

A budget workshop of the Town Board of the Town of Moreau was held on October 5, 2022, in the Town of Moreau Municipal building, 351 Reynolds Road, Moreau, New York

The Supervisor called the workshop to order at 5:05 p.m.

Town Board Members Present

Mark Stewart	Councilmember
Kyle Noonan	Councilmember
Alan VanTassel	Councilmember
John Donohue, Jr.	Councilmember
Theodore T. Kusnierz, Jr.	Supervisor

Town Board Members Absent

None

Also present: Ellen Buttles, Deputy Town Clerk; Jeffrey Cruz, Principal Account Clerk; Chris Abrams, Deputy Highway Superintendent; Wayne Palmer, South Glens Falls Fire Company; Steve VanGuilder, Moreau Emergency Squad; Donna Nichols, Moreau Community Center

The Supervisor gave an overview of the 2023 Budget, stating that it was a balanced Budget. The tax rate has been reduced from \$0.945/\$1,000 of assessed value in 2022 to \$0.90/\$1,000 of assessed value in 2023. This equates to a 4 ¼ % reduction in the tax rate, which is a decrease of \$0.04/\$1,000 of assessed value; and, which also remains under the 2% tax cap. He then thanked Jeffrey Cruz, Principal Account Clerk, for all his help.

The Supervisor mentioned a compensation plan for employees moving forward. The Supervisor met with Saratoga County HR Department and reviewed what other municipalities around the County are paying, some larger and some smaller than the Town of Moreau. The Supervisor stated that the first two years will be a 2% increase on top of what the Town Board decides to do with salaries, and in 2025 a flat rate of \$1,500.00, not a % based. He stated that there are instances where they will still need to adjust, however, the cap will be at 5%. He stated that eventually, within a short period of time, the Town will get their employees to competitive wages, comparable to other towns in the County. He stated that this was a “Step Program” for both salaried and hourly employees. There will be discussions, after the budget process is complete, per department.

The Supervisor gave a brief overview of the budget. He commented that they’ll be using \$473,447.00 in fund balance this year, which is \$565,423.00 less than last year. The Supervisor stated that the Town relies heavily on sales tax and commented that the Fire Department budget is solely funded by sales tax, as well as the Highway Department budget.

A4540 – Moreau Emergency Squad: Steven M. VanGuilder, Exec. Director, was present to ask or answer any questions. The Supervisor stated that they had requested \$317,000.00, which included \$257,000.00 for contractual, and \$ 60,000.00 for their new building. The Supervisor stated that they did a 2% increase across the board for the Fire Co., Moreau Community Center, and the Moreau Emergency Squad. He stated that they have \$270,060.00 budgeted for 2023 and \$15,000.00 budgeted for building reserve. He stated that they got them a grant from the Casino Foundation. He also stated that he put forward a program at the County using Covid funds, where they earmarked \$100,000.00 for all fire companies and emergency squads. He stated, that each one applied for, which he can get them a check in a couple days, will receive \$2,272.00. Mr. VanGuilder stated that they had applied for it.

Mr. VanGuilder stated that fuel was the biggest increase but also mentioned that the calls at the Emergency Squad have increased. Last year the squad answered 3,400 calls and right now are at 3,173 calls so far this year.

The Supervisor asked Mr. VanGuilder how recruitment was going, and he responded by saying that they have received approximately 6 applications in the previous two months.

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Mr. VanGuilder stated that the Emergency Squad is working on their letter drive, which received approximately \$24,000.00 last year, and \$17,000.00 this year. He stated that the funds received this year will be used on their expansion project.

Engineers for the Emergency Squad and Town engineers are looking together at the schematics for the expansion and sewer. Mr. VanGuilder asked if the new expansion would be able to hook into the sewer. He mentioned the possibility of getting a grinding station to hook into the sewer and stated that it would be a big cost. The Supervisor stated that they can't at present because they're outside the district. However, the Town is working to put forward regulations that will allow outside users.

The Supervisor asked how everything was on the paid side and if the budget will stay flat. Mr. VanGuilder stated that there was a surplus in their account for payroll. They've used a portion of that money to pay off one of the ambulances. It was mentioned that the extra money in the payroll was from PPE money. The Supervisor asked where they plan to be in 5 years. Mr. VanGuilder responded by saying that the goal is to have 6 ambulances, due to the Schermerhorn apartments and Home of the Good Sheperd. They create a lot of the calls for the Emergency Squad.

The Supervisor thanked the Emergency Squad for coming in.

SF3410 – South Glens Falls Fire Company: Wayne Palmer was present to ask or answer any questions.

The Supervisor gave an overview again of the 2023 Budget.

The Supervisor mentioned that the proposed budgeted amount for this year is \$572,712.00, which is an \$11,151.00 increase over last year. The amount included insurance. He stated that the Moreau Emergency Squad, Moreau Community Center, and the Fire Co. all received a 2% increase.

Mr. Palmer stated that he assumed the previous President submitted a budget, which reflected a 2% increase. However, inflation is at 10% and inflation at the firehouse is at 25%. He stated that they are looking at a 27% increase for fire gear next year and a 16% increase in air packs. He has a hose that's on order but won't have a price until it comes in. He commented that the hose didn't pass hose testing procedures and has to be replaced. The ladder truck estimate is \$1.4 million to replace in 4 years. Mr. Palmer's request was a \$100,000.00 increase, with \$50,000.00 being dedicated for trucks. Mr. Palmer stated that they don't want to finance any more money.

Mr. Palmer mentioned that South Glens Falls is one of the largest volunteer fire departments in the County, based on square mileage & call volume, and that they are under funded by \$500,000.00 compared to other companies. He stated that he's been trying to get the department where they need to be for over 10-years now. He believes that the Town made a mistake when they did away with the fire tax. He stated that this budget is making it difficult for them to do their jobs. They do this for free and all the services are free. He hoped that at some point they could come to a median. He stated that he feels at times they aren't heard. He stated that the Fire Company Treasurer is retiring in January. They're going to need a paid administrator because it would be way too much responsibility for someone to do on a volunteer basis. He stated that he wasn't sure how they were going to pay this person.

In conclusion, Mr. Palmer hoped that they could come to an agreement. He also stated that spreading out payments is difficult and puts too much work on everyone. He suggested two payments instead of three monthly. For example, January and June. The Supervisor stated that there was \$100,000.00 set aside solely for fire departments and rescue squads. Anyone who applies would receive \$2,272.00, as part of the recruitment campaign. However, there are no strings attached to it. Mr. Palmer requested an email address so that they could apply for the funding. Supervisor Kusnierz thanked Mr. Palmer and all the members of the Fire Company. He stated that the community supports first responders, as does the County.

HT7180.4 – The Supervisor stated that they have funded, for multiple years now, monies for a pole barn for the equipment at the Recreation Park. The Supervisor stated that \$35,000.00 was budgeted in 2022, which wasn't utilized, so it was carried over to the 2023 budget.

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The Supervisor mentioned that they have BOCES doing work at the Park as part of their Forestry Program. He suggested that they work on cutting a new entrance to the Park from Fort Edward Road. In case of an emergency, the two exits are not sufficient. Clearing for another entrance into the Park off Fort Edward Rd. would open up other areas for the Park. The increase of the use at the Park has grown incredibly. The Town needs to utilize the room, make changes, and increase the amount of use the Park is capable of. He stated that there is a need for more fields and parking. If the areas were clear, they would have the room, and could then have an engineer design it. Monies from the HT account will get things done at the Park, however, the road needs to be in place to get things started.

A8060 - Moreau Community Center. Donna Nichols was available for any questions or answers.

The Supervisor gave an overview of the 2023 Budget.

The Supervisor mentioned that the Fire Department, Emergency Squad and Moreau Community Center received a 2% increase across the board. \$301,449.00 was budgeted for the Community Center. Ms. Nichols mentioned that the Community Center was back to pre-Covid, with everything in full force except for senior trips. The Moreau Community Center was the recipient of the ARPA Covid-19 Relief Program, which gave them \$6,000.00. It will be used for their after-school Teen Program. The Center has received a grant from the Glens Falls Foundation as well. Ms. Nichols mentioned that they would also be applying for the Casino Foundation grant again this year.

Ms. Nichols mentioned that their back parking lot will be resurfaced, and air conditioning will be installed. She also hoped to grow the Teen Program. She stated that they have approximately 60-90 teens and are looking in the future, to hire a full-time person to run the program. It is now being run by the current staff, as well as Ms. Nichols herself. They are working closely with the School District and with John Carey.

Ms. Nichols thanked The Supervisor and the Board for their time.

The next budget to discuss was the Highway Department. Chris Abrams was present to ask or answer any questions.

The Supervisor gave an overview of the 2023 Budget.

A3310 - Traffic Control: The amount requested for road striping was \$40,000.00 and it was reduced to \$35,000.00, based on what was spent last year.

A5010 - Highway Administration: The Supervisor stated that there was a 2% increase for all elected officials for the purpose of the budget. The Supervisor mentioned the compensation schedule for salary and hourly employees, which the Town will have to agree to. He explained the step program, in that every two years, employees will be given an automatic 2% increase and every other two years will be given a flat \$1,500.00. He stated that they're trying to adjust salaries and commented that they know they've been low in some areas and are taking measures to address that. He put a cap on the maximum adjustment this year at 5%. He stated that Maureen Leerkes falls into that category. Her salary comes from A5010 (75%) and B8540 (25%). She was given a 5% increase this year. Mr. Abrams asked what would happen with her next year. The Supervisor stated that he would have to look at where she is in the step program. It's based on many things, such as longevity, current salary and where they should be. The equipment and contractual requests remained as is.

A5132-Highway Garage: Equipment and contractual remained as requested.

B8540-Drainage: All contractual and budgeted items remained as requested.

DB5110-Highway General Repairs: The budget request by the former Highway Superintendent for personal services was \$442,000.00, which included the hiring of three new employees. The Supervisor stated that he reduced that amount to \$335,000.00, which included one new laborer position. He stated

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that the estimated cost for each new laborer would be \$75,000.00, which would have to come out of fund balance. Contractual items remained the same as requested.

DB5112-Highway Improvements: Contractual items remained the same, except the crack sealer, which Chris mentioned was okay for now. The line item was reduced to zero.

DB5130-Highway Machinery: The requests were kept the same for contractual. Under the equipment line items, the request for the trailer and hot box were removed, but the gradall and chainsaw were left in. Mr. Abrams mentioned that the costs of repairs for the gradall are costly. Supervisor Kusnierz mentioned the time has come to utilize a leasing company. He contacted a company out of Syracuse who works with municipalities. They offer 3-5-7-year leases. He suggested, that one of the ways to ensure that you have a good fleet of trucks all the time, is to enter into a leasing program, which would have to go out to bid. He stated that he plugged in a conservative number for equipment, with a 5-year lease program. The lease amount would have an interest rate of 4-4.7 %. At the end of the lease, you can buy it outright for a dollar. The Supervisor recommended this to the Board. He stated this this would provide the necessary equipment at an affordable cost. He stated that the cost of the lease would be \$250,000.00. By not doing this, we would have to add \$400,000.00 in sales tax to this budget. Councilmember Stewart supported the idea of leasing. He stated that it keeps the Town with new equipment, less issues - less maintenance. The Supervisor asked if anyone was opposed. There were no objections. The equipment line item was reduced from the requested amount of \$1,003,938.00 to \$250,630.00. Under contractual, equipment repairs, the Supervisor stated that everything was left as requested. Mr. Abrams mentioned that he thought the number for repairs was a little low. The Supervisor asked him to take a look at the numbers. They'll asterisk the line item to see if there should be any changes.

DB5140 - Highway Brush and Weeds: Contractual remained as budgeted.

DB5142 - Snow Removal: The Supervisor stated that gas, diesel, and oil were bumped up to \$120,000.00 from 2022 and salt up to \$225,000.00. Sand remained the same at \$9,000.00.

DB9000-Highway Employee Benefit: The budget included one new laborer.

Mr. Abrams mentioned that he thought the former Highway Superintendent put in a request to move two people up from laborer to MEO. Jeffrey Cruz stated that it wasn't requested. Mr. Abrams stated that it would be \$0.34/hour/employee. He stated that Chris Scarincio and Paul Patterson are going on 10-11 years as laborers. Mr. Abrams thanked the Town Board for their time.

The budget workshop concluded at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen J. Buttles
Deputy Town Clerk