

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE FORT ANN TOWN BOARD HELD NOVEMBER 14, 2014

A special meeting of the Fort Ann Town Board was held Friday, November 14, 2014 at the Fort Ann Town Hall at 2:00 p.m. with the following members present:

PRESENT: Supervisor Darlene Dumas
Councilwoman Gretchen Stark
Councilman Howard Denison
Councilman Floyd Varney
Councilwoman Deborah Witherell

OTHERS PRESENT: Barbara Winchell, Town Clerk, Paul Winchell, Highway Superintendent, Helen Denno, Bookkeeper, Ann & Bill Wilcox, Skip Bearor, Don Ballard, Dave Dumas, Cody Jacobsen, Joe Loszynski, Gene Connell, Floyd Ladd, Dave Delor, Richard Moore, 2325 Summer Way, Fort Ann

Supervisor Dumas called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and the pledge of allegiance was led by her.

This Special Meeting was advertised in The Post Star on November 6, 2014 and posted on the Town Clerk bulletin board on the same date. Supervisor Dumas went over the 2015 budget line by line for anyone who hasn't been through the budget process before.

Supervisor Dumas stated that three (3) years ago when she ran for supervisor she promised to bring "open and honest" government to Fort Ann. As a resident, she wanted to know what the town government was up to and how it was spending money. Since she was elected as supervisor she has tried hard to keep that promise. There has been a website created, posted agendas, posted minutes, posted financial reports, handed out written copies of the agenda at meetings, and have tried hard to answer many questions.

One of the things that's really important to all of the citizens of Fort Ann is the Town budget. It impacts taxes, it makes it possible for the Town to do its business and it sets limits on what the Town can do. There was a copy of the preliminary budget was posted on the website about a month ago and it doesn't vary much from year to year. New York State has a tax cap of 2%, the tax cap sets limits on how much the budget can grow from year to year. This year, because inflation is low, the tax cap is 1.56%, not 2%. Since Supervisor Dumas took office the Town has stayed under the tax cap and it will be under again this year.

There are a few places where this year's budget varies from last year's. The biggest overall change is that most of the town employees will receive a 2% raise, so that affects all of the line items having to do with wages and salaries. Other places where the budget varies include:

Town Board Contractual Expenses (up by \$500.00): This line item is for postage, printing, supplies, etc. for the four (4) Town Board members. She has allocated \$500.00 more for 2015 since the \$1,500.00 budgeted for 2014 has been exceeded.

Supervisor personal services (up by \$4,000.00): The Town Board gave her a 2% raise. The Clerk to the Supervisor received a 2% raise. It was agreed to budget \$1,500.00 for clerical assistance if needed (that would be about (2) two hours per week) and \$2,000.00 was budgeted for the Deputy Town Supervisor. The Deputy is only paid if she serves while Supervisor Dumas is away. The payroll has been established

for three (3) years but the Deputy salary has never been budgeted for. It will be clearer if for 2015 it actually shows in the budget. In all likelihood, the \$2,000.00 for the Deputy and the \$1,500.00 for clerical will not be expended.

Assessor salary (down by \$12,000.00): The Town Board reduces the Assessor's salary by \$12,700.00 to \$35,000.00

Town Clerk (up by \$5,000.00): The Town Board increased the Clerk's salary by \$4,000.00 as well as a \$1,000.00 stipend for handling FOIL requests because there are so many and most are complicated and require considerable effort.

Attorney (down by \$10,000.00): Supervisor Dumas continues working on reducing the Town's legal expenses. They are down considerable from when she took office. Since only \$11,000.00 has been used of the \$40,000.00 that was budgeted for in 2014 she reduced this line item to \$30,000.00 for 2015.

Town Engineer (down by \$2,500.00): Supervisor Dumas has reduced this line item as well since only \$2,800.00 has been used of the \$10,000.00 budgeted for 2014. This line item has been reduced to \$7,500.00 for 2015.

Safety Inspector (up by \$1,000.00): The new Enforcement Officer position has turned out to be busier than anticipated so the 2015 budget has been increased slightly to cover the increases activity.

Highway Superintendent (up by \$2,000.00): The Town Board granted the Highway Superintendent a well-deserved raise of \$2,000.00.

Street Lighting: If the Town Board agrees Supervisor Dumas would like to add \$1,500.00 to remove one (1) light on Goodman Road in 2015. The Town Board agreed with this modification

Joint Youth Project (up by \$1,000.00): New York State will no longer fund this program so the Town needs to cover the cost of the summer recreation program.

Historian (up by \$250.00): The Town Board granted the Historian a well-deserved raise of \$250.00. Mrs. Parrott works very hard on behalf of the Town and has had a great deal of additional work this year because of the activity around the town cemeteries and Battle Hill.

Cemeteries (new line item, budget \$3,500.00): This new budget will help fund 20 hours per week for 16 weeks for someone to start taking care of the town cemeteries. There is a great deal of work to be done, which the town can't afford to do all at once, but this is at least a start.

State Retirement (down 10%, by \$3,000.00): Reduced because of employee retirements.

Hospital and Medical Insurance (down \$11,500.00): Reduced because of employee retirements.

Machinery Contractual Expenses (up by \$5,000.00): \$43,000.00 has already been spent of the \$75,000.00 budgeted for 2014 and may exceed the \$75,000.00 before the end of 2014. An additional \$5,000.00 will be budgeted in this area for 2015. It doesn't mean that it will necessarily be spent but it needs to be budgeted for in case it is needed.

Debt Service Principal (up by \$15,000.00) and Interest (up by \$2,000.00): This is due to the purchase of a truck for the highway department. The Highway Superintendent and Supervisor Dumas decided that the Town could purchase a used truck instead of a new one to save money.

Highway Contractual Expenses (Outside Village) (up by \$5,000.00, \$65,000.00): This budget was increased based on the experience of last year's winter weather.

Hadlock District Personal services (up by \$6,000.00) and Contractual Expenses (up by \$14,000.00): These budgets increased because there are additional people working on the milfoil project and on the harvester.

Lake Hadlock Association submitted a 2005 budget proposal of \$157,000.00 but Supervisor Dumas saw some duplicated items and was able to decrease that figure to \$143,000.00

Supervisor Dumas stated she feels this is a fair budget and meets the Town of Fort Ann's obligations while keeping taxes as low as possible. She recognized that the Fort Ann Fire Company, West Fort Ann Fire Company and the Fort Ann Rescue Squad had all approached her about needing additional funds and did find \$15,000.00. She wish it were more but felt that the fair thing to do would be give each an additional \$5,000.00 in their budgets with the Town Board's approval.

Councilwoman Witherell announced that she didn't approve of the Town Clerk's increase that everyone else got 2% and that's what the Town Clerk should have received. She wished she hadn't been so overwhelmed when the Town Clerk informed the Town Board that she desired more than 2% because she saves the Town of Fort Ann at least \$10,000.00 a year by not taking the health insurance. Councilwoman Witherell wishes she had voted no against the Town Clerk's increase because she is of the opinion it was a blackmail tactic.

Supervisor Dumas stated that the Town Clerk does an excellent job, follows through and nothing has fallen through the cracks since she was elected and is very deserving of the \$4,000.00 a year increase.

Councilman Denison stated he was not here for the tentative budget presentation, 9/29/14, and agrees that the Town Clerk has done a very good job. Money was not an issue with him because it's a known fact that most Town Clerks make more than the Fort Ann Town Clerk and didn't agree with how it was forced down the boards throat is how it got back to him on the presentation. He also stated that there were a number of people that got more than the 2% salary increases.

Councilwoman Stark commended Supervisor Dumas and Bookkeeper, Helen Denno, on the great job they did with the 2015 budget.

Resolution 74-14

ADOPT 2015 BUDGET WITH MODIFICATIONS

On Motion of Councilman Varney, seconded by Councilwoman Stark, the following resolution was ADOPTED-VOTE-

AYES 4 Varney, Stark, Dumas, Witherell

NAYS 0

ABSTAIN 1 Denison

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, to adopt the 2015 Town Budget with the following modifications for the 2015 Budget:

Increase A4540.4 Fort Ann Rescue Squad, SF3410.4 for Fort Ann Fire Company and West Fort Ann Fire Company each by \$5,000.00. Decrease Lake Hadlock SP7110 overall from \$157,000.00 to \$143,000.00

Skip Bearor and Don Ballard thanked the Town Board on behalf of the Fort Ann Rescue Squad and Fort Ann Fire Company for the additional \$5,000.00 to each for 2015. Skip made a suggestion to have organizations such as the Rescue Squad and/or Fire Company to adopt a small cemetery. Don Ballard stated that he hates the word fundraisers and fundraisers are not the way to go.

Mr. Joe Loszynski stated he needs clarification on each one of the line items Supervisor Dumas identified as duplication because of the Lake Management Plan that they are going to try to execute. The Harvester budget was decreased from \$9,000.00 to \$5,000.00. Mr. Loszynski stated that the Town Board has to look at the number of complaints received in 2014. The Lake Hadlock Association is very appreciative of what the Town Board does but stated problems develop in lack of communication. Supervisor Dumas assured Mr. Loszynski that she and the Bookkeeper had really scrutinized the budget and the Lake Hadlock Association funds are sufficient.

Mr. Moore suggested that Supervisor Dumas reach out to the Comptroller's Office and ask them to have Hadlock carved out because its uniqueness of the milfoil and it shouldn't be a burden to the Town of Fort Ann. It shouldn't be considered in the tax levy. He also stated he was at the budget meeting that Councilwoman Witherell referred to in regards to the Town Clerk's request of more than a 2% increase and it was not blackmail. He stated the Town Board members need to be respectful of each other.

Mr. Gene Connell stated that some people may say that too much money is spent on the Lake but we have the keep the Lake safe just like we do the highways of the Town.

On motion of Councilwoman Stark, seconded by Councilwoman Witherell, the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara J. Winchell, Town Clerk
Dated: November 20, 2014