

Town of Canton
September 30, 2021
Special Board Meeting 6:00pm
Minutes
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

Present

Supervisor Mary Ann Ashley, Council Members Bob Washo, James Smith, and Martha Foley Smith

Also in Attendance

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Karin Blackburn, Confidential Secretary/Bookkeeper Dylan Barringer (via Zoom), Historian Linda Casserly, Justice Michael Morgan, Economic Development Director Leigh Rodriguez, Recreation Director Meghan Richardson, John Gray, CPA

Members of the Public: Paul Baxter, Thomas Graser, Susan Huntley, Karen McAuliffe, Bob Santamoor, Carol Smith Pynchon, Heidi Smith, Anna Sorenson, John Taillon,

A. Call to Order

- Mary Ann Ashley opened the Special Meeting at 6:02 p.m.
- This is a budget working session.
- Agenda changes:
 - Consider the COVID Relief Loan Application from the Celtic Knot. Applied for \$10,000, paid back over 5 years with no interest. Revolving Loan Fund Committee has approved.
Bob Washo makes a motion to accept the Committee's recommendation, 2nd by Martha Foley Smith.
Bob is grateful that these funds are available, and he thanked Leigh and the Review Committee for their work on this.
All in favor. Motion carried.

B. 2022 Budget Work Session

- The Board members have a balanced budget in front of them and Mary Ann will go over some highlights.
- Mary Ann thanked Gray & Gray for their assistance with the preparation and work that went into this, including Danielle Susice and Dylan Barringer. Town budgets are very complicated and layered, and she believes the Town has done a good job presenting balanced budgets the last three years.
- Highlights:

- Original calculations were at an additional \$400,000 over what is currently available as a spending plan.
- The proposed balanced budget for 2022 totals \$3,016,454 compared to last year of \$2,840,431. Difference of \$176,023 due to most of it being for highway construction.
- The Board is considering passing a law to override the tax cap.
- Not one of the 22 revenue sources in the Town budget is absolutely guaranteed. Revenue that was cut in 2020 due to COVID, was partially restored in 2021; therefore, impacting the original budget.
- The state mandated tax rate is still labeled at 2%, but the last couple of years it has been less than 2%.
- Looking at the possibility of spending an additional \$31,000 if the tax threshold is raised from the current rate of \$2.79 per thousand to \$2.839 per thousand. Our 2020 taxable assessed property value is \$392,719,881. If we keep the same tax rate of \$2.79, this will generate a tax levy of \$1,097,379. If we raise the tax rate to \$2.839, this will generate a tax levy of \$1,115,049.
- Due to the mandated wage increase to \$15/hour, this budget is showing a few different increases in compensation and Labor needs in the Town Supervisor's office, Town Clerk's office, Court, and Historian's office. It really is about fundamental fairness.
- We need to decide when, not if, we need to do a full revaluation on property assessments. To do this, our Assessor needs to be full-time and there's a need for clerical support. Full revaluations is a two year process.
- The Code Enforcement Officer and Assessor need clerical support and have been working very close with the Town Clerk's office for their needs.
- The Justice Court has been supported over the past 3.8 years with an increase in funding and an additional part time position of Court Clerk and a Constable backup. They have requested a second part-time Clerk position.
- Highway request of a new \$200,000 piece of equipment of a front loader is needed, which is not in this current budget.
- Construction funds \$375,000 - \$550,000. That's where you see the \$176,000 that the budget is over for Highway.
- A 3% wage increase has been applied for all departments. However, we are in contract negotiations with Highway at this moment.
- Retirement system increases are up 18%.
- Health insurance increase for 2022 will be between 9% and 10% for active employees and retirees. This is a substantial increase.
- Justice Michael Morgan addressed the Board regarding his budget request.

- Historical fact: the Court has asked for a full-time clerk for the last three years, but granted a part-time Clerk. There is a lot of paperwork with the new bail reform.
- They met with the Judicial Committee. All three times they have met with the Committee in the last year and a half, they agree that the Court needs another Clerk.
- Mary Ann added some specific requests for the Court: 1) increase the current part-time Clerk's hourly rate from \$12.52/hour to \$20/hour, up to 19 hours per week.
The new Clerk position would be up to 19 hours per week at \$15/hour. There was also a request for an increase in the contractual line item because of the needs of the department.
- For context, Justice Morgan added that Canton Town Court is the second busiest court in the County. Massena is number one. Canton is tied with Ogdensburg. That is for the number of cases that are seen on a weekly basis.
- For the current part-time Clerk, an increase has been requested for her. She has thirty plus years of experience. The additional request of a part-time Clerk, the current part-time Clerk would train, along with Marc Armstrong. It is an intense job.
- Bob asked Justice Morgan if he knew how many hours the Justices were putting in on arraignments per month. Justice Morgan was keeping track until COVID hit, but currently doesn't have hard and fast numbers. He can report that he does receive between 5 and 10 calls a week in the middle of the night to come out of arraignments. That's on top of coming in for Court each week. Probably 30-40 hours a week.
- Mary Ann went through each fund for highlights:
 - Supervisor's Office: requesting the number of hours go from 15 - 19 hours per week because of the additional workload with solar projects coming in.
 - Town Clerk's Office: there was an addition of the contractual services for accounting and Clerk Blackburn put in for a half time Deputy Clerk.
 - Transportation Administration: stayed the same as far as salary.
 - Veteran Services: put back in at \$2,500.
 - Under B Fund: under revenue, put in \$3,000 from the Village. That is for an update to the WAGS Program for the Code Enforcement Office. The Village has agreed to fund half of that.
Assessor: keeping that at part-time at this time.
Historian: recommendation is for \$15/hour for the Assistant and \$20/hour for the Historian.
Recreation: recommendation is the same, \$132,201. There is another

payment on the Pavilion floor of \$15,300. Last payment will be the following year.

Under Code Enforcement: contractual was changed by \$3,000 to cover the WAGS Programs.

- DA Fund:

There is nothing in there for equipment. Calvin did put in a request for \$200,000 for a front end loader. He does believe we can get between \$80,000 - \$90,000 on a trade-in for the current loader, but that wasn't put in.

Bob recommended running numbers to see where things were at year end to see where anything is under or if resources could be pulled from anywhere else.

- DB Fund:

Didn't put in for revenue for EWR or Pave NY, but did put in for CHIPs. Construction line item does show \$550,000.

Jim stated that there will be two sales tax checks received before any black top gets put down.

- Special Fire:

Revenue is \$275,000

Still owe on Canton's fire engine #7. There is a written agreement at \$6,000/year. The Town was able to pay off a little bit more of that this year. There was \$16,700 left and was able to get that down to a balance of \$11,300.

Smaller departments at \$45,000 total and Canton at \$117,000.

- Special Lighting:

Morley Lighting District budgeted from \$4,000 to \$4,200 for a potential increase.

- There is a public hearing set before the Board meeting in October to override the tax cap. Does the Board want to max out the current tax cap now and increase the current tax rate from 2.79 to 2.8393? That gives us only an additional \$30,000. Bob is fine with maximizing the current tax cap and moving forward at the next meeting as well. Dave agrees. The increases for retirement and health insurance are substantial. Martha agrees as well. The fund balances are healthy enough. The Town needs to front government for about four months in 2022 before the revenue gets to where it needs to be. Having the reserves where they need to be is important.

Mary Ann would like to thank departments for their due diligence, especially during COVID.

- Bob stated it would be important to go over why the Historian's budget is going up. Mary Ann explained that the Historian's hourly rate has been lower than her

- Assistant's. Linda is a department head and she deserves to be making more money. The contractual expense has been increased a little more as well as special projects. There's always special projects that Linda is coming up with that should be in the budget. The Historian's office is a 50% shared service with the Village.
- Bob thanked Mary Ann for the balanced budget and stated that he is satisfied with what has been put in front of him. This is the fourth year that Mary Ann has provided a balanced budget and it's a good place to start.
 - Bob stated that it would be helpful to do some projections on year end fund balances as discussions progress. John Gray agrees.
 - Mary Ann added that once the budget is passed for 2022, things change and come up and the budget may need to be amended.
 - Dave thanked Mary Ann for her work on the budget and understands the budget amendments.
 - Budget needs to be passed by November 19, 2021.

C. Executive Session

Upon majority vote upon a motion that identifies the subject to be considered, the Council will conduct an executive session to discuss any of the issues identified as proper by Public Officers Law 105 (1) (E) collective negotiations pursuant to Article 14 of the Civil Service Law 1; and (H) the proposed acquisition of property.

1. Motion to go into Executive Session at 6:47 pm made by Bob Washo, 2nd by Mary Ann Ashley. All in favor. Motion carried.
2. Motion to come out of Executive Session at 7:58 pm made by Bob Wash, 2nd by Dave Nelson. All in favor. Motion carried.
3. Motion to adjourn at 7:58 pm made by Jim Smith, 2nd by Martha Foley Smith. All in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Karin Blackburn
Town Clerk