TOWN OF PLATTEKILL

REGULAR TOWN BOARD MEETING

October 16, 2024

Time – 7:00pm

SALUTE TO THE FLAG:

ROLL CALL:

The following Town Board Members were present:

Supervisor Depew

#### Councilman Fazio

Councilman Hoppenstedt

Councilman O’Flaherty

ABSENT- Councilman Castillo

PUBLIC HEARING: LOCAL LAW #2 TAX CAP OVERRIDE

Supervisor DePew made a motion to open the Public Hearing at 7:07PM.

Seconded by Councilman O’Flaherty

On the Vote: All Ayes

Supervisor DePew stated that the TENTATIVE BUDGET is a wish list, salaries, requests and requirements for the Town Hall and departments. We are going through each department figuring out what are wants and needs. Overall is at 16.7% increase as of tonight.

1. Alan Francese- This budget really needs to be looked at very carefully. Raising taxes will cause a lot of seniors in the area to relocate
2. Katherine Beinkafner- The justices are at a total of $47,000? Does that mean that annually they are $23,500 each?

Supervisor DePew- Yes, we met with the justice Department and they both have agreed to take a flat rate increase and not go to 6%. The Town Board has taken 3%.

1. Kim Cambell- I haven’t had a raise in years. I am stretched thin and have trimmed my own budgets. We cannot afford it. The Town should do the same. We aren’t getting any increase in our paychecks, except extra fee’s. You shouldn’t be buying new trucks or new pavers. Nothing should be voted on tonight.

Supervisor DePew- I will forgo any raise myself. This tax cap is at 2%, we have to pass a local law to go over that.

1. Ginny Malcuit- The Library and the Plattekill Fire Department, why do they need so much money?

Supervisor DePew- I can only speak on behalf of our budget, the A- Fund, the DA- Highway Fund, the Lighting District, Drainage Districts. We have no decision in the library taxes or the fire department budgets. The town technically is the tax collector for the library taxes and fire departments.

Ginny- The library has their own vote. They don’t make it very known about their vote. They should have some sort of transparency and be clearer.

1. Kim Campbell- We shouldn’t be spending this money on a playground.

Supervisor DePew- That playground was paid entirely by money from a grant in Ulster County and was paid for by ARPA Funds. There are certain things we can spend it on and use it by a certain date or we lose the money. The park hasn’t been expanded in 35 years.

We need our employees to stay here. We aren’t making anyone rich with these raises. We are keeping good quality people working here.

1. Bob Mabie- We have no municipal water and sewer and we can’t get our leaves picked up in the spring. There has to be some accountability for this money. The library does not need this much money. The Town should not be able to do an unlimited tax cap. A large portion of this town is on fixed income.

Supervisor DePew- They do their own budget; we have no control over the library. We have been making lots of cuts. We are determining wants and needs.

Councilman Fazio- The voter turnout for the library was roughly 65 people. That is really sad.

1. Mike B- We don’t hear about any of this stuff, it isn’t right. People don’t know about any of these meetings.

Supervisor DePew- This is not secretive. The town has obligations that we have to advertise. It is in the newspaper, we have a website, Facebook & our sign board.

1. Mike Fowler- There is a big increase proposed with the Police Department. Has anyone talked to the Sheriff’s department and any interest with them doing patrol? It seems like a duplication of services around here.

The thing that concerns me, is that I know there is a Police Car that goes back and forth to Albany every day? What is that about?

Supervisor DePew- The Police department did go up quite a bit, again tentative. We spent 4 hours with them last night and trimmed it way down. We have not spoken to the Sheriff’s department.

The Plattekill Fire District wants to start a paid EMS service down there. There are definitely things we need. We have a part time police department here. When someone needs help, they call 911. I would not look at the police department and say it will cost the town a lot of money, someone needs help, they want the whole calvary coming.

1. Mike Lembo- Why is that police car allowed to go back and forth to Albany every day, especially with what happened last year and the accident. This is for another job. He should be using his personal car and not a town vehicle.

Supervisor DePew- That is an internal problem that is being addressed. The issue that happened last year will no longer happened. That individual has retired.

1. Ms. Bulson- It is not my job to find out when you are having these meetings, it is the job of the town. If more of us knew, more of us would be here. Whatever you are doing is not working. We aren’t getting a chance to voice our opinion.

Supervisor DePew- Hypothetically mail outs to notify everyone, that comes at an extreme cost. How much money do you want to spend on that? We can put another line item on the budget but we would have to pay for that. There are a lot of people here tonight compared to usual. I have sat on this Town Board since 2013. My point is, there is rarely more than 4-5 people that come to the meetings. Every year, tax time comes at the same time every year. It never changes. Board meetings are the first and third Wednesday of each month.

1. Laura Dougherty- Doesn’t the 2% tax cap apply to each of the budget lines? You mentioned that the Library and the Fire Districts are not under the town.

Supervisor DePew- In its entirety, its 2 %. The A- Line, we are not going to stay within the 2% tax cap. All of this is cumulative. Overall, it is up almost 17%. If you live in the different fire districts, it will be different overall. The 2% doesn’t apply to each line item.

Laura- when it comes down to it, each line item should not be going over 2%. My second question is, you talked about working on needs and wants, buying $60,000 in filing cabinets. You were talking about building a new town hall, why spend money on a new filing cabinet. Why spend that money when you want to build something new. That isn’t spending money responsibly.

Supervisor DePew- There is a bunch of records that should be locked up in the vault. We are running out of room here. What I did, was go around to the different departments and ask what they would like to see. We are doing a building assessment on the Town Hall and Highway Department. We hired an engineering firm to come in and give us an evaluation on a new building or replacing this current building.

Laura- You received 1,043,000.00 in ARPA money. How was that money spent? Why didn’t you ask the people what they wanted in that park and how to spend that money? This new playground will not be ADA compliant with the mulch. A wheelchair cannot use it.

Supervisor DePew- We utilized it for premium pay in 2020. $73,000 or $79,000 went to the employees that worked through COVID. We are utilizing the money right now to expand the park, ways to utilize that money to offset needs in our budget. We took out the playground that was not ADA compliant, it was in disrepair. ADA compliant does not mean everything will be concrete and blacktop.

1. Anthony Covino- The judges, we have 2 of them. Your budget is to give them a 6% raise or are the asking for that? Instead of giving 6% raise, why can’t you go out and purchase a digital sign for out front notifying the people. Our tax money should go towards helping the residents. Everyone deserves to have a raise but it is a really difficult time. There is a big communication issue in this town

Supervisor DePew- If it is a union position, we had to go by 2024 budget. We are in negotiations with the police, the general union which covers the Town Hall and the Highway Department. There are certain positions that we can give raises to. Our elected officials put in non-stop hours.

Councilman Fazio- The judges are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

1. Kim Campbell- You keep mentioning that you are trimming the budget down, you leave the budget super vague. Before you ask to override this, you should have the final numbers so we know what we are up against.

Supervisor DePew- That is not the law and that is not how it works in Town Law. NYS sets and make those rules. We have to make sure we announce, have a public hearing and pass that law by a certain date.

1. Mr. Bulson- How many people live in this town? How many people are at this meeting? We have a problem with communication if only 40 people show up about a tax meeting.

Supervisor DePew- Roughly 10,500. We are obligated to post it and where. I encourage everyone o come the first and third Wednesdays of the month and stay informed. No one shows up and then everyone wonders why we are getting a building here and there.

1. Town Resident- You want to raise my taxes 16.7%. I get 2 services from the Town, Police and Fire. I don’t even live on a town road. What do I get from this town and you want to increase my taxes. I will be put in a bigger hole than I already am.

Supervisor DePew- There are a lot of things going on in this town that you get. There are a lot of good community events going on.

1. Mike B.- My mortgage just went up $180 a month related to school. I am not getting raises this year. We are talking about building a new building, why do we need that if 4 people show up to these buildings. I am looking at the Dog Control report. I have been in contact with Andew, my neighbors dog killed my cat, aggressive towards my wife, killed the neighbors chicken. A court date was issued and he didn’t show up, nothing happened. Why am I reading that there are no dangerous dogs in this town. I have talked to Andrew 15 times about this dog killing people’s pets. I have to plow my own road. I don’t even get a mailbox. I don’t get sewer and water.

Supervisor DePew- Please call me regarding this. We have a meeting with Andrew this Friday.

1. Mike Francese- People in my development did not know about this. No one in this town can afford the increase that you are asking for. The cost-of-living increase is roughly 7% and that is being conservative.
2. Annette Laskowsky- I am one of these few people that show up all the time. It is not clear what will happen November 6. November 6 is the meeting where people can go to and question, line by line and ask questions. You can voice your opinion at that meeting. 11/6 is where people should come and ask intricate questions.
3. Frank S- Me and my wife are retired and on a fixed income. Years ago, the senior exemption used to be $60,000 between the couple. Now it is only $32,000. Why is that so low? How much are my taxes going to go up this year in dollars and cents.

Supervisor DePew- We have no control over that. That is County and State. I would encourage you to reach out to them. Star Exemptions are by the state too. This isn’t on the value of your home, its taxable assessment.

1. Mike Baum- I don’t really look at this as a 16.7%, I see this as a 38+ increase to the general fund. My question is, if you took the historic step and did not go above the 2% tax cap, what would happen?

Supervisor DePew- What would happen, we would cut services. We would have to cut services drastically. There are mandates that we cannot cut. We would be going into debt. Insurance is for buildings, properties, vehicles. Increased cost to run the town. We would maybe even have to close down departments. I hope we never have to come to that.

1. Mike B- I called the police on a Saturday night once, and there was no one on duty. Why is that? There is a lot of waste going on. I would like to see you guys trim where you can. I understand this building isn’t great compared to other Town Halls, but why can’t you wait until inflation comes down and wages go up. I am a union worker and I know the costs.

Supervisor DePew- There have been shifts where no one is available to work. We are part time and cannot guarantee coverage on every single shift. We are addressing that and that is a big concern. We are aware of that. We are not at a full staff. If we are going to fund those lines, I want people covering the Town. The new Town Hall is a 3–5-year plan.

1. Kathy Beinkafner- The first two lines are General and Highway. Everyone pays those taxes, right? Then we get to special districts, library and fire departments. I live in Clintondale so I will be paying highland library. If you live in the drainage districts, you pay that tax. If you don’t, you don’t pay that tax. Depending on which fire district you live in, you pay that fire department.

Supervisor DePew- Yes. That is correct.

1. Kevin Roberts- This is almost 40% tax increase on top of the 8% last year. Looking at this budget, the tax levy is increasing by almost $500,000. The Police Department is increasing by $479,000 is almost equal to that. The conversation needs to be had with the County and the State for Police. They should be paid and well protected. But is it worth the 1.2 million dollars to have a part time police department. Can we use that money better to off-set tax increases and send the County or the State on the calls? Ulster County has a 440 million budget with a surplus of 171 million dollars, we can surely offset to help protect this town. Judging by the mood here tonight, I recommend that you can hold this public hearing open for more public comment down the road.
2. Matt Morrison- How many part time police officers do we have? At one time, was the police department closed down?

Supervisor DePew- We have 17. We plan on bringing more on in the next few months? I don’t ever remember that happening.

1. Email (Joyce H.)
2. Sis Morse- Will we get to see the Preliminary Budget before November 6?

Supervisor DePew- Yes it will be presented before them

1. Mark Reynolds- We post all the meetings every week in the Southern Ulster Times newspaper.
2. Mike Baum- You took $300,000 from the Towns Unexpended Fund and $300,000 from the Highway Department. What is the amount total amount in the fund balance?

Supervisor DePew- Last year we took $200,000 from the Highway Department. Out of that, we spent $180,000 on a Backhoe. This year, $300,000 is being taken from the DA and $263,000 will be spent on a replacement chipper and F4450 Dump Truck Sander. The General Fund balance in the A fund is approximately 1.2-1.3 million dollars.

Supervisor DePew Made a motion to close Public Input at 8:46PM.

Seconded by Councilman Fazio

On the Vote: All Ayes

LOCAL LAW #2

Supervisor DePew introduced Local Law #2, read it thoroughly and made a motion to pass this Local Law- Tax Cap Limit Override stating it was required due to extreme inflation and mandatory costs.

Seconded by Councilman O’Flaherty on the Vote: All Ayes

MINUTES:

* Supervisor DePew made a motion to NOT read the minutes from the October 2, 2024 Town Board Meeting

Seconded by Councilman Hoppenstedt.

On the vote: All Ayes

Supervisor DePew made a motion to accept the minutes from the October 2, 2024 Town Board Meeting.

Seconded by Councilman Fazio.

On the Vote: All Ayes

ADDITIONS:

* Resolution #66- ARPA (Regarding Remaining Funds)

Supervisor DePew made a motion to approve the use of ARPA Funds.

Gaga Pit base changed from crushed stone to concrete in the amount of $3,422.00 and adjusted area from 26’ to 30’.

Purchase of Flow/fill concrete for entry to the Pickleball Court in the amount of $950.00

Seconded by Councilman Hoppenstedt.

On the Vote: All ayes

* Highway Department Winter Hours

Monday, November 4, 2024 the Highway Department will start their winter schedule.

Monday-Friday 6:30AM-3:00PM

REPORTS:

* Supervisor Depew read the monthly department reports and noted they are all available at the Town Clerk’s Office upon request.

The following reports for the month of September 2024 were available.

Plattekill Police Monthly Report

Dog Control Monthly Report

Buildings & Grounds Monthly Report

Building Department Monthly Report

Assessor Report Monthly Report

Recreation Department Monthly Report-

Town Resident wanted to give Kudos to the Plattekill Police Department. He had to call 911 and the Police Department were first on the scene. The Ambulance and First Departments showed up as well. Everyone is always talking about the bad things and he wants to point out the good things. They all worked together.

PUBLIC INPUT:

* Supervisor Depew made a motion to open Public Input at 8:55 pm.

Seconded by Councilman O’Flaherty

On the vote: All Ayes

1. Mark Reynolds- Can you give an update on the Liberty View Farm issue and if there is any action into resolving that? I was at a meeting today that RUPCO sponsored regarding affordable housing. Does the Town have an affordable component in their code and would you consider adding that to your code?

Supervisor DePew- There is a ZBA Meeting 10/24 to address that. We do not presently have anything regarding affordable housing in our code. We are almost done with our second phase of our Comprehensive Plan and we did apply for a grant to talk about our zoning and redoing that. That is a needed item and we will be looking at that in the future.

1. Anthony Covino- (Brought in a sign) 5 Signs were ripped off his property. The past Supervisor, Croce knew of this 3 years ago. I came to Croce 3 years ago and asked why someone is digging right behind my property and my property line. I was told, it was no big deal, that they were putting storage containers there. Mud is all over the road and it is getting worse. Then Salemo gets elected, and I tried talking to her, I was told she was too busy to talk to me. Now you (DePew) get elected and you were the only one that has come out and talked to me. Since that time, there has been other issues. My property is being destroyed and it shouldn’t happen. The Planning and Zoning Bord were wrong in letting this go through. If one of my family members gets hurt or my property gets destroyed again, I am going to come after the Town because you approved this nonsense. He was told by the Planning Board to not drive his equipment up and down the road, and he does it continually. People pull over in my driveway asking why there are rocks in the road. His construction workers are on my property cutting down my tree because it was in the way of their excavators. They are on my property. I am not letting this go anymore and I want this project shut down. He is on the Rotary and can do whatever he wants. He put garbage bags on my front lawn to “clean up”. I made a report with the DEC and I will continue to move forward until this project is shut down. I am not dealing with this anymore. There will be an accident out there and I will give them every email, photo, everything I have to show why this happened. What is it going to take?

Supervisor DePew- Let me take that as a statement. Contact me when you are available and we can talk further.

Anthony Covino- I am done talking, the only one that is going to talk is my lawyer. This should have never happened in the first place. Prior Supervisors allowed this to happen. My neighbor’s property gets flooded now because of this mess. I have had enough with this mess and the disrespect to my property.

1. Laura Dougherty- There was a change in the website earlier this year. There is no search bar anymore. You used to be able to search anything and now it only lets you physically let you search what is currently posted.

Supervisor DePew- Thank you for pointing that out. We will look into it.

1. Katherine Beinkafner- I was Chairwoman of the UC Resource Recovery Agency for many years. From my point of view, the prices are out of control and will go through the roof. I want to give you a heads up. The Ulster County Sheriff’s Office have signs that they are trying to hire more people in their agency. They are also very low on staff.

Supervisor DePew- That is a problem everywhere. It is an issue that is real, it affects a lot of agencies.

1. Resident- asked to put a notice in with our town taxes so we are all aware of the budget dates and calendars can be noted. “Be reminded, next year’s budget starts…”

Supervisor DePew- I wonder if we can put something on the outside of the envelopes.

* Supervisor Depew made a motion close public input at 9:10PM.

Seconded by Councilman O’Flaherty

On the vote: All Ayes

OLD BUSINESS:

* Auction Recommendations- AAR Auction

12 items auctioned

Supervisor DePew made a motion to approve the sales, Highway Superintendent to move forward awarding

Seconded by Councilman Hoppenstedt

On the Vote: all ayes

NEW BUSINESS

* Resolution #65

Local law #3- Introduce the Moratorium Prohibiting Review of Applications for Battery Energy Storage Systems

Public hearing is set for November 20, 2024, 7:00PM

Seconded by Councilman Fazio

On the Vote: All Ayes

* Elected Official Salaries will be sent to our Newspaper tomorrow
* Resignation Letter

Edward Diller, Building Inspector

Last Day is October 22, 2024

Supervisor DePew made a motion to accept his resignation.

Seconded by Councilman O’Flaherty.

On the Vote: Aye- Supervisor DePew, Councilman O’Flaherty, Councilman Hoppenstedt

Nay- Councilman Fazio. He was instrumental to the battery storage

* Parking Enforcement

Chief of Police requested money for appearance tickets. It was not funded in the 2024 budget. These tickets will be V&T Law. (Hydrant parking, Loading Zones, Handicap Parking, etc.) There is a lot of complaints from businesses that people are parking where they shouldn’t be parking.

Purchase #2500- $729.90

Councilman O’Flaherty asked where ticket revenue is going to?

Supervisor DePew- Any fines collected by the court will get sent directly to the municipality. Dollar for Dollar. Money will be kept at the town.

Supervisor DePew made a motion to go forward and purchase these tickets via ARPA Funds for the Police Department Seconded by Councilman Fazio

On the Vote: All ayes

* Letter to Police Department

Received from a Family in Town, wanted to express their appreciation and professionalism to Officer Benjamin and SGT. Vasta for an incident on their property September 18, 2024.

* Request for Police Filming 10/31/2024 “After All”

Movie being filmed in town at a few locations in town

He requested a Police vehicle assist the filming crew on 10/31.

They will compensate the Town for their assistance.

Board members are in agreement with this as long as they reimburse the town for the Police Departments time and expenses.

Supervisor DePew said this would be considered a special detail, as well as compensation for our liability in reaching out to our attorney. I will forward this to the Police Chief and get a realistic cost from him. We have done this in the past.

Councilman Hoppenstedt made a motion that Supervisor DePew give this filming proposal to the Police Chief and reach out to the Association of Towns to verify liability.

Seconded by Councilman Fazio

On the Vote: All Ayes

TRANSFERS: NONE

VOUCHERS:

* Supervisor Depew reviewed the Voucher Detail report Dated October 16 2024, which includes:

The A-General Fund amount of 36,582.03

The DA-Highway Fund amount of $6,868.61

The SA- Clintondale Lighting in the amount of………………………………. $977.52

The SB- Modena Lighting in the amount of ……………………………………. $1,797.52

For a grand total in the amount of **$46,225.68**

Supervisor Depew made a motion to accept the vouchers, recognizing that the Audit Committee has reviewed the claims and found them acceptable for payment.

Seconded by Councilman O’Flaherty

On the vote: All Ayes

ADJOURNMENT:

Supervisor Depew made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 pm.

Seconded by Councilman Hoppenstedt

On the Vote: All Ayes