



# The Town of Franklin

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[Home](#)
[Officials & Contact Info](#)
[Town Clerk/Tax Collector](#)
[Board Meetings](#)
[Town Budget](#)
[Laws & Forms](#)
[Newsletter](#)
[Public Notices & Bid Info](#)
[History, Photos & Maps](#)
[Property Assessments](#)
[Energy](#)
[Events, Recreation & Kate Mtn Park](#)
[Area Businesses](#)
[Town Journals](#)
[Emergency Preparedness](#)

## Town of Franklin Board Meetings

### 2010 PRELIMINARY BUDGET AND 2010 FIRE CONTRACT November 5, 2009 - 7:00 PM

#### Board members present:

Supervisor Mary Ellen Keith  
Councilperson Janet Ordway  
Councilman Al Berg  
Councilman Cliff Smalley

#### Board members absent:

Councilman Walt Kretser

#### Others Present:

Highway Supt. Jacques DeMars, Budget Officer Richard Meagher, Town Clerk Sandra Oliver, Karen Smalley, Frances Oliver, Art Willman, Ed Martin, Les Parker, Brad Merrill, Don & Doris Hamm, Carol Lavigne, Vince Pagano Ed Baltzly, Dick Jarvis, Donald Goff, John Alexander - WNBZ News, Nathan Brown - Adirondack Daily Enterprise

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Supervisor Keith called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The Town Clerk called the roll, introduced guests and stated a quorum was present.

#### 2. PURPOSE OF HEARING

Supervisor Keith stated the purpose of the public hearing was to receive comments from the public on the 2010 Preliminary Budget. She then read into the record the Rules of Procedure for Public Hearings:

#### "PUBLIC HEARINGS BY THE TOWN BOARD AND RULES OF PROCEDURE

A public hearing is a meeting of the board and the public regarding an important issue that may have a significant economic, environmental, or other serious impact on the town and its residents.

The purpose of a public hearing is to give the public an opportunity to express its views.

The public has the right to appear and give evidence and the right to hear and examine witnesses regarding the issue at hand. Notice of Public Hearings

The supervisor will give notice of public hearings in writing to the board and town clerk ten days before the hearing, when possible. The town clerk will then post a notice of the hearing in at least one public location and will give notice to the news media at least 72 hours prior to the hearing. Preparation for Public Hearing

A study or report should be prepared by an expert in the subject matter of the hearing, such person to be present to testify in favor of the proposal.

#### **RULES OF CONDUCT AT PUBLIC HEARINGS**

##### **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 subject matter of the public hearing 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.

##### **PRESENTATION OF COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS**

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

##### **GROUND RULES FOR THE PRESENTATION OF COMMENTS**

The purpose of a public hearing is to gather public comment on the 2010 Preliminary Budget. 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:

No one may speak unless recognized by the Chairperson for that purpose. Upon recognition, the person must identify him/herself by clearing stating his/her full name and address.

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.

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.

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.

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.

No person may speak a second time until everyone who wants to speak has spoken.

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."

### **3. REVIEW OF 2010 PRELIMINARY BUDGET**

Budget Officer Richard Meagher reviewed the 2010 Preliminary Budget and stated there would be a 2.1% increase over the 2009 Budget, or a rate of per 1,000 of 2.3%. The tax levy is \$1,065,062, up by \$41,000 over 2009. He reviewed the budgets from 2007 to 2010 Preliminary and found a 3.3% increase over the 4 year period. The increase is due in large part to a decrease in revenues and interest income from bank accounts (in 2009 \$10,000 was expected but to date, the Town has received \$1,100). In addition, NYS funding has been forecast to be lower in the future, as well as revenue received from Franklin County for mortgage tax (In 2008 the County paid \$24,000, in 2009 the Town forecast \$25,000 but has received \$\_\_\_\_\_). The decrease in revenue affects not only the General Fund but Highway Fund as well (in 2008 the Highway Fund received \$89,000 and in 2009 forecast receipts of \$10,000 but to date has received \$2,000). The Board, he stated, has been diligent in cutting expenses in both funds. The Board held 3 budget workshops and debated heavily. Highway Dept. held expenses down but must purchase a new frontloader. A 2.1% increase is reasonable. Mr. Meagher reiterated that the percentage increase in the budget over 4 years was 3.3%, very reasonable.

**QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:**

Q/C Ed Baltzly asked if the Town could invest its funds in 3-month CD's in order to earn higher interest.

A: Mr. Meagher replied that historically NY CLASS pays a higher interest rate. When interest rates again rise, the Town can anticipate earning more interest. Municipalities must follow very strict NYS regulations regarding investment of public monies. When taxes are collected, the receipts are immediately deposited into NY CLASS.

Q/C Ed Baltzly asked if withdrawals can be made from CLASS

A: Supv. Keith responded it was very easy to transfer funds from CLASS.

Q/C Vince Pagano commented he saw very little difference between the Tentative and Preliminary Budget. He asked if the Board was satisfied with the Preliminary Budget.

A: Supv. Keith replied the Board was waiting for the public's comments and advice and will take them into consideration before adopting the budget.

Q/C RICHARD JARVIS submitted written comments on the budget to the Town Clerk:

"R. Jarvis comments on Town of Franklin 2010 Preliminary Budget, Nov. 5, 2009: Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the 2010 town budget. Overall, I was hoping that the budget would have no increase in the tax rate. Health insurance costs, Saranac Lake fire protection contract, select salaries and the certain highway department expenses appear to represent the larger increases from past budgets. I wish the bigger budget line items were presented to the board with more than just comparison to previous year's budget. There should be more information on the program, detailed cost estimates and presentation of options. The following are my comments and questions following the budget accounts and code numbers:

<b>Garage Equip &amp; Cap Outlay</b>	A1640.2	Information is lacking
<b>Codes Officer CE</b>	A3010.4	Is 5.11% raise same as other employees benefits factor?
<b>Supt of Highways</b>	A5010.1	12.5% raise is too much, benefits factor?
<b>Grant Fed &amp; State</b>	A6461.4 A.	Holland consulted? Wish this was an increase
<b>Youth Programs</b>	A7310	Was the August program report factored in?
<b>Hosp &amp; Med Insurance</b>	A9060.8	13% increase should be considered in emp comp.
<b>Payment in Lieu of Taxes</b>	A1081	Given exempt property, ask for contribution-fire, roads
<b>Add Recreation Revenues</b>	?	Contributions to youth program, KM Park field rentals
<b>Mortgage Tax</b>	A3005	Is \$25,000 realistic given real estate climate?
<b>State Aid General</b>	A3089	Is \$25,000 realistic given state budget crisis?
<b>Hosp &amp; Med Insurance</b>	DA9060.8	26% increase should be considered in emp comp."

A Mr. Meagher responded that with respect to A1640.2 Garage Equipment and Capital Outlay, that \$113,000 was spent in 2008 and used for improvements to the Garage and engineering fees. The recommendation of the NYS Comptroller's Office was to place the amount in an expense line. Mr. Meagher noted that nothing is budgeted for 2010.

A: With respect to the Codes increase (A3010.4), under contract with the Town of Santa Clara, the Town of Franklin share expenses of the Codes Officer, 2/3 to Santa Clara, and 1/3 to Franklin. Santa Clara gave the Codes Officer a 3% increase. The contract amount covers his benefits and retirement and is billed and paid annually.

Supv. Keith added that other expenses, such as mileage and travel, are also reimbursed by the Town of Franklin pursuant to the meticulous reporting of the Codes Officer.

A: With respect to Mr. Jarvis' suggestion about the Youth Programs, Supv. Keith indicated the amount on this line has been increased as the staff may need to add another employee.

A: Concerning the 13% increase in employee benefits, Supv. Keith stated the Highway Dept. employees have selected a "Cadillac" plan from the Teamsters Union.

Mr. Meagher reported the rates for health insurance are 13% higher, and Supv. Keith commented that Highway employees now pay 15% of their premiums. The exact amounts will not be known until contract negotiations are complete.

A: Regarding "payment in lieu of taxes", Mr. Meagher stated that although many municipalities have requested this option from tax-exempt organizations, very few of these organizations remit any monies. He opined the new Board might consider sending letters. Supervisor Keith indicated if this course of action were to be pursued, the process set forth in law must be adhered to. She pointed to the 4 pages of the Preliminary Budget listing all exempt organizations, including agricultural, churches, veterans, and forest land.

A: In response to Mr. Jarvis' suggestion about reviewing the 26% increase in workers compensation, Supv. Keith reported that several years ago a committee researched this insurance and whether to change. Essex County is attempting to cover all with one insurer. However, the Town of Franklin was recommended by Franklin County to stay with LaBarge Agency and not to switch. LaBarge Agency also has the Bloomingdale Volunteer Fire Dept.

VINCE PAGANO indicated he agreed with the budget.

DON HAMM asked what effect the new tax base would have on the budget.

A: Mr. Meagher replied that the Town of Brighton has experienced a \$3 million drop in tax receipts from NY State. The Town of Franklin will not suffer any further decrease in this revenue because of new properties. Once the assessment revaluation is in place, there will be an increase in assessed valuation, including all State-owned lands. Concerning the reval., generally it is expected that 1/3 of assessments will increase, 1/3 will remain the same, and 1/3 will be decreased. This means that tax rate will be lower.

DON HAMM questioned whether the Town had considered changing its insurance carriers. He stated he found he saved on premiums in his business liability and auto insurance when he changed carriers.

A: Coun. Ordway reported that several years ago she was on a committee (Jean Baltzly was also on the committee) that researched this. Municipal coverage differs from commercial coverage. After a year of investigating, the committee discovered there would be no savings realized by changing insurers.

#### **POLL OF ATTENDEES:**

Art Willman YES; Carol Lavigne YES; Jacques DeMars YES; Vince Pagano YES; Ed Baltzly YES; Dick Jarvis UNDECIDED; Don Hamm YES; Les Parker YES; Doris Hamm YES; Frances Oliver YES; Ed Martin YES; Brad Merrill YES; Don Goff YES; Karen Smalley YES.

Supv. Keith thanked everyone for their input.

#### **12. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to conduct, the meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm (M.Keith-C.Smalley m/s/p) ALL AYE  
Respectfully submitted, Sandra J. Oliver, Town Clerk

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