

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN BOARD**  
**TOWN OF RICHLAND**  
**1 BRIDGE STREET, PULASKI, NY**

**DATE:** October 12,2023

**KIND OF MEETING:** Budget Workshop

**PLACE:** Grand Jury Room, H. Douglas Barclay Courthouse Pulaski, NY

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Supervisor Kern Yerdon (Absent)  
Councilwoman Donna Gilson  
Councilman Allen Goodsell (Absent)  
Councilwoman Sue Haynes  
Councilman Robert North

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Residents, Eric Pappa, Larry Atkinson, Budget Officer,  
Financial Consultant, Laird Petrie,Tammie Whaley, Kevin Balcom Town Clerk Millie Newcomb

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. with Deputy Supervisor Donna Gilson leading in the Pledge of Allegiance.

At the present time, the Budget Officer told the Board that the total rate of increase in the Town Budget is 15.51% total budget including water. Laird Petrie told the Board, right now, if you look at the Tax Cap for 2024 it's \$2.5 million. That's all of the funds plus special districts EDU's. If you compare to last year's tax cap \$2.428 tax cap but because of the way the tax cap formula comes down through, you have the growth factor that gets put in by the Division of Budget, that is based upon brick and mortar type of increases that have happened within your township,that's all computed. It's based on the previous year's construction. That is pre populated and the other pre-populated number is the inflation factor. Here the inflation factor is under 2% you have to use that actual inflation factor because the inflation factor is way above 2%, you have to use the 2%. You can't use any higher than that. That is why they always refer to it being the 2% tax cap. It's really not a 2 % tax cap, it's 2% more whatever the current inflation rate is whichever is lower. So this year it's 2% again. If you compare it to last year's numbers, we were able to increase the tax cap by about \$72,000. Which is 2. something % higher than last year because there are other factors that go into that formula. Tammie and Laird still have to firm up the numbers but it's going to be pretty close to the 2.5% that they are looking at. Probably

\$2000-3000 one of the others. When the tentative budget was handed out at the last workshop, they tweaked some numbers because of the insurance increase of 14%, they had already figured 10%. A little bit ago, Mrs. Whaley finally got the revenue for the Water so some tweaking with the numbers. Mr Novak finally got the numbers to Tammie. There will be no increase to metered water to Sandy Creek. Laird Petrie was going to report back to Sandy Creek at the next meeting on the 29th, the results of the Audit that was done. He has been working with Sandy Creek, they have been sending him documents related to the Capital Project because this town really hasn't had any updates on what was happening on the last Capital project as far as how we are performing, budget to actual. So he spent a bit of time talking with the bookkeepers up there and then going over documents. Overall the audit was positive. He is just going to go over the audit with them. He was going to meet with them on October 16th but that has been rescheduled. It may be on October 24th or 25th. Councilwoman Haynes asked if it was open for people to attend. Per Eric Pappa, the Town of Sandy Creek would be open for anyone to attend. Per Tammie Whaley, her understanding was it was just going to be a meeting with just the Supervisors. The Richland Board members would like to be in attendance if possible. It's time to be upfront with the people that put us in these positions. The Town Board would like to meet with Sandy Creek's Board.

The summary sheet that is on the Board right now allows the Board to see the individual tabs and make changes to whatever they want. Then they can move over to the actual effect of the tax levy and then compare the levy with the tax cap. The tax cap is 2.5% and at the moment it's at 2.8%. So at the moment we are \$325,000 over the tax cap. That will change as we make decisions. We will see the immediate results of the decisions. Various software programs don't have the capability to do the "what if" scenarios. We are able now to show the immediate results of changes. The tentative Budget is everyone's wish list, now it's time to take the tentative budget and talk about the increases and decreases.

Mr Petrie changed his figures to what Mrs. Whaley was given this morning before the meeting. Now he has \$104,000 for metered water because that is what he had last year. Mrs Whaley told the Board that she just put that figure in there because she didn't know what to put in. The new figure is \$100,333, less than last year. For water district #2 We had \$24640, this one increased by \$16,000. Laird and Tammie cannot give the Board an explanation for these figures, that has to come from Water Supervisor Ron Novak. Water District #3 had \$39520 and now it's \$73800. That will take \$40000 right off when we get to the summary page. Water District #5, was at \$5000 and it was estimated last year. Now it's \$14898. It will take about \$10,000 off of the EDU. After putting the figures in we are now over the tax cap by \$269,000. It was over \$300,000. So this is how it's going to work. The Board can start discussing expenditures and revenues that they may want to change. As you come up with decisions Laird will put in the figures. Budget Officer Whaley told the Board that they will go through each fund and today start with the A fund. Other payments in lieu of taxes are the pilot programs, and Mrs. Whaley doesn't have the figures from Austin Wheelock from Oswego County. Most of the pilot revenue went to the "B" fund. Some money has been collected. Explanation between modified and actual budget figures was explained to the board. Boards a lot of the time want to know why

we are estimating. 2022 is the last completed fiscal year, we don't know what the actual is going to be in 2023 so we use 2022 as perspective as you will see as we go down through the expenditures. So why are we estimating more than we are actually spending or whatever and that's where the discussion starts in budget workshops. Councilman North asked whether we should start increasing our rates on some clerks fees like games of chance. The Town only took in \$30. Mrs Whaley said that she always tries to compare it to what we take in, when they started working on the Budget You are always budgeting on the conservative side, especially with revenues. Some of the revenues like State aid and sales tax from the county are outside our control, so you might get hit by surprise by the state or the county. But sometimes they come in better than great so it's a surplus but you don't want to be underestimated to the point that you have to raise more taxes than you need to. You should only raise taxes enough to fund the year's operations. You should not build in huge surpluses, we took care of that last year. We said if we are going to build in any surpluses at all they will be visible to the public, we are going to put them down and show the public that we are putting in appropriations items to put money in reserve and that the public has the right to know what the Town is saving for. If you just go through all these revenues and expenditures and underestimate the revenues, and overestimate the expenditures. it will build a surplus and you can take that surplus and put it into reserves, but that is not how you should treat the public. The public has the right to know what you are saving the money up for. That is the way the government is supposed to work. Councilman North asked if we are one of the lowest or the lowest as far as sale of lots. Budget Officer Whaley told the Board that in 2023, the Town budgeted \$6000 for cemeteries and as of July, we only took in \$3300. She advised that she wouldn't change it due to the fact that it's a guessing game. You don't know how many people will pass in a year. We have to be cautious with revenues because if you overestimate the revenues, you come in way low, you could be in trouble. The pilot program this year, we have brought in \$ 19,676 and we budgeted \$19,000. This will stay at \$19000. The Board continued to go over the A fund. Mr Petrie asked how many have ever been involved in the Budget process, but where we go from here and we have tweaked these things in these Budget workshops, eventually we will get where we have the amount that you want to present to the public, that is the Preliminary Budget. When we do that, he has another column that he will put on for the Preliminary Budget. It will show the difference between tentative and preliminary. The preliminary is what will be presented to the Public in a Public Hearing. You still have the opportunity to change that after the Public hearing because of what you can see in the last column in Mr Petrie's program that you will see is what you will be adopting the budget. Often you will see the same numbers in the tentative, preliminary and adopted budget , because maybe there is no change. You have until November 20th to adopt the Town budget. If by chance you have to override the tax cap, you have to adopt a Local Law prior to adopting your budget. Next annual income from the Justice's. The Budget Officer explained how the income is figured. As of today, we budgeted \$120,000. We are very low. As of July 2023 we have only collected \$43,000. She took the estimate down but may not be low enough. This year it's \$110,000. A lot of this is a result of CAP court. Maybe lower the estimate to \$100,000. If we don't get it down, it may get worse. Mr Petrie explained

to the Board the different functions of the town government. You have revenues coming in and expenditures related to those expenditures. These revenues are what's called, attributed revenues. If you are attributed revenue to a function that goes down, you should be looking at the expenditures going out. The difference is the net drain on your tax dollar. Ideally, you like to have each service be self sufficient but that will never happen. But to the extent that you can, you should try to make the function less drain on the tax dollar. During COVID, the state mandated that they could not work. No mail and never had to come in. The income on the Supervisors report is usually a few months, depending on when the Court hands in their report, but for real as of the end of July, we have taken in \$61,000. There are still 5 months left to the year and we have Salmon season coming. Usually it means a lot of tickets and fines to go with them. The Board decided to budget \$110,000.. The bottom line from the Towns view is from fees and the budget is for expenditures for municipal court, this year it was for \$148,000. This is a direct cost which doesn't include employee benefits. Laird feels that the Town is under water by about \$60,000-\$70,000. The Town doesn't buy any of the equipment and pays no medical expenses. Some towns are looking at consolidating Courts to cut expenses through shared services. If we go back to 2020, the town made \$82,000 from the Judges, we budgeted, 150,000 in 2021 we took in \$137,000, we budgeted \$90,000 but we made up for what didn't get done until we all came back to work. In 2022, we took in \$109,000 and budgeted \$130,000. WE budget \$120,000 this year, and we might be a little shy or around that. In 2023 for everything, we budgeted \$148,000. And that is just direct costs. Just food for thought, sometime down the road we should either share services or move down to 1 Judge. The Board is going to have to think hard in the future about shared services. Mortgage tax: The Town gets 2 payments per year based on brick and mortar construction, and home and property sales. If it's a good year construction the town will get a percentage. It was up the last few years because of all the sales in homes. This year the town budgeted \$60,000 and the first payment was \$28,000. It was suggested to take it down a little so it was dropped to \$58,000. The 2nd payment has not been received yet.

Total revenues in the General Fund are \$266486 then to the summary page right now the tax levy is without adjusting expenditures is \$1.1 million which is \$137,000 more than last year. Nothing has been done with expenditures and nothing with appropriated fund balance. Those are options that are available.

Next is Expenditures. The first section of A is the Town Board. The Board .4 is contractual and Graham Seiter. We only budgeted \$3000 for Graham and as of the end of July we already expended \$6600. Legal is next. We budgeted \$8000, only because at the end of July it was up to \$9900 . That is just the Town Board. The Board feels it's not really necessary to have the Attorney present at every meeting. The Board agreed to lower the legal services in the Budget to \$5000. It is advised to use the Association of Towns Attorneys when the Town can to save money.

Justice: The State pays for equipment. The .4 is for the constables which are the Village Police Department to cover on court nights. Justices requested a 10% increase for training for Judges and Clerks.

The Board continued to go over the other Departments in the Town. The Assessor would like to keep the \$4500 in for Equipment and \$25,000 put toward for a reval. At the moment there is \$61000 in reserve. It is estimated that a reval will cost between \$175,000 to \$200,000. Our market value is now at 67% . Our assessor would like to hire a company to do the revaluation. Mr. Petrie thinks the State will offer some incentives to get Towns back to 100%.

Town Clerk: Town Clerk, Tax Collector software. \$2400. Legal :\$200 Rent: stays the same. Buildings are next. No payroll or equipment. Office Supplies, postage, \$2500 for 2023 and expended \$1500 so far. It will stay at \$2500.

Contingency Account: this is an amount for the unknown expenses. \$65,000 was what we had in the account last year. If we don't use it, it can go back into Fund Balance.

Dog Control - Put \$2000 in. Legal fees were increased to \$2000. We had expended \$1100 this year so far.

The Ambulance budget is a bit higher than last year. \$170,876. This is a contracted amount split into 4 payments.

Highway admin Equipment \$500 for new desktop computer.

The Playgrounds and Rec Center Budget for equipment last year was \$50,000 because of the state aid. This year \$5000 for equipment. There is a roof that needs to be replaced over the zamboni room. Under .4 kept \$120,000 which is for gas for mowers ,dumpsters etc. Utilities for 3 months and internet.

Youth program raised the .4, \$500 It's expensive for this program.

Historian. Misc under the other \$ left the same. He has expended \$747 this year.

Cemeteries: Changed fuel and now has it expended under all 3 cemeteries \$900. Keep everything the same.

Hospital Insurance: The increase of 14%. Non union employees. Usually they never get what they want and they got it this time. Retirees insurance isn't known yet so they increased that 10%.

Right now we have \$100,000 that we said that we were going to send to Highway to help out. Right now we don't have anything on the revenue side like we did last year where we appropriated \$100,000 of fund balance to offset that. The General Fund we are looking at taxes of \$4.4 which is \$125,000 higher than last year. Last year also included a transfer of \$100,000 and we financed it by using \$100,000 of fund balance rather than raising taxes. If we want to transfer \$100,000 again by raising taxes in the General Fund, if we do that you can see that we bring it down to \$25,000 higher than last year. If you decide to use fund balance, we have to project what we think the fund balance will be at the end. We will try to do this before the next workshop. If there is available fund balance in A to help out DA again, without giving you less fund balance to work with then we would probably ask the Board if they want us to do that. Then you would only have to find \$25,000. We don't really know how 2023 will end. Your General fund right now looks like it will be okay. Not a big increase at all. The tax cap is \$2.5 million. We are only \$136,000 over the tax cap right now without working on those other funds. We are gaining. We are funding everyone's wish list. Just because it's in the budget doesn't mean you have to spend it.

The next Budget workshop will be Tuesday, October 17th at 1:00pm.

**MEETING ADJOURNED: 3:45pm**

Respectfully submitted by

Millie Newcomb  
Town Clerk