

Minutes for the Ticonderoga Town Board's Public Hearing regarding the 2020 Ticonderoga Preliminary Budget and the 2020 Water and Sewer Rate increases held on November 1, 2019 commencing at 8:30 a.m.

Others: Joseph Giordano, Supervisor
Joyce Cooper, Councilwoman
Wayne Taylor, Councilman
Dorcey Crammond, Councilwoman
Dave Woods, Councilman
Tonya M. Thompson, Town Clerk

Others: Patti Osier, Dick Crossman, Heath Towne, Bob Dedrick, Jerry Greer, Matt Courtright, John Croto, Dough Trudeau, Rich Stonitsch, Frank Basile, John Bartlett, Tim Rowland, Chief Hurlburt and Mark Barber.

Supervisor Giordano opened the meeting with the Reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Ticonderoga Town Board will hold a Public Hearing on the Proposed 2020 Sewer rate increase of \$32.00 annually and 2020 Water rate increase of \$32.00 annually on November 1, 2019 at 8:30 a.m.

The Ticonderoga Town Board will also hold a Public Hearing on the preliminary budget of the Town of Ticonderoga for the fiscal year 2020 on November 1, 2019 at 8:30 a.m.

Pursuant to Town Law #108 the salaries of the elected officials as of 10/23/2019 are as follows:

Councilpersons - \$11,000.00
Supervisor - \$42,000.00
Town Clerk - \$49,132.00
Highway Superintendent - \$62,000.00
Town Justices - \$22,000.00

A copy of the preliminary budget will be available November 1, 2019 in the Town Clerk's Office at 132 Montcalm Street., Ticonderoga, N.Y. for inspection by any interested person during regular office hours (8 am to 4 pm)

Mrs. Thompson stressed to the public that this is a Public Hearing regarding the Town's 2020 Budget along with water and sewer rate increases and that this Public Hearing will be continued at the Town's Board meeting on November 14 at 6:00 p.m. It is not about issues regarding water services to personal residences. She encouraged people with those questions to come to the Public Works Committee meeting on November 6th at 8:30 a.m.

Patti Osier explained that in the past, department heads always met to discuss their budgets, that didn't happen this year. Looking at the budget, everyone got a 2% raise but her, again. This is going on the 5th year and no raise. This is discrimination again her. She does her job, she does it well, she brings in money for this town every year and all she is asking for is 2% like everyone else, that is only \$600.00. Is this fair, even Sue in Building and Codes got a 2% raise, she got nothing. Is that fair, is that right?

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Supervisor Giordano again explained that the town has gone through a wage rate schedule and put people in grades and our Human Resources department went through all of these positions. He does not know how your salary, because you receive a salary not an hourly, was determined from prior administrations but right now it is at least \$8.00 if not more over the pay grade for which Assessor's make.

Mrs. Osier asked what is this pay grade, where are you getting it from. If you look at all the Town's that she has supplied, the Town of Keene and the Town of Crown Point, the Town of Jay - all of the Assessor's work 4 hours and they get insurance. She doesn't need to get insurance because she gets it through the county, she is saving the town money that way, she just doesn't understand, when Bob was the Supervisor, she got 2%, when Debbie was Supervisor, she got 2%, when Bill was Supervisor, she got 2%. The day you started she got nothing. She doesn't think that it is fair to her, she is a town employee and she does her job and she thinks she does it well.

Supervisor Giordano explained that it has nothing to do with how you are doing the job. It has to do with rates that have been (Interruption by Kent Belden to speak with Dave Woods)

Mrs. Osier continued, if you take my budget right now and divide it by parcel....

Supervisor Giordano explained that if everyone comes to the board with their own way of calculating what the pay rate should be, you in the past have done overhead rates, not necessarily salary - he is willing to go back through and gather pertinent information from all the positions to find out how the rates were calculated. From his understanding, they are all based on overhead, overhead being the entire department. The information you have provided from other towns was fine for downstate but it is not for the North Country communities. We have done our best to look at the North Country communities and look at the responsibilities of different positions and come up with the appropriate pay rate. Before he started, people who were taking jobs here were getting paid much less than they should have been paid for the work that they had been doing, so there was an inequality all across the board. We can sit down and have more discussions on what you think is the appropriate amount based on what your counterparts are doing, but like he said - we started this back a couple of years ago with human resources to come up with a fair and equitable way to determine pay rates across all positions.

Mrs. Osier asked her next question - how many people applied for her job - nobody! Nobody wants this job.

Supervisor Giordano stated that one more person applied after the deadline, so no.

Mrs. Osier explained that other towns are having the same problem, they are getting nobody to apply.

Supervisor Giordano noted that some of those other towns are going back to the county.

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Mrs. Osier stated, yes, and the county has one Assessor who is now doing three towns and they have nobody else to do any other towns right now. Again, that was at \$15.00 a parcel, now look at hers per parcel, she is getting like \$10.00 and now you want to go to the county pay them \$15. She doesn't see where that is a savings for the town. She is a local and she knows these people. That is all she has to say.

Rich Stonitsch asked what is the cost per gallon to make this water?

Supervisor Giordano does not know, we do not have meters to measure, but we are moving towards meters as they are required.

Matt Courtright asked how the rate is established. How it is charged.

Mrs. Thompson explained that it is charged per EDU and that is determined by the assessment of how many units are in a building as to how many EDU's are charged.

Councilman Taylor added that this comes down to debt service on this mandated work that we have had to do. That is what this increase is, it is about paying for this work that they are forcing us to do. We no other option, it is a zero interest loan, however.

Bob Detrick understands the necessary rate increases, but what is projected for rate increases in the future? How are we going to pay for water meters.

Supervisor Giordano explained that we are working on grants for water meters which is also being mandated for the town.

Councilman Taylor added that since the Village dissolved there has been a mandate in place that the Town would have a water conservation program, which was ignored by multiple administrations. We didn't become aware of it, until we had to and DEC stated that we will have, as a condition of granting these permits to do this water project, the town will have a water conversation program in place which includes water meters. This will probably be \$1,700.00 per connection to meters.

Mr. Detrick stated that the state is absolutely going to bankrupt people, they cannot afford this. They can't afford it now, how are they going to afford it in the future. Someone from the state has to come up here and understand that this is an area that has 55% of low income people, and a lot of our kids are getting subsidies for lunches, someone from the state needs to understand what is going on. So what is the projected rate.

Supervisor Giordano stated that all this really did was try to reduce those letters going out because the town was not meeting treatment standards for Gooseneck and Lake George - this is the whole thing for decades that we had not heeded the call to provide quality drinking water. It is not that the source was not at quality, but it was the treatment standards were not up to par. The work that had to be done, has provided for this, but this does not address at all any of the infrastructure in the town which many of you know in

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the winter time and the summer even we get these odd places where a surge of pressure causes a rupture. All of this still needs to be addressed, as well as water meters. This just takes care of the water supply component so the projected rate increase, because we did retire some debt last year - the projected increase is about \$120 per quarter. So next year we will be \$104 and then you are looking at another \$16 total and what the board is trying to do now that the town has its finances under control and know what our fund balance is we can offset the increase to all residents in order to step the rate up so we don't shock the residents with the total amounts. We started this last year, it was only a \$3.00 increase, because we used some of that fund balance to offset some of the anticipated charges coming down and will continue to do this moving forward.

Mr. Dedrick repeated what was said, that next year will be a repeat of this year.

Supervisor Giordano stated yes, so \$120 is what this project will be total if you figure that \$16.00 difference, yes it is anticipated at \$8.00 next year and \$8.00 the year after.

Mr. Dedrick hates to say this, but he would hate to have a business here with multiple units, because --- he doesn't know what International Pater is going to do or what Moses Ludington will do.... what will the Nursing Home or other businesses do. This will kill them.

John Bartlett asked if we can't get grants for these meters, will that cost be assessed to each property owner or will the town absorb it and put it in the rate.

Supervisor Giordano stated that this is a great question and one that needs to be looked at.

Councilman Taylor stated that we don't have it, it is 3.5 million dollars and we don't have that amount to do it.

Mr. Bartlett noted that it is to be determined, is that what you are saying.

Supervisor Giordano answered yes.

Mr. Courtright wanted to mention that there are other avenues and resources to look at for monies.

Mr. Stonitsch wanted to mention that it wouldn't hurt his feelings if the Assessor leaves.

Doug Trudeau asked what is the cost for these projects - the water and sewer projects.

Supervisor Giordano stated that the water project did not exceed 14 million dollars, the town was originally given 11 million dollars in a zero interest loans and 2 million dollars in grants. The Town then pursued and received an additional round three water infrastructure grant at 1 million dollars and we also received, because of Irene, FEMA money to cover the lower Chilson water main portion that was necessary. So we brought the total amount being borrowed to 10 million dollars and 10 million is what we are using

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to calculate the projected cost increase over the next two years to bring it to the \$120.00 a quarter. The sewer is currently around the same amount, we have received more grant funding, an 8 million dollar loan and that project for the most part is complete down at the waste water treatment plant and final portion of the daylight stream project is The Portage project which will include the replacement of sewer and storm water to separate them.

Heath Towne asked how long we can use fund balance to cushion the full cost?

Supervisor Giordano explained that the fund balance is pretty healthy and we are just using it to offset and get to some long term planning. A lot of the fund balance is there simply because the bookkeeping has not really been accurate enough to indicate exactly where the levels were. Now that we have that figured out, we are using that to take care of other capital projects going forward.

Councilman Taylor added that when the fund balance runs out this is what the rate will be.

Supervisor Giordano stated that we are not looking to run the fund balance out, we are just looking to get it down to the healthy level of which it should be based on percentages shown by the state.

Mr. Bartlett noted that in trying to find money for future projects, he would recommend pursuing the Northern Border Regional Commission.

Councilman Taylor had noted that the Town should hire a lobbyist - a pro, someone who knows how to maneuver those circles - to lobby for us. We are going against these big cities asking for the same thing.

Mr. Courtright commented that there are closer resources that we have available to us, such as the IDA's Office. These people will do this work for us and know what to do. This is just an example.

Supervisor Giordano stated to the public that we will not be closing this Public Hearing today but will adjourn it to be continued at the Town's Regular Town Board meeting on November 14, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tonya M. Thompson, Town Clerk