

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF TOWN OF COPENHAGEN 2023 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

Introduction of 2023 Budget

Last year we tried to build a budget that was fair to employees, transparent and realistic. I think that we did that. This year I think that the Preliminary Budget is fair, but it is also more transparent and more realistic.

In the 2023 Budget the Town Board's goal is not just to plan for the routine annual expenses of Town Hall and the Highway Department. Instead, this Town Board is attempting to set a realistic roadmap for 2023. We are budgeting for some significant maintenance expenses which we expect to incur. We are also budgeting for some projects for which residents have advocated. Including these projects in the Budget does not obligate us to these projects; it does allow the Board to pursue these projects in 2023 without amending the budget midyear. This is smart fiscal policy. It is also transparent.

Achieving Goals without Raising Taxes

In 2022 the Town paved the Park Building parking lot. We did that by drawing on unallocated fund balance. We have discussed the need to improve and expand the Municipal Lot on Main Street but we have not accomplished that yet. We have purchased generators for both the Town Hall and Park building. This project was long overdue. We also started the process of constructing a storage building for the Highway Department. Construction is slated for 2023 but we hired an engineering firm in 2022. That project has now been put out to bid. Other expenditures which we made or committed to include: purchase of two radar speed signs, hiring a web designer for the Town Website, purchase of security cameras for the Park and contributing \$31,000 in ARPA funds to the Copake Fire Department to assist them in purchasing a digital sign. While we used ARPA funds for some of these 2022 expenses we also amended the budget to access fund balance.

In 2023, we are looking to finish the 2022 projects which are not yet complete. We will also consider some new projects, outlined below. In our 2023 budget we have allocated a prudent amount of fund balance to achieve the Town's goals. Because we are planning ahead we will be able to complete these projects without raising taxes and without amending the budget midyear.

Salaries

I was appointed to the Board in 2012. Since that year salaries of elected officials remained unchanged until 2021. In 2021 we raised the salary of the Town Clerk which

was much lower than other Town Clerks in the county. Last year we raised salaries for the Town Board, Supervisor and Town Justices.

This year we not proposing any raises for elected officials who received raises last year. We are proposing a raise for the Town Clerk to keep her salary on par with other Clerks- and commensurate with the increased volume of work in her office. The Highway Superintendent will get a 2% raise since that is what our Highway employees receive pursuant to the Union Contract.

We are proposing a one dollar increase in the hourly wage for office staff in Town Hall. This will increase the hourly wage to \$18/hour. We are also proposing a raise to \$20 an hour for the Court Clerk. We believe that this is warranted in view of the responsibilities of her position. Additionally in view of the increase in the volume of work in the Building Department we are proposing an increase for the Code Enforcement Officer.

Infrastructure and Maintenance Projects

In August one of the three air conditioning units which supply Town Hall stopped working and was beyond repair. These units were installed circa 1999 when the building was built. This, along with the Town's commitment to Climate Smart initiatives has prompted the Board to consider engaging an engineering firm to look at both the Town Hall and Park Building to assess what improvements are recommended. Replacing failing equipment for more efficient equipment will reduce our energy usage. We know that at the very least we will probably be replacing three A/C units- and also correct an air flow problem which for years has left several offices freezing in the summer. (We have a grant of \$8000 which we can use to pay for at least part if not all of the cost of an energy audit.)

Once we have the energy audit we can decide how much work we should do in Town Hall in 2023. Presumably we will postpone any improvements to the Park Building to 2024.

The 2023 budget also provides for the possibility of: the installation of a bandstand in the Copake Memorial Park, improvement of the ice rink and possible installation of a pickle ball court, purchase of two additional radar speed signs, the completion of the highway storage building and the purchase of land to connect the Hamlet to the Harlem Valley Rail Trail. To cover these expenses we have made the following adjustments to the budget:

A16202 - 190,000 - 150k for AC and 40k for land.
A50102 - 12k speed signs
A51322 - 300k cold storage

A71402 - 235,900 - 200k band shell, 35k ice rink/pickleball, (\$900 was already in that line).

The total appropriated fund balance would be \$687,000.

Additional Sources of Revenue

The Town has benefited from generous Sales Tax and also Mortgage Tax payments in the past year. Of course we cannot count on that to continue. But we are well positioned to cover any costs of 2023.

First, even once we draw down \$687,000 to balance our 2023 budget, our current projection of fund balance for the end of 2022 is \$4,977,847 on the General side and \$165,701 on the Highway side.

Additionally, we have received \$348,101.51 in ARPA funds. To date we have spent \$83,136. The amount available is \$264,965.51 (and that amount must be spent or committed by the end of 2024- or returned to the Federal government). So we still have ARPA funds available for 2023 and possibly 2024.

Finally, and this is speculative, last week the Town of Copake submitted a grant application under the NY Forward program. We will know later this year if we have been awarded any money, but the awards are either \$2.25 or \$4.5 million. We feel that we made a strong application and we would hope to know by the end of 2022 if we have been successful.

Conclusion

No budget is clairvoyant. But this Town Board is putting forth a budget which is fair to employees, honest with taxpayers, and responsible. This budget seeks to address both delayed maintenance as well as projects which taxpayers have told us they want us to pursue.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at CopakeSupervisor@TownofCopake.org or by calling me at (518) 329-1234 Ext 1.

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Supervisor

September 28, 2022