

**TOWN OF BRUNSWICK
PUBLIC HEARING
November 7, 2024 6:15 P.M.
TOWN HALL**

Board Members Present: Supervisor Herrington, Councilman Christian, Councilman Cipperly, and Councilman Balistreri, Councilman Sullivan.

Also Present: Attorney, Thomas Cioffi and Town Clerk, Rebecca Del Gaizo.

Supervisor Herrington called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting was to hold a Public Hearing to accept public comment regarding the Preliminary Budget of said Town for the fiscal year commencing January 1, 2025. Any person wishing to comment on the 2025 Preliminary Budget, or to speak in favor or against the 2025 Preliminary Budget, or any item therein contained, will be heard at that place and time.

At Supervisor Herrington's request, the Town Clerk read the complete Notice of Public Hearing into record. The Notice had been posted on the Town website, the Town Hall bulletin board and published in The Eastwick Press.

Supervisor Herrington said for the 25th time of the past 31 years, there will be no tax increase. All employees will receive a wage increase. Due to the minimum wage increasing again, this puts a strain on the Town's Summer Youth Program. Approximately 140 camp counselors, beach staff, and lifeguards were employed this past summer. The town will continue offering a high deductible health insurance plan. This type of plan helps keep insurance costs under control even with monthly rates increasing. The town board will continue to support the library with an increase in funding. The town continues to pay off a bond for the town hall, which is the only debt the town holds. The principal balance will decrease to \$355,000 in the new year. Supervisor Herrington invited Becky Legacy and Pat Poletto to further explain the budget.

Pat Poletto, Assistant to the Supervisor, and Becky Legacy, Bookkeeper, reviewed the past year's finances and the 2025 Preliminary Budget. Mr. Poletto said one of the things helping the town this year that will continue, is the sales tax from cannabis. With only 1 cannabis dispensary operating in town, sales tax payments of \$52,000 were received during the first 6 months of operating. There is another cannabis dispensary opening soon on Oakwood Avenue. The 2025 budget will be under the 2% tax cap again this year. The Assessor's contractual budget has increased due to a few cases that need to go to court next year. The extra funds will pay to hire legal representation for these tax cases. The town attorney budget line has increased because the town may hire a second attorney because of the workload. The health insurance plan is increasing again this year. Last year, the town paid \$107,000 in 2023, and \$110,000 was budgeted for 2024, and \$120,000 is budgeted for 2025. For the past 2 years, the town had a fixed rate with worker's compensation and we are waiting to hear what the new rates will be for 2025.

The Safety and Inspection budget line increased because the town is looking to hire another inspector. The budget for the beach is up a little. With the increase in minimum wage, it is necessary to increase summer staff wages. Retirement costs are increasing. Employees pay a percentage of their salary into the retirement system, and the town is charged back some of that amount. There is an increase in property tax collection of only \$7,000. The sales tax income amount is also increased. Mr. Poletto said the town used to

collect \$200,000/year in police fees but after the bail reform removed permissions to suspend driver's license privileges, it is difficult collecting traffic fines, adding up to \$400,000 in unpaid court fees over time. The town hall started off with a \$1.7million bond in 2005, and it's down to \$435,000 and will be \$355,000 next year. So far the town has saved \$53,000 in interest from refinancing the town hall 10 years ago. The highway fund reflects the new union contract, including payroll, and increased sales tax funding. The highway fund is generated through property and sales taxes, with the addition of Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) money for paving. The amount allocated to the town is unknown until next April when the state passes their budget. Last year the amount had decreased slightly. They increased the interest income for 2025. For paving, they put an extra \$200,000 from the highway fund reserves and into the budget trying to get caught up on paving projects. There is money in the budget for the new truck that is on order for \$275,000. The town made money selling surplus equipment this year. The water fund is pretty steady with expenses and income. The fire district budget fluctuates due to the service award program, which is determined by the number of members and a point system.

Councilman Balistreri asked if any money was going into the fund balance, to which Mr. Poletto responded they weren't that far along to know but believes there will be a small increase in the fund balance next year. Councilman Balistreri asked for clarification on the "historical property" budget line. Mr. Poletto explained it is the Brunswick Historical Society building. The building is in need of major repairs, including windows, roof, paint, etc. The project will need to get bids eventually. He also asked about the reduction in the snow removal budget line. Mr. Poletto and Ms. Legacy explained the salt shed is at max capacity due to the required minimum purchase and last year's mild winter season. They reduced the tonnage of salt and sand mixture required to purchase for next year since they are already at max capacity. Councilman Balistreri asked about the reduction in money collected from water sales. Mr. Poletto said the amount reflects Mr. Bradley's figures.

VISITORS WHO WISH TO SPEAK:

Mary Ellen Adams, Cooper Ave, asked what the total amount of budget expenses is. Mr. Poletto said \$10,738,485 and the amount to be raised in taxes is \$5,038,899. He explained how the town is a "pass through" for Eagle Mills Fire Department and Speigletown Fire Department and therefore have no control over their budgets. We collect the tax and pass it back to the respective fire department. Ms. Adams asked if the revenues projected on the budget are equal to the budgeted expenses, to which Mr. Poletto said yes, with the exception of \$200,000 coming out of highway fund balance and into the Highway budget to supplement CHIPS. She asked for a general range of the general fund balance. Mr. Poletto said the fund balance has approximately \$2.1million, which still includes American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that have been set aside to help pay for the Vanderheyden Dam project. The fund balance will decrease dramatically next year. Supervisor Herrington explained how ARPA money was issued during COVID-19 pandemic and many towns used the money immediately for paving projects. Brunswick invested the \$1.3million ARPA funds and earned interest on it. The ARPA funds must be spent by the end of this year. Mr. Poletto explained the Vanderheyden Dam water main replacement project that is currently going on, which is in phase 1 of the entire project. Ms. Adams asked if any money is projected to go into the fund balance. Mr. Poletto said they were not quite sure since there are still things to pay for before the end of the year. She then asked if they anticipate any other unexpected things happening or if environmental restrictions will cost the town. Mr. Poletto said he didn't think so but noted the water department has been working on a lead pipe inventory project required for the NYS Lead Service Line Replacement Plan that is due at the end of next year. He said the City of Troy receives funding for the project, but not the town. He said the easiest way to tell if you have lead pipes is to use a magnet, since magnets cannot stick to lead.

Mary Beth Bruno, Lumex Run, said she is very pleased to see the town is in such fiscal health. She said this would suggest the current tax base from the commercialization in town is holding Brunswick in a

good fiscal place and she would like to keep that up. Mr. Poletto interrupted, wanting to explain how the sales tax is determined, that it is based on tax assessed value. He said the town has been saving money to help pay for large planned expenses such as the Vanderheyden Dam project, new highway truck purchases, and they are looking into building a new highway garage. Ms. Bruno then specifically asked about the salary lines for staff, the Supervisor, and Councilmen. She was advised office staff will receive a 4% increase across the board. The highway department staff will receive a 3.5% increase based on their union contract. She asked if elected officials' salaries are based on merit, or evaluations, or is it automatic. Supervisor Herrington said if elected officials aren't any good that would be considered. He said elected part time staff receive what the rest of the staff receive. She asked if the town board votes on their own raises and the supervisor's salary. She was advised it is the same at every municipality. Councilman Sullivan said people get to vote for school budgets, but that is limited to that. Budgets and salaries are voted on every 4 years when the Supervisor and Councilmen seats are voted on.

Kim Jensen, Roberts Drive, asked if there is any expectation of the town doing any financial planning for cost sharing for any of the projects proposed from the Hoosick Road traffic study in the event any of the proposed projects are approved for federal funding. Mr. Poletto and Councilman Sullivan said nothing is planned at this time.

Supervisor Herrington commended Becky Legacy as an outstanding and talented bookkeeper. He continued to say the town board is lucky to also have Mr. Poletto for the past 31 years working with the town budget. He thanked both of them for their hard work on this year's budget.

Supervisor Herrington made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Councilman Sullivan. Unanimously approved. The public hearing closed at 6:50 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilman Christian made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Supervisor Herrington. Unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Del Gaizo
Town Clerk