Budget Advisory Committee Meeting, November 7, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 by Mark Canfield. In attendance were committee members Mark Canfield, Denise Bujalski, Ned McElroy, and Dave Spinney. Staff present were GM Ron Beard, Steve Baird, Judy Kinney, and Linda Brookner. There were no guests.

The minutes from 10/31/2022 were not available and will be submitted at a later date for the committee's approval.

Judy Kinney addressed the issue of incorrect coding of some budget line items. She feels all numbers are currently as accurate as possible and can be relied on for budget planning. She has met with all department heads and presented the preliminary 2023 budget for the district. Mr. Canfield asked about the miscellaneous budget line which is a substantial amount. Ms. Kenney stated this has been addressed with staff and better coding procedures are now in place. The district is also planning on purchasing new financial software which is better suited to municipal budgets and coding errors are flagged when something is not correct.

The committee then focused on the highway and roads budget with department head Steve Baird. Mr. Canfield questioned the increase in wages for 2023. Mr. Beard stated they had applied a 5% increase which would be about half of the COLA increase. These increases would be merit based. Discussion was held on whether 5% was appropriate and is it inclusive of benefits. Could bonuses be a better way to compensate thereby saving on other components of wages and benefits. It was stated that both health and dental coverage is being reviewed and savings are expected to be realized. Members felt it was important that goals for the year be set and employees achieving or going above and beyond set goals be rewarded.

Overall the roads budget for 2023 is slightly less than 2022 but it was pointed out that the consulting number from last year was more of a one-time expense. So realistically the budget is over by approximately $50,000. The cost of plowing, sand, gravel, and paving are the main drivers of the cost increases. It was also mentioned by Mr. Baird and Mr. Beard that a new service maintenance building is badly needed. This may have to be addressed as a warrant article.

Action plans for 2023 for roads are to continue as much paving as possible, focusing mainly on maintenance of currently paved roads. Depending on the engineers expected report on which roads will need to be dug up for water lines will keep some roads unpaved and/or repaired until these lines are replaced. The District was able to pave Summit and Taylor this year. Mr. Baird would like to pave Morrell and McClaren next year. Discussion was held on if the District bonds for the water repairs that repaving of roads affected also be included.

Action plans for water are still dependent on the engineer's report but will probably be focused on the Bell Valley lines. Mr. Baird has been very successful in finding and repairing many leaks this year and hopes to continue doing so going forward.

Mr. Spinney addressed the ongoing discussions being held with the WEA Board and the District. Plans are still in a very preliminary phase but both bodies are looking at streamlining the process. One proposal being discussed is WEA distributing all dues in four payments a year to the district with the district then assuming all expenses. It was stressed by Mr. Spinney that the WEA board recognizes recreation has to become profitable to maintain the current level of recreation available. The committee heartily concurred.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 on November 7, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,
Denise Bujalski