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Email to the Watertown Township Board

After reviewing the 2016 draft budget I have some questions and concerns. I have listed them below so the Board can review these questions and answer them at the public hearing on the budget.

Dale Westrick, taxpaying citizen of Watertown Township

2016 Budget Concerns and Questions?

Revenue

1. Line item 101-000.001-402.000 Current property taxes $1,190.562. Question: The Treasurer’s investment report in July 2015 shows over $7,712,000 in investments. Can the Manager or Treasurer explain the reason for this considerable amount of investments in relationship to taxes?
2. Line item 101-000.001-412.000: Delinquent real property tax 2015 $30,863. Question: Please explain what this figure refers to?
3. Line item 101-000-001-574.000: State revenue sharing $384.000. Please explain.
4. Line item 101-000.001-665.000: Interest $26,500. Please explain what the interest is for?
5. Line item 101-000.001-697.004: Transfer in from reserves $245,000. Please explain?
6. Line item 101-000.001-699.000: Fund balance transfer $112,000. Transfer to cover bond payments for the State and Stoll Township owned properties. The Township has owned the property on State Rd since 2012. The Township overbid a developer to acquire the property. In February 2013 the Manager and Trustee Overton asked the Board if they were willing to sell the property at a discount. The Board declined. How much money to date have the taxpayers of the Township invested in this property, purchase price and special assessments? What does the Township plan to do with the property? Listen to the discussion of the Manager’s and Trustee Overton’s request at the 2-17-2013 Board meeting.



1. 101-269.000.932.001 Westwinds sewer bond payment $40,000. This payment is due to the underfunding of the sewer bond in 2000. This bond is to be paid by the Township out of the general fund until it is paid off in 2020. This is due to the shortage of special assessments from homeowners to pay the bond. Am I correct on this matter? If not, please explain?
2. Line item 101-000.001-697.004: Transfer in from reserves $245,000. Technology reserve $45,000 for copier and server. Road and bridge reserve $200,000. Please explain?
3. Total estimated revenues 2016. $3,322.136

Board of Trustees expenditures:

1. Line item 101-101.000-718.000: Pension TWP share 2014 $2,203; 2015 $3,621. When the new pension plan was adopted, Trustee Overton claimed that it would cost the Township less. Listen to his statements at the June 2015 public comment. [Public Comment on Pension Plan](http://www.wacousta.org/2015/June15/public%20comment%20on%20pension%20plan%20costs.mp3) When comparing the cost for the old plan from the new plan, I discovered there was over a $9,000 per year increase. If more people sign up, that figure will go up. One of my big concerns is that the Manager was on the committee to develop the new plan and she realized over a $3,500 increase in pension savings when she opted into the new plan. The December 2014 pension plan costs were $2,113.16. October 2015 cost was $2,528.67 for an increase of $415.51 for just one month. I have to assume that this is every month for an increase for one year to almost $5,000 additional cost to taxpayers. As per Trustee Overton’s statements claiming reduced cost for the new program, will the Township continue with the new program?
2. Line item 101-101.000-721.000: Health benefits reimbursement: $18,000 budget for 2016. Several years ago I did a random survey of about 90 different Townships. In that survey I discovered only five offered any benefits to Trustees. I am including the link to the survey with all the email responses I received. Trustee Benefit Survey: This is a random survey I took of other Townships to determine what Trustee benefits other Townships received. [View details](http://www.wacousta.org/ImpFiles/trustee%20benefits%20survey.docx). Why is this program being offered since a considerable percentage of Townships do not offer any benefits?
3. Line item 101-101.000-721.000. Health benefits reimbursement for 2014 $15,583.00; as of 5-31-2015 $7,124.00. These benefits are all paid from the general fund?
4. Line item 101-101.000-957.000: Education and training $4,000. Why the considerable increase in the education budget. Are there plans to spend the money and for what?

Supervisor expenditures:

1. Totals for dept 171.000 Supervisor $31,117

Elections:

1. Line item 101-191.000-727.001 Election supplies $26,000: Please explain the reason for the considerable expected expenditure?

Clerk:

1. Line item 101-215.000-702.000 Salary $53,466 plus benefits.

Treasurer:

1. Line item 101-215.000-702.000: Salary $53,466 Plus benefits.

Township Manager’s assistant:

1. Line item 101-260.000-703.000: Salary $40,882. 40 hr per week.
2. Line item 101-265.000-706.001: Cleaning service contract $11,700. Clean the Township hall 3 times a week.
3. Line item 101-265.000-706.002: Facilities Manager salary $2,500. When I asked the Manager at a budget meeting how much time was involved in this position, her statement was between 5 and 20 hrs a week.
4. Total salary cost less benefits of $55,082.00

Question how does the board justify this position?

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| 101-260.000-704.000 | TOWNSHIP MANAGER SALARY | 82,297 | 84,766 | 31,787 | 84,766 | 87,309 | 87,309 | 87,309 |

The total cost for Manager, assistant Manager, and Supervisor less benefits totals $173,508. I personally feel that after checking with other Townships of greater responsibilities that we are over spending for these services to our community.

I am including the answers I received for a FOIA request from Blackman Township, Jackson.

FOIA request. (Freedom of information act) for Blackman Township.

Questions:

How many school districts and other entities does the Township collect and distribute taxes for? 12

How many residential properties pay taxes in the Township? 5,399

How many commercial properties pay taxes in the Township? 1,544

What is the budget cost for Township office operations in 2014? Budget info is available at [www.blackmantwp.com](http://www.blackmantwp.com)

At the present time is there a pension or health care cost paid to elected or contracted help?

There are pension and health care costs paid to former elected officials. No pension or health care costs are paid to contracted help.

After talking to the Deputy Clerk, Kim Ambs, she informed me that there is no health care and pension paid to elected officials now serving.

What are the salaries for all elected officials and assistants?

Supervisor $24,000

Clerk $12,600

Treasurer $12,600

Deputy Clerk $19.95 per hour

Deputy Treasurer $17.85 per hour

Line item 101-209.000-801.005 Assessor’s contract: $66,405. When was the last time a RFQ has been placed out for bid on this contract?

Building and grounds:

Line item 101-265.000.707.001 Security wages budget 2016 $11,500. Open and close the gates at parks and cemetery. I am quite confident that using technology the Township could reduce this cost considerably and provide better security. Example: Motts Park in St Johns is protected by video surveillance. The cost for doing this could be obtained from the county.

Line item

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| 101-265.000-707.004 | TEMPORARY SEASONAL HELP | 12,535 | 15,000 | 1,793 | 25,000 | 25,000 | 25,000 | 25,000 |

Why the considerable budget increase for 2016 in Temporary seasonal help?

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| 101-260.000-956.001 | INTERNET CONNECTION | 1,019 | 1,020 | 425 | 1,020 | 1,020 | 1,020 | 1,020 |

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| 101-265.000-850.000 | COMMUNICATIONS | 7,151 | 8,100 | 2,554 | 8,100 | 8,100 | 8,100 | 8,100 |

The total budgeted amount for phone and internet services for 2016 are $9,120.00. I provided a quote for the board from WOW for internet and phone service for 2013.

1. Communications cost 2013 less cell phone costs, $5,000.00 plus $1,000 for internet service, total cost over $6,000. This is a 2014 3-year quote for $2,892.00 I received from WOW for phone and internet service for the offices. This would be a savings of over $3,000.00 a year. Double left click on link. 
2. The total 2015 energy phone and internet budget for the Township Hall and gym is Consumer’s Energy $18,000; phone and internet less cell phones $6,000 for a total budgeted costs of $24,000.

Note.

For comparison I am including the phone, internet and energy costs for our Parish School for 2015 at $17,250.00. (The 2013 actual was $16,858) Our school has 10 classrooms, library, day care center, parish offices, conference room, gym, kitchen, and all the hallways.

I did not receive any response from the Board concerning this matter even when the costs continue to increase.

Mercury light at Heritage Park. At the 2014 public hearing on the budget I provided the Board information about the light being on 24/7 for no reason. As I stated last year, it is a mindset that it is ok to waste taxpayer’s money.

1. Heritage Park light: I brought this to the attention of the Board at the 2014 public hearing on the budget. This light is still on 24/7 and has been on for the last 2 years at a cost of approximately $500.00 a year. View picture [Mercury Light Image](http://www.wacousta.org/2013/Jun13/6-17-2013%20mecury%20light.JPG)

These are some of the items in the state of Michigan f65 report that I requested a written response to but did not receive. This is the request I sent the Township Clerk requesting some answers.

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | to Deborah  https://mail.google.com/mail/images/cleardot.gif | |   Deborah Adams  Clerk of Watertown Township    Items of interest contained in the Watertown Townships State Treasury f65 report.  I have been researching the Townships f65 report under Citizens Guide. I have contacted the State Treasury and the bookkeeper at the Township Office in an attempt to find some answers to the following line items. The State Treasurer office’s response was they just plug in the numbers sent from the Bookkeeper of the Township. When I checked with the Bookkeeper, she informed me that she just reports what the auditor provides her. A lot of these line items have a considerable difference in just one year. My question is who is providing the details on these line items?  The Clerk declined to give me an answer and deferred the questions to the Township Manager. As of this date, I have not received a written response as requested.  Deborah  Is the auditor the person to contact for answers to my questions?  Dale Westrick  Click on link to view f65 report  <http://f65.mitreasury.msu.edu/Reports/CitizensReport.aspx>    1.       Line item 531 nonspendable 2014 $331,538 2015 $16,961 for a decrease of 314,577: why the considerable decrease in non spendable money?  2.       Line item 246 Capital outlay 2014 $5,600 2015 $101,006 for an increase of $95,406: what is the reason for the considerable difference?  3.        Line item 239 Planning and zoning community/econ development. 2014 $347,203 2015 $206,449 for a decrease of $140,754: why the considerable decrease?  4.       Line item 210 All other general gov. 2014 $504,681 2015 $682,374 for an increase in one year of $177,693. Please explain the considerable increase in one year?  5.       Fund balance by component 2014 restricted $258,508 2015, restricted $538,638 for an increase of 108.36% or an increase of $280,130. Please explain the considerable increase?  6.       Compared to prior year. General government 2014 $918,713, General government 2015 $1,123,127 for an increase of 22.25% or $204,414. Please explain the increase?  7.       Community/econ Development 2014 $347,203, 2015 $206,449 for a decrease of 40.54% or $140,754. Please explain the considerable decrease?  8.       Capital outlay 2014 $5,600, 2015 $101.006 for a 1703.68% increase or $95,406. Please explain the difference in the capital outlay? | | | | |