

Village of Waldron
102 S. Main St.
Waldron, MI 49288
PUBLIC HEARING & SPECIAL MEETING
February 28, 2024

A public hearing of the Waldron Village Council was set by President Russ Platt Wednesday, February 28, at 7:00 p.m. to be held at the Waldron District Library, with a special meeting to follow at approximately 7:15 p.m.

President, Russ Platt, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. All stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll Call was taken showing Council members Ryan Belcher, Allison Harwood, John Newton, Stephen Newton, and President Russ Platt, present. Trustee George Kintner was absent.

The floor was opened for public comment on the proposed 2024-2025 budget. The members of the public present included Emil Gravelle, Bill Hall, April Platt, and an anonymous member. Discussion regarding the budget included the following:

Verification that the budget at the public hearing is the same one that was originally proposed. Clerk Casey Gravelle explained the only difference between what he had initially received in the office and that evening was the balances on the public copy.

Information regarding the millage: the amount of the millage, what it is used for, how allocations are coming. Treasurer Sarah Newton gave the current millage rate of 10.6978. Explanation was given that the millage rate would need to stay the same to maintain the numbers in the proposed budget.

Inquiry regarding staff pay, comments regarding seeing things being done within the village has improved. Trustee Stephen Newton responded that everyone is happy with what the work being done, discussion had occurred regarding the pay of the maintenance crew both on-call pay for slower work times and whether to increase their pay, a pay increase had been made the previous year, both ideas were decided against.

Clarification on work load was requested. Trustee S. Newton mentioned that there had been a check for only 12 hours of work, but other weeks they are very busy. Trustee Allison Harwood clarified that the decrease in work is due to the winter months. The mention of the on-call pay was for the winter months.

Follow-up question asking if the Village of Waldron pays competitively. Trustee S. Newton responded that we are much smaller community. Trustee John Newton commented in agreement that the village's budget is smaller as well and we can't afford to compete with larger cities.

Inquiry regarding Street Administrator pay. Trustee S. Newton responded he had suggested in his committee meeting that the Street Administrator pay increase \$200 for the year, making it equal to Trustee pay. He would see raising the Street Administrator pay being raised before the maintenance crew.

Had the Street Administrator pay been looked at for this budget? Trustee S. Newton did not believe it had.

Village of Waldron
102 S. Main St.
Waldron, MI 49288

Verification that the Street Administrator pay comes from Major and Local Street Funds. Clerk Casey Gravelle verified that that is true. Trustee Harwood expressed that she did not think \$200/year was a sufficient increase, considering the work the Street Administrator does. Trustee S. Newton agreed, but expressed concern regarding being able to pay a code enforcer along with all that had been discussed in raising pay for the positions discussed and needing to raise the water rates that it is a lot all at once. Trustee Harwood understands those concerns but wants to ensure that the Village is able to keep its current employees.

Clarification requested that there is not enough money to give the Street Administrator a raise in pay even with the balances of street funds equaling almost \$450,000 together. Trustee S. Newton responded that it isn't so much to do with the balances, but to do what is best by the budgets and that the board is getting ready to increase the water and sewer rates.

Debate continued regarding increasing the Street Administrator pay. Trustee J. Newton commented that Street Administrator Shawn Barnhart stated he did not want a pay raise. Trustee A. Harwood stated Street Administrator Barnhart had said he didn't want a pay raise without Dennis and Hunter receiving a pay raise. Trustee Ryan Belcher agreed with Trustee Harwood.

Concern was raised that the pay raise for the Street Administrator should not be dependent on the current person acting in the position.

Question regarding whether a wage increase was included in the budget for the water and sewer operator. Trustee S. Newton and President Russ Platt answered no. Clerk Gravelle explained that it is provided for in the budget, because when she had met with the operator in charge, he had stated he would be requesting an increase. Trustees J. Newton and S. Newton clarified that he was no longer asking for the increase. Trustee Harwood inquired whether he would be providing a contract. Trustee J. Newton said the operator is working on that because he had told him he wouldn't be in favor of an increase for gas without one.

Clarification that the increase for the water/sewer operator's pay was due to gas and that they are going to increase the water rates. Trustee S. Newton clarified that it is only what the operator has proposed.

Clarification if the Street Administrator had been given a raise and if he had denied it. Trustees Harwood and S. Newton answered no, he had never been given a raise. Trustee Harwood continued that it had been discussed at a committee meeting. There was a proposal of \$200 increase a year for him.

Clarification regarding what Street Administrator Barnhart had said to Trustee J. Newton regarding increasing his pay. Trustee J. Newton said he didn't want it if money wasn't given to the other people. A member of the public and Trustee Harwood reiterated the great job the three men are doing. Trustee J. Newton stated it wasn't a good time to give raises due to probable water and sewer rate increases, along with the Boyd Drain project that may happen.

Question regarding the blank sections in the Major and Local Street Fund budgets. Discussion followed that in the past the board has moved money from Major Streets to Local Streets. Those areas of the budgets were left blank and not discussed at the last meeting.

Village of Waldron
102 S. Main St.
Waldron, MI 49288

Question regarding what streets are considered Major which are Local streets. Clerk Gravelle and President Platt answered.

Concern was raised regarding the bridge on South Main. President Platt explained that the Boyd Drain will affect what happens to it.

Clarification regarding maintenance pay and what work is done for the streets and not the other three budgets. Clerk Gravelle explained the breakdown of how the maintenance crew had worked the last fiscal year, and 42% is paid from the streets. Work included for streets includes cleaning, sweeping, mowing, plowing, salting, leaf and brush pickup, anything done to keep and maintain the roads.

Further debate regarding the maintenance pay continued. A member of the public pointing out that most of their pay comes from the streets and that is paid by the state. Trustee S. Newton responded that recently there isn't enough work for them currently. The Village hasn't had two maintenance people. There was a request for on-call pay, but his concern was that there was no work. He had suggested making Dennis's more consistent of 35 hours, but Hunter's position would be brought down to an on-call position.

Further clarification as to why raising the pay for maintenance isn't possible even though there is money available to cover that increase. President Platt responded that if a water main rupture happened on one of the major streets that fund would pay for the street repair. Trustee J. Newton voiced that he was not in favor of a pay raise and that he would not be adding it to the budget. He mentioned the open trustee position and if people are unhappy with the decisions being made, they are welcome to apply and then they will have a voice in the matter. Trustee S. Newton expressed the concerns of residents regarding the pay of the water operator. He also communicated that they can't pick and choose whose pay gets increased. Further discussion regarding the water operator's pay followed.

Question regarding the transfer from the major street fund to the local street fund for the last fiscal year and whether a transfer for coming year would occur. Trustees responded that it had been overlooked and that it would be discussed during the following special meeting.

President Russ Platt closed the discussion at 7:33 p.m. and opened the special meeting.

John Newton moved to approve the agenda. Stephen Newton supported, and it carried with a voice vote.

Discussion regarding transferring \$30,000 from Major Streets to Local Streets for the coming fiscal year was held. Stephen Newton moved to add a transfer of \$30,000 from Major Streets to Local Streets into the budget. John Newton supported and it carried with a voice vote.

Stephen Newton moved to accept the budget for the general fund. John Newton supported the motion and it carried with a voice vote.

John Newton moved to accept the budget for the water fund. Stephen Newton supported the motion and it carried with a voice vote.

Village of Waldron
102 S. Main St.
Waldron, MI 49288

Stephen Newton moved to accept the budget for the sewer fund. Ryan Belcher supported the motion and it carried with a voice vote.

John Newton moved to accept the budget for the major street fund. Stephen Newton supported the motion and it carried with a voice vote.

Stephen Newton moved to accept the budget for the local street fund. John Newton supported the and it carried with a voice vote.

The floor was opened back up for public comment. April Platt requested that the following be recorded in the minutes: At approximately 24 hours a month, the water operator is making \$129.17/hour. The maintenance people are making \$930/month and \$910/month and are here every day. It was explained that the water operator does have state licensing required.

John Newton made a motion to adjourn. Stephen Newton supported the motion, and it was carried with a voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Casey Gravelle
Village Clerk

*Subject to approval at the March 12, 2024 meeting.