

Budget Workshop to Discuss 2024 Budget held October 24, 2023, at 10:00 A.M. at the Town Hall in Schroon Lake N.Y.

Present:

Supervisor: Meg Wood

Councilpersons: Leanna Welch, Lynn Donaldson, Richard Gero and Steve Miller

Deputy Town Clerk: Erica Hedden

Budget Officer : Chris Stone

Highway Superintendent : Dana Shaughnessy

Also Present: Albert May, Hunter Allison, Bill Jenks, Joe Flores, Jason Matt

Supervisor Wood called the meeting to order at 10:15 A.M. with a pledge to the Flag .

Dana Shaughnessy stated, we are over. We have some more stuff coming in with the FEMA payments and we have a sander coming in, we budgeted for that last year. We budgeted \$30,000 for that but we spent \$15,000. So we can pull in that unspent balance towards general repairs. Our payments for our new truck are done next year. We are finishing up getting our road sand, which will be approximately \$22,000, we budgeted for \$21,000. We have some hand work and FEMA work to finish up, that will be about \$30,000. We have Peckhams coming back up for free to fix some issues. With everything from the storm damage, and all the emergency repairs we faced this year, we are definitely over budget. An estimate of the cost from the storm damage is about \$325,000 that includes man hours. We should be getting back about \$250,000 of that when the FEMA checks start coming in, which can be a slow process, but they are coming. We tried our best to keep as much of the work as possible, "In house", which of course is a cost savings. I talked with Joe, looking at the near future and we don't think there will be any large equipment that we need to buy or replace at this time; we can do maintenance at this time. Anything that might be needed, we think will be within budget.

Chris Stone stated; Joe, are you going to be buying a new truck next year? The last payment on the current truck is this year, and typically it takes about a year once ordered to receive the truck.

Joe Flores stated I am not 100% at this point. I want to keep that spare truck around, at least for the winter.

Chris Stone stated; so chances are your going to go out to bid next year. Probably won't get it till the following year.

Dana Shaughnessy stated; they are about 2 plus years out right now, on build time.

Supervisor Wood stated; if that's the case maybe we should go out to bid now, knowing it will take that long to receive the truck, plan ahead.

Councilman Gero stated; what is the manufacturer?

Dana Shaughnessy stated; international.

Councilman Gero stated; are there other manufacturers on the state contracts? I would look into that as they might have different build times.

Dana Shaughnessy stated; North Hudson just got a Western Star and that took about 2 and a half years, they are all about the same. So far the 5 trucks that we have are in pretty decent shape.

Councilman Gero stated; how are we with supplies like cutting edges, cutter blades, shoes and bolts?

Joe Flores stated; good, we just ordered our last supply of grater blades, we have ice blades, we are fully equipped and ready for this season. We have enough and spares. Chains, blades, we are in good shape.

Councilwoman Welch stated; on a side note, now that Gordy has retired should we be posting soon for a replacement? We are going to be two men down. Gordy has retired and Joe is going to superintendent.

Dana Shaughnessy stated; we have Gordy's replacement, but we will need one more. Dustin was hired on as Gordy's replacement before Gordy left, so that spot is filled. We will be down one as of the first of the year.

Joe Flores stated; we can put out for wing man too, folks who might want overtime.

Supervisor Wood stated; in regards to hiring and what we need, who in the highway department besides Dennis does not have their CDL?

Dana Shaughnessy stated; just Dennis

Supervisor Wood stated; is everyone who has a CDL is working in a plow truck? We don't have anyone who can plow, that refuses to plow correct?

Joe Flores stated, correct. Dennis does plow; he plows in the pick up truck. Everyone that has their license does plow.

Supervisor Wood stated; so what specifically are we looking to put out an ad for?

Dana Shaughnessy stated; HEO/MEO or trainee, what ever the entry title is.

Councilman Gero stated; we should look for an MEO trainee or a wing man. Even if we have to hire someone and they are a wing man for this winter, just knowing that it will be required of them to get their CDL within a certain time frame. I think it's a great way for them to start. We just need to make sure that they know upon entry, that a CDL will be required.

Chris Stone stated; the other thing we want to keep in mind if, that if we hire part time, we open ourselves up to unemployment, and we have to pay anyways, so we might as well hire full time.

Dana Shaughnessy stated; one thing I wanted to talk about as well is the deputy. I would recommend raising the deputy pay. We have a lot of new crew members now; we lost and are losing a lot of experience this year as people are retiring. I think this year the role of deputy will be important, and really bare a lot more weight this year. The deputy is really going to have to step up.

Chris Stone stated; well deputy is not a foreman. Deputy is to step in when you, or starting next year, Joe, are not there. Deputy pay is not for assistance managing the staff or being foreman. Deputy pay is simply to act as Deputy Supervisor in the event that the Supervisor is not there for whatever reason. If you are looking to get another position created, like a foreman, that's a whole different ball game. As a municipality, we are subject to civil service rules and there isn't a title for that.

Dana Shaughnessy stated; I understand, but I think the Deputy will be stepping up and helping out more, even though that isn't in the title. I strongly recommend that we raise the deputy pay.

Supervisor Wood stated; we will take that under advisement. Thank you

Bill Jenks stated; here is a copy of my list. You'll see there is an estimate for a new truck in there. I have looked at a couple places and they are all about the same. This is for a gas truck, the diesel prices are just WAY out there.

Supervisor Wood stated; is Krystal a part of the state contract?

Bill Jenks stated; Adirondack Auto is not, I do not know about Krystal. I'm just giving you a ball park.

Councilwoman Welch stated; can I ask about your listing here to upgrade the control system? What is that for?

Bill Jenks stated; the state has been after us to get this done. Our control system which was put in, in 2001, it is run through the telephone lines. We are going to have to upgrade it to a better system that goes through Ethernet or something else. This isn't something we are going to be able to do all at

once. That is why we needed the back up generators, so the control system can still function if the power is out. As of now, if we have power or not, we have phone lines. Once this is switched over, if the power is out we won't have internet. I talked to Jim Kowalka about this. He isn't familiar with what we have out in the field. We talked about generators, and we talked about using solar. The generators are the best and most reliable option. Prior to this we had stand by generators on site, that I would have to go up and fire up manually. That number is an estimate, and of course that is going to go up as time goes on, but this is just to get you some information and some numbers to mull over.

Supervisor Wood stated; this would qualify for the ARPA funds that we are waiting on. We need to get a list of things to the powers at be of what repairs we are going to do. So we need to decide how we are going to divide up these funds. We need to allocate them before they will be issued.

Bill Jenks stated; if we were to order three generators, we could probably get a better deal. One for Horseshoe Pond tank, one for the golf course tank, and one for the Route 9 tank. That would be the lowest price.

Councilwoman Welch stated; how did you make out with getting the meters replaced?

Bill Jenks stated; not good, I have replaced 6. The problem is to get people to let us in.

Councilwoman Donaldson stated; I see a listing here for security cameras along the fences?

Bill Jenks stated; yes the state has been pushing us to get this. The state has brought this up to us several times during their yearly inspections. They, at this time are not making us do this, but that is coming. The route 9 tank would be easy to get it hooked up with internet there for the cameras. The horseshoe pond tank, there is internet at the bottom of tank way but not up to the top. That would require poles to be put in. The golf course tank would be tricky, that would need to be all underground so that would take a bit of time and expense to get set up. It's a matter of security; this is the towns' water supply.

Chris Stone stated; I do think this is something the board needs to look at. This is a big undertaking. We need to plan this out, if we are going to make these changes; this is going to cost money. We need to really put some effort into figuring out what is the best way to move forward with this.

Councilwoman Donaldson stated; can we get an estimate from Jim?

Bill Jenks stated; yes that would be a great start. If he has time I can take him around and show him what we have and what we might need so he can get a better idea. Another thing that I didn't put

on this list that was brought to my attention, the programming for the water meters for the reading and the billing is going to be changed. That will possibly be an \$8,000 dollar fee. A rep is supposed to stop by this afternoon he can give us an update and some more information. We are switching to a whole new program. This wasn't something that I had planned on this year.

Chris Stone stated; we are going to have to make it work, this change has to happen. The reason for all this is that the company no longer supports the program we have; it will continue to work until it gets its first hiccup and they will not service it. So our option was to remain with the old system and cross our fingers or upgrade to their new system and continue to receive their tech support and updated programming. The change had to happen.

Supervisor Wood stated; you have met a couple times with Mike Pierce, an engineer with the county to do an assessment of our water systems, can you explain what's going on?

Bill Jenks stated; yes I did. Basically there were two gentlemen that came in and they assessed the well site. What they are doing is, they take pictures and they give a recommendation of the remaining life of the equipment and what the cost of upgrades/ replacements would be. Then they categorize them based on the needs they see. There will be another person coming in to do a similar assessment on some other things as well. Again, they are trying to give us the remaining life on our equipment and base their recommendations on what needs to be replaced and how much we can anticipate the cost to be, an estimate.

Supervisor Wood stated; this whole project is going to take about a year to finish, these engineers are doing the whole county. So we might not have results right away, but this is a county wide project. This is a service that is coming down from the county, at no cost to the town. This is really going to help give us an idea of where we stand and help us with budgets moving forward, a long range plan. We also have another project coming up that the state has brought down to us. We need to be able to identify the types of pipes we have coming off our water mains. That project has a time frame.

Bill Jenks stated; October, 24th 2025. Some of it is already done. We have some new main lines so we know what type of pipe is in there. What we don't know is what type of lines goes to someone house. That is the information that we need.

Councilwoman Donaldson stated; why are we required to know what's on the private lines?

Bill Jenks stated; we supply to the private lines. This is through the state. They want to know, we will have to dig up lines to find out. This is going to be tricky because we do not have the right to

dig on private property, so we will have to reach out to the property owners. We can say that the pipe material is unknown, and that will satisfy the state for this first year, but as this project goes on and on, they will want those unknowns to be found.

Supervisor Wood stated; they sent out some paper work for this a year or so ago, but we always have projects going on, now that this is coming down the pipe line a little closer, we need to start working on it. The town of Westport I believe it was, at the beginning of the year sent a letter out with the property taxes. Explaining briefly and simply, and asked for the property owners to check a box. That would save us a lot of money. Even if we only got 10 -15% return on that, which would be 10-15% that we would not have to do.

Bill Jenks stated; this is a gray area because this is a private line on private property. We do not have the right to dig up private property. The state is still working on all the details with that.

Councilwoman Welch stated; I have a question, going back to the new water meters?

Bill Jenks stated; the problem is getting to the people. Getting to them during working hours, finding them when they are home. Some people are only here for a month or two months.

Chris Stone stated; I wanted to add. We also have issues with people taking their meters out and when they put it back in they put it in backwards. That creates a major issue for Pat and it will for Erica too. When they go to download that information it throws off the whole billing. She had to reverse approximately \$4,000 worth of billings due to water flow being backwards. Every time you have to touch an account or make a correction, there is always a slight room for error. The number of these backwards billings varies, sometimes its 10 sometimes it's 20. If people are going to take them out, they either have to put them back in right or they are not going to be allowed to take them out. This has been a billing issue every time. We know who they are obviously because of the billing issue; maybe we send them a letter, stating the issue.

Bill Jenks stated; maybe there should be a fee, if someone has to go back and re-read the meter or correct the meter, that they get charged a fee for that. It costs the town money to have me or Hunter go back out and re-read meters or to have to go back out and troubleshoot meters, especially when it's the fault of the homeowner. At least a letter with a warning, that possibly could say that we have identified a problem, here's your warning, and if it happens again then here is what your consequence will be.

Chris Stone stated; I think it should be a flat fee. If we have to come back in and read your meter, here's your fee.

Bill Jenks stated; there's also the issue that if these meters are put in backwards, it can damage the meter. If the meter gets broken, then the homeowner will have to pay to replace it. Those meters are not cheap. The issue too is that if the meter is put in backwards, it reads backwards. The billing program does not calculate backwards, it only goes forward with what ever number is on the meter, it can't compute a negative number. So these meters are hard to catch in the billing program, because it only recognizes positive numbers. So it takes that negative read and makes it positive.

Chris Stone stated; here's another problem. These seasonal places, they come up after we read the meters and they leave before we do the next read and they take their meters out. So we never get a read on their meter. I understand too that there are folks that take their meter out to protect it, because they don't want it to freeze or get damaged during the winter months when they are not there. There is no one size fits all for a solution. Could we create some sort of flyer, maybe once a year "Here's how your water works" or something like that. Just as a reminder, or examples of ways to keep your meter working well. Just to remind people, to keep them informed.

Councilwoman Donaldson stated; Question for you, line leak locator \$4,500?

Bills Jenks stated; yes, instead of us bothering Mr. Coolidge, that's something we could do in house. Do only town lines to locate the leaks.

Councilwoman Donaldson stated; line locator \$1,000, so you need two sets of devices?

Bills Jenks stated; so if you do the leak locator and the line locator, that's a package deal that does both. The line locator is the one that we have now. We could replace just that. They are two different instruments. One looks for the line the other looks for the line and the leaks, dual purpose. These are all ball park figures. Prices are subject to change depending on when we make purchases.

Councilwoman Welch stated; what is the light tower fix, what's wrong with it?

Bill Jenks stated; we have a light tower, it runs, and then it doesn't run. It needs a mechanic to look at it. I looked at the cost of a new one and they run about \$15,000-\$20,000, so the \$1,500 is a rough estimate of the repair costs.

Chris Stone states; the water budget may squeak by, it all depends on what happens between now and then. We are over in administration; we may be over on payroll. I'm hoping we can make it to the end of the year, as long as nothing big happens. The \$8,000 that we were talking about before, will fall under administration, so again that will put them more over in that category. We will transfer money from where ever there is money left to cover that. So right now Bill has \$84,000 left between now and the end of the year, which includes payroll, health insurance, all of it. Water and sewer are

hard to plan because you never know, there could be a line break, could have some addition paving from digging. There are a lot of unpredictable events that can happen.

Supervisor Wood stated; thank you Bill. Shifting gears a little bit, we have had two people go up to the Lodge at Schroon to do a unit count. What we have from that is a listing of exactly what water items are in each building. We need to get a map out and identify it according to this and bring the proper number of units up to date for the hotel. We need to do that before the next billing cycle.

Bill Jenks states; on this paper is everything per building, this is what is in there now. We looked at every building; we have actually put our eyes on it. I think we should do at least an annual appointment with them, to recount and to make sure that the unit total has or hasn't changed. We want to make sure and keep everything transparent between them and us. Here he is, this is the rep from Ti Sales, he's here to fill us in and let us know what's going on with the water and billing changes.

Jason Matt states; Hello everyone. I'm from Ti Sales. I can give everyone a quick overview. Currently you are using NSIGHT software to read the meters; it directly communicates the file from the billing to our software. Our software gets the meter reads back to the billing. So Neptune which is an NSIGHT billing software which dates back to 2001, was built upon and built upon and has been edited and added to over the years. The platform that it was built off from stopped in 2019. So what happens is, now we are nervous as to where it's going to go from here. In 2019 Neptune developed its new software. We have slowly been transitioning our new clients to this and since you guys were already our clients now we are transitioning you to it as well. Last year I let Bill know that this was coming. Now we are at the point where Neptune has officially announced their "End of Support" they are calling it, in June 2024. That doesn't mean it won't work, but it does mean that IF it doesn't work, there is nothing they will do to fix it. It was based on Windows 10, it happens to work with Windows 11, we have NO IDEA if it will work with Windows 12, and Windows 12 is set to come out in 2024. So that is why we are moving into a new system, because we can no longer care for the older system. I gave Bill an estimate of \$8,000 for this transition. This is a high estimate, so I can be safe, but it will not be over the \$8,000. I can get you an official quote right now with the actual numbers.

Chris Stone states; this will be compatible with our new Edmunds system correct?

Jason Matt states; yes absolutely. We work with Edmunds, they are a great company to work with. So what would happen is whoever is in charge of the billing, who would that be?

Erica Hedden states; that would be me.

Jason Matt states; Erica OK great, I have documentation that you would forward on to Edmunds, it's that simple. We are about 90 days out with our new software, so I can't guarantee a 2023 start date. We would hope to be up and running this year but it would be ready for your first billing cycle in 2023.

Chris Stone states; Edmunds wants to have us up and running in November, the way our cycles work is that we do our reads in December for our January billing. Will those readings be able to be used on that new billing system?

Jason Matt states; yes I will need to get the file from Edmunds but yes that is how we would do it. There are always bumps in the road when we do transitions but we have a great contact. We of course strive for a perfect transition but I just want you to know that we have things in place and people there to help if there are any hiccups. We have a special program available for current Neptune customers who are under 1,000 accounts. Basically there is an annual fee, there is a maintenance fee of \$4,200, but that maintenance fee between Ti Sales and Neptune are cut in half to about \$2,217.60. That fee is based on the exact number of accounts. That figure is included in the \$8,000 dollar estimate that I gave you. I aimed high, so there wouldn't be any surprises. This includes training as well. We don't charge for training's, its included. It will be the same reading gun, from the old handheld that was from 2002 to going to using a cell phone or tablet that connects to a receiver "the black box". It will pair together with that. You can use a phone or a tablet. We can pair it to as many devices as needed. The tablet options are offline or online. We do recommend that you go with one that has a data plan, the data plan option allows for the use of mapping software. All the meters show up as red dots on the map and as they are read they turn green. The other plus is if there is internet service, they can be synced up and immediately going back to the computer. If you were to choose the off data plan, there is an additional cost of \$669.00 a year, because we would supply offline maps. We would have to create and keep updated. So it's beneficial for the town to have a tablet or cell phone with a data plan to avoid that additional fee. Tablet is about \$30.00 a month, verses a \$669 annual fee. At this point you wouldn't get a bill until next year, just timing. I can get that quote out to you this year, and we can get the ball rolling.

Chris Stone states; I just had a couple other things I wanted to bring up. Water and sewer rate increases. Both the water and sewer are not going to meet their revenues this year. Water is off \$7,791.00 and the sewer is off \$11,578.00. We will make up some; the Lodge didn't pay their bill on time, so that will make up for some. The actual metered sales, both departments did not meet them.

The other thing is that \$33,000 dollars in omitted taxes is currently in our tentative budget because by law it has to go into the tentative budget. It's in general funds, A10-30, line 416. Its omitted taxes, I don't have a direct fund source, but I think this is the Lodges. I do not know how this PILOT agreement comes into play, what constitutes year one or year two.

Supervisor Wood states; the PILOT agreement would only move forward. Anything that is owed prior to the effective date to the PILOT, is due, and will not be included in the PILOT.

Chris Stone stated; we currently have 1,217.35 water units, and 582.75 units. 870 water accounts and 372 sewer accounts. Sewer is \$249 a unit right now. The usage is down as well, because the usage is based on water usage, and we had a lot of rain this year! The golf course water bill this year was BEAUTIFUL. The golf course is typically a huge draw on the water, but this year it was way down. We do need to think about these rates.

Councilman Gero stated; I agree we need to do something with them but I want to really be mindful of what's happening today. With the inflation, and the cost of living increases, to some people even a \$20 increase per year is tough. The financial situation we are in right now is hard, and we have to make sure we keep that in mind. We just want to make sure we are covering our costs but also being as fair as possible with our rates. We have some seniors who can barely make ends meet as well as young people, and for that matter, everyone in between too.

Chris Stone stated; I agree. We also need to keep in mind, our lines are old. Some of them are really old. These lines will need replacing at some point. That is going to be huge money. There is no way that either the sewer or water could afford that in their budget, we would have to bond it. The sewer department has made some upgrades to their facility; upgrades to their computer systems, things are running more efficiently now, upgrades to the facility and the chemical storage. Things that have allowed him to save on fuel and order bulk chemicals at a lower rate. We need to get the water department started down the same path. These things take time and they take money to do but it is worth it in the long run. Each department has different needs and requirements. Sewer department has a bond out now, that will be paid off in 30 years. The water department is without debt at the moment, but down the road, we never know what is going to happen.

In regards to the ARPA money, we want to try and utilize it between the two departments. The ARPA fund is limited, but this is a great opportunity to start working on these things.

Other things to think about are the tennis courts. They need attention, back several years ago it cost \$35,000 to clean and re-coat the courts. There's a lot of work between the departments and our facilities that are coming due for maintenance, or are over due.

Thank you everyone for your time, Tuesday we will button all this up. We need to make these figures solid so I can move forward with the budget.

I, Erica D. Hedden, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct transcript from the minutes now on file in my office and of the whole such original minutes.

Dated: November 20 2023 _____ Town Clerk