

VILLAGE OF HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
PUBLIC HEARING
SEPTEMBER 4, 2012

A Public Hearing was held by the Board of Trustees on Tuesday, September 4, 2012 at 7:35 p.m. in the Meeting Room, Municipal Building, 7 Maple Avenue.

PRESENT: Mayor Peter Swiderski, Trustee Bruce Jennings, Trustee Marjorie Apel, Trustee Meg Walker, Trustee Nicola Armacost (7:42 p.m.), Village Manager Francis A. Frobel, Village Attorney Marianne Stecich, and Village Clerk Susan Maggiotto

CITIZENS: Five (5).

Mayor Swiderski declared the Board in session for the purpose of conducting a Public Hearing in accordance with the legal notice that appeared in the August 24, 2012 issue of *The Rivertowns Enterprise* to consider the advisability of adopting the schedule for Building Department fees as attached.

Mayor Swiderski: This is a chance for anyone to weigh in on the fee schedule that was posted. Is there anyone who would like to approach the mic?

Tim Downey, 520 Farragut Parkway: Could there be some explanation as to why it seems these jumps are so significant on these fees? And a timeline.

Village Manager Frobel: This process started a number of months ago with some work sessions with the Trustees. Our building fee structure has not been looked at since 1999. We were long overdue for an adjustment. We have determined that these proposed fees more closely reflect the cost to provide the service. It still does not cover a high percentage of the operation, but it gets us closer to the costs to provide the service.

Mr. Downey: Overdue, I understand. The one nice thing t you've added is some timelines. All too often, there is too much abuse of containers, and jobs are let run on, and neighborhoods suffer. So that is certainly appreciated being put into the new permits.

Barry Lindner, 13 Marianna Drive: I had a real problem with the increase in the percentage fees. They obviously increase with inflation, and therefore these are true increases in the fees. In addition, the punitive fees here of, let us say, building permits to legalize work done going from 1 percent to 3 percent, and the other kinds of punitive fees, are not what I imagine living in Hastings should be like.

We live in a very small town, where the Building Department works with people, not working to get their money. The goal of the Building Department should be to make sure

everything is safe, done properly, within the laws of the town, not to earn their money writing tickets at the end of the month to make sure they get their fees. This is just terrible. If I wanted a government that acted like this, I would live in New York City or Yonkers, some government that does not care about their citizens, and just wants to jab them for money. I would rather see, if we need the money, raise my taxes \$100 a year and then have a building department that works with its citizens rather than trying to extract money from them at all time. I just do not see it. Especially the punitive stuff, I find it ridiculous. Demolition, going from 1 to 1.5 percent, I do not see any reason why it should increase. The Building Department should hopefully be very friendly. Home renovations is quite stressful, and then having a building department say, You didn't do this, you didn't do that, give me more money so I can come out, please give me another \$100 so I can come out and check that work because your electrician might have done it incorrectly.

I do not think the Building Department wants everybody to get a permit for every little job that's done to avoid the punitive fees. If I have an electrician come in, install a GFCI, replace an outlet, maybe add a little outlet here, maybe change my plumbing fixture or my sink fixture, do you want every job to go through that building department? Instead of trying to break even, you are going to need another person to handle job that you expect. You do not want everyone coming in for every job. I imagine most small work, 100 percent of small work is never permitted. Maybe jobs over \$5,000, \$10,000, \$20,000 are permitted. But I cannot imagine all the small stuff is permitted, and now you are making everyone into criminals.

John Doherty, 21 Overlook Road: I am an agent at Peter Riolo Real Estate. The only way we can raise taxes in the Village is by improving our property, other than by a general tax increase. You want to encourage people to improve their properties. When I look at these fees, they are big enough to raise some eyebrows. It defeats the purpose of improving the Village. I work real estate beyond Hastings, and I can tell you it is a tremendous asset that people come here and want to fix up their homes. To do anything to discourage that ought to be thought about again. I encourage you to table this tonight and think about it a little more. I do not know what the discussion was prior to this. I understand that many villages seem to be raising their fees. But I think that is wrongheaded. We will not end up gaining in the end. We want people to come here and we want them to fix up their homes, and we'll collect the taxes afterwards.

John Gonder, 153 James Street: I was wondering if Mr. Frobel could advise us what the comparison is between Irvington, Ardsley and Dobbs Ferry with these types of rates. Are they the same, or much higher now, if this goes through?

Village Manager Frobel: Let me spend a little time researching it. But it is my understanding that this would make us comparable, if not a little lower, than some of our neighboring communities. What is new in this is some of the fees that Hastings has not charged in the past; for example, review of building permits when a permit is never executed. So it is more on that side than the fees collected that makes Hastings stand apart from our neighbors.

Mr. Gonder: Architectural Review Board. If you have the Architectural Review Board for signs and canopies, why are you not charging for coming to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board?

Village Attorney Stecich: There are already are. In a separate section of the Code there is a charge for site plan approvals, for subdivision approvals, the actions before the Planning Board and Zoning Board. And there is a fee for variances. We do have them.

Mr. Lindner: I want to make one last comment. Some of the other towns have taken these steps to make their town very unfriendly in terms of the fees required by homeowners. I would want us to do better in terms of having a department that works with its homeowners rather than trying to extract funds. Some of the other towns have already increased their fees, and I have friends who live there. It is awful. Every time they turn around they got to pay another fee for doing some work. Rather than trying to make sure the job is done safely, it is y about collecting the fees. At least that is what it appears to be.

CLOSE OF PUBLIC HEARING

On MOTION of Trustee Apel, SECONDED by Trustee Walker with a voice vote of all in favor, Mayor Swiderski closed the Public Hearing at 7:45 p.m.