

Town of Canton
2023 Preliminary Budget Public Hearing
Monday, November 7, 2022
In person and video conferencing (zoom)
Minutes

PRESENT:

Mary Ann Ashley	----	Supervisor
Bob Washo	----	Council Member
Jim Smith	----	Council Member
John Taillon	----	Council Member
Bob Santamoor	----	Council Member

Also Present: Town Clerk Heidi L. Smith, Leanna Moquin (zoom), Code Enforcement Officer, Mike McQuade, Betsy Hodge (zoom)

Public Attendance: See attached sign in sheet. North Country This Week Paul Mitchell, Watertown Daily Times Tom Graser, River Street Planning and Development Monica Ryan and Margaret Irwin

A. Call Meeting to Order

Supervisor Ashley called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

B. 2023 Preliminary Budget Public Hearing

Supervisor Ashley opened the public hearing by reading the legal notice out loud including the proposed salaries for elected officials.

Supervisor - \$16,900
Council Members (4) - \$5,801
Highway Superintendent - \$66,628
Town Clerk - \$ 45,500
Town Justice (2) - \$31,232

Supervisor Ashley added the process of creating a town budget is for this Town Supervisor to collect town department request for consideration. It is the duty of the Town Supervisor to present a proposed budget to the town board for deliberation. This preliminary budget represents a \$3,425,167 spending plan with a four-cent tax increase in the tax rate from two dollars and eighty-three cents per thousand to two dollars, and eighty-seven cents per thousand. Garnering a \$1,144,127 tax levy. We are following the New York State mandate tax cap.

Supervisor Ashley went over a few highlights of the budget. It took a year and a half to negotiate a CSEA contract. As a result, a 3.5 wage increase for 2023, along with allocating the same increase for non-contractual employees and elected officials is in the proposal.

We need to return the Assessor position to full time. We must get all the data collected in anticipation of doing the full evaluation of all Town assessed properties. We have about 3,900 properties and the information needs to be updated.

Changing the confidential Secretary Bookkeeper to full-time is important because of the substantial increase in duties in the Supervisor's office, especially the impact of solar projects.

Preparing for a capital project purchase with the Village in the anticipation of building a new municipal building has also been incorporated. This will maximize the Federal ARPA monies that have been received.

Planning for the Stiles Ave property. Michels vacating the property at the end of March was also taken into consideration. We will be losing revenue from that transaction.

Under Special Fire due to discussions in the past budget work sessions, Council Member Santamoor questioned if a fire department can hold funds for capital purchases.

All fire departments were required to submit budgets, and the list of firefighters as part of the Town budging process my proposed budget allocated the following: Canton Fire \$117,500. This has been the same for the last five years. Morley, Pyrites and Rensselaer Falls increased from \$47,400 to \$50,000.

We have steadily increased allocations for the smaller departments for five years. Financial obligations for Canton Fire Department needed to be put in writing back in 2018, and we needed to fulfill those obligations. That's exactly what we did.

The contingency line was \$15,000. This represented \$282,500 on the tax warrant.

After reviewing the Fire Department budgets Mr. Santamoor recommended decreasing the Canton Fire Department by \$35,300 and putting it in a contingency line until we got a legal opinion from Attorney Eric Gustafson on holding of funds. We received his opinion. It is his counsel that the Town Board does not have the authority to dictate Fire Departments spending. The Town Board needs to decide on how to move forward with this account.

Ashley opened the public hearing up for public comment.

Bob Crowe, Canton Fire Department Chief, respectfully requesting that the budget line be returned to what it has been the last five years. Mr. Crowe thinks they do an admirable job spending the taxpayers' funds. The legal item was answered, and Mr. Crowe does not see why the line item cannot be returned to the Supervisor proposed budget.

James Blackburn, Rensselaer Falls Fire Department 2nd Assistant Chief, thanked the board for the increase to Rensselaer Falls. Mr. Blackburn stated that he does not know what the plans are for the contingency fund. Mr. Blackburn suggested that the contingency fund be divided between the departments.

Mike Morgan, Canton Fire Department Treasurer, stated when Canton Fire Department was building their budget, they have not asked for increase in the last five years. Canton just purchased a new pumper truck and put \$300,000 down that was saved. The \$35,000 will be the payment for the next ten years. If that is cut Canton is down \$200,000 and that is expenses only. Everyone will suffer from that cut, Mr. Morgan respectfully asked that the board put the \$35,000 back into the budget. Mr. Morgan also added that over the years the fire department and town board have worked hand in hand with issues that have come up with the money and have worked well together to solve those issues.

No further comments.

A motion was made by Council Member Jim Smith and seconded by Council Member Bob Santamoor to close the public hearing at 6:10 PM.
All in favor. Motion carried.

Council Member Santamoor stated that when he looked at all the Fire Department budgets and what they spent and based off the appropriations that were spent, his original thought was \$82,00 for Canton. \$50,000 for Rensselaer Falls, Morley, and Pyrites. After doing more digging and reviewing the fire department's 990 it showed that Canton Fire has a very healthy 990. Santamoor would like to amend his original thought and propose a change to the allocation of the warrant. Bring Canton to \$94,625 and \$62,625 to Morley, Pyrites and Rensselaer Falls. This is based off the budget request submitted to the board and Canton's 990.

Council Member Taillon commented that he wants to see Canton's restored to the original \$117,000. Council Member Washo agrees.

Council Member Taillon would like to see the recommendations from the Fire Task Force that was done in 2018.

A motion was made by Supervisor Mary Ann Ashley and seconded by Council Member Bob Washo to change the preliminary budget of Special Fire Allocations for Fire Protection to the following: Restore Canton Fire Department to my original proposal of \$117,300. Increase Pyrites and Rensselaer Falls from \$50,000 to \$55,067 and increase Morley to \$55,066. The total allocation is \$282,500.

Aye – Mary Ann Ashley, Bob Washo, John Taillon, and Jim Smith.

No - Bob Santamoor

Motion carried.

C. Code and Zoning Update Presentation

Monica Ryan from River Street Planning and Development gave a presentation on the zoning updates for the Town of Canton. Included in the presentation was an overview of project activity to date, summary of key changes to the proposed zoning and next steps.

The project advisory group consists of Bob Washo Deputy Supervisor, Jim Smith Town Board Member, Debra Backus Planning Board Chair, Matt Scaffidi-McGuire ZBA Chair,

Michael McQuade Code Enforcement Officer, and Leigh Rodriguez Director of Economic Development.

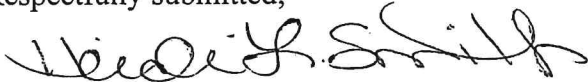
Debra Backus commented that this new plan is comprehensive, easy to understand, and up to date. Mrs. Backus thanked Monica for her work.

Supervisor Ashley gave Monica a list of questions and comments for review.

The deadline set for feedback is December 1st.

A motion was made by Council Member Bob Santamoor and seconded by Council Member Bob Washo to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 PM.
All in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heidi L. Smith", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Heidi L. Smith
Town Clerk

Sign In

Town Board meeting
Nov. 11th, Special meeting

James Blackburn
Tarin Blackburn
10M SCHWARTZ

Bob Crony
LARRY DALLINGER

DAVID STAY
Wayne Morrison

Corbin Leitzon

Loch Frank

Casey Archer

Mike Arnold

Brendon Wade

Rowan Wade

~~Doc Gault~~

Mike Morgan

DAN SOUTER

~~Dan Souter~~

Matt Scatidi-McLuire

Derek Casely

