

Van Wyck presents next year's town budget

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Content

Van Wyck Town Council passed first reading of the town's 2023-24 \$420,060 budget May 1, which is up about 12% from the current budget of \$371,030.

The town does not collect municipal property taxes.

At its 7 p.m. June 5 meeting, the town will hold a public hearing on the budget and then a second reading before it is adopted.

Van Wyck treasurer Janice Grubbs prepared the 2023-24 town budget, which will take effect July 1. She has been with the city for the last year.

ARPA funds

The biggest change between the current budget and next year's budget is the loss of \$178,905 in revenue from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), as those funds given to municipalities by the Biden administration done.

In the past year, the town of Van Wyck used ARPA funds to replace the HVAC system in the community center. It still has remaining ARPA funds for future projects that must be allocated by the end of 2024.

Revenue sources

The town's budget does not include any property taxes, as it gets most of its revenue from Municipal Association of S.C. business license revenue insurance and the LOST Property Tax Credit Fund.

The town expects to collect about \$61,000 more in LOST funds next year.

It also expects to increase its revenue from business licenses and zoning certificates, as the town continues to grow. The proposed revenue from both is expected to be \$58,000, more than double last year's total.

Van Wyck, which incorporated in 2019, does not yet pay for services such as firefighters or law enforcement, relying on the county for those.

"We're in the baby section," Grubbs said. "They (other cities) just have more income buckets than I have right now."

She said that eventually, as Van Wyck continues to grow, tax levies may become another income source.

Main expenses

The town's capital improvement projects include a new playground and picnic table area at the Van Wyck Community Center, which is expected to cost about \$108,000.

"We got the bids in — hasn't been voted on — (for) a children's playground set for here, at the community center, and nicer picnic facilities that people can come and sit with their families, because we have the walking track back there," Grubbs said. She expects the bid process will be complete in the next 30-60 days.

Grubbs also estimated \$54,500 for community development functions, such as the Easter egg hunt, Sculpture in the Park, the July 4 event and bingo nights. The biggest expense there is \$25,000 for public art.

"True stuff that the community comes together (for), the town pays for the event," she said.

Staff expenses

Staff expenses will increase from \$56,450 to an estimated \$86,500 next year. This is because the town is hiring a deputy clerk to work with municipal clerk Crissy Laviolette.

"The town has grown enough that our clerk can't get it all done in 40-50 hours," Grubbs said.

Education for current board members will also continue, at a cost of about \$10,000.

"We've only been a town for a couple of years, so our clerk has started her formalized training that the state provides," Grubbs said. "It'll now be my turn, and there's also specific classes for mayors, council members."

"We said OK, we've gotten through getting this town set up, we now need to make sure we have continuing education, that we're on top of it, and doing the best job we can for the town," she said.

Community feedback

Grubbs said that two months ago, before the first reading, the town council talked to community members and asked them what their budget priorities and needs were. They used that feedback to generate the proposed budget.

She said the town is in a great financial position.

“The mayor here (Sean Corcoran) and the Town Council are extremely fiscally responsible,” Grubbs said. “They’re very transparent. Making sure that the townspeople understand revenue, it’s just giving them good information to make good decisions.”