary frozen many times while he was working. He also mentioned that many companies have moved from New York State because of the taxes.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor responded that there have been years when the union mandated a 0% increase in salaries. The employees saw the need for the freezes and agreed to it.

Angel Ferreira: Mr. Ferreira inquired the percentage of increase in the proposed budget. He also feels we pay more taxes than the Town who has a Police Department.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor stated his budget proposes a 7.9% increase, but upon review there will be cuts made that will decrease that amount. He also informed Mr. Ferreira that the Town Police Department also services the Village.

Francisco Batista: Trustee Batista, speaking Spanish, tried to explain the situation to Mr. Ferreira.

Jose Munoz, 6 Ridge Street: Mr. Munoz asked the three Trustees what their job is as a Trustee. He thought they were supposed to represent and support the Hispanic community.

Emily Dominguez: Trustee Dominguez stated there are four Trustees that sit on the Village Board.

Jose Munoz: Mr. Munoz is aware of that, however, he feels that each Trustee is there to represent their community and the three Spanish Trustees at this meeting do not represent the Hispanic community.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor explained to Mr. Munoz that this is a Public Hearing on the budget and no other matters are to be discussed at this meeting.

Francisco Batista: Trustee Batista explained to Mr. Munoz that the full Board will review the budget to see if there is anywhere that cuts can be made.

Emily Dominguez: Trustee Dominguez responded that it is a process the Board works on every year and she believes this is the first time since this Board has been together that the budget is this high. She explained that a lot of it is caused by the Mirant situation, the school taxes, etc. She also feels the biggest downfall is that village residents do not attend school board meetings and make their voices heard.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor informed Mr. Munoz that there is a refund due Mirant of \$8M between all the taxing jurisdictions of which the Villages' portion is \$550,000.00, the remainder being paid by the School District and the Town.

Jose Gomez, 22 First Street: Mr. Gomez wanted "personnel services", listed on the budget, explained.

Judy Curcio, Village Treasurer/Clerk: Ms. Curcio explained that all items under personnel services are salary related.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor also responded that as the Village lost one full-time employee, the Village had to take on a part-time employee in that position, leading to a 50% decrease in salary.

Clemente Ferreira, no address given: Mr. Ferreira feels the Village pays too much money to the staff of the Community Center, speaking specifically about the Department Head who retired and then came back collecting a high salary, which he believes is illegal. He feels the salary situation is getting out of hand, as well as the way the Village spends money.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor explained that Ms. Breland retired and received all her retirement benefits as per her contract. The Village then hired her back at \$30,000.00 per year, with no benefits, to be the Director of the Community Center, which is all legal and approved by the State of New York. He also mentioned if the Village had to hire another Director, they would have demanded a salary of approximately \$85,000.00 plus benefits. Rehiring Ms. Breland is definitely saving the Village money.

Ramon Soto: Mr. Soto asked if there is any person working for the Village doing two jobs and collecting two salaries.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor responded "yes", explaining that there is one, Nikki Merriman, who holds both a full-time position and a part-time position.

Ramon Soto: Mr. Soto then inquired if the Village receives any kind of revenue from the Blue Beverage Co.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor responded that the Village receives tax money from Blue Beverage, but nothing else. He also informed Mr. Soto that the State of New York pays their taxes.

Ramon Soto: Mr. Soto stated that Blue Beverage promised the Village they would have 102 employees giving employment to residents of the community, but in fact they only have 7 employees.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor has been to the facility and Blue Beverage definitely has more than 7 employees and they will be putting on a second shift, although he is not aware of how many employees they will be hiring. The Mayor also informed Mr. Soto that there is a program through the State of New York whereby the State will pay the property taxes for the first ten years if a company sets up a business in the State of New York. He believes Blue Beverage is at year 5 of the program, which is mainly for manufacturing type of businesses in order to bring large scale manufacturing into the State.

Emily Dominguez: Trustee Dominguez reported that the program no longer exists.

Jose Gomez: Mr. Gomez inquired about the parking enforcement car item in the budget. He was not aware the Village had a car for this purpose.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor explained to Mr. Gomez that the car is an old 1995 police car that is in constant need of repair. He also explained that the parking requirements are not just for the downtown area, but the entire Village for overnight parking during the winter, handicapped parking, fire hydrant distance, etc.

Emily Dominguez: Trustee Dominguez mentioned that the Village has held off buying a car the past two years, but at this point the present car is in for repairs at least once a month and the enforcers needs a reliable car to do the job.

Clemente Ferreira: Mr. Ferreira inquired about the amount of money being spent for Community Center fuel.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor explained that is the cost for the utilities to run the Community Center, a large building that operates 6 days a week, year round. The Mayor again mentioned that this is a proposed budget, which still has to be reviewed by the Trustees, who are working diligently to decrease the budget wherever they can or develop new ways to increase revenue.

Rafael Bueno: Trustee Bueno explained the situation and answered Mr. Ferreira's questions in Spanish.

Angel Ferreira: Mr. Ferreira wanted to know why the Village only puts notices in the paper one day prior to meetings.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor informed Mr. Ferreira that the Public Hearing was scheduled at the previous Board Meeting, at which time a notice was sent for publication in the Rockland County Times. The Mayor explained, however, that the Village has no control over when the newspaper prints the notices.

Judy Curcio: Mr. Curcio mentioned that it has also been posted on the Village Website and the front entrance to the Village Hall.

Ramon Soto: Mr. Soto wanted to know the percentage of Latino's in the Village and also would like for any notices to be sent to all the Hispanic newspapers.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor responded the percentage of Latino's in the Village is approximately 65%.

Mr. Pinero: Mr. Pinero suggested that whenever there is any kind of meeting scheduled that the Village notify Channel 12 News, not just publicize in the Journal News. He also mentioned that he is a veteran of the Korean War and has been trying to get the veterans exemption for his village taxes for a long time. He did receive the reduction from the Town.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor responded that the Village expanded the Veterans exemption approximately 4 years ago. He explained that the Village exemptions apply only to the primary residence and not to any rental properties.

Jose Gomez: Mr. Gomez inquired how long it will be before the Village is able to pay off the Mirant debt.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor responded that there is an existing liability from the last time with a 20 year note of which the Village is approximately 7 years into. He then mentioned the present liability will be paid off in 5 years, totaling another 13 years.

Mr. Pinero: Mr. Pinero informed the Board that he has heard the Town of Stony Point is going to fight the Mirant taxes.

Mayor Kohut: The Mayor explained to Mr. Pinero that Stony Point used to have the Lovett Plant in their district, which has been torn down completely, but Haverstraw still has the Bowline Plant. The Mayor explained that Stony Point is not putting anything additional onto the Village.

Mayor Kohut entertained a motion to close the Public Hearing.

RESOLUTION #109-2014

Motion by: Emily Dominguez

Seconded by: Francisco Batista

Motion Carries: All

Mayor Kohut: With no further business to be conducted by the Board, the Mayor entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mayor Kohut entertained a motion to that effect.

RESOLUTION #110-2014

Motion by: Emily Dominguez

Seconded by: Rafael Bueno

Motion Carries: All

Respectfully submitted by,

Beverly A. Swift
Senior Steno Clerk