

TOWN BOARD
Public Hearing
November 3, 2020

A public hearing of the Oneonta Town Board was held on November 3, 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

Others present: Jim Rowe, Steve Kent, Jon Ackley

PUBLIC HEARING – Preliminary Budget & Proposed Local Law permitting the Town of Oneonta to Override the Tax Cap Levy Limit

Motion was made by Jacob, seconded by Riddell Kent to open the public hearing.
VOTE – Ayes 5, Nays 0 Motion Carried

The public hearing notice was sent to the Daily Star and posted on the Town’s website.

Councilwoman Riddell Kent raised her concerns with the budget and expressed her desire to minimize the impact of going over the tax cap. Councilwoman Riddell Kent wanted the board to explore ways we could curb spending in order to minimize the tax increase. She suggested delaying the trade-in of the 2017 loader. She stated we have a brand new highway garage and furnishings and reliable highway vehicles and equipment. She would like to see us tighten our belts with these big purchases. She was concerned about people on fixed incomes struggling in this time of inflation with higher heating costs, prices and taxes. She doesn’t want to price people out of living in the Town.

Councilwoman Riddell Kent made a motion to take the loader out of the budget. None of the councilmembers made a second.

Supervisor Wood stated he feels that Jim justified the purchase well as Jim tries to optimize returns on equipment. He stated that it’s really \$60,000 not \$200,000 because of the trade in. The loader was a budgeted item. He has concerns reducing general and highway purchases. He stated that the town has few wish lists, it is bare bones and what we need to operate. Supervisor Wood stated that if we do not exceed the tax cap for this year it could put us in the dark next year. Supervisor Wood also commented that we have not raised highway taxes in four years, since 2018. Supervisor Wood stated that since 1980 there was a town fire district. The town fire district dissolved a few years ago. If they didn’t the town would be under the cap.

Councilman Mowers stated that the loader blew a hose. We are in a good situation, we are getting money from the trade-in and starting fresh. We stayed within budget.

Councilman Holleran stated that he feels we should make cuts before we make purchases. He also stated that if we don’t have a loader, there should be a backup plan. Councilman Holleran stated that we are sitting at desks from when the building was built. We need to take a deeper look at spending so we do not have to raise taxes.

Jon Ackley stated that he read the article in the paper. Jon stated that he does not feel the tax levy should be raised. Jon asked if it can be raised arbitrarily. Supervisor Wood stated that when the fire district dissolved, we were still under a contract. The fire contract went up \$200,000. Supervisor Wood negotiated it down with the City by amortizing equipment over a ten year period and got it down \$155,000, putting us \$90,000 over the tax cap or you can cut \$90,000-\$100,000 out of the highway department. Jon stated that there is a tax cap, shouldn't you be making cuts as the residents don't want their taxes going up. Supervisor Wood stated that the residents still want services.

Councilwoman Riddell Kent made the comment that the newspaper article was incorrect. It is actually \$42 not \$4 per \$100,000 assessed value.

Jim Rowe asked if there were independent people to provide that service. Supervisor Wood stated that he looked into that.

Motion was made by Jacob to pass local law #1-2021, to override the tax levy limit. Seconded by Mowers.

VOTE – Ayes 5, Nays 0 Motion Carried

Motion was made by Riddell Kent. Seconded by Mowers to adjourn the meeting until Nov 10th where we will presumably pass the preliminary budget to make it the final budget.

VOTE – Ayes 5, Nays 0 Motion Carried

Sara Robinson
Town Clerk