

\$663 tax bill on a \$100,000 home, the assessment will now be \$672, which represents no increase when County and Town taxes are considered in the total mix. It also stays within the state mandated property tax cap.

Property tax revenue will increase – from \$560,000 to \$568,500, which represents approximately 54% of the total revenue received by the Village.

A 2% increase in salaries – for all employees, full and part-time, is included in the tentative budget. Our employees received a 1% raise last year, and the Board felt that a 2% raise was not out of line this year. This is not much, but reflects on-going financial concerns that the Village faces. As was mentioned above, the benefits package remains the same – the Village employee pays 10%, while the Village provides 90% of health coverage. This is better when compared with similar arrangements in the private sector.

Employee Benefits – many of the benefits, including retirement, health insurance, unemployment insurance, and workers compensation continue to remain beyond Village control.

Debt Service – continues to be a large item in the budget and cannot be overemphasized. Mayor Curtin stated that the debt service is always the “gorilla in the room” and one that would not go away even if there was complete dissolution of the Village – residents would still pay the debt.

State Regulations and Unfunded State Mandates – continue to compound budget problems for the Village – items over which, there are no controls by the Village. Three years ago, Coon’s Pond was an example, and an even more recent example is the requirement from NYSDEC, which has ordered the removal of phosphorus down to a 1.0 mg/L level so as to stop the pollution of Onondaga Lake. This is of major concern to the Village and the plant operators because of the high cost to implement this unfunded mandate. The Wastewater Treatment Plant is the only one other than METRO that comes under this directive and the Village must meet a 2018 State mandate, at which the cost has been estimated at over \$5,000,000. The Village was able to secure an engineering grant of \$30,000 to plan for this eventuality, but the Board is very concerned as to how to pay for the implementation of the mandate.

Department Cuts – there have been savings in each department, but the Board is hopeful that the cuts will not affect service too severely. The Board also intends to set aside monies to make road repairs to Hillside, Baker, and Dunlap, as well as some sidewalk repair that was put off from last year.

Eliminate Police Department – some continue to argue that if there is a need to cut services, the Marcellus Police Department should be eliminated. The Board is unanimous in its decision that our Village needs a police force. Mayor Curtin addressed the issue once again. The absence of major crime in the Village has given rise to some complacency as well as questioning the need for a police force. The absence of major crime is not just a piece of good fortune. The Village does not have major crime because the mere presence of a police force acts a major deterrent to crime and causes the criminal element to move on to other communities – ones that would provide less scrutiny and not hinder illegal activity as much. The criminal element prefers to be as inconspicuous as possible. Some claim that our police department could be easily absorbed into a larger police entity (e.g. the County Sheriff’s Department) without losing the level of protection that the community currently enjoys. While the Sheriff’s Department provides much assistance to the village, including use of its many resources, it is doubtful that the Department could answer 300-400 extra calls a month adequately, since it would not be able to dedicate a car to the Village on a regular basis. The Sheriff’s Department, like all policies agencies, is stretched to the limit with its own budgetary concerns. The village would be safe, but quality of life issues (a hard-to-define concept made more conspicuous by its absence), ones that are important to village residents, would be seriously compromised. Some point to the 2009 merger of the Clay Police Department into the County Sheriff’s Department as an example of police consolidation – a merger that promised to save millions of dollars. However the taxpayers in the Town of Clay are still waiting for the savings to begin. In addition, the Town of Clay is not an urban center like a village. It is a community made up of neighborhoods that are bisected by a number of highways. Therefore, merging a highway patrol, such as the Clay PD, into the Sheriff’s Department was not as difficult as it would have been, had the community been an urban, settled community where people live much closer together, where businesses are more concentrated and issues are more challenging than highway street patrol. Each village is, different and each should address the issue of police protection in light of its own particular circumstances. At present, the Marcellus Village Board is committed to maintaining a police presence in the Village of Marcellus – a force that has become increasingly professional in recent years and a model for others in the county.

Clerk and Treasurer – the salaries and benefits of the Village Clerk and Village Treasurer are divided between two funds – the General Fund and the Sewer Fund – since the duties and work activity of both employees is often equally divided between the two funds.

The Village Attorney – is now considered an employee of the Village, not a contractor hired by the Village, and the cost has been reduced somewhat in the 2015 – 2016 budget.

Village employees, Bill Reagan and Kurt Field – perform code, Fire, and Zoning Inspections – their efforts have been extremely helpful as the Board recently implemented a new Rental Registration and Inspection Law. In addition, the Board is under increasing scrutiny from the DEC to meet mandatory storm water regulations and the Code officers have been most effective, making sure that the Village was in full compliance, following recent DEC audits.

Culture and Recreation – parts of the budget include some monies, in the form of contract agreements, for the Health-Loan Closet and the Marcellus Historical Society, since the organizations provide a service to the Village and its residents.

The Water Fund – remains but has no revenue. Monies are allocated from the General Fund to supplement the Water Fund, primarily to pay for hydrant inspections by OCWA and to pay for the annual Limeledge Contract of approximately \$6,000 each year.

The Sewer Fund – the Village Treasurer has addressed the seriousness of this part of the budget and there is a need to build this fund balance and be prepared for unexpected emergencies.

The Compost Project – again, the Treasurer has addressed this project, and the need for the State of New York to reimburse the Village with the promised grant monies.

Tree Nursery – another project begun by the Wastewater Treatment Plant operators is the start of a tree nursery at the plant. Seedlings purchased and planted in years past are now ready for street tree planting. There are also some extra trees that the operators will distribute to residents on a first come first serve basis at an Open House in May.

Sewer Consolidation Grant – a NYS Local Government Consolidation Grant to improve the Village sewage collection system was awarded in the amount of \$600,000 in October 2012. The monies were used to make repairs to those portions of the collection system that are jointly used by the Village, the Town and the School District, effectively addressing the inflow and infiltration of storm water into the treatment plant, as well as address the new DEC requirement for phosphorus removal at the plant and to bring about targeted improvements to several parts of the sewer system including the Orange Street Pump Station. Now that the project has been completed, the operation, maintenance, repair and billing of the entire sewage system has led to a consolidated arrangement, under the sole ownership and responsibility of the Village. In recent weeks, final figures on the project were submitted to the Department of State, for reimbursement of \$600,000.

Comments from Trustees

Mayor Curtin asked if there were any comments from the other members of the Board. Trustee Cox explained that once the Village is reimbursed the \$600,000 from New York State for the consolidation of the Village, Town and School District Sewer System and the \$400,000 for the Composting of Sludge Project at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, the Village will be in much better shape financially. Trustee Cox also mentioned that he is the only Trustee that still works full-time and wanted to thank and recognize Mayor Curtin and Trustee Tallman for their hard work and for always keeping him updated on Village matters. Trustee Cox also thanked all of the Village employees for their hard work and dedication.

Comments/Questions from the Public

Mayor Curtin opened up the floor and asked for comments from the public. Peg Shields of Hillside Drive asked if street repairs to Hillside Drive, Baker Road and Dunlap Ave. were included in the tentative budget. Mayor Curtin assured Peg that the monies for street repair to these roads was in this year's tentative budget.

Vote on the Tentative Budget for 2015 – 2016

Trustee Tallman made a motion to approve the Tentative Budget for the Village of Marcellus, for 2015-2016, as well as a motion to approve an increase in the property tax levy from \$6.63/1000 of assessed valuation to \$6.72/1000 of assessed valuation. The motion was seconded by Trustee Cox. Mayor Curtin called for a vote. All board members voted aye and the motion carried.

Motion to Adjourn

Trustee Cox made a motion to adjourn the tentative budget hearing. The motion was seconded by Trustee Tallman. Mayor Curtin called for a vote. All board members voted aye and the meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.