

VILLAGE OF HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
PUBLIC HEARING
APRIL 8, 2014

A Public Hearing was held by the Board of Trustees on Tuesday, April 8, 2014 at 7:35 p.m. in the Meeting Room, Municipal Building, 7 Maple Avenue.

PRESENT: Mayor Peter Swiderski, Trustee Bruce Jennings, Trustee Meg Walker, Trustee Nicola Armacost, Village Manager Francis A. Frobels, and Deputy Village Clerk Linda Loeb.

ABSENT: Trustee Marjorie Apel

CITIZENS: Fifteen (15).

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 March 28, 2014 issue of *The Rivertowns Enterprise* to consider the proposed budget for the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson, New York for the fiscal year beginning June 1, 2014 and ending on May 31, 2015

Mayor Swiderski: Is there anyone from the public who would like to speak on the budget?

Susan Cooper, 378 Warburton Avenue: I have an advertisement here from Blue Cross Blue Shield from 1944. The individual cost for complete health care is 90 cents a month, and family is \$2 a month. Moving ahead to today, 2014, according to the most recent contract I could find for the DPW and the Rec Department, and I am assuming other Village employees as well covered by government employees health insurance, many are paying less than was paid in 1944 by citizens.

Apparently, employees hired prior to 1998 receive fully paid dental insurance on the employee and their eligible dependents. And, of course, then was a section five: after 1998, there is a small contribution to dental insurance, where it is \$3.85 for individual or \$7.69 for dependents. I do not know anyone that has that kind of dental insurance at this point in time.

A very important point is that it seems that after 20 years of service with the Village a retired employee and his eligible family is eligible for fully-paid health insurance, and I am assuming dental, I could be wrong, and never go on Medicare. I wonder if locally-elected officials realize how distressing that could be for taxpayers, property owners to understand what that means in terms of what they are paying for their health care and dental coverage in comparison. Manager Frobels, you have stated in the proposed budget, "The cost of providing health care has risen faster than the cost of living. Little has been accomplished to effectively stem the cost. Unless systemic changes are made, these costs will continue to

rise. The question is, little has been accomplished by whom? And then why have they not stemmed the cost? Who is responsible for that? And if that is something that you are recommending, what are aspects of those recommendations that you would make to stem the cost? And would there be needed a neutral third party to advise on a nonpartisan recommendation, since it may be an assumption but I am assuming that you are also a recipient of the same or similar benefits. Citizens are entitled to more specific information in that regard. As you say, it is going to keep going up, as it has for all of us who are paying many hundreds of dollars a month for basic coverage, not counting all the other little co-pays, deductibles, co-insurance onward and forward. Most of us will be either on, or will be eventually on, Medicare and paying hefty supplementals. I see no reason why employees with pensions that they are receiving currently, for example someone last year retired with a pension, at a young age of \$72,000 or \$73,000 a year, I see no reason why they cannot afford to pay a Medicare supplemental and/or their dental insurance.

Village Manager Frobel: I think the industry needs to change. What I was referring to in that comment was, until we require a greater out of pocket deduction, or deductible, when we go to the doctor or when we go to the hospital then we may see some relief. I was referring to the industry in general that needs to reform itself before we can expect to see some curtailment or reduction in the cost of providing health care insurance to our employees. I am not an expert in the industry, as you point out.

Ms. Cooper: But to my question, are those figures accurate? The retired employee, after 20 years, never going on Medicare and the Village providing full cost of coverage for family and individual.

Village Manager Frobel: No, at age 65 they go on Medicare, our employees do.

Ms. Cooper: And who covers the supplemental?

Village Manager Frobel: We pay the supplemental for them.

Ms. Cooper: And that is accurate? The Village employees, in all departments, go on Medicare.

Village Manager Frobel: Yes, required 20 years of service to continue their health care upon retirement.

Ms. Cooper: And what about the costs for health care and dental? Was it accurate, the figures I presented?

Village Manager Frobel: For dental or for health care? Health care, it is covered until 65 in that gap between retirement and 65. After that it is Medicare supplemental. We do not provide the dental upon retirement.

Ms. Cooper: So it is accurate that people are paying less than they paid in 1944?

Village Manager Frobel: Oh, I am certain of it. I do not dispute that. Paying less out of pocket? Yes.

John Gonder, 153 James Street: I came down to review the budget. Mr. Frobel and his department heads and secretaries put up a pretty good budget. I was surprised, at the last meeting I was making an April Fool's joke. To my surprise yesterday, it is like a zero percent increase. I almost dropped. You did a great job. Now all I would like to see is if you give me a five percent for senior citizen so I can stay here another year.

But talking of budgets, I have two things. One, you mentioned it. A great guy passed away last week. Chemka Pool: I am always for kids to have free access to the pool if they go to our Hastings school system. Maybe this year you could do that. I hate to see kids that are maybe on the wrong side of the tracks, that we used to say, that cannot afford it, have to come up, and their parents have to fill out something to get a scholarship get into the pool.

The other thing is, I know you people get mad at me when I say it. All the Trustees get \$2,000 and the Mayor gets \$4,000. Not half the time, but a lot of times you are away on business trips and other things. That money could be better spent for our fire chiefs. I am not sure of the Ambulance Corps, whoever is in charge of that. Your money should go to them. Because a lot of communities in Westchester, I understand, do give stipends or something to their chiefs. You should consider giving up yours, keep the budget zero, and give it to the chiefs. Thank you.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Swiderski asked for a motion to close the Public Hearing.

ADJOURNMENT

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