

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING OF
THE TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF NEW LEBANON
ON THE TOWN BUDGET FOR 2023
HELD ON NOVEMBER 9, 2022**

Present: Tistrya Houghtling Supervisor
Marianna Anthonisen, Councilmember
Britt Buckenroth, Councilmember
Deborah Gordon, Councilmember
John Trainor, Councilmember

Recording Secretary: Marsha “Marcie” Robertson, Town Clerk

Others Present: Jeffrey Winestock, Highway Superintendent
Steve Houghtling, LVPA
Eugenia Browning, LVPA
Cissy Hernandez, ZEO & Building Dept. Admin.
Ashley Saviano, Deputy Town Clerk
Samantha Long, Court Clerk
Maggie Banker, DCO
Christine Dreyfus, MOW
Elizabeth Poreba, CSC Member
Abbie Shoobs, Recreation Commission Chair
Bruce Shenker, NL Rep to CC Environmental Mgt. Council
Members of the Public

CALL TO ORDER:

Supervisor Houghtling called the Public Hearing to order at 6:45pm.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE:

Town Clerk Robertson read the following public hearing notice aloud:

**TOWN OF NEW LEBANON
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
ON THE LVPA 2023 PRELIMINARY BUDGET AND
THE TOWN OF NEW LEBANON
2023 PRELIMINARY BUDGET**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the PRELIMINARY BUDGET of the TOWN OF NEW LEBANON for the fiscal year beginning January 1, 2023, including general town funds, highway funds, and fire protection district funds, has been completed and filed in the office of the Town Clerk at the New Lebanon Town Hall, 14755 NYS Route 22, New Lebanon, New York, where it is available for inspection by any interested persons during regular Town Clerk office hours. The Preliminary

Budget for 2023 has also been posted on the town website (www.townofnewlebanon.com) and can be viewed or downloaded from the website.

FURTHER NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Town Board of the Town of New Lebanon shall hold a public hearing on the Lebanon Valley Protective Association’s 2023 Preliminary Budget on Wednesday, November 9, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. at the New Lebanon Town Hall, 14755 NYS Route 22 for the purpose of receiving public input on said budget.

FURTHER NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Town Board of the Town of New Lebanon shall hold a public hearing on the Town of New Lebanon’s 2023 Preliminary Budget on Wednesday, November 9, 2022 at 6:45 p.m. at the New Lebanon Town Hall, 14755 NYS Route 22 for the purpose of receiving public input on said budget.

The following are the proposed 2023 salaries of the Elected Town Officers of the Town of New Lebanon:

Supervisor	\$24,824
Councilmembers (4)	\$4,000 each
Town Clerk	\$38,948
Highway Superintendent	\$72,153
Town Justices (2)	\$11,259 each
Tax Collector	\$10,812

Participation by the public will be in person at the New Lebanon Town Hall, 14755 NYS Route 22, New Lebanon, New York with members of the public also being able to view the meeting at the following link: https://townhallstreams.com/towns/new_lebanon_ny

You may also still submit comments regarding the LVPA 2023 Preliminary Budget and the Town of New Lebanon 2023 Preliminary Budget to: supervisor@townofnewlebanon.com and they will be included in the record.

By order of the Town Board of the Town of New Lebanon

Marcie Robertson
Town Clerk
10/24/2022

WHAT IS A PUBLIC HEARING:

Supervisor Houghtling read the following:

The Public Hearing is a legislative step for certain action of the Boards. They are conducted to gather information from the public (and/or interested parties) and to survey public opinion as part of a local lawmaking or decision-making process. For the Town Board, it is necessary before the Board votes for or against a law, ordinance, special permit, or budget.

The public is encouraged to present, to the respective Board, their feelings, arguments, and ideas for or against the specific action or topic of the Public Hearing. It is hoped that these public comments will give added information to a Board, to assist them in making a decision for or against the issue. When possible, the public is encouraged to include supporting documentation in their presentations,

as well as a written copy of their comments for the Board.

The Public Hearing should NOT be confused with a public information meeting. It is hoped that the public followed the process of an issue and understands its content, prior to arriving at the Public Hearing. Therefore, the time allotted for the Public Hearing should not be dominated by long explanations of the issue and detailed descriptions of the steps and work that lead up to this point in the process. Because there may be many parties who wish to comment, the Board may choose to limit the time allowed for any individual comments, so that all participants may be assured of having time to speak.

Since this meeting is specifically reserved to hear the public, it must be understood that it is not a dialogue or debate – either with the Board or other members of the audience. This would only serve to prolong the meeting or reduce the time available for other members of the public to have their say. At a Public Hearing, the presiding Board is under no obligation to discuss their personal views or opinions, or to respond to questions or comments from the floor – only to listen and understand the viewpoints of the presenters. Nevertheless, the Board may respond or ask questions to gather more information or to clarify a point.

SPECIFIC RULES OF PROCEDURE:

- ◆ *The Board shall be courteous and respectful of all in attendance and all opinions given, and the public shall be expected to extend the same to the Board and those with opposing views;*
- ◆ *All comments shall be restricted to the specific subject of the Public Hearing as advertised;*
- ◆ *All comments should be directed to the Board – not to the audience. All specific requests or questions should be addressed to the Town Supervisor or Chairperson of the respective Board;*
- ◆ *Each person will be given 3 minutes to make their presentation.*

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Supervisor Houghtling opened the floor to public comment.

Elizabeth Kroboth: Elizabeth spoke regarding the park section of the budget and the splashpad, she feels that it is a waste of money for our town and the money can be better spent on other things and there is no need for a splashpad. She stated that she lived a mile up the road for 27 years, there were never kids in this park playing, there won't be even with a splashpad, it's a complete waste of money. She stated that she also thinks the skatepark is a complete waste of money. She stated that it is just sitting out there, it's rotted, it's firewood. She stated that it is an indoor skatepark, it doesn't belong outdoors, that money can also be put to much better use. She stated that they spent a lot of money in Williamstown and built a beautiful outdoor skatepark. She stated that it is covered in graffiti, kids hung out, there were drugs and smoking, it became a hang out spot. It was not used for the purpose it was meant to be used for. She stated that people are struggling, inflation is out of control, we need to cut expenses not spend frivolously.

Elizabeth also asked what the \$2,500 budgeted for beautification is for and \$2,850 for town concerts. She stated she knows there are concerts in the park but doesn't think taxpayers should pay for that, they should be funded privately or charge an admission.

Darla Dobert: Darla spoke to the raises for the appointed positions, they are getting a substantial COLA raise. She stated that a normal COLA raise is between 2 to 5%, these appointed officials are getting anywhere between 14 to 15% raises. She stated three elected officials, Town Supervisor, Highway Superintendent and Town Clerk could potentially get a 7% COLA raise; we don't know if that is legal yet. She has been listening to the meetings and hasn't heard if that has been resolved yet. Darla stated that the Supervisor's salary in the last two years of the term has gone up \$8,420 with the addition of an \$8,000 budget officer position that was never in place prior to this term. Adding another 7% to that and you are adding another \$2,184 to the Supervisor's salary. She stated the Tax Collector and the Justices, who are also elected are not getting a COLA raise, she doesn't know how that is fair. She stated that she doesn't oppose any appointed official getting a raise, they should, however 15% is very exuberant. She stated that you will have an elected Town Clerk in this town, making less than her Deputy collectively in two positions in this town, how is that a good dynamic in her office? She stated it just doesn't make sense to her.

Darla stated that there is also a position in the park where apparently, he doesn't like to do certain duties. So, we are going to hire someone else to pick up those duties that he doesn't want to do, but he is still going to get that 15% raise and get less duties. She stated no where in her world that she has worked in, has that ever happened.

Darla stated that in 2021 it appears that the Supervisor's salary went up.

Darla's three minutes were up and Craig Skerkis spoke up and offered his three minutes to Darla so she could continue.

Darla Dobert: Darla continued that in 2021 is when the Town Supervisor's pay went up to \$22,772, which was the \$8,400 increase because it was the Town Supervisor and Bookkeeper position at that point. However, now we have a bookkeeper position for \$14,000, did the Supervisor's pay go down to cover that or does that not change? She stated she isn't sure why the duties got pushed onto a new position without the pay being reduced by the Supervisor for that position.

Supervisor Houghtling responded to Darla's question. She stated that the Town Board did a Compensation Plan where they looked at different positions, elected, appointed and the elected and appointed officials that were salaried, they figured out what they were making per hour. She stated, one of the reasons that the Judges and Tax Collector didn't get increases was because they were making close to \$100 per an hour. At that time, the Supervisor position was making about \$5 per hour. The Compensation Committee and the Town Board held discussion last year and decided not to bring those higher per hour salaried positions down, but to bring the lower paid positions up to where they should be and they decided that the higher position's hourly rates would be frozen when COLA's and raises happened until they were in equity in a per hour rate as the other positions that did a similar duty to them.

Supervisor Houghtling stated that the Supervisor position was set at 24 hours a week and that is what the new salary going into this year was set at. She stated that the outgoing

board did not pass it at 32 hours a week. She stated that when new board members came in, they asked to revisit that. Supervisor Houghtling stated that you cannot revisit an elected officials salary mid-year without going through a local law and referendum process. She stated because the office was still a 40 hour a week office, the board decided instead of increasing the hours of the Supervisor, a bookkeeper for 13 hours a week would come in for a total of 37 hours in the office that was budgeted for. Supervisor Houghtling stated that even with the bookkeeper position she was still working 30-35 hours a week. She has kept a calendar and is happy to share it. The work load was still above the 24 hours that the salary was originally based on.

Darla Dobert: Darla stated that in regards to the salaries, she is confused as to why the 15% increase. She stated that there is a lot on money being spent in this budget; raises, the park, etc., a lot of money that could be used for other things such as the Highway Department, the Highway Garage, equipment storage, why not an equipment garage rather than a splashpad and a skatepark. She stated that \$365,000 is just the start of what that is going to cost them, what will next years budget cost for that.

Darla stated that she believes the budget should be mailed out to every taxpayer in this town.

Craig Skerkis: Craig stated that the whole hourly mathematical equation, this person gets \$100 an hour and to him he's been salary or self-employed his whole life. The notion of the job is the job and you accept the job for a certain amount of money. Some people have to do it in 80 hours and some people can do it in 10 hours, to break it down hourly, he disagrees with that.

Kevin Smith: Kevin asked if the lawyer said it was legal or illegal for the 7% COLA raise for elected officials?

Supervisor Houghtling responded to Kevin's question. She stated that it is legal to give COLA's to elected officials the same way that they always have, as long as it is not done mid-year. Supervisor Houghtling stated that the attorney thought they might have to go out to a local law process if you are doing it mid-year, not mid-term. She stated that just like when Kevin was on the board, they gave COLA raises to elected officials as long as the public hearing notice for the budget lists what those salaries are. She clarified there was no question if there was a cap, there is not one. The question was could they do it mid-term without a local law and the answer is yes, they can.

Kevin Smith: Kevin asked how many employees are getting insurance buy-outs and how much they are getting? He assumes that is public information.

Supervisor Houghtling responded to Kevin's question. She clarified that his request to her was who is getting the buy-out. She stated that may be HR confidential. Supervisor Houghtling stated that she asked the town attorney and she was told that his request should go through the FOIL Officer, which is Marcie, through a FOIL request and then she can do the due diligence to find out if it is public or not. She stated that the personnel policy defines

which employees are eligible for health insurance and if they are eligible for health insurance, they are allowed to opt out of the health insurance and into the buy-out. She stated that as far as which employees choose for their personal families or themselves to choose the buy-out, she doesn't believe that is public, but she doesn't know for sure. She told him he can FOIL it and the FOIL Officer can look into it.

Kevin Smith: Kevin mentioned creating a Park Manager Position at \$23 an hour and that it is rumored that there are things that Donnie doesn't want to do. He stated why not just put the whole job out, why should there be a need for a Park Manager, that is what the Park Superintendent does. He stated they are talking about a new person; a new hire and they will be getting paid more than Donnie.

Supervisor Houghtling responded to Kevin's question. She stated that in most towns the Highway Superintendent oversees the parks, that doesn't exist here. She stated that typically Donnie's position would report to the Highway Superintendent, instead it puts a lot of work on the park liaison, Town Clerk's office, and the Supervisor's office. The Park Manager position would be a seasonal, very part-time \$3,000 a year salary. Kevin said it all adds up. She said you are asking someone for 6 months out of the year to manage the park, to manage the pavilion rentals, oversee the schedule for \$3,000 a year. She stated they don't think they will have people knocking down the door for this job. Often when you have a really part-time seasonal position the per hour rate has to be high enough to attract them to want to take on that responsibility for the salary.

Kevin commented that they will then be calling the Town Clerk's office.

Supervisor Houghtling clarified that the pavilion rentals will still come through the Town Clerk's office but the Town Clerk's office will no longer have to do all of the administrative work of getting the pavilion cleaned, set up, unlocked, there will be someone over seeing all of that.

Kevin stated that is the classification under the title for his performance review that is done on everyone, that is part of his job, that is why it is Park Superintendent. So, he's not doing his job, why create a new position, how about get someone who will do the job?

Supervisor Houghtling responded that is a question she is not going to answer, it sounds HR related.

Kevin stated that a lot of the work in the office, she's created all of these different committees, she's created where there is more work that doesn't need to be there. He stated he doesn't see all this big development in this town that is knocking down the doors. He stated that the Supervisor is creating all of the committees which is costing money, there is just a lot of waste. Kevin asked how much is the total cost of both the skatepark and the splashpad?

Supervisor Houghtling responded that it is in the budget. She stated that when he called her, she directed him to the page in the budget. Supervisor Houghtling referred to page 8 of

the budget and responded \$260,000 for the splashpad and there is also \$65,000 left in this year's budget that they did not spend that will be encumbered, that brings the splashpad to \$325,000 and the skatepark is \$125,000. She stated that they budgeted this year to do the splashpad based on the engineers' estimate which was \$75,000, when they went out to bid it came in a lot higher than anyone expected.

Kevin responded, okay you are talking \$500,000. He said let's go back to the highway garage, you know there's things that need to be done with that building, you're not putting any money aside for it. He stated that he could see doing one project or the other, but give, give, give, take, take, take. He said taxes are going to go up right, 2% or higher?

Supervisor Houghtling responded 2%, the proposed budget is in the 2% tax cap and they did put money aside for a new highway garage through a resolution that will be presented to the Town Board in November or December.

Kevin stated that he would think in these times that there would be a 0% increase in their taxes instead of just nailing it to seniors, veterans and low-income people.

Highway Superintendent Winestock stated that he wanted to make a quick comment, it seems like he is always getting beat up. He said he has always worked very hard with the park and cooperated with the park. He said he has always worked with every person that's been in charge of the park. He stated that since Supervisor Houghtling has been here, she has kind of ordered that he has to do this, has to do that. He stated that the Highway Department just rebuilt the park road this spring, he sprays it with calcium, he does a lot. He stated that if Donnie needs something, he helps Donnie. He said there are a lot of towns that don't take care of the parks. He's not saying that they don't help out. He said, like Kevin said, it's his job he is the Park Superintendent, he said he's not knocking Donnie. Highway Superintendent Winestock stated that Supervisor Houghtling is trying to make it look like he doesn't do anything. He stated that the Highway Department always helps out in the park and always will, all they have to do is ask.

Supervisor Houghtling responded and told Highway Superintendent Winestock that they appreciate that and that she didn't mean to say that he didn't do anything for the park. She said that in most towns, the Highway Superintendent is the direct supervisor of the park's maintenance staff.

Highway Superintendent Winestock stated that he has been there almost 40 years and he's always seen it run very well without whoever she wants to hire to be the manager. He said the Supervisor and Council people, it always works out.

Scott McDougal commented that the slip n slide is a waste of money. The upkeep, maintenance, how will they treat the water, did they do an environmental impact study on the water that they are treating to keep it out of the ground water. They have enough of a problem with the town dump leaching downhill. He said he thinks they are wasting too much money on stupid things. How many kids do we have in town? Can't be a whole lot. He stated he wanted to point out it is a total waste of money and they'd be better off spending it on

other projects.

Christy Bashaw referred to one of the things that Darla mentioned and doesn't think Supervisor Houghtling answered the question. She said that Darla raised a point of the budget being mailed to all taxpayers. She does get the newsletter and she is wondering is there a reason that the budget is not mailed out like the newsletter?

Supervisor Houghtling responded that it has never been a request. She thinks less people are interested in copies of the budget than the newsletter. She said the newsletter is something that they budget for. The budget is about the same thickness as the newsletter, it is something the Town Board could consider. It is not in the 2023 budget; they would have to increase the budget line for that. She stated that printed copies of the budget are available at the Town Clerk's office. Any resident who requested it be mailed to them; we could do that. Supervisor Houghtling stated that she has a feeling you'd end up wasting a lot of trees and you'd end up with a ton of them in the recycling bin at the Post Office, but she could be wrong. She stated that one resident picked up 25 to distribute and we mail out about 1,600 newsletters. She stated that it is an expense and it is a lot of printing and paper. She hasn't heard a request for that, it is certainly something they could consider.

Christy Bashaw asked about the COVID relief money, where is that and what is it being used for?

Supervisor Houghtling asked if she was referring to the ARPA funds. They put out a survey to the public, they received a lot of responses, they asked how the public would like the town to spend our ARPA funds. Many towns and the County decided as a board to not get public input. She stated that they wanted it to be a more open process so they polled the public. Number one was supporting local businesses, they did an ARPA application for all local businesses, a lot of local businesses applied, they had to have at least a 25% loss in revenues COVID related from pre-COVID until now. The Town is receiving \$220,000 in ARPA funds and they have allocated up to \$100,000 for direct grant relief to our local businesses. Supervisor Houghtling stated that a Community Center, increasing walkability and access on the rail trail, and water testing also polled high on the survey.

Supervisor Houghtling told Christy if she would like to email her, she would be happy to send her the ARPA application, the survey and any other information she would like. She also reminded her that all of the meetings are recorded and she can watch them on Town Hall Streams.

Abbie Shoobs, Recreation Commission Chair & Deputy Court Clerk commented that a lot of the people in the audience are stating negatives of the budget. She wanted to state some positives of the budget. She stated that it seems like since the Supervisor and the new board took over there have been a lot more initiatives trying to involve townspeople more directly and trying to improve lives more directly. She sees these things as a positive. The towns around here have often been losing population and if you have things for people to do in your town then you won't lose population, you'll gain population, especially families with kids. She stated that it is her understanding that we are losing school population, if we lose

enough we won't have schools here anymore and that would be terrible for the people who are already here and want to stay. Encouraging people to move here and grow families here is all great. Although she personally won't benefit from a splashpad or a skatepark, talk to the resident who came to talk to the Town Board regarding the benefits of having a skatepark. It would bring people to town, to our restaurants, stores, gas station. All of those things that will bring people to town and have those people ideally spend money or think they want to live here. She stated she didn't see anything in the budget that bothers her, the money is there. On the whole the board has been doing a great job of controlling costs. There was a lot of reaching out to other towns in our county and the surrounding counties to see where our town was salary wise, and we were pretty much the lowest salaries. Abbie stated that there is a lot of money being spent in every town.

Supervisor Houghtling stated that we were one of the only towns in Columbia County that increased our population in the most recent census.

PUBLIC COMMENT EMAILS:

Supervisor Houghtling read the following emails she received for public comment.

Dear Town Supervisor and Town Board Members:

As a private citizen and resident of New Lebanon for 15 years, I want to voice my support for the proposed budget for 2023. I especially want to support the line items that will enhance the kid-friendly features at Shatford Park, including the skate park and the splash pad. My kids are older now and have aged out of these features, but we sure would have appreciated them when they were younger.

*Sincerely,
Joel Priest*

Tistrya,

I want to let you know that I support the proposed budget for New Lebanon. Specifically, I support the raises for the staff, the splash pad, and the skate park in addition to the rest of the budget as proposed.

*Sincerely,
Kris Cottom*

Hi Tistrya,

Please feel free to read this and or enter this into the record for the public hearing for the 2023 Town Budget Nov 9 2022. I am sorry I cannot be there in person.

I highly support the raises for town employees - everyone deserves a fair wage for service and this is helping folks get there. I have rarely seen a group of people work as hard and well and productively as those who work for our town. Everyone goes above and beyond and works far more hours than they are paid - they are dedicated and take pride in doing a good job for all of us. While gov't jobs usually pay far less than private and commercial businesses, it's a great thing to be able to add money into the pockets of our town employees. They deserve it.

While I understand the investments to the park are very large, if we want to remain a viable town and attract families and younger folks to New Lebanon, we have to make investments into functions that everyone can enjoy. I have no children. I pay school tax. I volunteer in the park for dozens of

hours a year so that everyone can enjoy it. But we need more if we are going to attract younger folks to town. Of course, we need affordable housing and more varied businesses to attract people to town as well, and looking into a wastewater system will help address some of these important needed things, but these amenities in the park will become known and talked about will benefit residents and visitors alike. And our existing businesses will benefit.

Working closely with you as a committee volunteer on the CAC and other committees over the past 8 years, I know that you work far more hours than you get paid for. Having a clerical assistant in Ashley (or anyone who would be in this position) allows you to be even more effective in your job and honors the work that you do. I think it has made a big difference for all concerned, especially for residents.

I read the budget reports and notes and watched some of the meetings. I encourage anyone who is contemplating commenting on this budget to do the same. Information is power and knowledge is power. The Board fairly and reasonably discussed all options and I applaud the hours and hours and hours of time and effort the Town Board spent on this process. And frankly the incredible amount of hours this Town Board puts in is astonishing and appreciated.

Thanks for all the Board does and thanks to all the staff at Town Hall.

All my best

Peg (Munves)

I'm writing to voice my support for the budget that the town board created, especially raises for the hardworking town employees and additional capacity through the bookkeeper position. With inflation, the cost of living has gone up substantially, and town salaries should reflect this reality. As a New Lebanon parent, I am also happy to see investments in activities for our children (and the young at heart) at the park.

Sincerely,

Anna Duhon

Good afternoon,

My name is Saoirse Gardner, I live at 776 Route 20, and I wanted to take a moment to express my support of the budget.

I am happy with what I see presented to the public. I believe in these fiduciary commitments and their prospective timelines, as transparent and honest reflections of what the town needs, with conservative, well planned spending limit structures and well thought out projections. It's wonderful to see the dedication of our elected leadership in the detailed budget laid before us.

I am in full support of the raises addressed in the budget. I don't believe anyone is paid enough in public service, and would love to see these limits raised as the town continues progressive growth. I think these raises are well within reason and fully transparent, thus they have my full support. I am in full support on spending for the splash pad, skate park, and efforts towards the community center or any recreational areas that promote community and a safe environment for my children and their friends. We have such an extraordinary community and the more places to congregate, the better for all. These places deserve the investment, as it's an investment in our youth and their future.

Thank you for your time

Saoirse Gardner

Dear town board, thank you for budgeting for the splash pad, skatepark and multi-use Court. As a teen growing up in town it's nice to have things to do

Mateo Priest.

Please accept this letter in support of the Proposed Town Budget.

New Lebanon has come a long way in the past few years and through the dedication of elected officials, town employees, and citizens who generously volunteer their time, it will continue to grow. The employees and officials deserve this proposal of a modest increase in their salaries. Their work is reflected by the town's progress and growth. Those who work in the private sector get raises; certainly, those we elect and trust with our future and our children's future deserve as much. The same goes for the addition of hours for a bookkeeper. This position will significantly help the Supervisor and Clerk and is not a large expense. We should have that type of expertise in our town. Our park is beautiful and getting better. What is important is that we have "attraction " which bring them there. The splash pad and skateboard ramps are just two great additions which we support. As people come to our park, they will also visit our stores, restaurants, brewery and food venues. Building New Lebanon is in every one's interest.

Sincerely

Nina Keller and Richard Adago

Good afternoon,

I am writing to you as a town resident and tax payer in regards to the proposal for the skatepark and the splash pad.

As the past Camp Director, I believe the addition of the splash pad will be an asset to the community and the camp. The current sprinkler no longer meets the code. During the summer it gets really hot and the splash pad would provide the campers and staff a safe place onsite to cool off.

As for the skatepark I also believe that the community would benefit from this addition. Many days and nights I would prepare for camp and have to move extremely hectic and unsafe equipment that was left in the pavilion from local young adults constructing their own makeshift skate park. As an employee of the school quite a few students have expressed how happy they were that our town would have a skatepark.

As a town employee I would like to speak on behalf of the proposed pay increases. The cost of living has increased and each town employee is earned the proposed pay increases.

Thank you for your time,

Michelle Bienes

To the supervisor and the town board:

I am sorry not to be able to be there in person this evening but I would like these brief comments read into the minutes. I read through the budget and am impressed at how many expenses have been stable over the last four years.

I am fully in support of the raises proposed for town employees: No one is getting rich working for the town (nor should they) but everyone should have a salary that reflects the hard work they do, and the COLAs recommended by the Federal government are based on the current economic realities and the values of employees' compensation.

I am also fully in support of the bookkeeper whose work frees our supervisor from tedious clerical work to work on larger issues and strategies to move our town forward. Much of the town work is done by volunteers, so while the paid staff of the town is small, the number of people and

committees with whom the supervisor must communicate, and the work she does with the county, is time well spent. I had no idea we didn't have a bookkeeper before!

In terms of the one-time investments, I am torn: I am generally in favor of improvements to Shatford Park, but I spoke at the last board meeting about some of my reservations. While I find the splash pad expense to be surprisingly high, I was convinced that the board had done its due diligence and that much of the expense has to do with environmental and safety regulations so I support that expense.

I am not, however, in favor of the skate park pad being built at this time: the wooden skate park equipment has turned out to be a bit of a fiasco, and I believe the board must come up with a workable plan for a more permanent installation before building this pad, even if there are temporary uses to which it could be put. We shouldn't build impervious materials into the park unless their uses have been fully thought through.

Thank you for your attention to my voice, and to the voices of other town residents.

Adelia Moore

I am writing to formally support raises for all town employees. As the Deputy Town Clerk, going into my fourth year. I have always been ready and able to take on additional work and responsibilities. I believe that not only are the COLA raises necessary, but also the performance-based raises were also well justified. The cost of living is astronomical to date, and we cannot survive, just like every other human being. Historically, employees of the town have received raises every year, and since COVID that has since stopped. Due to COLA and no actual raises for years, these increases are fully justified.

Signed,

Ashley Saviano

Please accept this letter as my strongest support of the efforts the Town Board, to improve Shatford Park with a splash pad and a skatepark. Both of these efforts are highly anticipated from residents, parents, and the children of New Lebanon. We have long understood the importance of having safe public spaces for children to play in which we know is important for overall healthy development of children, especially in rural areas. I applaud the efforts of Supervisor Houghtling, and the entire town board collaborating on this without a tax increase.

Signed,

Ashley Saviano

Hi Tistrya,

Great seeing you yesterday and I will try to come for the first part of the hearing this evening. I would rather not talk in person but here are my comments which you can read in the meeting. It is short, let me know if you would like me to write more.

I totally support the 2023 budget developed by the town board. I believe their efforts to make the town a better place to live are well represented by the budget. An excellent example is the investments in Shatford park which is and will become even more of an asset for the town. The hiring of a paid bookkeeper makes sense, the supervisor is providing value to the town way beyond what she is being paid and having a paid bookkeeper is the least we can do to support her heroic efforts.

I support the budget and the path we have embarked on to make a real improvement to life in New Lebanon.

Bruce

Dear Supervisor Houghtling,

As a volunteer who is involved with many committees and thus many Towns of New Lebanon employees, my experience with the Town staff has been a very positive one. For me to be effective in my roles, I have to rely on staff for everything from retrieving information in archived files to physically lifting electronics and other heavy boxes. I've never had one person turn down a request or give me an attitude in response. All Town employees, I am familiar with, work very hard, and in my opinion, are underpaid. So, I'm happy to hear about and support the raises that are proposed for them in the 2023 Town Budget. 8% isn't a huge increase given the inflationary pressures that everyone has to contend with these days. I applaud the Town Board for looking out for our valuable employees which will help retain them and boost morale.

*Thanks, and best regards,
Steve Powers*

Hi town board -

Just a quick note to say that I checked out the proposed budget and am happy to see that town employees will hopefully see a wage increase! You all work so hard for our community and should DEFINITELY make a competitive, living wage.

We're excited for park improvements (like a splash pad and skate park)!

Thank you so much!

Schuyler Gail

Dear Tistrya,

I am writing to offer my full support for the Town Budget that has been presented for 2023. I don't feel that what is presented is unreasonable or that spending the money for improvements in the park is a waste of our resources. The Town must service all of its residents, while trying to recruit new residents and families. I know that the Town Board and Supervisor work as hard as they can to come up with a budget, we can all live with, one that addresses current and future needs and doesn't break the bank. We all want to keep costs down, improve the lives of our residents and fairly compensate the people who make it happen. It's a tough balancing act and I appreciate what they do for us.

I don't think anyone is getting rich working for the Town and I am sure there are many, many hours of work put in on our behalf that are not paid for. We elected these officials to do what's best for our town and we should trust in the process.

*Respectfully,
Sharon Powers*

Dear Tistrya,

I am sorry that I will not be able to attend the Wednesday night meeting on the preliminary budget. I have reviewed the preliminary budget and I am in total support of everything that was proposed. These are all budget items that are necessary for our town to move forward and grow. There is nothing in the preliminary budget that is out of the ordinary for any town to achieve and I applaud you and the Town Board for a job well done.

Thank you for all you do for us.

Erminia Rasmussen

To the Town Supervisor: I support the skate park. I'm 19 and often go to skate parks in other towns, like Pittsfield and Chatham, and meet friends there. A skatepark will bring visitors into our town, instead of just passing through it. New Lebanon needs more things for younger people to do.

Liam Ogilvie

Hello Tistrya,

I wish that Joe and I could be at the town budget hearing meeting on November 9. Since we cannot, both of us wanted to express our support for it.

On the specific topic of pay raises for employees and the addition of a bookkeeper, we feel that the proposed use of town funds is appropriate to more adequately compensate the really demanding job of running the town.

On the issue of the skate park, both Joe and I are fans of recreation as a way to expand the economy of our town. We feel that walking trails are an important example of this, and so is the skate park. Skate boarding might not be the recreational sport of choice for Joe or me or our peers, but we have learned a lot about the value of skate parks through the experience of our teenage sons.

We've seen how our kids like to try out quality skate parks wherever we travel, so we know that skate parks are destinations.

When we're at a skate park, we see that they attract people who are dedicated and persistent. Skate board expertise is hard work that takes tremendous practice. We have come to admire these qualities in skaters.

Once the older kids are engaged at a skate park, we set out to explore the area. We seek out places to eat and shop and visit. That could happen for New Lebanon too.

Skate parks turn out to be a fine way for kids to get together. There are not many places where skaters can practice safely. They like to meet up at the skate park where they can not only get exercise, but also have an easygoing social outlet. That is hard for older kids to find, particularly in our town.

And when the older kids are skating, it's great that younger kids can be playing on the Shatford park playground. With the addition of the skate park, Shatford Park becomes a place that can attract a family looking for activities for the range of ages of their kids. Those are also hard to find. Let's not underestimate the kind of magnet for families that Shatford Park can become through the addition of the skate park.

That's why we fully support the use of town funds for the skate park.

All the best,

Fiona Lally and Joe Ogilvie

Hi Tistrya,

I am Jude Ogilvie a lifelong resident of New Lebanon and avid skateboarder. I learned to skateboard on Mill Road, graduated to Walter B Howard's parking lot, and learned to skate ledges and curbs at the high school. My closest friends are due to skateboarding and it has helped me grow into a better person through learning new tricks and challenging myself. Skateparks are accessible to many people, they bring new faces into the town, and help communities grow together and foster stronger bonds. Skateparks don't have to be massive ramps and huge pipes, but a couple of ledges

and small ramps on smooth ground can go a long way! I hope New Lebanon can add one to their town I know I'll be there often and many people like me will be there too.

*Best,
Jude*

I am in total support of the proposed 2023 New Lebanon Town Budget. I congratulate the Town Board on its proposal to make our employees whole through a cost-of-living adjustment, and merit raises to deserving individuals. I support the position of bookkeeper in the Supervisor's office, recognizing that she needs the assistance due to the long hours she spends on Town business, along with her increasing responsibilities in County government, which is so important to New Lebanon's visibility within Columbia County. Finally, I understand that we may not have enhanced sales tax revenue coming our way in the future, so I believe the Town is correct to use what we have for one-time expenditures such as the skate park, which our young people will certainly appreciate.

Monte Wasch

To the Town Supervisor and Town Board,

I approve this budget and thank the Board for their hard work. Building amenities in the park is needed especially in hindsight when there were many needed activities during Covid. We need to build a park including the splash pad and skate park so families can have activities for their kids on our town. Also, thank for allowing space in the budget to give well deserved and needed raises.

Emma Anthonisen

I won't be able to attend the public hearing but I would like to voice my support for the proposed town budget. I am so very pleased with the progress that has been occurring in our town these past few years. I especially support the proposed salary increases for town employees--their work is a valuable service to our community, and they make sacrifices to work in the public sector at wages that are never commensurate with their workload. I have been a resident now for 34 years, and New Lebanon has become an increasingly beautiful and vibrant place to live. We still have a ways to go, but we won't get there by failing to support the town budget and town leadership. I strongly support both.

Aimée Brodeur Johnson

I'm stuck on a call. To Whom This May Concern of the Public, if you would not mind reading this. It is to my personal opinion that everyone deserves a raise, including myself considering the fact that New Lebanon is one of my lowest paying towns and I am on call 24/7. I do believe it is fair because I am an active member in the community and I go out of my way to help people take care of their dogs, train their dogs and get their dogs vetted properly at a low discount. None of this includes my job title but I think it's fair to help the community with my knowledge to be able to do so.

Maggie Banker

Maggie Banker, DCO Maggie asked if she could add to her statement since she was able to make it to the meeting. Supervisor Houghtling told her she could. Maggie stated that her opinion in what she is seeing on the streets with the kids and how things are going in this world, she is seeing 12- and 13-year-olds addicted to heroin. With that being said, she stated that she is in

favor of the skatepark or anything that will help these kids do something fun and stay off the streets and stay away from drugs.

CLOSING OF PUBLIC HEARING:

All persons desiring to be heard, having been heard, emails read into the record, a motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling to close the Public Hearing and adjourn the meeting at 7:36 pm. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Gordon.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Buckenroth -	Aye
Councilmember Gordon -	Aye
Supervisor Houghtling -	Aye
Councilmember Trainor -	Aye
Councilmember Anthonisen-	Aye

Respectfully submitted,

Marcie Robertson
New Lebanon Town Clerk