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Subject: Proposed 2024-25 Budget - Comments for the Budget Hearing
Date: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 6:35:48 PM

Members of Council:

Because the date of the budget hearing was delayed at the last minute, I was unable to rearrange my work schedule and am unable to attend tonight's meeting. I request, therefore, that this letter to the Village Council be read during the public Budget Hearing.

I would like to express my concern about the proposed 333 percent increase in the budget for legal fees requested by Council in the draft 2024-25 budget. One of the Council's primary functions is to ensure that funds received from taxpayers are safeguarded and utilized wisely on our behalf, in an open and transparent manner, with maximum accountability. Unfortunately, that is not happening with respect to the Council's expenditures on legal fees as evidenced by the invoices for legal fees over the past fiscal year, the January decision by Council to cede all control over when and on what issues the President can consult the Village Attorney, and the complete lack of accountability.

As we can see from the draft budget, actual expenditures on legal fees were more than triple actual expenditures in 2022-23 and more than double budget allocation for legal fees in 2023-24 budget. The President almost always seeks counsel from the Village Attorney via telephone rather than in writing and has not reported to the Council sufficiently on those conversations. It is unclear how these increased expenditures benefit the Village taxpayers.

While the Council Members may have ceded their right to any input into or control over the Village's expenditures on legal fees, they are each still responsible for how our tax dollars are spent. I recommend the Council limit the budget for legal fees to the amount allocated for 2023-24 (\$3,000) and that they revisit their decision to give one Council Member carte blanche to spend Village resources.

Thank you,

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