

**TOWN OF SENECA**  
**BUDGET WORKSHOP**  
October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

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The Budget Workshop of the Seneca Town Board, County of Ontario, State of New York was held at 3675 Flint Road, Stanley, NY 14561 on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of October 2024 at 5:00 pm.

<b>PRESENT</b>	
Drew Wickham	Town Supervisor
Jason Mosher	Councilman
Jim Malyj	Councilman
Howard Keeney	Councilman
Jesse Orbaker	Councilman
Haley Eagley	Town Clerk/ Tax Collector
Shana Jo Hilton	Bookkeeper/ Assessor
Jim Lawson	Highway Superintendent
Kathy Mastellar	Town Historian
Randy Coolbaugh	Water Superintendent

Supervisor Wickham led the pledge of allegiance and then offered privilege of the floor. Nobody wished to speak at this time. The Supervisor explained that he would be focusing on the parts of the budget that had significant changes from last year and encouraged the Councilman to join in if they had any questions or concerns in between.

**PERSONNEL SERVICES**

He went on to explain that they had talked in the past about adding a part-time person in there to give Bookkeeper Hilton some assistance. This idea has been in discussion since last year and the reason it hasn't happened yet is because they're trying to nail down a job description that covers exactly what they're looking for.

Many other towns are hiring a part-time person to come in and assist with reconciliations at their towns. Supervisor Wickham said there was a rough proposal from Carol Golden who has been assisting with us for a couple of years. They are also working on getting another proposal as well. Mrs. Golden said that if she were to be hired, we would be her sole client at that point in time. Supervisor Wickham said that neither Bookkeeper Hilton or Mrs. Golden will be around forever and that would be a slight risk of losing one or both around the same time.

Councilman Orbaker asked if we should consider making a full-time position out of it and take the rest of it off Bookkeeper Hilton's plate and said that his thought would be to alleviate the issue in the future of possibly having Bookkeeper Hilton and Mrs. Golden timeout at the same time.

Supervisor Wickham explained that the challenge is that the type of accounting the state looks for this day in age. He explained that they are looking for Accrual Accounting, which is more complex and requires someone with a different mindset than the average bookkeeper. He went on to mention that when Bookkeeper Hilton retires in a few years, we can look at it and pose the question at that point of whether we want someone who is there to run checks and pay bills, while utilizing someone outside for the reconciliation and advice or if we want someone who is close to a CPA. He explained that getting someone who is close to being a CPA would cost the town \$150,000 or more.

Councilman Orbaker reiterated that he was wondering if it would just be easier to make the two separate positions of Bookkeeper and Assessor and reminded Supervisor Wickham that it is going to be difficult to find someone part-time for that position. Councilman Orbaker said that he was just thinking for the future and Supervisor Wickham stated he would run some numbers and into it.

Ideally, the State AUD Report gets filed around February or March of every year. There was discussion about being behind on the State AUD Report. It is currently being reviewed by our CPA and will be sent to the state once that is done. Supervisor Wickham stated that our town does not have a unique situation as opposed to other towns. He said that most other towns

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have a bookkeeper that is capable of being a bookkeeper, but not a CPA. They hire a CPA Firm to do the reconciliations and help file the AUD Report.

**GENERAL EQUIPMENT AND CONTRACTUAL:**

Supervisor Wickham explained that there was a \$15,000 placeholder under Equipment because we have a few computers that really need to be updated.

Councilman Mosher asked about the Contractual amount going up. Bookkeeper Hilton explained that this line-item is the “kitchen sink”- whatever doesn’t go in another subject gets put there. Staples, general office bills, supplies, etc. Councilman Mosher asked if we really think we will spend \$28,000 more than we budgeted last year. Bookkeeper Hilton explained that we aren’t expecting to spend that much, but with consumables going up we are projected to go a little over this year’s budgeted amount.

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**BUILDINGS AND MAINENANCE REPAIR:**

Supervisor Wickham explained that CEO Hoover left a memo in the folders tonight to explain some of the needs. The memo noted that we need to replace the furnace in the Town Hall, we need to do something with the Town Hall driveway (looking at another seal), fix blocks in the highway garage, replace highway driveway and lot. Supervisor Wickham stated that this number will be refined.

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**COUNTY TAX BUYDOWN:**

Supervisor Wickham explained that we went from \$500,000 to \$400,000 last year with the county tax buydown. Councilman Mosher added that last year they had discussed dropping it \$100,000 each year and he asked the other councilman if they still were on-board with that thought. They all agreed that dropping it another \$100,000 to make it \$300,000 would be best to prepare us for the future.

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**WATER:**

Supervisor Wickham said that Water Equipment is in at \$157,000.

**Water Meters:** Supervisor Wickham stated that there is \$70,000 in water meters (original request was \$85,000). The board, along with Water Superintendent Coolbaugh, discussed the idea of ordering this many water meters for the year. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh is trying to get the meters switch over to cellular and this budget would allow him to order 150 meters per year. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh was asked many questions about this line item including:

- Councilman Orbaker asked if this was a requirement to update the meters and Water Superintendent Coolbaugh explained that he was trying to get everyone updated to cell-based meters as this would be easier to view in real time for the customer and the water department; eventually ending the program with them not having to drive around to read meters anymore.
- Councilman Orbaker asked if we will have to do this all again if the technology happens to change in 2-3 years. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh said that it shouldn’t change. His plan would be to have everyone switched over in 7 years.
- Supervisor Wickham asked how long the current meters last for and Mr. Coolbaugh stated that they last between 15-20 years. He added that they are currently working on meters that are from 2009 and older, so these ones have been in service for 16 years or so.
- Councilman Mosher asked how much these cellular meters cost and Mr. Coolbaugh said they are roughly \$350-400 and could be up to \$1,200 depending on the size of the service.

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- Councilman Mosher followed up by asking if we must subscribe to some type of monthly service. Mr. Coolbaugh stated that it is a monthly service fee through AT&T of \$0.89 per meter, per month and we are currently not billing the customer for that cost.
- Supervisor Wickham asked what the procedure would be when a meter fails. Mr. Coolbaugh stated that it would get noticed when they go to read, and it doesn't read right. Supervisor Wickham said that he could understand if we were changing meters out when they failed, but he doesn't understand going in and preemptively and taking out a perfectly good meter for no reason and then having a cellular fee paid by the town for that.
- Highway Superintendent Lawson asked Water Superintendent Coolbaugh if he was billing people for the new angle meter valves. Mr. Coolbaugh stated that he was only billing them if they broke it themselves. Mr. Lawson commented that anything in the house has always been billed to the customer regardless.
- Councilman Orbaker asked if we were trying to change these out of fear of failure or for convenience purposes. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh explained that he is trying to do a little bit of both, especially for the manual ones. He said he's trying to get those changed over so they don't have to get out of the truck and go read them because they take time out of their schedule to go do that.

Water Superintendent Coolbaugh said that they basically have 4 different systems that they are currently using. Manual Reading, CE based, ME based, and now we have cell based. So, he is trying to convert everything over to one system. Councilman Mosher said that it sounds to him that this wouldn't ever happen because technology is always changing.

Councilman Mosher asked Clerk Eagley if having these 4 different types of meters makes it any harder for the billing system. Clerk Eagley explained that it all comes into one system for her to calculate, print, and enter payments- so it isn't any more difficult on her end.

The board was all in agreement to only replace the meters when a meter fails or when someone gets a new service.

**Service Van:** This would be to replace the current, yellow, service van that they have. Supervisor Wickham stated that the \$157,000 does not include the Service Vehicle. If that was included, the equipment budget would be \$257,000. The board agreed to leave that out of this year's budget and Water Superintendent Coolbaugh asked why they decided that. Councilman Mosher said he doesn't believe it is a necessity and that a lot of other towns don't have it. We need to start thinking about our future from a fiscal standpoint. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh added that the current service van is 40 years old and is going to start getting hard to fix and replace parts.

Councilman Mosher said that he would be open to discussing a service trailer that they could hook up to the trucks they currently have. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh agreed and said he would be open to a trailer.

**Appurtenances:** This line item in the Water Budget is for \$40,000. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh explained that this would be the parts and pieces in stock for general replacements and operational parts. The question Supervisor Wickham has is how much of this \$40,000 is billable. He believes that we (collectively) need to do a better job identifying what is billable to the customer and then communicating that to customers.

Councilman Mosher asked if the reason we need this is because the stock from Mr. Lawson and Mr. Prater is drastically depleted or if we started putting stuff on the shelf that was never there before. Mr. Coolbaugh stated that he's putting things back on the shelf that they used this year.

With some of the questions asked, Supervisor Wickham appreciates the good discussion on all of this and said that they will do some work on this and come back with a revised budget.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

At 6:43 pm, Supervisor Wickham looked for a motion to adjourn the Budget Workshop. Councilman Orbaker made the motion that was seconded by Councilman Mosher.

Respectfully,

Haley Eagley  
Town Clerk