

A Public Hearing to allow public input on the 2004 Preliminary Budget was held Monday, November 10, 2003 at 7:00 p.m. at the Brighton Town Hall, Paul Smiths, NY, with the following:

PRESENT: Supervisor Robert Tebbutt
Council Members: Alicia Bodmer
Linda Dobson
John Quenell
Steve Tucker

ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Elaine Sater-Town Clerk

RESIDENTS: There were 8 residents present

Public Hearing was **Called to Order** by Supervisor Robert Tebbutt **at 7:00 p.m. for the purpose of public input on the 2004 Preliminary Budget for the Town of Brighton.**

Public Notice was faxed to the Adirondack Daily Enterprise on Thursday, October 30, 2003. Requested the Notice be published on Saturday, November 1, 2003. The notice was posted at the three local post offices and local businesses and on the Town Clerk's Sign Board at the Town Hall on Friday, October 31 and changed on Saturday, November 1, 2003, to reflect the date change to November 10, since the Public Notice could not be published in the paper until Monday, November 3, 2003, according to Council Member John Quenell and Supervisor Robert Tebbutt.

Supervisor Robert Tebbutt stated that all the board members worked very on the budget and they are very proud of it. Don Oliver and John Quenell, the Highway Committee, worked hard and made major sacrifices to keep the budget down. It represents less than a 2% increase in taxes.

The Floor was opened for discussion and this is a summary of the discussion:

Tom Willis-Garondah Road-Rainbow Lake: Thought the board did a nice job on the budget and only had a few questions and comments for the board. He discussed the following lines:

GENERAL FUND	APPROPRIATIONS			
ACCOUNT	NAME	AMT	QUESTION/COMMENT	ANSWER
A1010.4	Town Board Contract Expense (CE)	\$1300	What is the increase of \$900 for?	Training for two new Board Members
A1110.2	Justice Equipment	\$500	What is the money for?	New filing cabinets
A1110.4	Justice CE	\$1500	The amount for this year is not enough to cover the expenses, is this enough for next year?	Account is overspent for this year already. This is what the Justice asked for.
A1420.4	Attorney CE	\$2000	Is this enough for all that is happening in the Town with the new Highway Garage Project?	Funds for the attorney for the Highway Garage Project comes out of the capital project fund.
A1620.4	Building CE	\$5185	What is covered by this account? It is utilities, etc? Is there a specific amount for maintenance of the Town Hall (i.e., the front steps and stone pillars)?	The copier contract, paper, and maintenance are also covered by this account. There is no specific amount for maintenance. Fixing the steps and stone pillars will be added to the restoration project of the Town Hall.
A3410.4	Dry Hydrants	\$1000	Every year this is funded and nothing has been expended for three years. The Fire Department should provide a dry hydrant schedule for installation and repair to the Board so they can fund this account better.	Dry Hydrants cost \$1000 to install. The Fire Department does not always get around to do the installation or maintenance each year. Currently there is a shortage of volunteers for this project.

ACCOUNT	NAME	AMT	QUESTION/COMMENT	ANSWER
A3510.4	Dog Control CE	\$1150	The Animal Shelter has increased their price, what does the Town get for this money? Does this person also take care of dead animals in the road?	The Dog Control Officer needs a place to put stray dogs when the owner cannot be located. The Town pays a salary to the Dog Control person so dogs can be picked up quickly instead of waiting for the people to come from the shelter in Saranac Lake. He also issues tickets. The Highway Crew picks up the dead animals.
A3620.4	Safety Inspector CE	\$14,400	Is this a firm amount based on the contract with the Town of Santa Clara, last year there was not enough in the budget to cover the contract. Five years ago when we had our own Safety Inspector we only paid \$5000 plus expenses, but we have better service now.	Yes, this is the amount agreed upon. The contract was for three years, but the Town only signed a one-year contract since it is getting so expensive. The level of service has gone up but it is still expensive.
A5615.4	Joint Airport CE	\$1000	Can we ask Mr. Crowe to allocate this money from his taxes to pay for this since he benefits the most from the airport?	
A6772.4	SL Adult Center CE	\$500	Has anyone told the SL Adult Center they are getting this money this year? Is there a contract with them?	They requested the money and there will be a contract.
A7140.4	Playground CE	\$4350	What does this include?	Fuel, utilities, and maintenance of the Park.
A7310.4	Youth Program CE	\$2800	Is this for the Summer Youth Program, who runs this?	Saranac Lake School District runs the Summer Youth Program, \$1000 is for that, \$1500 is for the Civic Center, and \$300 is for the Franklin County Snowmobile Club
A8810.4	Cemetery CE	\$2,100	Why did this decrease, what is involved?	The survey of the cemetery was completed; the roof of the building needs to be repaired.
A9010.8	State Retirement	\$11,702	This has gone up considerably, it is interesting that they can't tell you until December when it's a small amount, but when it's a large amount they can tell you early. Who is this covering?	Superintendent of Highway and all Town Officers. This will not go below 4.7% of salaries again.
A9040.8	Worker's Compensation	\$27,319	Is this from the County? The Town has no control over this amount. The Fire Department is included also.	The County has had some bad experience with County employees so the amount is high and is passed on to the Towns
A9060.8	Hospital & Medical Insurance	\$60,500	This amount was not changed. The Town does not know what it will cost.	The intent of the Board is to not spend any more on insurance this year.

GENERAL FUND	REVENUES			
ACCOUNT	NAME	AMT	QUESTION/COMMENT	ANSWER
A3005	Mortgage Tax	\$15000	This has been increased \$6,000, has something happened?	Since the interest rates are down, people are refinancing mortgages. The Comptroller's Office said this is statewide and should continue for another year.
A3820	Youth Programs	\$0	The Town used to get \$500 for this every year from the Youth Department, has something happened to this program?	The County runs the program and it was done away with a couple of years ago.

HIGHWAY FUND	APPROPRIATIONS			
ACCOUNT	NAME	AMT	QUESTION/COMMENT	ANSWER
DA5130.2	Heavy Machinery	\$20,000	What is this for?	Replacing a tractor, the old one will go to the park
DA9060.8	Hospital & Medical Insurance	\$37,100	There is no increase for premiums. Don't know what it will cost yet?	Yes
FIRE PROTECTION	APPROPRIATIONS			
SF3410.4	Fire Contract	\$60,102	Is this the 3 rd year of the contract?	Yes
SUMMARY TAX LEVEY	Assessment Base Tax Rate per thousand assessed value		These do not add up, is this due to rounding? The amount should be 4.37248 per thousand assessed value or a 7 cents increase per thousand dollars of property assessment.	An increase of seven cents per thousand is correct.

The Board did a good job keeping expenses under control. Fund balances are going down. It is great we have fund balances to cover expenses for projects in the future. The past boards have done a poor job with the budget because they collected taxes in advance, the taxpayers have loaned the town money that is collecting interest in the bank

Peter Martin – County Route 60-Rainbow Lake: Who maintains the building at the cemetery? There is nothing budgeted for equipment at the park. Is all the equipment adequate there?

Robert Tebbutt: Robert Byno maintains the buildings.

John Quenell: The Park Attendant didn't ask for any money for equipment.

Peter Martin: Last year the Board said that the reason the park attendant didn't have insurance was because the Citizens' Committee recommended in a report not to give insurance to non-elected town employees. There is nothing in the report that says this. There should be something in writing to show this policy. The report only mentions elected officials.

Tom Willis (Complier of Report): It has been the Town's policy for many years to pay only for elected officials insurance. The report did not recommend expanding this policy. The Town of Brighton's practice is quite generous compared to other places. The issue of health care in the report did not examine other than elected officials. It did not attempt to survey other non-elected officials. Cannot tell you if other places pay for part time (25 hours a week) employees to have health coverage. This was not addressed in the report because of past practice.

John Quenell: The Town has a "defacto" policy. The report did not recommend changing the policy.

Robert Tebbutt: This issue came up at a meeting and the Board cannot support giving part-time employees health insurance.

Peter Martin: If board members are paying a portion of their health insurance why can't part time employees be given the same option, to buy into the plan if they desire. A policy needs to be in writing. The report does not reflect this.

Dave Knapp - County Route 61 - Gabriels: How many less than a full-time employee does the town have? If they were allowed to participate and self-pay would this reduce the cost to the Town? It would not be a burden to the Town.

Several employees were named but no number was given.

Robert Tebbutt: This is being looked into since there are limited health care options available to many people in the Town. If people did self-pay it would not be a burden to the Town. Alicia Bodmer made some phone calls to try and see if this could be done. Adding the Fire Department volunteers was also looked into.

Alicia Bodmer: John Quenell has been making the phone calls for this. He should get the credit.

Laurie Besacency – Adirondack Daily Enterprise: How long did it take the board to create the budget? What was the increase last year?

Robert Tebbutt said it took four workshops. He showed her a chart that shows the tax increase over the last 8 years.

Lydia Wright – Keese Mills Road: Asked for a clarification on some accounts.

ACCOUNT	NAME	AMT	QUESTION/COMMENT	ANSWER
A1620.1	Buildings Personnel Salary (PS)	\$2000	Who gets this salary?	Shelly Smith, Housekeeper
A8810.4	Cemetery PS	\$2000	Who gets this salary?	Bob Byno, Maintenance. He also does Town Hall maintenance
A7140.1	Town Park Manager PS	\$11,650	Who gets this salary?	Park Attendant, Dan Spencer
A7140.1A	Town Park Maintenance PS	\$2000	Who gets this salary? There are two people who maintain the Park? This is a new line; it was not in the previous budget.	Bob Byno does some maintenance at the park; Dan is the manager. Their jobs overlap. This line was split off from the Park Attendant PS this budget but the salary did not change.
DA5130.22	Machinery and Equipment Reserve	\$20,000	This decreased by \$10,000 from \$30,000 last year; does this accumulate if you don't use it? Do you know what the balance is from past year? Is this available only for equipment or for living expenses?	There is five-year plan for the use of this money. The purchase of equipment is "lumpy costs" so this money is collected over time to pay for high cost equipment. This is part of the Highway Fund balance and the intent is to be used for equipment. There is no account for a specific amount from this line.

Asked how the board decides who gets a raise and who doesn't? This was talked about at a workshop but the answer was not clear.

Alicia Bodmer: The Town uses the report as a basis to work from; there has never been a (salary) base to work from for the board. There is no policy in writing and this was an attempt to set a base to start from.

Robert Tebbutt: The report is a benchmark.

Lydia Wright: If you follow the recommendations in the report it doesn't make sense why people did or did not get a raise this year.

Robert Tebbutt: It was tempered by what people asked for.

Lydia Wright: Shouldn't this be based on something like merit or guidelines from other townships?

John Quenell: We are using guidelines by surveying other towns and using what they are paying.

Alicia Bodmer: It was also tempered by the budget. Not everyone could get a \$1000 raise.

Lydia Wright: The highway got a 3% cost of living raise, why didn't the rest of the town employees?

John Quenell: We are benching marking the highway salaries and the union affects what they get. They are full time employees.

Lydia Wright: Don't you think this is unfair to only target one group of employees? The report talks about having target salaries; but no lowering any salaries if they are above the target; this is a good idea. However, some people who are above the target salary got raises and other people didn't, for example the Supervisor is not at target but did not get a raise. The Town Clerk is at target and did not get a raise. The Justice is below target and did not get a raise.

John Quenell: No it's not unfair. The Board offered a raise to the Supervisor but he did not want one. The Justice did not ask for a raise.

Nik Santagate – State Route 30: According to the report the Justice, Town Board, or Clerk didn't need to ask for a raise. If this was the tool that was used to set salaries, the report, on page one, mentions giving small increases to these positions. There was no need to ask for a raise since it was already in the report that increases would be given in 2003. The math is flawed for the Justice salary. According to the report when two judges were in a town only one salary was used to calculate the target because they did the same job. But, if there were two or three assessors, all the salaries were combined and used. This was pointed out last year and he understood that the "standing committee" was to continue working on this project and fix this error. The way the justice salary was calculated is in error.

Robert Tebbutt: This meeting is for discussing the budget and not this report. He wants to know how Nik Santagate feels about the budget. Did he want a raise this year?

Nik Santagate: No, this is not what was wanted at all. The budget has salaries in it and if the report was used to set the salaries this year this is not reflected in the budget.

Robert Tebbutt said the report did not have to be used to set the salaries. The board decided on the salaries.

Nik Santagate: If the report was not used what was the criteria used to set salaries?

Robert Tebbutt asked the board if they needed criteria to set the salaries. As elected officials can't they use their brains to make a reasonable decision to set salaries? The board did not think it was appropriate to give everyone a 3% cost-of-living raise, there may be a time when this is appropriate.

Peter Martin: Last year, when Robert Tebbutt wasn't here, the answer from the Board to salary increases was "because the Residents' Committee Report suggested it". The Board said it was going to go by the report to set salaries in the future. Now this year you are saying that the Board didn't use the report. Considerable increases were given to positions last year.

Robert Tebbutt: This year a different approach was used because of the rest of the budget.

Linda Dobson: The hope was to make the adjustments, but looking at the budget as a whole there were additional adjustments needed. Workmen's Compensation and State Retirement have increased a lot. The Board has to look at the whole budget not just individual pieces. The Board had to look at the bottom line.

Peter Martin: Why wasn't this done last year? The answer was always "the Residents Committee Report said so". The Board has changed its approach to the salaries this year.

Robert Tebbutt: Are there any specific salaries that Nik Santagate would like to comment on.

Nik Santagate answered that there are no specific salaries, but he would like to see some criteria for setting salaries in the future so everyone is treated the same.

Robert Tebbutt said if the Justice wants a raise he needs to ask for one in the future. Don't assume that a raise will happen if you don't ask for one.

Nik Santagate: That is missing the point totally. He has no problem with his salary. He is concerned with the salaries being arbitrary and would like to know what criteria the board used to determine the increase in salaries. He has not received an answer yet. Raises were given to some people who asked and they weren't given to others who asked.

Lydia Wright: What were the criteria for people who did ask for a raise?

Robert Tebbutt: The vote of the board was the criteria. The board dealt with all the information it was given. They looked at many things to make a decision. Every board member was at every workshop and made the decisions based on the information.

Lydia Wright: The Tax Collector and Dog Control Officer asked for a raise and didn't get it. So asking for a raise did not mean you would get it. The Superintendent of Highways asked for a raise and got it. All three positions are above the target salary. It is difficult to understand how the board made its decision.

Don Oliver-Hobart Road: The highway employees got a 3% pay raise so the Superintendent of Highways gets a raise. The employees can't make more than the Superintendent of Highways.

Lydia Wright: A cost-of-living raise is a raise so why don't all the employees get a raise? Would like to understand why some employees who asked for raises didn't get them but others did. There is neither rhyme nor reason as to how raises are given out. It makes it hard to justify giving them.

Robert Tebbutt said she could deal with this next year during budget time when she is on the board.

Tracie Santagate- State Route 30: The Town of Duane (next to the Town of Brighton) gives a 2.5% raise across the board every year.

Lydia Wright: Under Highway Fund Account DA5148.1 Services – Other Government - is this a salary paid to the town for doing work for the county? Does the Town get reimbursed for this expense?

John Quenell: The State Comptroller makes the Highway fund divide salaries between three accounts, DA5110.1, DA 5142.1 and DA5148.1. The allocation is arbitrary. The county does reimburse the town.

Lydia Wright: Whom does the salary from Account A1340.1 Budget Officer PS go to?

Robert Tebbutt said he is the budget officer.

Lydia Wright: Is it always the Supervisor?

Alicia Bodmer said it isn't always the Supervisor, he can appoint someone else to do it.

David Knapp: In the 2003 Budget the Park Attendant, Dan Spencer, was given a raise but didn't receive it and there was some discussion to fix this. Did he ever get it?

Robert Tebbutt: Yes, he did get it.

There were no further comments from the public.

Motion to Adjourn the Public Hearing was made by Linda Dobson **at 8:05 p.m.**, second by Alicia Bodmer, Aye 5

Respectfully Submitted,

Elaine W. Sater
Brighton Town Clerk