



Village of Fredonia

8-11 Church Street
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FREDONIA, NEW YORK 14063

The announcement from ConAgra foods on March 19, 2014 that it would be closing the Fredonia processing plant in December, 2014, came as a devastating body blow to the entire village of Fredonia. Of course, the most important loss would be that of the jobs which provided 425 area families with a living. The secondary loss was to the Village of Fredonia of nearly \$1.5 million in property taxes along with water and sewage revenues received yearly from ConAgra. From there on out, it was a domino effect affecting every Village department and as well as every Village organization that received funding from Fredonia's budget. Mayor Stephen Keefe had just released his 2014-2015 budget earlier that week and the Village Board thought it had a working document from which to craft a spending plan for the next year.

Unfortunately, that was not the case and the Village Board essentially started from scratch reviewing each and every line item on the revenue, appropriation and capital sides.

Mayor Keefe summed the situation up best when he said, "There will be no sacred cows in this year's budget." The first casualty was the elimination of almost all items in every department's capital requests. Department heads were proactive and creative in figuring out that equipment could be toggled for another year, the sewage treatment plant would utilize window air conditioners instead of installing a cooling system and the Streets Department would sell scrap metal and vehicles to pay for a new snowplow blade. The Parks and Recreation program was shortened by two weeks and the weekly concert series, which had booked most of the concerts for the summer, would go on with the musical groups booked prior to the plant closing willing to play for reduced rates.

However, no matter how many capital projects and programs were eliminated or cut back, it came down to the saddest cut of all which was eliminating positions, either full or part time, in the Water, Waste Water Treatment Plant, Administration, Streets Department, and Police Department. It is with much sadness that those cuts were made and the loss of each and everyone of those employees and their contribution to the overall well being of the Village will be felt by residents in the year to come.

We ask all residents to know that this budget was probably one of the most difficult ones ever enacted in the history of this village and was a task we did not undertake lightly. Many hours were spent analyzing and discussing the cuts to be made with department heads and in Board sessions. We would like to thank Village Administrator Richard R. St. George for all of his guidance and expertise in navigating, what was as he eloquently put it, a Doomsday scenario. The spending plan which resulted from these budget sessions is a lean one and we ask the residents of Fredonia to understand that the cuts were necessary. However, the village will continue to provide services that residents are accustomed to, just in a reduced manner. We all look forward to the challenges in the next year and continuing to work for Village residents.

Sincerely,

Board of Trustees
Village of Fredonia