

A special meeting of the Mechanicville City Council was held at the Senior Citizen's Center, North Main Street, Mechanicville, NY on December 30, 2013. Mayor Sylvester opened the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Roll Call:	Mayor Sylvester	- present
	Comm. Seber	- present
	Comm. Chauvin	- present
	Comm. Higgins	- present
	Comm. Hipwell	- present

Sam Carabis led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Mayor Sylvester, seconded by Comm. Chauvin, moved that the minutes of the regular meeting of December 18, 2013 be accepted as prepared. Roll Call: Affirmative – all. Negative – none.

Mayor Sylvester said he received a thank you note from Mayor Higgins wife Madeline thanking the city council for sending food up their house.

Comm. Seber said Wednesday at 1:00 here there will be a swearing in ceremony of our new Mayor, new Commissioners, re-elected Commissioners, Fire Chiefs. Said the public is welcome to attend. Also for substitute Judge.

Comm. Chauvin had nothing to report at this time.

Comm. Higgins said they were able to fix the lights on Park Avenue. Said they couldn't find out where they were shorting out so they abandoned everything and ran a new wire to the duct across the street so we're all set.

Comm. Hipwell had nothing to report at this time.

Fire Chief Alonzo said they had relatively busy month with weather changes. Said they had 304 calls for the year.

Mayor Sylvester made a motion to close the regular meeting at 7:28 p.m. to go into a public hearing to discuss and vote on the Annual Appropriation Ordinance 2014-1, seconded by Comm. Higgins. Roll Call: Affirmative – all. Negative – none.

Comm. Seber said the notice was duly published in the Gazette newspaper.

Mayor Sylvester called upon Comm. Chauvin to explain the budget.

Comm. Chauvin said they have a controversy on the fire truck, he has it in the budget as part of the budget and they have never voted on it as a Commission whether this should be part of the budget or not. Asked if anybody had any comment on that that they would like to give them before they do vote on that.

Chief Alonzo said he noticed that it was in there like a bond, you were putting money in there to finance the truck, is that correct.

Comm. Chauvin said that was correct. Said the problem is at the budget meetings they had this was never brought up, discussed or voted on as a Commission. Said they now have Commissioners that do not want this in the budget so he can't put it in without having it voted on. Said to Jeff that he noticed when he was discussing the fire trucks that the insurance rates could change this year. Asked if he had any idea what impact it would have if they did change.

Chief Alonzo said they wouldn't change this year, the potential of change after the ISO rating will depend on how the rating comes. Said because of the age of some of the equipment and what the ISO requires, there might not be a change at all or there very well might be a change and it won't be a lot but it would affect the homeowners insurance contrary to what may or may not have been heard by some insurance experts out there. Said luckily we are in a city that has a municipal water system, has a fire house located within 2 1/2 miles of all of its properties. Said it does call for two front line engines no older than 20 years old, one reserve engine which is defined by them not him, said currently they have a 25 and 30 year old engine which shouldn't even be running, it's a liability. Said there are many issues that may not affect this year but they can. Said for the past 4 years they talked about their aging equipment and they need to replace one, they are not begging them for two like they should be, they understand. Said they have been in good communication with the Council. Said he tried to find a multi-purpose vehicle so they could eliminate two vehicles. Said they went out a found some great financing. Said he heard from council members that they wouldn't vote on a fire truck unless they see it in the budget but now all of a sudden they can't see it in the budget.

Comm. Seber said he said let's put it in the budget and see if it makes it through the process, let's not vote on it on its own. Said he didn't say he was going to vote for this because it was in the budget. Said a month or so ago there was a resolution to vote for the fire truck independent of the budget and they tabled that with the understanding that it would be put in the budget but there were no guarantees that they would vote for the fire truck, all they said was if it made it through the budget process as part of the budget, fine, if not fine.

Chief Alonzo said if they don't get the truck they definitely need another \$15,000. Said they have \$11,000 in repairs to the two trucks. Said if the truck can't go into the budget what he will ask for is at least \$15,000 more in their repairs and maintenance budget. Said he and the new chief will be committed to keeping their equipment and apparatus as maintained as possible.

Chief Corrigan said he is fully committed to running his department well. Said if they got the truck it wouldn't be delivered for 9 months and potentially you may not have to pay until the end of 2014 or the beginning of 2015. Said they wouldn't pay for it until it was delivered.

Kim Dunn said she missed the last meeting but at the meeting she was at she asked what the tax increase was going to be and they said 20 to 25% but now they are looking at 17 1/2% and she is wondering where they cut 50 to \$160,000. Said a few meetings ago Jimmy DeVito said we were \$400,000 in the red. Said that is a huge difference in the percentage, asked how the change came about.

Comm. Chauvin said some came out of the police department, some out of retirement that was less than they had anticipated and they had a cushion in there that was eliminated which was almost \$100,000 in itself. Said when they budgeted they had salaries and other things that they didn't know where they were going, they had a CSEA contract coming up that they didn't know where that was going, things like that. They have a contract now with CSEA. Said their percentage was at 3 but they got it down to 2% per year. Said some of the other benefits have changed. Said those are the things that have gone down. Said now at the 17% the fire truck is not in there which would be another 1 1/2% which would make it 19 or 20%.

Mrs. Dunn said at the last meeting she was out they talked about 4 or 5 policemen retiring, are they replacing any of them.

Comm. Chauvin said that would be up to the new Mayor and the new City Council. Said none of the retirements are definite still but Joe did cut some of his budget in anticipation.

Mrs. Dunn asked about the central mailing.

Comm. Seber said it used to be just for the rental of their postage meter, there has been a change, instead of each department having their own code all departments will come out of one code so it will be easier to track. Said they did the same thing with advertising a couple of years ago.

Mrs. Dunn asked about telephones, cell phones and pagers.

Comm. Gilheany said most are just regular office phones and just a few people have cell phones like the animal control officer and they only allow a certain amount.

Mrs. Dunn asked if the \$47,500 under the Department of Law is for Val only.

Comm. Chauvin said they had a contract with attorneys for civil service and labor negotiations that were \$23,000 a year.

More discussion was held on the budget line items.

Annie Boucher said she made a phone call to City Hall and the person she talked to said this administration was not at fault for the budget but the previous administration was. Said she told that person that she should be ashamed of herself for saying such horrible cruel things. Said they voted them in and that was their job to correct anything that the prior administration did but apparently that's not happening

because you got into serious trouble with the Comptroller's Office. Said the Governor put a 2% tax cap for senior citizens who can't afford to live here anymore and you raised it to 22% and then you put it down to 17% so you would look like good guys here. Said they should take the money out of their own pays and not penalize the people that live here. Asked how they expect senior citizens to pay for this. Said there is a witness protection program for people who tell on people who have drugs. Asked them to explain that.

Mayor Sylvester said she knows more about that than they do. Said the city does not control housing. Said if it's witness protection you don't know who they are. Said if she is talking about the Housing Authority that's the Federal Government that handles that and they do police background checks on them but your next door neighbor can rent to anyone they want to without a background check so you could have a criminal or pedophile living next door to you and you wouldn't know it. Said that would not happen in the Housing Authority.

Mrs. Boucher said it does.

Mayor Sylvester said this is the United States; you can't stop people from moving in. Said they were off of the budget now, this is not part of the budget.

Mrs. Boucher asked how they got into so much trouble with financing.

Mayor Sylvester said poor bookkeeping.

Mrs. Boucher asked what Comm. Chauvin did wrong.

Comm. Chauvin said lots of things apparently. Said the bookkeeping was wrong and they don't have enough time at this meeting to define it.

More discussion was held on this.

Comm. Higgins said the mistake was that they didn't raise the taxes higher in the previous years.

Jim Thompson said he's not happy with the 17%.

Comm. Chauvin said neither are they.

Mayor Sylvester said he's a senior citizen, he's going to pay the same taxes as she will and he's on a fixed income.

Mrs. Boucher said he gets all of his benefits paid for.

Mayor Sylvester said he takes nothing from this city at all. Said they are available if he wanted to buy them but they are more expensive than the GE's.

Comm. Seber said they can't get their health insurance paid for in one term, two terms, going forward its three terms but the problem is no one can serve three terms.

More discussion was held on benefits.

Mrs. Boucher asked why they are raising the taxes 17%.

Comm. Seber said no one wants to raise the taxes 17%, they got themselves into an unfortunate situation for whatever reason. Said for the last three years they kept it under the 2% tax cap. Said he can assure her that none of them love to do this. Said he doesn't like to vote for a 2% tax increase.

More discussion was held on the budget.

Comm. Seber said the whole problem is not the expenses in the budget, the whole problem is lack of fund balance. Said last year they appropriated \$396,000 in fund balance which is almost 20% in taxes. Said they don't have that fund balance this year. Said it's not the appropriations and the revenue in the budget, they haven't changed that much, it's the lack of fund balance for whatever reason. Said he's of the belief that they had a lot of matching grants and he is convinced that over the years they have not applied for reimbursements for certain projects, he has no evidence of that but when the new Commissioner comes in hopefully they will get together and go over it. Said in 2010 they had 1.6 million dollars in fund balance, since then they have appropriated 4 or \$500,000 a year. Said he can't imagine them having a budget so out of balance under normal circumstances that it would reduce it by 1.1 million dollars over a couple of years, it just doesn't make sense to him. He believes they paid for revitalization and engineering codes out of pocket and didn't get reimbursed for or didn't apply for reimbursement. Said they need to take a look at that. Said it don't help them tonight but going forward it would help them tremendously. Said that's the problem they are facing, there is no reserve to lower the taxes, that's the reason they are where they are.

Talked about taxes owed on properties and if they are paid it will help the city especially the penalties.

Mayor Sylvester made a motion to close the public hearing at 8:05 to re-open the regular meeting, seconded by Comm. Higgins. Roll Call: Affirmative – all. Negative – none.

Comm. Seber read RES. NO. 88-13 APPROVING MEMORANDUM OF
AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MECHANICVILLE
AND CSEA

Introduced by Comm. Seber, seconded by Comm. Chauvin.

Comm. Seber said it's a 3 year contract and CSEA employees in the city are basically Public Works employees. Said its 2% a year on the salary end, they did manage to get some changes in health care which will save them several thousands of dollars.

Said Dave had some changes in staffing certain positions that will help. Said right now there is a 1 Tier Salary Schedule and if someone has been here 40 year, the next person would get the same amount of money. Said they created a \$2.00 differential between the new employee and the former employee but at the end of the first year they would jump up to the salary of the former employee. Said they started in that direction and they were hoping for a two tier for the whole thing. Said Dave got some concessions on. Said because we have no pump stations with dialers on no one has to come in on weekends or holidays so no one will get paid for that. Said it's a pretty good deal, they have gotten some things back that will save them some money. Said 2% is pretty much the going rate for contracts around here. Said that's what the police received two years ago.

Roll Call: Affirmative – all. Negative – none.

Comm. Seber said 89-13 is the budget. Said Comm. Chauvin would like the budget appropriation to include the fire truck at least in the initial vote. Said what he is going to do is read the resolution and when they get down to the general fund appropriation they will add \$30,000 to that and they will vote on that and if that fails they will renumber the next resolution to 90-13 and they will subtract out the \$30,000 and vote on that one.

Comm. Seber read RES. NO. 89-13 APPROVING THE 2014 BUDGET

Comm. Chauvin said he wants to change that \$4,887,811 to \$4,917,811 to include the fire truck.

Introduced by Comm. Chauvin, Mayor Sylvester seconded it.

Roll Call:	Mayor Sylvester	- yes
	Comm. Seber	- no
	Comm. Chauvin	- yes
	Comm. Higgins	- no
	Comm. Hipwell	- no

Comm. Seber said RES. NO. 89-13 fails.

Comm. Seber read RES. NO. 90-13 APPROVING THE 2014 BUDGET

Introduced by Comm. Seber, seconded by Comm. Higgins

Roll Call:	Mayor Sylvester	- yes
	Comm. Seber	- yes
	Comm. Chauvin	- no
	Comm. Higgins	- yes
	Comm. Hipwell	- yes

^ Mayor Sylvester, seconded by Comm. Chauvin, moved that the meeting be adjourned at 8:25 p.m. Roll Call: Affirmative – all. Negative – none.