

ATHENS TOWN BOARD – BUDGET MEETING
October 12, 2016

Meeting to discuss Town of Athens 2017 Tentative Budget, called to order by Supervisor Robert F. Butler, Jr. on Wednesday, October 12, 2016 at 6:10pm.

Attendees Present: Supervisor Butler, Councilwoman Mary H. Brandow, Councilman Richard M. Surrano, Jr., Councilman Anthony Paluch, Town Bookkeeper Michael Strenka, Interim Assessor Carol McBride, temporary secretary Jennifer Petramale. Councilman Michael Ragaini was partially present throughout the meeting due to coinciding Village meeting.

Interim Assessor Carol McBride presented her proposed budget for discussion:

- Carol asked if her clerk Michaela Anderson could increase her hours from 18/week to 20, to which Supervisor Butler responds there is no room in the budget to increase. Discussion continued surrounding the flexibility of her hours for personal reasons; Supervisor Butler responds No, that she must be present for the hours posted on the door, and it was pointed out that insurance is not available until employees work 21 or more hours per week.
- Carol questioned her own pay rate as per step chart. She believed her proposed 1.5% increase would put her rate at less than the next step. However, as per Bookkeeper Strenka and Supervisor Butler, she does not qualify for the next step due to a special agreement previously made (which was a 16% raise to work less hours); until she completes her certification, she will stay on this track.
- Carol also presented the Payment Schedule by Revaluation expert Bob Hilbert. Lengthy discussion among board members ensued regarding his presentation last year and a discrepancy in his pay rate. Board Members questioned Carol about the current Revaluation project and who authorized the expenditure. She claims the Board approved it and since it was in the budget she assumed it was approved. However, no proof of a contract has been presented, only a proposal letter dated 8/11/15 directed to Carol in regards to the cost of the project.
- Carol presented the option of allowing a medical deduction for seniors, as well as a solar proposal. (literature on file)

Supervisor Butler went on to present the proposed budget. As he points out in the summary, there is NO proposed tax increase. The budget was mostly kept the same as last year.

- He meets with Coxsackie Town Supervisor Rick Hanse on Friday to discuss sharing of legal services for the pending court case of Sleepy Hollow Lake vs. the Town of Athens.
- Includes 1.5% pay raises across the board

Councilwoman Brandow brought up questions about Justices taking insurance buyout and the discrepancies between policies/amounts. Discussion ensued, and Bookkeeper Strenka suggested board members submit line item changes which could then be voted on.

Bookkeeper Strenka pointed out that last year's Deputy Supervisor line item was not listed correctly. It is now fixed which makes it appear to be a large jump but it is just because of now being properly categorized.

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Councilwoman Brandow questioned the jump in Tax Collector Service Contract. Mr. Strenka replied it is to put required tax collector software on all the computers.

Regarding Town Clerk salary, Councilwoman Brandow noted that proposed increase is 24%, substantially higher than across the board 1.5%, and higher than Highway Supt which is \$34.50/hour. Sup. Butler noted that both positions are salary so hourly rate is skewed dependant on hours worked. It was noted that present Town Clerk was aware she makes less than the Justice Clerk, and that probably does not happen across the rest of the state. Mary cautioned about setting precedents with position salaries.

Supervisor Butler stated Dog Control is increased \$1,500 in order to take over the Village portion (who does not contribute).

Bookkeeper Strenka reported recent notification that ALS will reduce by \$2,000, down to \$22,814.

Supervisor Butler reported that George June said BLS should be \$95,000. Robert will try at Friday's meeting to compromise at \$92k, and noted past supervisor Joe Iraci was able to negotiate this down from \$101k a couple years ago.

Regarding Medical Plans & Retirees, the reduction was noted and discussed regarding losing 2 retirees; however we still have 2 retirees with 2 spouses on the \$280/month plan because of its portability for their travel, and 7 retirees with 4 spouses on the \$469/month plan which they chose to keep.

Regarding General B Budget, Strenka notes to watch the rising Attorney Fees (zoning & planning). Supervisor Butler will talk to Hal about limiting all the phone calls to attorney office, as each one is billed.

Regarding Highway DA budget, Strenka points out a new budget line item for equipment reserves created in both DA and DB. This was achieved by reducing other line items and putting it into this transfer category, keeping the budget unchanged from 2016.

Dates were discussed for getting changes done, public hearing, and Monday November 14th set for date to adopt new budget proposal.

Motion to adjourn was made by Supervisor Robert Butler at 8:03pm, seconded by Councilman Surrano. Ayes – (Butler, Surrano, Brandow, Ragaini & Paluch). Noes – 0. Abstentions - 0

Minutes recorded, typed & submitted by Jennifer Petramale.