

**BUDGET WORKSESSION
TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF LIBERTY
November 9, 2009**

At the Budget Worksession of the Town Board of the Town of Liberty held at 4:00 p.m. at Town Hall, 120 North Main Street, Liberty, New York, the following Town Board Members were present:

Supervisor John Schmidt
Councilperson Lynn Killian
Councilperson Thomas Hasbrouck
Councilperson Clarence Barber
Councilperson Maurice Gerry

Recording Secretary: Town Clerk Laurie Dutcher

Also present:

Finance Director Earl Bertsch
Code Enforcement Officer Mark VanEtten
Senior Account Clerk Cheryl Gerow
Deputy Town Clerk Sara Sprague

After the Pledge of Allegiance, Supervisor Schmidt called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Heinrich Strauch

Supervisor Schmidt advised Mr. Strauch that they were proposing to cut \$12,500 out of the CDC's budget and wanted to know if he had any ideas.

Mr. Strauch advised that a 10% cut would be manageable for the CDC.

Mr. Schmidt advised that they were looking to get the budget down to a 2% increase and they were still around 2.5% for the Village and 2.6% for the Town and that he felt it was a pretty big bullet for the people to bite considering the economy.

Councilperson Barber wanted to know what the actual cut was to the CDC if the Town cut the \$12,500.

Mr. Strauch advised that it was about a 7 -10% cut but that the concern was that the funds were matched by the Village and the Gerry Foundation and that they may follow suit.

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Diane Brady advised that the CDC's contribution has gone down 30% from the inception without even asking. They have received other sources of income.

Alan Goodman, President of the CDC advised that there was never any discussion from the Town representative John Schmidt to the CDC about this cut. Mr. Goodman advised that it has always been the goal of the CDC to reduce its reliance on its contributors, the Town, the Village and the Gerry Foundation. Mr. Goodman stated that he recognized the facts that funding has to be cut across the board but wanted to know where was the common courtesy was.

Mr. Goodman also advised that if the Town cuts its contribution, the Village and Gerry Foundation may cut also. He stated that the CDC had zero feedback from the Town. Mr. Goodman stated that Heinrich Strauch is a one man operation, has no retirement and no support personnel and is an educated professional.

Supervisor Schmidt asked Mr. Goodman if the Town decreased their contribution if he thought that the CDC would go down the tubes.

Mr. Goodman replied that it would not be as successful.

Supervisor Schmidt advised that they picked apart a lot of departments.

Councilperson Lynn Killian advised that none were cut by 50%.

Supervisor Schmidt advised that he doesn't go by percent but by dollars.

Councilperson Lynn Killian advised that at the Public Hearing the people did an extraordinary job of presenting to the Board the accomplishments of the CDC. She added that they were true contributors to the economic development of Liberty and that the Board needs to reconsider the cut.

Alan Goodman asked Finance Director Bertsch what the \$12,500 meant in terms of percentages.

Finance Director Bertsch advised that it was about ¼ percent.

Diane Brady added that the cut would be \$12,500 X 3.

Supervisor Schmidt advised that he didn't think so.

Mr. Strauch advised that it was set up where the Town contributed 25%, the Village contributed 25% and the Gerry Foundation matched both the Town and Villages contributions.

Alan Goodman advised that when the CDC asked for less the Gerry Foundation gave less.

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Diane Brady advised that a lot of grants do not pay for administration. Mrs. Brady stated that the board wants the CDC to be self sufficient but yet still work for the Town and Village.

Councilperson Barber advised that they all had a misconception and that the wrong choice of words was chosen when they stated self sufficient.

Supervisor Schmidt advised that money was taken from all depts. to keep the tax rate down.

Finance Director Bertsch advised that a ¼ percent would amount to about \$2-\$3 per 100,000 of assessment.

Jeremy Gorelick advised that he is a paying member of the CDC and that he has business interests in Liberty, Monticello and Fallsburg and that Liberty was the best place to do business. He also stated that Liberty was the most appealing to people. Mr. Gorelick suggested that the Town come up with a list of realistic and tangible ideas for the CDC.

Diane Brady advised that they were having a meeting on 11/13.

Councilperson Lynn Killian advised that from the feedback of the Public Hearing the taxpayers wouldn't mind paying \$2-\$3 more on the tax bill to keep the CDC. She also stated that the CDC makes a very important contribution to the Town and that a 10% compromise is a good one.

Councilperson Gerry advised that he agreed with Councilperson Killian and that he was not in favor of cutting the CDC 50%. He advised so much has been cut in the Town and Village that every time you turn around there is so much less. Councilperson Gerry advised that he listened to the people and that he agreed with Mr. Goodman that the Town Board has not been informed. He stated that a decent compromise is fine but he objected to a 50% cut. Mr. Gerry stated that it was not realistic, not fair and the Town would suffer in the long run. Councilperson Gerry advised that nothing positive will come of it and that cutting all the things for the people does not make good sense.

Councilperson Killian commented that the difference between the Village of Liberty and the Village of Monticello is the CDC.

Alan Goodman gave his closing thoughts and advised the board that Heinrich Strauch is a full time employee trying to carry out the goals and objectives of the Town. The CDC sets Liberty apart from any other Town in the County. The CDC is Liberty's last shot and they are not here to be a drain but rather to compliment. Mr. Goodman asked the Board to invest in the CDC.

Supervisor Schmidt advised that the CDC was beautification and that it did not create jobs here.

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Mr. Goodman advised that it all goes toward attracting businesses and that it is all tied together.

Supervisor Schmidt advised that the Chamber of Commerce should be in charge of beautification.

A short discussion followed and the Town Board decided to postpone the vote until the Regular Monthly Meeting on 11/16/09.

On a motion by Councilperson Maurice Gerry, seconded by Councilperson Thomas Hasbrouck the Town Board adjourned the meeting at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Dutcher, Town Clerk