

Public Hearing Re: 2007 Budget November 9, 2006 7:30 p.m.

Present: Sup. Newlin; Councilmen Bax; Johnson & Pacioni; Finance Officer DiRamio, Town Atty. Leone and Town Clerk Brandon. Also 20 residents.

Excused: Councilman Edwards. (Work Engagement)

The Supervisor opened the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

The Clerk was asked to read the Notice of Public Hearing:

**TOWN OF LEWISTON
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON THE
PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR THE
YEAR 2007**

NOTICE IS HEARBY GIVEN that the preliminary budget of the Town of Lewiston for the fiscal year 2007, including general town funds, highway funds, fire protection district funds, and lighting district funds, has been completed and filed in the office of the Town Clerk of the Town of Lewiston, 1375 Ridge Road, where it is available for public inspection during normal office hours. The Town Board of the Town of Lewiston will hold a public hearing on said preliminary budget on Thursday, November 9, 2007, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Lewiston Town Hall. At such hearing, any person may be heard in favor of or against the preliminary budget as compiled or for or against any item or items therein contained. The following are the proposed 2007 salaries of certain Town officers of the Town of Lewiston.

Supervisor	\$27,923
Deputy Supervisor	1,640
Council Members (4)	12,311
Town Clerk	49,191
Highway Superintendent	58,774

By Order of the Town Board
November 1, 2006
Carol J. Brandon
Town Clerk

The Tax Levy for 2007 is as follows:

Town of Lewiston Tax Levy 2007						
<u>Town District</u>	<u>Fund</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Assm't Units or Footage Value</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Tax</u>	<u>Total</u>
Lewiston O/S Vil	B					
Lewiston OSV-High	BD	TOV	626,627,733	0.0000	0.00	
Lewiston OSV-Drain	SD					
Fire Prevention	SF	FP-241	652,406,412	1,4593	952,100	952,100
Lewiston WIA	SW1	WD-240	834,744,604	0.4259	355,600	355,600
Lewiston MSIA	SS2	SD-243	598,856,100	0.0801	47,968	
Lewiston MSIA	SS2	SD-243 P/U	3,938	105.0000	413,490	461,458
Lewiston SSIA	SS3	SD-245	77,049,677	2.2304	171,852	
South Sewer Non-U	SS3	SD-246	594	8.0000	4,752	176,604
Lewiston Hts. Gas	SL	GS-241	41	482.9300	19,800	19,800
		ASSESSEDVAL VILLAGE	\$133,281,701			
		TOWN O/S V	<u>626,627,733</u>			
		TOTAL	<u>\$759,909,434</u>			

Town of Lewiston
2007 Budget Summary

<u>Code</u>	<u>Fund</u>	<u>Appropriations</u>	<u>Estimated Revenues</u>	<u>Appropriated Fund Balance</u>	<u>Amount to be Raised by Taxes</u>
A	General	\$2,354,697	\$2,298,950	\$55,747	\$0.00
B	General/ Outside Village	1,929,687	1,841,382	88,305	0.00

BD	Highway-Town	1,839,500	1,555,750	283,750	0.00
SD	Drainage	268,000	268,000	0.00	0.00
SS1	WPCC	<u>1,503,500</u>	<u>1,486,000</u>	<u>17,500</u>	<u>0.00</u>
	Subtotal	\$7,895,384	\$7,450,082	\$445,302	\$0.00
<u>Special Districts</u>					
SW1	Water	\$1,536,250	\$1,065,800	\$114,850	\$355,600
SF	Fire Protection	961,800	9,700	0.00	952,100
SS2	LMSIA	1,614,160	1,152,702	0.00	461,458
SS3	LSSIA	300,400	123,796	0.00	176,604
SL	Lighting	<u>20,000</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>19,800</u>
	Subtotal	\$4,432,610	\$2,352,198	\$114,850	\$1,965,562
Total		<u>\$12,327,994</u>	<u>\$9,802,280</u>	<u>\$560,152</u>	<u>\$1,965,562</u>
	ASSESSED VAL VILLAGE		\$133,281,701		
	TOWN O/S V		<u>626,627,733</u>		
	TOTAL		<u>\$759,909,434</u>		

Newlin: This budget that I have proposed and the council has been working on has about a 3.3% increase overall spending from 2006. We are still holding to the policy of doing everything we can to prevent a town tax. That I think is a remarkable achievement for this Town and it shows we try to get the “biggest bang for our buck” and not heft any more burdens upon the population which in my opinion is already burdened by a school and county taxes. You as residents may comment and give us your thoughts and insights. It will not be a question and answer period. We may be addressing some of your thoughts when we meet again on the budget on Monday, Nov. 13th at 6 p.m. Any resident that wishes to speak please state your name and address for the record.

RESIDENTS:

Lee Simonson of 504 Morgan Drive. I am a volunteer member of the Board of Trustees of the Historical Society. (At this time, Mr. Simonson introduced the members of their Board.) Thank you for allowing us to share our thoughts with you as you prepare next year’s budget. Our request is quite simple. We are looking for matching funds from the Town so we can leverage the money that we raise privately thereby strengthening our efforts to achieve several important goals that will help Lewiston both historically and economically. As we said before, Lewiston’s history future can be found in its past. We see evidence of this time and time again. The Lewiston Historical Association has taken a leadership role in not only preserving but promoting our rich heritage. Just last December, in cooperation with the Chamber’s Christmas Walk we put on our first historic home tour. The results were absolutely astounding. Local restaurateurs reported that it was their busiest and most profitable weekend ever which is amazing because traditionally December is a very slow month for them. Retailers reported a surge in profits and one local retailer bloomed as an example said “It was the best weekend they had ever had since they opened six years ago.” Meanwhile, we have become the world’s gateway to Lewiston. In fact, if you use any Internet search and type in Lewiston NY, you will find our historic Lewiston website. Back in May, we sent each of you a letter outlining the many projects we are working on but specifically we come here this evening with a priority and that priority involves the restoration of the Lewiston Museum including a redesign of the public exhibit area and a more protective environment for our archives, photographs and collections. Your help and support is needed as we work to improve Lewiston’s quality of life and make it a destination for visitors. We are perfectly situated between Niagara Falls and Ft. Niagara’s brand new 5 million dollar visitors center and we need your help to capitalize on the fascinating aspects of our past including our role in the War of 1812 and the Underground Railroad. What we do today will be felt for generations to come as Lewiston’s history takes on even greater importance. We need your support for the tremendous amount of work that needs to be done to achieve the potential that Lewiston has in becoming the pre-eminent destination of choice for visitors seeking an historical and cultural venue in Western New York.

Again, we aren't asking for a charitable handout. We are just asking you to match funds that we have raised privately. Our charter with the State of New York has us serving the entire Town of Lewiston which we do proudly. We look forward to working closely with the Town of Lewiston and realizing our common goals of boosting Lewiston's reputation and opportunity. We also appreciate in value and welcome your input as we move forward. Thank you and we are gratefully for your favorable consideration. I have for you packets of information discussing our program and also our financial statement.

Paulette Glasgow of 836 The Circle. I am a member and life long member of the Friends of the Lewiston Library. In 1933 all libraries in Germany were ordered closed and their contents publicly burned. The purpose was clear. Those in power wished to curtail the public from seeking information and knowledge. In Lewiston we haven't resorted to publicly burning library books but we have through a lack of adequate funding restricted the public from seeking information and knowledge. Libraries and their funding should never be caught between political policies or personal vendetta. Libraries should be as Andrew Carnegie noted "the cradle of democracy that never fails to extend its' place in the democratic idea". Lately, we have read where the financially strapped community ...libraries have been forced to cut their staffs thereon and then close their doors. Lewiston is not like other financial strapped communities. It has more than enough money to adequately fund and maintain a public library. In 1996 the Town conducted a town wide survey on how the public wished the new found money from the Modern settlement be spent. Under the category of cultural, tours and marketing the public gave the highest rating to the library. By doing this the public conveyed the library importance to our community. During the budget session of that year, the Town of Lewiston decided to honor the publics' opinion and budgeted \$360,000 for the library so it could establish hours that accommodated with the publics' schedule and had adequate funding for operating staff, supplies, equipment facility. It wasn't until two years later, that a few misguided individuals decided to make the library and its' funding personal and a political issue.

Having grown up in Niagara Falls, I have seen how personal and political vendettas can destroy libraries. I have seen how lack of adequate funding caused the Niagara Falls library to deteriorate. During many visits, I would have to navigate around multiple buckets that were placed on the floor or have to wait days until the library staff could secure the information on its' web because it was removed to protect it from leaking roof. Is this what we wish to happen to our library because someone has told you it is not politically correct to fund the Lewiston library? Having sat through many public meetings, I have heard Town Board members make numerous inquiries with regards to the library from classification to ownership, percentage of financial responsibility. In 1996 when asked to rate the importance of the library to the community, for some reason the public didn't think that this was an important issue to consider. They wanted their library adequately funded. It made no difference to them that it was classified as a Town/Village library even though under law there is no such classification. The library is a public and municipal building where every resident of Lewiston could use regardless of classification or ownership.

In 1996 when seeking opinion from its' residents the Town didn't just send questionnaire to 30 or 40 or 60 or 70% of its' residents. Opinions were sought from 100% of the population. In 1996 when negotiating the funding for the library, it wasn't a question of 60-40, 30-70. There is no sign on the libraries front door stating that due to financial responsibility only 30 or 40 or 60 or 70% of Lewiston's residents can utilize the library services. The Town Board budgeted \$360,000 to fund a public municipal library that serves the entire population of Lewiston including Sanborn, Ransomville and Colonial Village. Your responsibility as a Town fiscal board is to insure that all peoples request are honored. As custodian of the people's money you should fund this request so that each of your constituents from the very young to the very mature has a better quality of life. Mr. Shaw at his presentation last week conveyed to you that through an increase of circulation your constituents have made the request that you adequately fund the library so that it is maintained and open not on a restricted schedule where there isn't enough supplies and the equipment is outdated and the roof leaks. But open as a safe, well maintained public municipal facility where up to date equipment where the roof doesn't leak. A public municipal

library is open each morning for our seniors so that can read the daily newspaper or our children with programs that teach them the importance of reading. Open in the evenings for those of us who have worked during the day and can only visit the library in the evening. Open more hours on a weekend and during holidays so our students who must utilize the library in order to do their homework or to find research.

It is true that libraries do extend and strengthen the democratic idea because they are the very center of our community. A well thought funded and maintained library not only is the cradle of democracy, it is represented of what a community thinks of itself. Mr. Newlin, of all the members of this Town Board you know the importance of the library to your father. Your father spent many long hours fighting for funding for them to have adequate operating hours, equipment and staff and he did this regardless of who owned the building, which classification laws and where they lived and what their financial responsibility lies.

We have been told that there is only so much money that you can give to the library. If it wasn't for the fact that the Town is presently sitting on over a million dollars of new found money....that next year you will receive an additional million dollars that there is no time period as to when these monies can be spent and that they are to used for capital improvement throughout the Town you might be able to convince me and you notice I said the word "might". The lack of monies just as the Modern monies was the property of the citizens of Lewiston just as the Modern monies they should be used for capital projects throughout the Town. I can think of no better project than to fund a public municipal library so that it is adequately funded and its' roof doesn't leak.

As a patron of the library, I would like to present a solution to the funding, if I may. That the library 2007 budget be set at what it was in 1997 when Mr. Johnson & I voted for it. \$360,000. That the libraries funding be increased between 3 & 5% annually and finally the most important ingredient that the Town not wait until September 2007 to establish a capital fund for the library as you have stated, Mr. Newlin. That a dedicated fund for the Lewiston Library be established in this budget, 2007 to be spent in January 2007. That the Town pilot into this fund for 2007 and the next 50 years the sum of \$50,000 to be used to maintain the facility. As stated previously, the monies are sitting in a bank account...they haven't been touched from what I have been told....there is no time period as to when they can be used. It is stated that you intend to open a capital account in September 2007. The capital project it can be used on is to fix a leaking roof. So, the question basically as to why do we have to wait until September if we are going to get the capital fund anyhow? Why not make it in January? I would hope that each of you would seriously consider this proposal. The time for bickering and finger pointing and personal political agenda has come to an end. If we truly love Lewiston we must do what is best for its' residents. Thank you.

Newlin: Thank you Mrs. Glasgow. I don't like to have to respond to public comments but when there are misrepresentation of the fact, I feel it is my duty to do so. The reason why this Board is acting prudently and not designating funds that are going to be allocated hopefully in September 2007 because of exactly that. It is a hope. My attorneys who I think of some of the best in the business tell me they see a smooth approval process for the FERC re-licensing. However, we can't tell how attorneys are going to be acting that are speaking on behalf of Westchester Cnty. and a bunch of other municipalities and commercial interests in terms of their efforts to seek a better deal from NYPA. I cannot guarantee anybody at this point that the Federal Energy Regulatory Committee will in fact approve NYPA's re-licensing. So, it would be foolish for me and any elected official to say "hey folks, you are going to get this kind of money now". What is going to happen if a lawsuit does work our or there is some intervention that does work out on behalf of Westchester or these competing interests. Then there will be no money and then you should be mad at people like me or other people who stand up here and promise you something that they had no right to promise. Mrs. Glasgow is right that there is a pool of money when it comes to the signing bonus, 1.3M we got. I have had to keep that money aside in the best interests of this Town because one of the things that we are out working for is reduced residential rates. That hasn't been done in New York State and municipalities since the early 1900's. There are not too many people are around

back then that unfortunately can give us guidance on that. So, when I ask people how much is it going to cost for the Town of Lewiston to set up cheaper residential rates...something that will benefit everybody in this Town. I can't get a number. So, until that process is concluded I think it would be short sighted to designate those monies elsewhere. That having been said, I have met personally with Mr. Shaw, your (our) fine new Library Director and I told him I think we will make those monies available. What I just gave you was a brief analysis of what I believe are accurate facts.

But it is hard for me to analyze the facts with a cool head after someone who speaks of behalf of the library attempts to draw a parallel with Nazi closing down libraries in 1930's. What has happen to Lewiston? You heard a woman just say how she wants to go past political vendettas but to get up here and accuse any member on this Board, to my left or right or anybody who served here in the last 20 or 30 years of a parallel with the Nazis' closing down libraries in the thirties is off the charts. I know that doesn't speak for the rest of you fine folks but **please** be reasonable when you come to us with your request.

Glasgow: Mr. Newlin, I didn't mention Nazis. I said Germany.

Newlin: Who ran Germany in the 30's? It wasn't the Democratic or the Republican Party. The last time I read the history books Adolph Hitler came to power in 1932.

Glasgow said he came to power in 1928.

Newlin: I think you said Germany in the 30's.

Glasgow: I don't want to argue about this.

Newlin: Listen, we are decent people up here despite what other people might think but to make parallel between elected officials and the Nazi Party I think is a darn shame. I hope it doesn't happen again... You had your time Mrs. Glasgow and I could of stopped you right there because that is really is way out of bounds. But, that having been said I will entertain the next person but I had to say something about a comment like that cast dispersions upon this Board and its' predecessor. I am sorry Madam, but I just couldn't stay quiet.

Jill Smith of 693 Cayuga Drive. I go to the libraries a lot. Now that all my children are in school...it is great in the morning... our toddler sessions. We had our meeting at 7:30 and now with the library only opened to five we have to have this meeting 4 or 5. Mainly my argument is that the library is not open later. The kids are busy with sports and dinner so I would like you to really think about increasing it because we have great reading programs at our school and we are encouraging them to read.

Newlin: Thank you. I know you speak for a lot of families in Lewiston.

Robert Giannetti of 425 Seneca Street. I have something to say about the value of the library and I realize that what you face are competing priorities. But, in the face of competing priorities I think too often the funding of a library suffers. It suffers because it doesn't have the glitz of a jazz or some of the apple pie things that might get funded. So, let me without ruffling any feathers and I certainly won't bring up any European history but please allow me to bring up some American history. The thing I would like to recall is the fact the was some people who made an awful lot of money in the early 20th century ...Mr. Garry, Andrew Carnegie and with a man like Andrew Carnegie what was one of the first things that he did when he tried to give back to his community? He funded free libraries. That idea of free libraries is very meaningful. The fact that books are free is basic to our democracy. Sure, you can say that the functions that a library might perform ...access to a computer, CD's, books....these are all things that are available in a culture but you have to buy them. What a library does is give the birthright of democracy to the citizens in that community and that is particularly important now because we live in an over commercialized culture and I think the library stands as something that is worthy in the struggle of competing priorities. It could be funded because it stands as

something of a counter to the over commercialized culture. There are some qualities to the library and if I can just briefly go through these but what you have in a public library is a sense of inclusiveness. The broadest swap of society and you can take any other area of funding and it is going to be compartmentalized to children, seniors etc. All of those people come under the umbrella of a library. Men, women, children, rich poor all benefit. The library is a non partisan place. The best expression of our democracy as it was realized by Andrew Carnegie and others is the width of the ages there. The buildings that houses books is a symbol for illiterate society and I think sadly one of the things that has happen with the over use of computers and education as we would all know is that literacy has suffered. We are skewed to that computer screen as opposed to being able to go through books and dig into arguments. The library helps us do that. There is a respect for learning in bodied in a library. I think of all the times in history that we need respect and we need respect for learning and this is one. If this is one light to shine in that cultural condition I think it needs too. Books as materials are cultural artifacts. You can go into a book store and you can buy anything but you can't buy books that were on the shelves 10 or 20 years ago or a century or two centuries or more. That is the value of the library as a depository. So, in the light of all these considerations I have to say and I say it in no uncertain terms there is a solemn responsibility you all bare and as a person who respects our name and wishes to advance it and wishes to see it diffused I think this is what you need to consider. These are the real facts. Sure, there are legal questions....there are competing priority questions but let's not forget what the really the library is about. Thank you.

Marya Vukceovich of 595 Seneca Street. I wanted to say that Peg Salada who is the President of the Friends of the Library recently instituted with Mt. St. Mary's Hospital in the maternity ward a project that we are calling "Books for Babies". So, we are not just thinking about seniors, high school and college kids and visitors who come in and use our facilities but young mothers who are expectant. All they do is come into the library and we give them a packet which include the impetus to start reading to their children...a child that is still in the womb. Scientifically, know that the child can hear and feel the motion. We are asking not only for possible matching grants to help us with our leaking roof and other facilities that we need in our restrooms and conference stations. Also, for our *John Daly* reading room where we have so many projects for young people. But, we would like very much to consider that possibly you could see it in your venue to help us financially. Thank you.

Newlin: We are glad to see so many folks from the library and I know that this Board is going to do everything humanly possible to address the needs. We have already got some ideas on how to help the roof situation. I spoke with Theresa Donaldson recently and I think we can make real good progress. The Town Board just a few years ago started to work with a grant writer so that will be of some help.

I apologize if I got overly emotional about the Nazi thing but I will say so that everybody understands thismy mother is from Sweden and my uncles as young boys had to go defend the border in Sweden against Norway when the Nazis occupied it. I have very close friends of the family who had to house German soldiers in Norway and I just really resent any parallel drawn with what happens here in Lewiston and what happened in Nazi Germany. So, I apologize for my emotionalism there but it cut close to the heart.

Johnson MOVED to adjourn the Public Hearing. Seconded by Pacioni and carried 4-0.

Newlin said that we will reconvene a budget session on Monday, November 13th at 6:00 p.m.

Time: 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted and Transcribed by:

Carol J. Brandon
Town Clerk