

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR 2009 PRELIMINARY BUDGET
TOWN OF BRIGHTON - FRANKLIN COUNTY, NY
November 6, 2008**

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A Public Hearing was held on Thursday, November 6, 2008 for the 2009 Preliminary Town Budget at 6 p.m. 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 6:04 p.m.

TOWN OFFICERS

PRESENT: Supervisor David Knapp

Council Members: Sheila Delarm, Jeffrey Leavitt (entered hearing late) Steve Tucker (entered hearing late) and Lydia Wright

ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Elaine Sater - Town Clerk and Richard Meagher - Budget Officer

RESIDENTS: There were three residents present

NOTICE OF MEETING: Notice of this hearing was posted on October 30 on the Town Clerk's Sign Board and at three post offices and businesses in the Town. It was also published in the Adirondack Daily Enterprise on October 30.

Supervisor David Knapp turned the hearing over to Richard Meagher - Town Budget Officer.

Richard Meagher commented on the changes to the budget from the previous year. Overall there is an increase of \$2.73 tax rate per \$1,000 assessed value of property. This is a 7cent increase per \$1,000 of assessed property value over last year's \$2.66 per \$1,000 assessed property value. This equates to a 3% increase from the 2008 tax rate. In the General Fund Appropriations are increased almost \$32,000. Salaries were increased by 5.3% for Cost of Living. There is a large increase in the assessor's expense account to help support a clerk in the Town of Harrietstown where the Assessor works full-time. The attorney's account is up \$2000. There is a \$1,000 increase in the rescue contract. This was reduced by \$1,800 by the Village of Saranac Lake from the original amount in this budget of \$37,119. Expenses are up 15% for fuel, supplies, and utilities. Health insurance is up 24%. Revenues are down by almost \$6,000 due to lower interest rates. In the Highway Fund Appropriations are increased by about \$8,300. Machinery is increased by \$23,000 to purchase a chipper and mower. Employee salaries have been reduced by \$18,000 by hiring a part-time employee instead of a full time person. Expenses are increased by 15% for fuel, salt, and paving materials. There are reductions in Social Security, and retirement due to the part-time employee. On the revenue side there is an increase of about \$10,800. Snow Removal Contract with Franklin County is increased by about \$7,600, interest has decreased, and CHIPS funding is expected to increase. For the Fire District there is a \$5,000 increase. The Lighting District is increasing by \$150.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The floor was opened to public comments (comments are summarized not verbatim):

Resident 1 asked about the rescue increase. He wanted to know about the \$50,000 in the Village rescue budget for an EMT, what is the Town's share of this fund?

Supervisor David Knapp said the Town pays 5.5% of the total budget. He attended a Fire Advisory Budget and was told the funds are still in the budget. The Village Fire Department is working toward separating the Rescue Department from the Fire Department.

A discussion was held on what the Village is doing with these funds and why the towns agreed to pay the \$50,000 again, when it was never used for an EMT. Discussion was held on paying for dispatch service when it is already paid for at the County level. From the Village Fire Department budget the total for dispatchers/drivers is \$281,000 for salaries and \$105,433 for benefits for a total of \$386,000. The total Village Fire Department budget is \$674,895.

Resident 1 asked about A8161.4 Landfill Closure, when will these payments for the monitoring end?

Supervisor David Knapp said the monitoring has been reduced to once a year. It will continue for a long time.

Resident 1 asked about A9060.8 Hospital & Medical Insurance, large piece of budget, why is it a 24% increase?

Lydia Wright said there is a 16% increase from the Health Insurance provider. The Board also decided to make it more

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equitable for those who do not take the insurance by paying them 50% of the annual premium for a single policy.

Sheila Delarm said the Board is planning on changing the health benefit to elected officials to single policies and letting people pay the difference if they want a family policy.

Discussion was held on the different options available to help people afford health insurance, such as employee contribution, flexible plans for tax deductible payments. Any change would be in 2010 to give people plenty of time to decide on what to do with their options.

Resident 1 said that currently only elected officials and full-time highway employees are given health benefits, what will happen if an employee challenges this policy.

Resident 1 asked about DA5112.2, \$50,000 was budgeted in 2008 but was not spent, now the Town is budgeting \$50,000 again for 2009, was this the intent of the Board.

Richard Meagher said yes, this is correct. The \$50,000 was rolled over into the fund balance and used against the highway fund.

Jeffrey Leavitt said there were no paving projects done in 2008 because of the question of the ownership of the White Pine Road bridge. The funds are being held in case the Town has to pay to repair the bridge.

Resident 1 asked about DA9060.8 Hospital and Medical Insurance, the amount stayed the same as 2008 even though the number of employees decreased.

Richard Meagher said the amount was left the same since the amount of insurance is unknown for 2009.

Lydia Wright said the insurance company is cancelling the highway policy and can not give the Town information until the end of November.

Resident 1 questioned the overall increase in the budget of 3%. He thought it should only be 1.2% based on last year's tax levy.

Richard Meagher said the overall tax increase per \$1,000 of assessed value is 3% because the tax levy is up 1.2% and the assessed value of the Town dropped 2%, causing the overall effect on the tax rate to be a 3% increase.

Resident 1 asked about the increase to the Fire District SL3410.4 of 7.4%. The contract calls for a 3% increase.

Richard Meagher said the additional 4.4% was his error from last year's budget and the General Fund has to be repaid about \$3,000.

Resident 2 asked about the expense for the Park (A7140) of \$21,436. She asked if there was a record of the usage of the park.

Supervisor David Knapp said he was making provisions for tracking hours of the Park during the next year.

Sheila Delarm said he was asking this of other areas as well.

Resident 2 asked about the funds for the Airport (A5615.4), does this go to Harrietstown for its General Fund.

Richard Meagher said this money goes directly into the Airport Fund, not Harrietstown's General Fund.

Supervisor David Knapp said this is how the rescue funds should be handled by the Village, it should go into a separate fund so the fund balance is kept only for rescue services. The Village is on a different budget schedule which makes it hard to follow the money.

Resident 2 asked about the Hospital and Medical Insurance, does the new plan have three levels.

Lydia Wright said the current plan for the General Fund has three levels, the Highway fund only has a family plan. The new plan she is looking into only has two levels, single and family. She still has to compare the plan with what the Town currently provides for coverage.

There were no further comments from the public.

Motion to close the Public Hearing at 7:05 p.m., made by Supervisor David Knapp, Second by Lydia Wright, Aye 5 (Delarm, Knapp, Leavitt, Tucker, Wright), Nay 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Elaine Sater, Brighton Town Clerk