

Town of Enfield
Public Hearing on Budget Minutes
Enfield Community Building
Wednesday, October 27, 2010
6:45 p.m.

Present: Town Supervisor Roy Barriere, Town Councilperson Chris Hern, Town Councilperson Jean Owens, Town Councilperson Debbie Teeter, Town Clerk Alice Linton, Highway Superintendent Buddy Rollins.

Town Supervisor Barriere opened the meeting at 6:45 p.m. by leading the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Supervisor Barriere explained that a Notice of the Public Hearing was posted in the Town Hall and published in the Ithaca Journal on October 19, 2010. Supervisor Barriere highlighted some of the important points in the budget. One is the retirement benefit which last year was budgeted for an amount considerably lower than what the payment for this year will be, which is around \$43,000. The budgeted amount for next year, for which we've already received notice, is going to be around \$45,000. Another item is the workmen's compensation will involves the general fund, highway fund and fire protection fund. There was an average of about a 20% increase which has to do with the increased raises in medical expenses and the number of claims.

Diane Aramini commented she'd never seen such a large increase and suggested the town look at their carrier. Supervisor Barriere responded our carrier is through NYMIR which is very competitive, but Sprague Insurance is also looking at other carriers for the town.

Supervisor Barriere also noted that salary increases of 3% are proposed for everyone in the highway department, including the highway superintendent. Also proposed are a 3% to 5% increase for most public officials which will bring them more in line with the rest of the county. The three positions that are now considerably lower than other towns in the county are the supervisor, clerk and deputy clerk positions.

At this point Supervisor Barriere moved on to the public and reminded everyone that it is beneficial for the board to hear comments – what the public feels should be increased or cut. Because of the areas mentioned above, the tax rate increase proposed is 3.58% for the general fund and highway fund and 3.63% for the fire protection fund.

Gary Fisher commented that he felt the budget was incomplete because there are no fund balances shown for the year – beginning and ending – and this makes a big difference when looking at where the money is coming from and where it is going and what the balances are. He had questions that he could not answer because he didn't have this information. He also mentioned that worker's compensation wasn't increased 20% in each department.

Supervisor Barriere replied that the 20% was overall. He also explained that at the beginning of the year, when the workman's compensation was paid for the fire department and the town, there was an under budget on the fireman's account by a little over \$3,000. According to the state comptroller, the way to handle that was to go ahead and pay it from our unallocated insurance account for 2010 and in 2011 increase the fireman's budget line by that amount and move it back into that line item.

Gary Fisher also commented that he was appalled at the increase proposed for the supervisor and clerk. He felt each town within the county is a separate geographic area and we shouldn't try to compete or hire people from other municipalities to run our town. Each town has different populations and different economic incomes across the board. He feels a 3% to 5% increase is beyond the pale when we have basically a 0% cost of living increase in the United States. He feels that employees should get a 0% pay increase this year.

Diane Aramini reiterated what Gary said. She has research that shows different companies will be giving an average of 2 – 2.5% salary increases this year. She feels the budget is way above for all salaries and would like the board to reconsider the budget since some taxpayers are not having increases in their income this year. These are trying times.

Peggy Hubbell elaborated on Diane's comments. She feels the number of hours that the town clerk and supervisor work in other towns should be considered. She stated the Town of Danby has a clerk there 8 hours a day, 5 days a week.

Diane Aramini asked how many hours a week the Enfield deputy clerk works. Supervisor Barriere explained the deputy clerk gets paid an hourly wage and the increase will be in the hourly rate and the number of hours worked. Dog control is now being passed to municipalities from the state, and this will require more of the clerk's time for maintaining records.

Peggy Hubbell stated it wasn't that long ago that the deputy clerk line item was cut.

Diane Aramini asked what was the change in dog control.

Supervisor Barriere explained the responsibility of maintaining the data base has belonged to the state, but as of January 1 the state is passing this down to municipalities so the clerks will be responsible for maintaining the data base. New Town of Enfield tags will also be issued to replace the NYS Department of Ag and Market tags.

Diane Aramini asked for an explanation of the worker's compensation under fire protection.

Supervisor Barriere stated \$3,424 was lacking in the fireman's account to pay for worker's compensation this year, so that had to come out of unallocated insurance. So the town had not budgeted enough. The state comptroller told us this was the proper way it should be done and in 2011 this figure will need to be added to the budget so it can be returned. This year the total will be going up from around \$22,000 to around \$26,000.

Stan Carpenter asked why the brush and weed removal line item was budgeted less than last year.

Supervisor Barriere explained that the funds have been divided differently. The total payroll is now divided into two categories – the general highway and the snow removal instead of having three categories which makes it difficult to separate all that out. Before the regular mowing was included in that and now it will be in general repairs, personal service, but responsibilities will be the same.

Diane Aramini asked why the bookkeeper was given a 5% increase.

Supervisor Barriere responded this is to try and bring the compensation up to a comparable rate with the rest of the county.

Diane Aramini again stated these are tough economic times and thinks the taxpayers will suffer with this budget.

Gary Fisher stated the county has financial problems and has given pay raises that were far in excess of cost of living increases. Percentage wise this compounds year after year, but is also compounded as far as state retirement because that figures is a percentage of wages. That is happening here also – it is not just the wage increase but social security and retirement. You have to look further down the road. He again reiterated that we should not be comparing our bookkeeper with the Town of Ithaca bookkeeper, but looking here and asking if it is a fair wage for the work that we're requiring.

Peggy Hubbell asked why highway general repairs, personnel services is cut by \$6,109.57? If they got a pay raise, where is it?

Highway superintendent Buddy Rollins explained a higher paid employee retired and was replaced with a new employee at a lower hourly rate.

Sandy Small asked why the highway employees don't get a 5% raise.

Supervisor Barriere replied that the pay rate of our highway employees, as compared with other municipalities, looks good.

Diane Aramini asked if we paid for a deputy supervisor in 2010. Was Jean Owens paid for this position and the town councilperson position?

Supervisor Barriere replied that yes, she was paid for both positions. This is the same as the highway machine equipment operator and deputy highway superintendent being paid for two positions. The person is asked to do more than a regular machine equipment operator.

Stan Carpenter asked, as far as revenues, was there a change in the formula?

Supervisor Barriere explained that earlier this year the board decided to change from sales tax revenue to property tax revenue. This is because the sales tax has been unpredictable and the actual tax levy has been hard to determine. The biggest advantage of switching to the property tax is it will be consistent and we'll get all the money up front and we'll be able to get the interest on that. With the sales tax version, which we have now, we're still due a few more checks before the end of the year which we don't receive interest on.

Gary Fisher stated that with sales tax you have the opportunity to receive additional funds that you won't have budgeted for, and with this plan you forego that. History will show that the town did very well in the past with sales tax and additional monies coming into the town. He doesn't feel the interest rates we would receive now will make up that difference.

Supervisor Barriere asked for more comments. There being none, he moved to close the public hearing at 7:12 p.m. Motion seconded by Councilperson Owens. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Enfield Special Public Hearing on Budget, October 27, 2010
Alice M. Linton
Enfield Town Clerk