



# The Town of Franklin

P.O. Box 209, Route 3, Vermontville, NY 12989 • 518-891-2189 • Fax: 518-891-6389 • [www.townoffranklin.com](http://www.townoffranklin.com)



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## Town of Franklin Board Meetings

**Town Board Meeting**  
**November 7, 2007 - 7:00 pm**

**The Town Board of the Town of Franklin held a duly advertised Public Hearing and Special Board Meeting on Wednesday, November 7, 2007 at 7:00 pm at the Vermontville Town Hall.**

### Board members present:

Supervisor Mary Ellen Keith  
Councilperson Janet Ordway  
Councilman Tim Goff  
Councilman Gene Goff  
Councilman Walt Kretser

### Others Present:

Budget Officer Richard Meagher  
Town Clerk Sandra Oliver  
Al Berg  
Richard Jarvis

### CALL PUBLIC HEARING TO ORDER

Supervisor Keith called the meeting to order; the Pledge of Allegiance was recited; the Town Clerk called the roll, and announced the full board was present.

### PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC HEARING

Coun. Gene Goff read the Town's Rules of Procedure for Public Hearings:

#### 1. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

**Oral Comments.** The Town Clerk will maintain a sign-in sheet at the public information desk for each person who wishes to make oral comments. Anyone who wants to do so must enter his/her full name and address on the sign-in sheet, in the spaces provided. ANYONE NOT

SIGNING THE SIGN-IN SHEET WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO ADDRESS COMMENTS TO THE TOWN BOARD.

**Questions.** The Chairperson will entertain questions from the floor. Questions shall be for the sole purpose of obtaining information about the 2008 Preliminary Budget or clarifying its provisions. Questions shall not have the intent of provoking a debate between the questioner and the Town Board or any individual in the audience.

**Written Comments.** The Town Board will accept written comments on the subject matter of the public hearing PROVIDED ALL WRITTEN COMMENTS ARE GIVEN TO THE CHAIRPERSON BY THE END OF THE PUBLIC HEARING.

## 2. PRESENTATION OF COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS.

**Presiding Officer.** The Town Supervisor will preside over the public hearing, and act as Chairperson. In her absence, the Deputy Town Supervisor will act as the Chairperson.

### GROUND RULES FOR THE PRESENTATION OF COMMENTS

The purpose of this public hearing is to gather public comment on the 2008 Preliminary Budget to help the Town Board make an informed decision on whether to adopt it. The Board encourages all in attendance to offer comments and ask questions. However, a successful public hearing requires that some simple ground rules be followed. These ground rules will ensure that all in attendance are treated in a respectful and courteous manner, and that all who desire to speak will have the opportunity to be heard:

1. No one may speak unless recognized by the Chairperson for that purpose. Upon recognition, the person must identify him/herself by clearly stating his/her full name and address.
2. Anyone choosing to speak must address his/her remarks to the Town Board, and not to other members of the audience. Any debate between those "for" and those "against" the proposal must be strictly avoided.
3. Oral comments can generally be delivered in five minutes. If there are a large number of persons wishing to speak, the Chairperson reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to strictly enforce the 5-minute rule, so that all who wish to speak may have an opportunity to do so.
4. The Town Board is here to listen to the public's comments, and to answer questions about the Preliminary Budget. The Board is NOT here to express its own views or opinions thereon. The Board will NOT participate in a debate of the issues. We want your advice and assistance in coming to the proper conclusion on the issues involved. If you are in favor, simply tell us and give us your reasons why; and likewise, if you are opposed.
5. No person has the right to demand an answer to a specific question from a member of the Board. As noted earlier, questions should seek clarification and information and should not lead to a debate of the issues. All questions are to be directed to the chairperson, who may either answer them or refer them to a Board member or the Attorney for the Town. The answer may be deferred and subject to further review or study and answered at a later date.
6. No person may speak a second time until everyone who wants to speak has spoken.
7. No member of the public or Town Board shall engage in any demonstration, booing, handclapping, or otherwise disrupt the formality of the public hearing.

The Town Clerk will be responsible for ensuring that these rules are followed. ANYONE VIOLATING ANY OF THESE GUIDELINES WILL BE ASKED TO REFRAIN FROM DOING SO, AND MAY, IN THE SOLE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRPERSON, BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE PUBLIC HEARING.

## 2008 PRELIMINARY BUDGET - GENERAL AND HIGHWAY FUNDS.

Budget Officer Richard Meagher reviewed the budget briefly and stated the budget was increased by 3.5 percent, mainly due to the \$13,000 in line A1355.4 - Assessor CE - for a data collector, as well as 3% salary increases for hourly employees.

The floor was opened for comments and questions. Richard Jarvis submitted the following statement. Mr. Jarvis' comments appear on the left side of the table below, and responses by the Budget Officer and/or members of the Board appear at the right:

"Thank you for the opportunity to observe and to comment on the proposed budget. These comments are meant to be constructive

1. Generally the workshops did not provide much discussion of individual budget items and appeared to be a lack of advanced homework or background information. The board appeared to be guided more by an effort to keep the total increase to an assumed acceptable level of 3.5% (cost of living increase?) and by comparison to previous year's budget. It is not clear how the 2007 was significantly "modified as of Sept. 1, 2007."

2. The board did work toward containing the overall increase in the budget. When you deliberate on the 0-9final approval, ask yourselves if it could be better. Keep in mind the general knowledge that taxes in NYS, and property taxes in particular, are close to being the highest in the country. With the increased costs of fuel for heating and transportation and related costs of food, I hope all residents can maintain a quality of life and continue to pay their property taxes.

3. The board members are acknowledged for not taking/requesting a pay increase. In comparing some other legal notices in the newspaper, the TOF appears to have the lowest pay. However I have no idea how much time is spent in your positions, but I would support comparable, fair compensation. Regarding the highway department pay, it seems that positions would have a beginning and maximum pay rate, with periodic advancement based on satisfactory job performance, built into the contract. The value of employee benefits should be acknowledged.

4. Specific comments on line items with reference to code # are provided below as to possible suggestions for changes in the final budget:

<b>Comments and Questions by Richard Jarvis</b>	<b>Response by Town Officials</b>
1310.1: Check Asst Supervisor with actual expenses \$3,533 on 9/1 and budget for \$7500?	Richard Meagher confirmed this budget line is the "personal services" or payroll line for the Supervisor's Confidential Secretary, Melissa Begor, an hourly employee. Further, outlay for the months of October, November and December remain. Supervisor Keith noted that Mrs. Begor is a very important, efficient employee who performs the payroll function and has scrutinized the Union contract so the Town is in complete compliance. In addition, Mrs. Begor is responsible for compliance with Franklin County Personnel.
1355.4: Is this an appropriate contractual increase (481%) to the Assessor?	Mr. Meagher reiterated the increase was requested by the Assessor for a data collector for this coming year's assessment update.
1420.4: Is the town anticipating significant attorney contractual expense increase?	Supervisor Keith replied the attorney for the Town, James Maher, is paid from this budget line. The Town also contracts with bond counsel, Trespasz & Marquardt with respect to its Bond Appreciation Notes. In 2007, the outstanding assessment litigation brought by Loon Gulf and Domtar Paper (now Chateaugay Woodlands) was dismissed, due to the efforts to Brian Stewart, Esq. In 2008 the Town will contract with bond attorneys with respect to the infrastructure project.
1670.4: Appears to be a significant increase in central mail expenses base on actual expenses as of 9/1.	Supv. Keith answered that all postage expense, except for the Tax Collector and Assessor, have been brought under this line item. In 2007 first-class postage increased to 41 cents and the Postal Service is now charging extra for oversized envelopes.
3010.2: Is there a line elsewhere to cover code officer's mileage on the job?	Budget Officer Meagher stated the codes officer's salary is paid to the Town of Santa Clara per contract. He also noted that both the Towns of Franklin and Brighton have denied the request of the Town of Santa Clara to share in the purchase of a new truck for the codes officer.
5182.4: Based on 9/1 expenses \$8,000 appears high?	Supervisor Keith said the National Grid invoice for streetlighting each month is between \$400 and \$500. She anticipates an increase in this amount due to the ever-rising cost of fuel.
6461.4: Is this the grant for design and specs for town hall and garage for Earth Science and Engr? If not, shouldn't that appear somewhere in the budget?	Mr. Meagher and Supv. Keith replied that line item 6460.4 represents a potential HUD grant application; however, as the Town will not be applying for a HUD grant in 2008, the \$11,000 originally budgeted was transferred to 6461.4, for grant writing.

8020.4 Should the town budget for effort on development of the subdivision regulations? Have you considered applying to DEC for Smart Growth Grant due Dec. 2007?	The Board generally concurred this was something to consider. Supv. Keith stated she had attended the workshop on Smart Growth grants. With respect to shared services, she affirmed the Town shares an Assessor and a Codes Officer with other municipalities. The Town also shares equipment with Franklin County and neighboring towns. A record of each instance of equipment/manpower sharing is maintained. She opined, however, that shared services, purchases and consolidations are more complicated for rural communities because of the physical distances between municipalities.
8090.4: Where is the expense line for monitoring Onchiota landfill required by DEC?	Supv. Keith stated that at the monthly meetings she distributes her "Supervisor's Report". The fund from which landfill monitoring is paid is found on that report.
8810.4: Is there a potential savings given expenses as of 9/1?	Supv. Keith indicated the Board had done all it could to reduce costs and that this line item reflected equipment purchases, repairs of machinery used to maintain the cemeteries. The Town is very proud of its cemeteries.
9950.9: I think it is a good idea to save/budget for the future, but should be highway budget be reduced?	Mr. Meagher stated the 9950.9 line item does not cover highway department costs. This line item is the Town's 2008 contribution to the Capital Projects Building Fund, which will be used for infrastructure improvement.

Mr. Jarvis thanked the Board for responding to his comments and questions. He then asked if, during budget workshops on the tentative budgets, whether copies of same could be distributed to those attending, but not participating in the budget workshops. The Board thought it a good idea.

#### **FIRE/RESCUE FUNDS 2008 PRELIMINARY BUDGET.**

Coun. Gene Goff stated the budget has also been increased because the Fire/Rescue contracts have increased. In 2007 the Town was charged \$55,000, or .39/1000; in 2008 it will be charged \$66,466, or .43/1000. A per-call rescue for a residence worth \$250,000 cost \$44 in 2007 and in 2008 will cost \$48 per call. The local communities get their money's worth with the fire and rescue departments. The equipment is available when residents call 911. A certain municipality in the area published an RFP for rescue services, and received two price estimates. The first price estimate would handle rescue service for \$500,000 per year; the second estimate was for \$54,775, adding it would use area volunteers to staff rescue vehicles. Coun. G. Goff reiterated that local fire/rescue services are a bargain for taxpayers

With respect to progress made on the Saranac Lake Area Fire Advisory Board, Coun. Gene Goff reported a full-time EMT job description is still being drawn up by Franklin County. A new protocol has been established for rescue calls in the Village of Saranac Lake. In the past, the rescue vehicle would travel to the rescue site in the Village and wait for an EMT. Now the rescue vehicle does not leave until an EMT is present, just like the protocol used for calls in surrounding towns.

#### **COMMENTS**

Supervisor Keith asked if anyone had any comments on the 2008 Preliminary Budget.

1. Mr. Meagher stated there are no large "swings" in the budget. The per 1,000 rates have been consistent over the past few years: In 2005 it was \$911,000; in 2006, \$807,000; in 2007 it was \$953,000 and in 2008 it will be \$990,000. Mr. Meagher stated that remaining fund balances are also used to offset a potential tax increase. As the 2008 Budget for Franklin County is lower, residents of the Town of Franklin will not have to pay more in January.
2. Coun. Gene Goff concluded he thought the 2008 Preliminary Budget was good.
3. Coun. Walt Kretser agreed and noted that the rise in fuel prices and energy will have to be monitored carefully.
4. Coun. Janet Ordway stated the budget was a good one and added this Board is experienced in preparing budgets, and this year, the process was smoother than in the past.
5. Coun. Tim Goff concurred the budget was realistic.
6. Supv. Keith added the Board worked hard on the budget, and that auditing the vouchers and abstracts each month during the year provides a "good feel" for how funds are expended.

#### **POLL OF THOSE IN ATTENDANCE:**

Richard Jarvis IN FAVOR OF BUDGET  
Al Berg IN FAVOR OF BUDGET

**POLL OF THE TOWN BOARD**

Supervisor Keith IN FAVOR OF BUDGET  
Councilman Gene Goff IN FAVOR OF BUDGET  
Councilman Tim Goff IN FAVOR OF BUDGET  
Councilman Walt Kretser IN FAVOR OF BUDGET  
Councilperson Janet Ordway IN FAVOR OF BUDGET

**RESOLUTION ADOPTING BUDGET** Supervisor Keith requested a motion for a resolution adopting the 2008 Preliminary Budget as the 2008 Budget for the Town of Franklin.

Motion for resolution (M.Keith-T.Goff m/s/p) ALL AYE

**RESOLUTION NO. 55: ADOPT 2008 PRELIMINARY BUDGET AS 2008 BUDGET FOR TOWN OF FRANKLIN**

WHEREAS, following deliberation and a duly publicized Public Hearing, NOW, THEREFORE, the Town Board of the Town of Franklin hereby adopts the 2008 Preliminary Budget as its 2008 Budget.

Those voting aye:

Supervisor Mary Ellen Keith  
Councilman Tim Goff  
Councilman Gene Goff  
Councilperson Janet Ordway  
Councilman Walt Kretser

Those voting nay:

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to discuss, the public hearing and meeting adjourned at 8:02 pm

Motion to adjourn (M. Keith-G.Goff m/s/p) ALL AYE

Respectfully submitted, Sandra J. Oliver, Town Clerk

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