

PUBLIC HEARING FOR PRELIMINARY BUDGET 2010
TOWN OF BRIGHTON - FRANKLIN COUNTY, NY
November 5, 2009

Page 1 of 4

A Public Hearing for the Preliminary Budget for 2010 was held on Thursday, November 5, 2009 at 6 p.m. following the Fire Services contract hearing at the Brighton Town Hall, 12 County Road 31 (a.k.a. Jones Pond Road) in Paul Smiths, NY, with the following:

CALL TO ORDER:

The Public Hearing was Called to Order by Supervisor David Knapp at 7:20 p.m.

ROLL CALL OF TOWN OFFICERS

PRESENT: Supervisor David Knapp, Council Members: Sheila Delarm, Jeffrey Leavitt, Steve Tucker and Lydia Wright

ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Elaine Sater - Town Clerk, Andy Crary - Superintendent of Highways

RESIDENTS: Seven people attended

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING: Notice of this hearing was posted Thursday, October 29, on the Town Clerk's Sign Board and at three post offices and businesses in the Town. Notice was published once in the Adirondack Daily Enterprise on Thursday, October 29, 2009.

Supervisor David Knapp stated that the purpose of this public hearing was to hear public comment on the Preliminary Budget for 2010 for the General Fund, Highway Fund, Street Lighting and Fire Districts. This budget reflects a change from 21% from the Tentative Budget to 8% after two meetings with the Budget Officer to discuss the budget on October 22 and 29. The Budget Officer was unable to be at this hearing because he is at another hearing. David Knapp said he would fill in for him. If there was no additional increase in expenses from the 2009 budget this budget would have increased 3% because the assessed value of the Town was reduced on the lands owned by the State of New York. A reassessment needs to be done to increase the NYS land assessment value again; it may be done in 2012. The original Highway Fund increase was 21% and the Fire District increase is 8%. After additional discussion with the Highway Superintendent it was decided to propose reducing the Highway Fund for equipment (DA5130.2) by \$15,000 and this would reduce the Highway Fund to an 11.5% increase. The total budget would be reduced to a 5% increase overall. CHIPS revenue was left at \$35,708 and Capital Improvements DA5112.2 was left at \$75,000 for paving the Keese Mills Road. Road improvements need to be kept up.

Jeffrey Leavitt said the Town of Santa Clara has been working on the far end of the Keese Mills Road. There is also logging taking place in Santa Clara. The heavy truck traffic from paving can be limited by starting at the Santa Clara end of the road and paving toward State Route 30.

Sheila Delarm said if the Town knew when Santa Clara would be done working on their end of the road, the Town could wait to work on the same road.

Andy Crary, Superintendent of Highways, said he thought they were just patching areas and it would be a continual thing so there is no need to wait for them. He would like to continue working on the roads each year and using the CHIPS funding.

The floor was opened to the public for comments.

Tom Willis: Asked about the General Fund appropriations; why the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO)'s salary (A3620.1) had a \$2,500 increase when everyone else was at zero. He did not think the CEO should get a pay raise since he has not cleaned up the mess up the street. He asked when the CEO worked in the Town.

David Knapp said the salary increase was due to a workload increase from the "Avoidable Alarm" and "Litter" laws. He asked for \$15,000 but it was reduced to \$13,030. The CEO is waiting to see how the Avoidable Alarm Law works before he tries enforcing the "Litter" law. He works on Wednesdays and is available for appointments by phone.

Lydia Wright said when he was hired it was at a lower salary until the Board saw how he worked out. He was the most qualified applicant who answered the advertisement. He is very knowledgeable and the Board would like him to stay on as CEO. He has another job with the Town of Peru.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR PRELIMINARY BUDGET 2010
TOWN OF BRIGHTON - FRANKLIN COUNTY, NY
November 5, 2009

Page 2 of 4

Tracy Santagate said that other positions also have had increased work loads. This should not be a reason to increase a salary when it is asked for, there should be equity for salary increases.

David Knapp said the CEO is very knowledgeable and more available than the previous CEO.

Sheila Delarm said the Board's error was not paying the CEO enough when he was hired.

Lydia Wright said she has heard from several contractors who say the CEO responds much quicker than the previous CEO.

Tom Willis asked about Dry Hydrants (A3620.2) for \$1200, is the Town actually going to put some hydrants in or is this "just in case" like it has been in the past.

Steve Tucker said the fire department has to change out the 4" hydrant heads for 6" heads. The equipment has been ordered and they are doing a few each year.

Tom Willis asked about the Registrar equipment (A4020.2) for \$1,450.

David Knapp said it is for a fire proof filing cabinet, instead of trying to create a fire proof records room which costs much more.

Tom Willis asked if the Grant (A6461.4) was for the salt shed.

David Knapp said this was from the Smart Growth Grant, the funds were already received in 2009. The salt shed grant funds were received in a prior year.

Tom Willis asked about the Park equipment (A7140.2) increase to \$3,000, he said there is hardly anyone at the Park when he drives by.

David Knapp said this is for a new lawn mower. He said he has seen an increase in Park usage this year.

Tom Willis asked about the Health Care (A9060.8), why is it up to \$82,840. He asked how many people were going to take health insurance. He said at one time the elected officials paid a portion of their health care and has the Board look at this option.

David Knapp said the amount was increased 15% which was the median amount projected. All elected officials are entitled to receive health care.

Lydia Wright said the policy was changed when the health policy was changed and co-pays were much higher than the contribution. If Board members were asked to pay 10% they would be paying to be on the Town Board. There are not a whole lot of people trying to get on the Town Board. The newly elected Board member was coerced to get him to run.

Sheila Delarm said it is unfair to ask elected officials to pay for insurance at the last minute. It needs to be discussed at the Board meeting.

Discussion was held on different ways to make this entitlement fair to all elected officials.

Tom Willis said the Building Permits revenues (A2555) \$10,000 seem to be very high.

David Knapp said the CEO is busy in this Town because building is still going on.

Sheila Delarm said the revenue from 2009 reflects the amount of increased workload for the CEO.

There are eight more building permits this year than from the same time last year.

Tom Willis asked about the Fines and Forfeited Bail (A2610) at \$17,500, should it be higher.

David Knapp said not all the funds stay in the Town, he has to pay the Comptroller's out of the revenue.

Nik Santagate said the Town keeps about 40% of what is collected by the court.

Tom Willis asked why the Mortgage revenue (A3005) is so low at \$10,000.

David Knapp said there were only two properties sold in the Town this year. There is one more check to come from the County. The Budget Officer deals with three towns and has a good feel for the numbers and he recommended keeping this low.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR PRELIMINARY BUDGET 2010
TOWN OF BRIGHTON - FRANKLIN COUNTY, NY
November 5, 2009

Page 3 of 4

Tom Willis asked about the Highway Fund, Health Benefit (A9060.8) at \$50,000, is this for two people.

David Knapp said yes, the insurance is very expensive, it includes health, eye, and dental. They have a contract.

Tom Willis asked about the Tax Rate Summary fund balance of \$90,000 being used with a zero fund balance at the end of the year.

David Knapp said the budget Tom Willis was looking at did not reflect the balances but he had a new budget that did. The General Fund balance was projected to be \$184,000, the Highway Fund \$101,000, the Fire District Fund \$883, and the Street Lighting \$377 at the beginning of 2010. The projected balances for the end of 2010 were General fund \$94,000, Highway \$66,000, Fire District \$883, and Street Lighting \$477.

Tom Willis asked why the Street Lighting Fund (SL5182.4) amount of \$900 is shown as part of the budget total when only certain properties are taxed on it.

David Knapp said he was not familiar with how the Budget Officer calculates the numbers. He will ask him about it.

Tracy Santagate said she does not see where there are funds for the Town Hall Project. What line is it in?

David Knapp said the Town received a grant approval for \$200,000 that has a matching fund against it. The Town does not have to use the whole amount. There is a balance of \$17,378 in the Town Hall Capital Project as of Nov 1.

Lydia Wright said there is currently \$159,714 in the CLASS Investment Account that can be used against the Town Hall Project. Some of the matching funds will be work-in-kind.

Tom Willis said \$90,000 of that fund balance will be used against the 2010 budget.

David Knapp said the Town Hall Project will probably cover a two-year period.

Kevan Moss said the town should be putting money into a maintenance fund just like the highway puts funds against road improvements. She is advocating that the Town match the funds the "Friends of the Town Hall Project" have raised toward the Town Hall Project. There should be a line item in the budget for building maintenance, such as if a tree falls on the roof and repairs are needed. This should not be left to the next administration.

Tom Willis said there is currently \$32,000 in the restoration fund and he expects to get more. He was disappointed in the last appeal, he received about \$2000 from the Town residents.

Steve Tucker said the Board agreed to use \$25,000 out of the unexpended fund balance when the project was closer to being a reality

Tracy Santagate said the Board should show a commitment to the project by allocating funds toward it.

David Knapp said he will ask the Bookkeeper about the mechanics of using CLASS General funds for the project. He needs to know how it would affect the minimum balances.

Lydia Wright said that \$25,000 was approved a few years ago. The balance is \$17,378.

Tom Willis asked about the minimum balance allowed to be maintained. There is only one year left in the fund balance to be used to keep the budget low. The taxes will increase out of sight when the fund balance is gone.

David Knapp said the unexpended fund balance has been used over the past years to keep the budget increase low.

Kevan Moss said the Town needs to put funds aside for the Town Hall Project and increase the budget line for maintenance.

Tom Willis asked about the fund balances in the street lighting and fire district fund. He doesn't understand why there are balances at all.

David Knapp said the accounts can't go to zero. The amount raised for fire services is based on a different tax basis than the other funds.

Discussion was held on why there are funds in the accounts. Amounts were left from previous years where balances were not used.

Peter Shrope asked for a clarification of the use of the fund balance.

David Knapp said he could not speak to the history of how fund balances were used.

Peter Shrope said the Town is using its saving accounts to keep the tax rate low, when the funds are gone the taxes will increase a lot.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR PRELIMINARY BUDGET 2010
TOWN OF BRIGHTON - FRANKLIN COUNTY, NY
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Page 4 of 4

Lydia Wright said that in the past the tax payers were paying too much and the Town has to get the fund balances down to about 10% of the budget. The Town has no business over taxing the tax payers just to increase it's savings. The balances have been very high in the past and the Town can't keep asking for more money just to squirrel it away.

David Knapp said the funds are continually re-supplied when the Town department are run efficiently. The Highway Department has been one such department.

Jeffrey Leavitt said the Fire District Fund (SF3410.4) has increase to \$77,466 a 6% increase. He would like to see the increase reduced to 0%. This would reduce the overall budget to 3.6%.

Lydia Wright said the insurance costs keep increasing, discussion has to take place at a Board meeting about asking elected officials to contribute 10%.

Jeffrey Leavitt said the CEO increase is less than ½ of 1%.

David Knapp said he can only request the Fire Department reduce its budget. He only has until November 20 to get an approved budget to the County. This one is scheduled to be voted on at the next Board meeting on November 12. Discussion was held on how this information can be obtained in a timely manner and the budget approved before the deadline.

Sheila Delarm said the insurance issue needs to be addressed.

Discussion was held on how to make the salary and benefits more equal among the elected officials. This has been discussed over the past years but nothing has been decided about it.

David Knapp said this issue needs to be a policy change discussed at a Board meeting.

Sheila Delarm said the fire department is providing more services than in the past, they need to purchase technical equipment.

Jeffrey Leavitt asked why the fire department didn't show up to explain why they need such a large increase.

Dan Spencer said the Fire Chief asked members to show up at the public hearing and he is only the one that showed up besides the two Town Board members.

David Knapp said he will ask the Fire Department for a 0% increase for the budget and the Bookkeeper about calculating a 10% contribution from elected official for insurance and moving \$15,000 for the Town Hall Restoration from the General fund balance. He will also discuss the fund balances in the Street Lighting and Fire District funds. The public has asked the Board to decrease the budget so any changes don't need another Public Hearing.

There were no further comments from the floor.

Motion to Adjourn the Public Hearing at 9:00 p.m. made by Supervisor David Knapp, Second by Jeffrey Leavitt, Aye 5 (Delarm, Knapp, Leavitt, Tucker, Wright), Nay 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Elaine Sater
Brighton Town Clerk