

TOWN BOARD  
Special Meeting  
October 4, 2021

A special meeting of the Oneonta Town Board was held on October 4, 2021 with the following members present:

Councilman: Brett Holleran  
Councilwoman: Patricia Jacob  
Councilman: Randy Mowers  
Councilwoman: Patricia Riddell Kent  
Supervisor: Robert Wood  
Town Clerk: Sara Robinson

No one from the public was in attendance.

### **2022 Budget Message**

As a general overview, we were allowed to go up \$65,000 to stay under the tax cap. Taxes in the general and highway funds are not budgeted to increase. However, since the Fire Protection District is now a part of our budget, and the formula has generated an increase of \$155,000 we are looking at a budget that is \$90,000 over the cap. Reducing services or exceeding the cap are our only options.

### **General Fund**

Spending in the general fund is down slightly again. As proposed, there is a 2% increase in wages for employees. All department heads have been very careful in their requests this year. General Fund will be sharing sales tax with the Highway Department this year. Debt service is scheduled on the new highway garage. Health Insurance has a minimal 3.25% increase.

### **Highway Fund**

The Highway Budget has increased about \$331,000 for this year with no increase in the tax levy. This increase is basically due to our accounting for CHIPS, EWR, and PAVE NY funds in the budget. And the anticipated revenue from the sale of our loader to offset the cost of the replacement for this piece of equipment. The new title of Working Supervisor and the rearrangement of staff is working out well. We continue to replace equipment as needed without borrowing. We do need to find more funding for road work as we have two long roads in need of resurfacing. If we receive the TAP Grant next year, we will have another large financial commitment to the Southside Corridor that will need financial attention, most likely through bonding.

### **Water & Sewer**

Our Water & Sewer Districts are in good condition physically and fiscally. Place holders for Districts 5&6, Southside Water are set up but we won't know what expenses to anticipate until we have water coming out of the pipes, hopefully by summer of 2022. Bond repayment will be due this year but it will be minimal and won't likely hit taxpayers until 2023. We will be doing our own billing for water and sewer using new software purchased in 2021.

### **Oneonta Fire Protection District**

The cost of the Fire Contract increased very substantially again this year. This was due to two factors. One was that the equalization rate for the town went to 94% which increased our percentage in the formula by 1.3%. The other was a reduction in the billing receipts for ambulance service dropping by \$257,000 which was used to offset costs. The city did offer some relief by depreciating some equipment purchases over the useful life of ten years. As presented this budget will cause district residents to see an increase in tax rate \$.37131/1000 due to the increased cost.

Supervisor Wood also made the following comments;

This budget proposal as presented here today will require the town to pass the local law to

exceed the tax cap. This budget has no increase in general or highway fund taxes. We have not increased taxes in the general fund for three years and there has been no increase in the highway taxes for four years. This is not sustainable. Our costs continue to increase so we do less with the same amount. At this point we are behind on our road maintenance and need to increase funding in the highway budget for road work.

To stay under the cap, we could increase taxes by \$65,000 which includes a \$16,000 carryover for being under the cap last year. The fire contract is up \$155,000 leaving us \$90,000 over the cap.

The budget as proposed has a 2% increase for our employees. Each 1% of increase equates to \$7,500 in our budget. We need to take care of our staff as they are the ones that do the work. If we wish to stay under the cap, we must cut services in the town or reduce funding to some of the shared services we provide to the city. These could include Destination Oneonta and the Huntington Library. Eliminating those plus our sidewalk program would still not keep us under the cap. We have very little room to spare in our budget. I feel we have no choice but to override the cap.

The dissolution of the Fire District is causing the town great harm. There is no doubt that the residents of the town are privileged to have this service. The increased costs are tolerable, but the town needs to have input on how the costs of operating the department when we are asked to contribute over 37% of the cost. Since the dissolution of the district, this becomes part of our regular budget and large increases jeopardize the ability of the town to provide adequate services for our residents and stay under the cap. If the district was still in place, they could exceed the cap without limiting our regular budget.

Motion was made by Holleran to approve the JCAP grant application for desks, a shredder, a footstool and wiring for surveillance cameras in the amount of 1,553.00. Seconded by Mowers  
VOTE – Ayes 5, Nays 0      Motion Carried

Motion was made by Riddell Kent to approve the hiring of AnnMarie Hill to be a part-time court clerk at \$13/hr. for 20 hours a week. Seconded by Holleran.  
VOTE – Ayes 5, Nays 0      Motion Carried

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Holleran. Seconded by Mowers.  
VOTE – Ayes 5, Nays 0      Motion Carried

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Robinson