

November 1, 2023

Schultzville, NY

A public hearing on the 2024 preliminary budget was held on this day in the Town Hall. Present were Supervisor Whitton, Councilmen Dean Michael, Chris Juliano, Eliot Werner, Councilwoman Katherine Mustello and Town Clerk Carol-Jean Mackin. There were 7 people in the audience.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At 6:30 PM, Supervisor Whitton called the public hearing to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

LEGAL NOTICE

Arlene Campbell read the Public Hearing Notice aloud for the Town Clerk.

PUBLIC HEARING

Supervisor Whitton reminded this is public hearing listening to the public first and then the town board will speak. There is a discrepancy in the budget, the Town Clerk's salary is as posted in the notice: \$52,658, not the budget.

MM Supervisor Whitton, 2nd Councilman Michael to open the floor to public comments. All aye. Motion carried.

Ray Oberly – asked about the generator? If not funded he is concerned for safety of residents needing to use elevator. Referred to the friction Councilman Juliano refers to between the highway and Supervisor's office when he was Supervisor. Commented that the highway clerk was told not to talk to the supervisor; he wanted to know what Board member gave those instructions, with no response. The highway dept. has assumed many general fund tasks and their budget continues to grow. Dean Michael said the highway must be full time and the general fund must be part time. Ray Oberly commented that the general fund employees continue to be underpaid since 2013, they work full time for their part time wages, their positions are underfunded. Described how many Clinton highway workers there are, which is more than surrounding towns with same number of road miles. Suggests eliminating 4 highway workers. Suggests eliminating new the building clerk and give \$5000 to Arlene Campbell and fund the deputy assessor. The highway clerk is a clerk position and needed part time until four years ago when town board majority added more general fund office tasks to her position and made it full time. Ray described the tasks of the supervisor's secretary, including legal responsibilities, HR, Retirement and negotiating all insurance contracts and suggests to scale back the highway clerk to the previous level and reduce hours and wages. Commented that Highway Superintendent Todd Martin is paid full time but works part time. NYS law does not require elected officials to work, we are paying him when he is off at his part time job. He should be paid part time.

Dean Michael replied, the Highway Clerk should not be brought to 40 hours, she should be kept at 32 hours.

Todd Martin – said he takes two weeks a year vacation, he is here 24/7 everyday, phone rings at home all year round. He does a 40 hour week. He is dedicated to the highway department.

Jodi Scagnelli - has called the highway office many times for a stop sign to be put at Pumpkin Lane and Long View Dr. Commented on the dangerous intersection there. Her issue has never been addressed, no one returns her calls.

Lynn Miceli – how much of the budget’s revenue comes from taxes?, Mike Whitton said about half; our taxes are governed by tax assessments. Lynne wants the assessor to have an assistant. The records need to be updated. Might help the revenue if we can update the records. Shared information on a comparable house to hers being used by the Assessor to assess her home; the comparable is owned by an LLC using it for STR, a commercial use not a residential use. Please find money somewhere or group all LLCs and reassess them, they are corporations, not residents. Asking for fair comparables.

Bill Gannon - 50 year resident. Alan Mueser did all three jobs of Building Inspector, ZEO and Assessor. The roads are the same as 50 years ago but there are more houses. Thanked assessor to raise assessments to keep school taxes in line. Employees should be talking to the supervisor not asking for raises in public. Retired people in town can’t afford to live in town. Asks which employees have benefits. Supervisor Whitton replied. It turns his stomach when employees ask for \$60,000 to work for the government with benefits. Feels it wrong for employees to compete for wages in the public forum. Spoke regarding ag exemptions that he feels are fake. No one should get any raises right now. Dean said we added plowing county roads for our town trucks to clear which we are paid \$92,000 from the County, so we added trucks and employees to manage those roads. We have no control over school taxes, feels Teresa has done a great job keeping us at 100[percent assessments. Some concerns are out of our control. Discussion continued on assessments and school taxes. Dean addressed the raises for the general fund employees match the highway union raises of 3.25 percent.

Assessor Teresa Stegner - good data is important, disappointed the data collector was dropped. Her appointment is over Sept 2025 when she plans to retire. The state recommends training a data collector to transition. Addressing Lynne Miceli’s concerns, she used models instead of comparables to come up with assessments.

Chris Juliano – Said that the Town Board will discuss the budget more in depth tonight and consider readjusting certain budget lines. The tax rate going down is due to her reassessments.

Margaret Shuhala - what decision was made about giving Mike Whitton health benefits. Mike said he will get none. The Board agreed to his working 22 hours a week, although he works more than that.

Todd Martin – he is working with SHRAC and the town board, trying to keep Clinton rural; he will look into the stop sign. He is a long time employee here, if we cut back on highway employees we will cut services, it will take 5 hours to plow the Town vs. the 2 hours to plow the roads that it takes now.

Mike Whitton – replying to several comments: generator not in budget, plans to pay for a generator with a grant. Asked CPL for an updated number for a generator. Agrees Longview and Story Lane needs a stop sign. Agrees the assessor needs help. In November we will talk about STRs and list LLCs as commercial properties. We have a list and reviewing it, there are about 60 STRs in Town.

Chris Juliano- said there should be benefits to the residents from STRs. We can enact a tax. Eliot said we have 35 who have str permits, its progress. Dean said we will be reviewing the law as we took steps to stop a corporation from coming in and buying up properties and that needs review.

Mike Whitton - We are following the highway lead with a 3.25% raise and believes an employee should be able to afford to live in town. Chris Juliano agrees and added that we made strides over three years to bring up general fund salaries. He feels though that certain salaries still need to be brought up and we still need to make improvements but we need to take a break. As electeds we know what we are getting into, he took it for duty. There is a difference between town employee and town official. Officials are here to help community and give back. Pushed for town board not to take any raise under covid.

Mike Whitton - wants to restore the data collector tonight. With \$104,000 savings in the budget there is room to play, and with the \$7000 reduction of town clerk salary typo, we have \$111,000 to play with.

Chris Juliano said some money should go to a building maintenance fund; he favors adding the deputy assessor position.

Dean agrees with Katherine to reinstate the records management clerk and the deputy assessor. Eliot agrees, and want to revisit salary for certain employees. Dean said we agreed it is unfair to single out certain employees. Eliot disagrees. There are specific increases he suggests because their jobs call for more responsibility. Katherine wants to agree to the two clerk positions: Records management clerk and deputy assessor. Mike Whitton suggests reducing the records management clerk from 15 hours to 8 hours and to bring the town clerk to \$60,000.

Eliot Werner said the supervisor deserves more than 3.25 percent raise; bring the salary to \$42,000 with no benefits. The other two are modest, adding \$1000 for the deputy town clerk and for the secretary to the supervisor to add \$2500. Dean said then there is the argument of who is valued more. Eliot said not everybody is equal. Chris said the highway clerk is listed as a secretary. Agrees with the higher wage for the deputy clerk but commented that surrounding towns are cutting back the supervisor position. Mike Whitton said there is another town going the opposite way and making a part time Supervisor position full time. Chris said as an elected position it is tough to say full time or part time. Mike said salary is based on 22 hours is because only because it fits in the budget.

Katherine said only certain people getting raises is a problem. Do we do annual performance reviews? If we use that as a basis she will entertain different levels of raises. Eliot we have the discretion to entertain different levels of increase based on the positions. Katherine is not

qualified to differentiate raises without job performance reviews. Dean said we tried three years ago to bring peoples salaries to equity; we are not giving bonuses.

Arlene Campbell - for years we were underpaid and received no raise or a modest raise of 10 cents an hour. As a result, employees leave and takes the knowledge with them. You are saying longevity gives more income to some, but it does not solve the problem of equity. The old longevity was a bonus was for length of service. Mike Whitton wants to bring up performance reviews. The highway dept should be doing one on each employee and they have not been. Mike Whitton suggests we do performance review for all employees.

Bill Gannon – making a \$60,000 salary makes it tough to live here.

Joe Tompkins – on the safety issue of the stop sign, when are we putting up the stop sign why is it not up now, are we going to wait for an accident? Todd said the town goes through county and state then back to the town. It takes a year to a year and a half for the process. We have to do it correctly. Mike asked Todd to start the process tomorrow.

Dean Michel – in review, suggests to add the full amount to records management clerk and add deputy assessor. Increase Town Clerk salary by \$3500, as well as the supervisor salary by \$3500 plus the amounts for social security; add \$45,000 to the building fund. This equals the \$111,000 they had to spend but to also stay under the tax cap. All in consensus except Eliot Werner.

Chris Juliano– in review, the highway budget has been under the two percent increase. We are using \$500,000 of the fund balance which our fund balance policy calls for. And we are still above the 45 %, the high end.

At 8:05 PM, there being no further comments, MM Supervisor Whitton, 2nd Councilman Werner to close the public hearing. All aye. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

MM 805 PM, MM Supervisor Whitton, 2nd Councilman Michael to adjourn the meeting. All aye. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Carol-Jean Mackin".

Carol-Jean Mackin, Town Clerk