



Town Board

Special Meeting Preliminary Budget

November 17, 2022

The Town Board of the Town of Chester convened at the Town of Chester Municipal Center, 6307 State Route 9, Chestertown, New York, at 4:30 pm.

Roll Call:

Supervisor Craig Leggett – Present
Councilman Chris Aiken - Present
Councilwoman Karen DuRose – Present
Councilman Mike Packer – Present
Councilman Larry Turcotte – Present
Deputy Supervisor Marion Eagan – Present
Town Clerk, Mindy Conway – Present

Special Meeting:

Supervisor Leggett **opened** the Special Town Board Meeting at 4:30 pm with Councilwoman DuRose leading the Pledge of Allegiance.

Preliminary Budget:

Supervisor Leggett presented an informational overview of the duties and responsibilities of the Assistant to the Assessor, Purchasing Agent, Confidential Assistant to the Supervisor, Zoning Administrator, Court Clerk, and Town Clerk. Right now, we have a good group of employees at the Town Hall that work well with each other. We are a small town and don't have a lot of extra staff. We have a great group of people who are dedicated to what they do. Remember that our out of unit employees do not receive longevity.

Mr. Packer commented that he thinks the pay wages are too high and he would go for a cost of living raise of seven or eight percent, that is the most he will go for, it is going to be tough for people this year.

Supervisor Leggett said yes, it will be tough for everyone, including our employees.

Mr. Aiken said that on paper it looks like a big raise, but based on a forty-hour week, it is \$25 per hour which is not a lot of money for these positions and asked about the office hours for the Town Clerk. Mindy replied that they are posted for 30 hours a week and by appointment.

Mrs. DuRose said that she was going to say no to the budget even though Craig did a good job, she feels that she needs to think about her neighbors, not just Mindy and she is not saying that Mindy isn't doing a good job but feels that for \$52,000 the office should be open 37.5 or 40 hours per week. Mrs. DuRose said she is done. Mindy asked Mrs. DuRose, if she has her office open 40 hours a week then she would give her \$52,000. Mrs. DuRose commented if you are in there. Mindy asked where else she would be. Mrs. DuRose commented over to Riparius or to the meter place, anywhere, she does not care where. She has had enough of the budget this year.

Supervisor Leggett commented that we are very lean here, we used to have a full-time person as bookkeeper/secretary that was in there the whole time and have been making due with a bookkeeper that is less than 20 hours per week, we have a confidential secretary that is picking up

20 hours a week, so the bases are covered in his office. Sometime if you are in your office you are not doing your work, sometimes you have to be out and about working with the water department, doing the customer service. We had a few water bills that were higher than past years and we didn't say tough luck, Mindy went out there with the Water Superintendent, took readings, started a spreadsheet, and kept track for a month, and people went away satisfied. They might have had to pay a little bit more than what they had wanted, but the facts were there, because people went out on the street to take care of this. That may not fall under the Town Clerk per se, but that is how we help the public. We help people to get things done. Also, when look through other towns the Clerk has assistants, Bolton has an assistant, Warrensburg has at least one assistant.

Mr. Packer asked how many hours the new girl in the Bookkeeper's Office works. Supervisor Leggett replied that Carrie Jo is working up to 20 hours. Mr. Packer asked if she could do some of those jobs. Supervisor Leggett said right now she is picking up a lot from the bookkeeper has been doing payroll and is booked up during her time right now. She has been a good hire. Mr. Packer asked if there was someone else. Supervisor Leggett commented that we have been able to get away with our budget here staying as even as it has through the years by managing the personnel to take on more jobs and not just compartmentalizing. Mr. Packer said that we are looking to give some employees more than 2.5%, we are breaking the tax cap, we are looking to build a highway garage for over 5 million, and there are a lot of things we are looking to do. Supervisor Leggett said that we also have an increase request on services as well and they want us to do more. We just added seniors that was never there before, they have become self-sufficient, we have pickleballers that want six new courts and there are the usual demands for keeping up our highway and water systems. Mindy commented that they could hire someone else to do some of the jobs she has taken on like Mr. Packer suggested.

2023 Budget Effect on Various Properties							
Chestertown				Pottersville			
Funds in Tax Bill	2022 RATE	2023 RATE	2022-2023	Funds in Tax Bill	2022 RATE	2023 RATE	2022-2023
Warren County	\$3.88	\$3.67	-\$0.22	Warren County	\$3.88	\$3.67	-\$0.22
A/DA/L	\$1.77	\$1.39	-\$0.39	A/DA/L	\$1.77	\$1.39	-\$0.39
NWEMS	\$0.00	\$0.39	\$0.39	NWEMS	\$0.00	\$0.39	\$0.39
Chester Fire	\$0.81	\$0.81	\$0.00	Pottersville Fire	\$1.77	\$1.67	-\$0.10
Total Tax Rate	\$6.47	\$6.25	-\$0.22	Total Tax Rate	\$7.43	\$7.12	-\$0.31
Cost/\$100,000	\$646.50	\$624.69	-\$21.81	Cost/\$100,000	\$742.50	\$711.59	-\$30.91
Cost/\$200,000	\$1,293.00	\$1,249.39	-\$43.61	Cost/\$200,000	\$1,485.00	\$1,423.19	-\$61.81
Cost/\$300,000	\$1,939.50	\$1,874.08	-\$65.42	Cost/\$300,000	\$2,227.50	\$2,134.78	-\$92.72
Cost/\$400,000	\$2,586.00	\$2,498.77	-\$87.23	Cost/\$400,000	\$2,970.00	\$2,846.37	-\$123.63

Supervisor Leggett commented that working on the County Budget as Finance Chair and Acting County Administrator, one of the hardest thing was personnel and right now the Warren County Budget is 4.5 million dollars more solely on the \$5,720 that every employee at the County got. Warren County adjusted everybody's salary at the County by \$5,720. If the Town was to do something like that you are looking at more than what is proposed in this budget.

Supervisor Leggett said yes, we are breaking the tax cap and he is not happy about that, but we have North Warren EMS going up \$186,000 and we will paying them \$300,000. That is a large amount right out of the starting gate to absorb. We have held steady with even that large

increase. Supervisor Leggett said that he is the one who sits here with the employee that do great work for the Town and he feel they are worth it.

Supervisor Leggett said that if the Board would like to change any of them it can be done at this meeting. Mr. Packer commented that he thinks we have a good staff.

Mr. Turcotte asked what the formation of the Friends Lake Tax District added to the tax burden. Supervisor Leggett said \$34,000. Mr. Turcotte commented that it was the EMS District and the Friends Lake District that was pushing us up over the ceiling. Supervisor Leggett said that was right.

Ms. Eagan commented that we have streamlined things at the Town Hall which has allowed to do more and allowed us to purchase things like Christmas lights for \$15,000 and \$3,000 for flowers every year. We buy \$7,500 worth of fireworks. If someone is only making \$1,100 a month, they are paying virtually nothing in taxes. This budget process starts here in August and Craig does a wonderful job and she thinks that it is an insult to Craig for Karen to say that she is not going to vote for the budget. Ms. Eagan said she did the same job as Carol Bleickhardt but for less.

Supervisor Leggett said that one of the reasons he presented the budget the way he did was that everyone at the end of the hall shares duties so they should get the same equal rate. Supervisor Leggett asked the Board if they were comfortable making \$650 per month. Mrs. DuRose said that when she ran for the position, she knew what she had to do and she is ok with the 2.5% raise and she is ok with working 20-30 hours per week with phone calls, emails, text messages and people stopping by her house and if she doesn't like it, she will not run again.

Mr. Turcotte thinks that the Budget Officer for the Town ultimately has the best financial interests of the Town in mind. There is a lot more in this Budget than personal, which we get hung up on every year. After reviewing this budget, he would not call this frivolous. Mr. Turcotte said that he called around to some of the local businesses to see what they were giving out for raises. The ones he called, were an 8-10% across the board regardless of skill level. The pay that is being proposed is fair when looking at the labor market and we don't want to lose the people we have. He would like to have a schedule set for non-union employees and set hours for the Town Hall. Mr. Turcotte thanked Supervisor Leggett for his efforts.

Mrs. DuRose asked Supervisor Leggett on the revenue, why we are dropping over \$300,000 out of Real Property for the proposed Budget of 2023. Supervisor Leggett replied that it had to do with sales tax. Mrs. DuRose said she wanted to make sure that it didn't have anything to do with current homes selling for more. Supervisor Leggett said that would show up in the assessed value.

Mrs. DuRose asked why we had a line for CDL in the General Fund. Supervisor Leggett said it has always been in there, we could have a CDL driver in Parks and Rec. Mrs. DuRose asked why the CDL in the Highway Fund varied so much from year to year. The Town Clerk replied that part of the expense is due to new hires.

Mr. Aiken said the hopefully this will bring everyone up to where they belong, and we can go back to the regular 2.5% raise across the board.

Supervisor Leggett commented that over the last 6 years we have averaged an increase in the general Fund of 2 % and we have been fair to our employees.

Mr. Packer proposed that the Board give all non-union employees an 8% raise and asked if that would include the Library. Supervisor Leggett said the Library is set by the Library Board of Trustees.

Supervisor Leggett asked if it was a flat raise across the board how is it attached to duties and value of the job. Ms. Eagan said that she has a hard time with someone starting out making \$25 per hour when she has been here 10 years. Mrs. DuRose commented that she thought we were doing this on merit not on catching up to someone else. Mr. Aiken commented that he likes the idea of bringing them up to \$25 for 40 hours a week. Mrs. DuRose said that everyone should have to punch a timeclock. Supervisor Leggett commented that if we increase everyone 8% across the board we will be paying \$15,500 more than the budget presented.

RESOLUTION NO. 176 OF 2022: ACCEPT PRELIMINARY BUDGET AS FINAL 2023 BUDGET AND ADOPTS THE 2023 FINAL BUDGET

WHEREAS, a Public Hearing on the Preliminary Budget was held November 8, 2022 at 7 pm, **BE IT RESOLVED**, the Town Board accepts the Preliminary Budget, as presented, as the 2023 Final Budget and adopts the 2023 Final Budget as presented by the Budget Office.

On a motion by Mr. Turcotte, seconded by Mr. Aiken, Resolution No. 176 of 2022 was **ADOPTED**.

Mr. Turcotte	AYE
Mrs. DuRose	NO
Mr. Packer	NO
Mr. Aiken	AYE
Supervisor Leggett	AYE

Mrs. DuRose made a motion keep the raises at 2.5% from now on every year.

Mr. Packer said that he doesn't want to be tied down. Mrs. DuRose asked why, he may want to go to 1%. Ms. Eagan commented, what a lack of respect to the people who work here.

Supervisor Leggett said that we have done well financially and during Covid people took cuts.

Ms. Eagan said that she is happy to work for Craig.

On a motion by Supervisor Leggett, seconded by Mr. Packer the Board **entered** executive session to discuss the possible acquisition of real property at 6:37 pm.

AYE 5 NO 0

On a motion by Mr. Aiken, seconded by Mr. Turcotte the Board **exited** executive session at 6:57 pm.

AYE 5 NO 0

No action taken.

Mrs. DuRose asked about the status of a Retiree's Medicare. Ms. Eagan replied that an appeal was filed and they have to wait up to 60 days for a decision. Supervisor Leggett commented that we take good care of our employees, current and retired as well. Ms. Eagan said she made one phone call to Social Security and helped to file an appeal.

On a motion by Mr. Packer, seconded by Mr. Turcotte, meeting **adjourned** at 7:03 pm.

AYE 5 NO 0

Respectfully submitted,

Mindy Conway, Town Clerk

DRAFT