



The Town of Franklin

P.O. Box 209, Route 3, Vermontville, NY 12989 • 518-891-2189 • Fax: 518-891-6389 • www.townoffranklin.com



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Town of Franklin Board Meetings

Public Hearing On 2009 Preliminary Budget And Fire/Rescue

The Town of Franklin Town Board held a duly publicized Public Hearing to collect comments on the 2009 Preliminary Budget on Wednesday, November 5, 2008 at 7:00 pm at the Franklin Town Hall in Vermontville, NY.

Board members Present:

Supervisor Mary Ellen Keith
Councilwoman Janet Ordway
Councilman Clifford Smalley
Councilman Walt Kretser

Board members absent:

Councilman Allen Berg

Others Present:

Budget Officer Richard Meagher, Town Clerk Sandra Oliver, Frank & Barbara Karl, Paul and Carol Ward, Dave Whitson, Nathan Brown, Adirondack Daily Enterprise

CALL TO ORDER

The public were asked to sign in, Supervisor Keith called the hearing to order at 7:00pm; the Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and the Town Clerk called the roll, stating a quorum was present. Supv. Keith announced the purpose of the public hearing was to gather comments on the 2009 Preliminary Budget; the Town Clerk read the Rules of Conduct at Public Hearings.

REVIEW OF 2009 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

Budget Officer Meagher reviewed the General, Highway and Fire budgets, explaining materials cost increases, and increases confirmed by Fire Dept. officials for higher workers compensation costs. He further reviewed the reductions made in several areas of the General and Highway Funds. Revenue to the Town will decrease due to the State devaluing its land, a decrease in building permit fees and lower interest income. The overall increase in the budget is 4.8%.

As an item of interest, Supervisor Keith reviewed the second to last page of the preliminary budget, which sets forth all real property exemptions in the Town. The total number totals \$12,113,593 for the County tax, \$12,420,846 exemptions in the Town tax and \$24,673,048 in school tax exemptions. She noted that families are for the most part ineligible for most of these exemptions.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Why are the lights still on all night outside the Garage? Didn't the Highway Superintendent agree to turn them off at the end of the day?
- Coun. Kretser stated research was being done to change the lighting to a more efficient type. National Grid was to have checked them, but we will speak with the Highway Dept. about this.
- Have you instituted changes regarding trips to the dump? Does the General Fund custodian take both Highway and General refuse?
- Yes, the change was instituted last week, Supv. Keith confirmed The Saranac Lake Fire Dept. and the Rescue Squad are dividing so ambulance service can bill insurance companies. Shouldn't the lower cost be reflected in the budget?
- Supv. Keith responded that the "paper split" has not yet been accomplished and will not be finalized until next year. In addition, the Village of Saranac Lake will not commence its budget meetings until March or April 2009, as its fiscal year is on a different schedule. Further, the adjoining communities which contract with the Village for fire and rescue service paid a total of \$50,000 for a full-time EMT, and the position is still vacant. The \$50,000 was placed in the Village General Fund, and \$32,000 of the \$50,000 was expended by the Village but was not accounted for. Town supervisors protested this, and the Village granted a credit towards the 2009 contract to each participating municipality. Supv. Keith and other town supervisors advised the Village it should place the fire/rescue funds in a separate account, not in the Village General Fund. Budget Officer Meagher noted that future fire/rescue contracts should be lower.
- The Town of Franklin budget is higher than any other town in the area. The County has no increase, and surrounding towns only are up 3%. Why are we so high? Refuse and garbage increased to 15%, Cemeteries up 12%? Why pay someone \$15 per hour to mow lawns.
- Coun. Smalley stated the high percentage increases were explained by Budget Officer Meagher previously. The salary for the General Fund employee had not been accounted for correctly; these high percentage increases are a bookkeeping correction. In actuality, the General Fund employee will be receiving a 3.5% increase. Budget Officer Meagher concurred, stating that no one is receiving a 12% increase.
- Why does the budgeted amount for the 2009 rescue contract stay the same? Lake Placid ambulance bills insurance companies. You should check with them.
- Supv. Keith replied the Fire Dept. has been working on this for quite some time and have hired lawyers to deal with the paperwork; it is quite involved. The projected cost savings are not yet realized, and the Village has a different fiscal year. No one actually knows what the savings will be; however, in speaking with Harrietstown Supervisor Larry Miller, she learned that as soon as the legal work is done, cost savings will be known.
- Why is the General Fund grants line increased 15%? Does Ann Holland work on an hourly basis? What are these grant applications for?
- We have a contract with Ann Holland to write grant applications; this is for our infrastructure improvement.
- You have to cut back. Why not put less down on a new Highway vehicle and keep them for a longer time? Why not just purchase single-axle trucks like we did years ago?
- Coun. Kretser replied that the price of salt tripled, the price of sand is up, asphalt prices have quadrupled, the front end loader is used daily, and must be replaced. Highway Supt. Sullivan indicated the Town could spend \$20,000 to repair it, and it would last for another year. Coun. Smalley continued, the Board has worked very hard to cut costs, however, costs are continuing to rise and our income is going down. He noted that the Board is shocked that New York State is lowering values on state-owned land; be that as it may, vehicles must be replaced.
- If you don't have the money, you have to spend less because you're getting less. You must make this budget more acceptable.
- Does the Assessor check on all these exemptions?
- Budget Officer Meagher replied that checking on exemptions is part of the Assessor's job.
- Please keep those of us on fixed incomes in mind. Several residents are in danger of losing their homes.
- We also are residents, and this economy has also affected us. We do keep everyone in mind.

POLL OF ATTENDEES.

Supervisor Keith then asked whether or not those in attendance were in favor of the 2009 preliminary budget:

Dave Whitson - NO
 Barbara Karl - NO
 Frank Karl - NO
 Carol Ward - Undecided
 Paul Ward - YES

OTHER DISCUSSION.

Supv. Keith stated a situation at the Garage had developed, and Coun. Kretser explained that a 3-inch PVC line ruptured from the main drain. The department dug it up and discovered it drained water, salt and oil into a large tank. They also discovered an overflow of sludge. Engineer Doug Ferris was summoned, and he investigated the problem, and communicated with NYS DEC, which will pump it out so as to fix the problem temporarily. Mr. Ferris will attend an upcoming meeting and will report to the Board.

ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business to conduct the meeting adjourned at 7:59 PM. (J.Ordney-M.Keith m/s/p) ALL AYE
Respectfully submitted, Sandra J. Oliver, Town Clerk

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