

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF  
THE BUDGET COMMITTEE OF THE VILLAGE OF MAMARONECK  
APRIL 16, 2012 AT 7:30PM AT VILLAGE COURTROOM

**PRESENT**

Chair            Leon Potok  
Secretary       Dan Margoshes  
Members        Manny Enes  
                    Rose Silvestro  
                    Myron Tannenbaum

**NOT PRESENT**

Members        Jeffrey Rubin  
                    James Cox

**DISCUSSION**

1. March 2012 minutes were reviewed and approved with no changes
2. The committee discussed recent work done committee members and developed the following set of recommendations:
  - a. Parking – Electronic Meters. The committee recommends that the Board immediately consider installation of electronic multi-space parking meters on and around Mamaroneck Ave. Preliminary investigation suggests that electronic meters would generate incremental revenue for the village, but even if they are revenue neutral in some locations, they would provide valuable parking statistics that will be useful when considering long-term parking investments.
  - b. Parking – Enforcement Hours and Rates. The committee recommends that the Board expand parking enforcement hours from 6:00pm to 8:00pm and consider raising the metered rate from 75¢ per hour to \$1.00. This is consistent with rates and hours in other Westchester communities, and would have a substantial positive financial impact.
  - c. Parking – Collection of outstanding tickets. The Village currently collects 91% of issued tickets and has approximately \$750,000 in outstanding unpaid parking tickets. This uncollected revenue not only strains village finances, but is also unfair to the vast majority who pay their tickets. We recommend that the Village assign responsibility for debt collection and develop alternative approaches for collections
  - d. Harbor – Master plan. The Harbor is an attractive and desired village asset, as evidenced by waiting lists for dock space and heavy ramp usage. The committee was encouraged by our meeting with the new Harbor Master in January, at which he presented several investment opportunities that would not only enhance facilities, but also create substantially increased revenue. The committee recommends that the Harbor Master and Village Administration develop a comprehensive plan to generate new revenues and ensure the high quality of our facilities into the future.
  - e. Building Department – during the annual budget meetings, the committee learned that recent events have left the department understaffed, resulting in a 6-8 week lag in permit approval. The Budget Committee is concerned with the potential impact on fee and permit revenue, and also the potential for claims against the village due to delays and/or errors. Therefore, the committee recommends that the Board allocate sufficient additional management and professional resources to ensure more timely responses to applications

filed with the Building Department and to reduce the risks of flawed decisions due to the loss of professional expertise.

- f. Financial Reporting – The committee recommends that budgets presentations should include a comparison to projected actual spending for the fiscal year, in addition to the current comparison to prior budgets, which would help to assess spending with the most current information available. The committee notes that the Mamaroneck School District has recently made a similar change to its budget presentation, with the result that actual spending is closer to budget, with resulting lower tax levies.
  - g. Budget supplements and access to contracts – Last year the committee made recommendations regarding creation of a new budget supplement and making Village contracts available on the Village website. These recommendations were agreed and adopted by the Board and administration although they have not yet been implemented. The committee recommends immediate implementation of these initiatives in order to enhance transparency of village finances and operations.
  - h. Budget Meetings – After the recent series of departmental budget workshops, the committee was told that while we could attend and observe these meetings, but would no longer be able to participate by asking questions. The Budget Committee recommends that the Mayor and Trustees reconsider this decision. The committee believes that the opportunity to ask questions of department heads in reviewing the specifics of their proposed budgets is an effective use of the committee's and administration's time and that the dialog is an important part of fulfilling the committee's mandate. We respectfully ask the Mayor and Trustees to either rescind the decision, or propose more effective approaches for Budget Committee participation rather than simply sitting by as silent observers. For example, we propose that regular meetings with department heads outside of the budget review process and during regular monthly committee meetings might be a productive approach.
3. Public Hearing on Budget – The Committee agreed to have its chair present its recommendations to the Board of Trustees at the upcoming Public Hearing on the FY2013 Budget. The Chair's comments are attached.
4. Other matters:
- a. The committee continued discussion of overall village staffing levels as compared to similar villages. The committee noted the success of the recent review and restructuring of sanitation routes with the assistance of an outside consultant, and discussed the feasibility of using this approach to review other departments.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further matters before the committee, on motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Prepared by: Dan Margoshes  
Secretary

Approved: June 27, 2012

**Leon A. Potok**  
**Comments to the Village of Mamaroneck Board of Trustees**  
**FY2013 Budget Hearing – April 23, 2012**

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I serve as chair of the Village of Mamaroneck Budget Committee and am here to offer comments on behalf of the Committee. I will have a few comments of my own that I will identify as such.

Just to refresh your memories, the Budget Committee prepared a set of recommendations in the summer of 2010 that were submitted and presented to the Board of Trustees. After several meetings with the Village Administration, we presented a revised set of recommendations in March 2011 that were supported by the Village Administration.

One of the recommendations in the March 2011 report is that the Village Administration prepare periodic comparisons and analysis of actual vs. budget results. Namely, how closely are we adhering to the Budget and the reasons for any material differences between actual and budget. This is a standard practice in any serious enterprise. The corollary of this recommendation is that subsequent budgets are prepared in relation to actual results, or projected actual results, rather than the prior year's budget. Last spring, the Mamaroneck school district formed a budget advisory committee composed of nearly two dozen residents, two of whom serve on the Village's budget committee. One of the school district committee's key recommendations was that budgets should be prepared based on actual experience in the current fiscal year, rather than being based on the prior year's budget. That recommendation was taken to heart by the School Administration, and that's how this year's school budget was prepared.

The experience in the Village has been very different. No analysis of actual vs. budget has been prepared, apparently because of insufficient resources in the clerk-treasurer's office. In the fiscal 2013 budget report, the Village Administration has reported that it expects the general fund surplus to increase by \$180,000 in the current fiscal year, ending May 31, as compared to a budgeted decrease of \$510,000; the difference represents a positive variance of \$690,000. In addition, when we look at the variance before taking into account tax certiora expenses, which are largely outside the control of the Board, the variance is more than \$1.5 million. The question is whether this difference, which represents about 5% of the budget, is due to long term borrowing, or to operational factors, namely higher revenues or lower expenses. We think the answer to the question is key in evaluating this year's budget. We have asked that question, several times over the last three weeks, and no answer has been provided. We recommend that the board, and the public, be provided with this type of information as part of the budget process.

Second, we have identified a number of revenue sources that would require Board actions, as follows:

- 1- Collection of parking tickets needs to be managed more effectively. The Village collects 91% of tickets issued. When we last looked at the list of unpaid tickets earlier this year, the Village was owed \$750,000 in fines and penalties. There is no one managing these outstanding debts and trying to collect them. We recommend that the Village assign responsibility for debt collection

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and follow up on alternative approaches for collections. It is not simply a matter of budgets, it is also a matter of fairness to the residents and non-residents who pay the 91% of tickets issued.

- 2- Proceed expeditiously to install multi-space electronic meters on Mamaroneck Avenue, behind CVS, the Hunter upper tier lot, and probably the Spencer Place lot as well. We have looked at the economics from two vendors and we project that the meters can be in place within six months and that the annual incremental revenue to the Village would be \$40,000.
- 3- Increase the number of hours for paid meters on Mamaroneck Avenue, and perhaps the three locations I identified for multi-space meters, by at least two hours per day. The incremental revenue of an additional two hours would be \$50,000. An additional four hours per day, from 6pm to 10pm, would increase revenues by \$100,000.
- 4- Increase meter rates on Mamaroneck Avenue from \$0.75/hour to \$1.00 per hour, which would raise revenues by \$75,000, before any other changes, and even more if the multi-space meters and additional hours are implemented as well.
- 5- In total, the opportunity is to raise revenues by \$275,000 if the three changes are implemented - \$1.00 rate on Mamaroneck Avenue, four additional hours of metered parking, and multi-space meters on Mamaroneck Avenue and nearby lots. The higher revenue could be used to bring the property tax increase to below 3%, and/or to pay for additional services.
- 6- The Budget Committee is in favor of immediate implementation of multi-space meters and at least two additional hours of metered parking; it has not taken a position on immediate implementation of higher meter rates, as we talked about raising rates following the installation of multi-space electronic meters.

Third, on the cost side we heard from the Building Department that it is backed up by 6 to 8 weeks, that it receives an enormous number of inquiries that it cannot manage well, and that the level of professional expertise has been severely eroded with the loss of Keith Furey and former department head John Winter, which makes it more prone to making mistakes in handling applications. The head of the Building Department should be applauded for his honest assessment of the state of his department. The Budget Committee recommends that the Board allocate sufficient additional management and professional resources to ensure more timely responses to applications filed with the Building Department and to reduce the risks of flawed decisions due to the loss of professional expertise.

Fourth, in March 2011 we recommended an assessment of the technology in use in the Village in order to determine the opportunities for improving service delivery and/or reducing costs. As a first step, we recommended that the Village try to recruit local residents onto an interim technology committee. In November 2011 the trustees passed a resolution to form such a committee. Unfortunately, we were not successful in attracting local residents and so we need to look at the alternative of retaining an outside consultant to perform such a diagnostic assessment. I should note that I tried to work with a non-resident volunteer to make a preliminary assessment so as to be able to make more specific recommendations on next steps for an RFP. To be clear, this volunteer was not being asked to join the technology committee, but to assist in providing his professional expertise, for free, to answer some key

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questions that would be helpful in moving forward with an outside consultant. As a first step, I asked for an inventory of existing technology. I was provided an inventory of computer hardware. Unfortunately, I have been waiting since mid-February to receive an inventory of key application software used in the various departments. No assessment is possible without an understanding of resources currently in place. We urge the Trustees to allocate resources for an outside consultant to answer the questions we initially posed: what are the opportunities for improving service delivery and/or reducing costs through investments in technology.

Fifth, the budget committee met with Harbor Master Joe Russo in January and reviewed revenues, expenses, and capital spending needs for the Harbor. The committee was impressed with Mr. Russo's knowledge and his commitment to managing our beautiful harbor for the benefit of village residents and visitors. The harbor is an attractive village asset, not just recreationally, but also financially, as evidenced by waiting lists for dock space and heavy ramp use. During our meeting, Mr. Russo described a number of potential investment opportunities, which if properly implemented, could lead to enhanced and sustainable facilities, with substantial revenue opportunities for the village. We recommend that the administration and the Harbor Master develop a comprehensive management plan for the harbor to address recreational needs and critical capital repairs while generating new and increased revenues.

Lastly, and this set of comments are my own views and not necessarily those of other members of the Committee or of the Committee as a whole. I would like to note that two-thirds of the budget is comprised of employee salaries and benefits and one-half of that spending is allocated to the Police Department. At the budget workshop I shared with you a comparison of demographics, crime statistics, and staffing for the Village as compared to the City of Rye, and in a set of emails I followed up with a comparison of the Village of Port Chester. The bottom line is that we have a larger police department in relation to population than either the City of Rye or the Village of Port Chester, which suggests that there might be opportunities to manage with a smaller department. Towards that end, I requested that the Mayor arrange for the Police Chief to meet with the Budget Committee last week so that we can better understand how our police resources are managed and to discuss potential opportunities for raising revenues and/or reducing costs. There was no response to that request. With two positions currently vacant in the Police Department, I urge the board to look carefully at any possibilities of reducing staffing and the impact of such reduced staffing. As one element of such a review, the Budget Committee asks that the Mayor and the Board arrange for the Police Chief to meet with us so that we can better understand the workings of the Police Department and explore opportunities to increase revenues and/or reduce costs.

Thank you.