

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING OF
THE TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF NEW LEBANON
ON THE TOWN BUDGET FOR 2024
HELD ON NOVEMBER 9, 2023**

Present: Tistrya Houghtling Supervisor
Deborah Gordon, Councilmember
Norman Rasmussen, Councilmember
Susan Tipograph, Councilmember

Absent: John Trainor, Councilmember

Recording Secretary: Marsha “Marcie” Robertson, Town Clerk

Others Present: Ed Godfroy, LVPA
Steve Houghtling, LVPA
Steve Powers, CAC & ZRC Member & CSC Chair
Peter Flierl, The Columbia Paper
Members of the Public

CALL TO ORDER:

Supervisor Houghtling called the Public Hearing to order at 7:02pm.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE:

Town Clerk Robertson read the following public hearing notice aloud:

**TOWN OF NEW LEBANON
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
THE TOWN OF NEW LEBANON
2024 PRELIMINARY BUDGET**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the PRELIMINARY BUDGET of the TOWN OF NEW LEBANON for the fiscal year beginning January 1, 2024, 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 2024 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 Town of New Lebanon’s 2024 Preliminary Budget on Wednesday,

November 9, 2023 at 7:00 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 2024 salaries of the Elected Town Officers of the Town of New Lebanon:

Supervisor	\$40,470
Councilmembers (4)	\$4,120 each
Town Clerk	\$40,117
Highway Superintendent	\$74,318
Town Justices (2)	\$11,259 each
Tax Collector	\$10,812

The following is the proposed amount for 2024 for the Lebanon Valley Fire Protective Association:
SF-1 \$228,302

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 2024 Preliminary Budget and the Town of New Lebanon 2024 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
10/30/2023

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Supervisor Houghtling opened the floor to public comment.

Elizabeth Kroboth: Elizabeth commented, if the board is giving COLA adjustments for elected officials, it should be for all elected officials. The Justices and the Tax Collector are currently being excluded from the COLA increase.

Elizabeth commented, that she thinks the Supervisor, Bookkeeper salary should be kept as separate line items. If the current Supervisor moves on in two years, or another Supervisor happens to be elected and the new Supervisor does not want to take on the bookkeeping role and wants it to be a separate position. The Supervisor's salary would have to be cut and recreate the salary for the bookkeeper. Elizabeth feels they should keep the salary separate. The current Supervisor could still earn that pay but on a separate line item.

Supervisor Houghtling responded, when they did the Compensation Plan, they took every elected official and broke it down based on the retirement calendar that they submit. The committee looked at what their hourly rate was based on the number of hours worked was

as submitted to NYS Retirement. Supervisor Houghtling stated, it became apparent that the judges and the tax collector were close to \$100 an hour, while position like the Supervisor were making \$10 an hour, or the Town Clerk \$15 an hour. The board at that time proposed cutting the judges and the tax collector salaries in half. They also looked at what the other towns were paying and number of hours worked.

Supervisor Houghtling stated it was not a favored option to cut salaries of existing elected officials who had been in their position a long time. She stated, they compromised by not cutting their salaries but those positions would not be eligible for any COLAs for any budget year, until and unless this board felt like their pay was more inline with other jobs that are similar in duties required. Supervisor Houghtling stated, there is an adopted policy that states those position will not get COLAs.

Supervisor Houghtling spoke to the new incoming Town Board members, that when they join the board, if they want to re-visit the compensation findings that is something they can do.

Supervisor Houghtling responded to the comment on the Supervisor/Bookkeeper, stating it is not true that the Supervisor can still earn that. The Supervisor is not allowed to be their own bookkeeper. The Supervisor is allowed to be the Budget Officer. Right now, there are two lines and they are separate, if a future Supervisor wanted someone else as the Budget Officer, that appointment could be made. The bookkeeper position was created when a board voted down the supervisor going to full-time. The bookkeeper position was made to get the Supervisor's office to forty hours without her having to work those forty hours. Now, she is looking to bring it back so that the supervisor is full-time. Including the Budget Officer is how they get to full-time calculation as \$25 an hour plus the COLAs. Supervisor Houghtling stated a future Supervisor could have someone else as budget officer or could split it back out.

Peter Watson: His comments are for the next Public Hearing.

Craig Skerkis: Craig asked the Supervisor if the function of the office of the Supervisor has changed that dramatically that the budget has over doubled in three years?

Supervisor Houghtling, started to respond when Craig stopped her and stated that these are just his comments and that he did not expect her to respond. He wanted to point it out and let people know that the conversation is not over.

Supervisor Houghtling asked, if Craig would like the history behind the increase? She stated, back to when Mike Benson was Supervisor, he was part-time, coming in only a couple of hours a week to sign checks.

Craig stopped the Supervisor and asked her if the job was getting done? Supervisor Houghtling responded, the minimum basic requirements of the job at that time. Craig asked Supervisor Houghtling to just answer the question with a yes or a no, if the job was getting done. Supervisor Houghtling started again to explain the Supervisor job then and now.

Councilmember Rasmussen responded; the job as defined then was done. The job is defined differently now. Rasmussen stated, “the job” does not exist, they are two different jobs, then and now. Over time different boards have made different wishes known, including having a full-time, fully engaged Supervisor, not a two hour a week check signer. Back and forth discussion between Rasmussen and Skerkis took place.

Councilmember Tipograh spoke up and commented, no disrespect but these are conversations for when the new board members join the board. They should have those conversations about their vision for the town.

Supervisor Houghtling stated, the job can be done as a part-time position to get the bare minimum statutory requirements done. This board and past boards have decided that they want things done over the bare minimum, that would require a full-time supervisor.

PUBLIC COMMENT EMAILS:

Supervisor Houghtling read the following email she received for public comment:

Hello,

I am sorry I will not be able to attend tonight's meeting in person but wanted to say that I do not think that it is fair to yet again not apply to cola adjustment that is supposed to go TO ALL elected officials to the Tax Collector or the Judges.

Last year Jessica Byrne and I presented data that we had spent a lot of time gathering for the Deer visit & Town Board members to justify our current salaries which at least the Supervisor thought was too high. The information presented seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

I have watched all the budget meetings and read the typed minutes also and in both the conversation was that ALL of the elected officials would receive the 3 percent COLA but for some reason my salary is still listed the same as it was last year without the increase added.

I have been performing this job for the Town for the past 14 years and have seldom requested a raise. My office is autonomous and well run. The Supervisor and/or Town Board members have not had any need to step in and handle any complaints or concerns while I have held this office. Everyone seems confident in my ability to accurately and efficiently perform my duties. I do not believe that excluding these positions for another year is a fair or just.

Please reconsider adding this increase which is not a raise but a cost-of-living adjustment to these positions as you represented in the budget workshops.

*Thank you,
Tammie Darcy*

MISCELLANEOUS BUDGET CHANGES:

HIGHWAY:

Supervisor Houghtling stated, there are a few changes to be made based on the election

results. Pete McCagg won for Highway Superintendent. Supervisor Houghtling stated, she has spoken to both Pete McCagg and current Highway Superintendent Jeff Winestock, they are both interested in having Jeff stay on as a part-time, as needed employee for the highway department. Highway Superintendent Winestock is hoping that the Town Board will entertain keeping him on the health insurance. He currently has an employee and child plan. Supervisor Houghtling stated, she discussed the board considering a single plan for the employee only. This is not typical for a part-time employee but Jeff has worked for the town since 1985.

Supervisor Houghtling looked at the numbers, they must change the general health insurance line. Jeff was on an employee/child plan and Pete needs a family plan. There will be an increase of \$5,877.48 to General Line A-9060.8. Supervisor Houghtling would like the Town Board to consider adding a single plan to the Highway budget. The Highway Superintendent gets paid out of the general fund for health insurance benefits. All other highway employees come out of the Highway funds. The cost would be \$876.22 a month, \$10,514.64 for the year, for the current plan from December 1st, 2023 through November 30th, 2024. Per Supervisor Houghtling, they did not discuss dental coverage. Dental would be another \$509.28 for twelve months for the single dental plan.

Supervisor Houghtling stated, if the board decided to approve these changes, they will need to create a policy, an MOU, or some type of contract. Supervisor Houghtling will need to communicate with the union and will discuss with the labor attorney.

Councilmember Tipograph asked if Jeff would be a member of the union with a part-time employment status? Supervisor Houghtling responded; she will need to check with the Union.

The Town Board held further discussion.

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling to modify General line A-9060.8 and add \$5,878.00 to that line for Pete McCagg's family plan; also, to add to DA-9060.8. \$11,024.00. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rasmussen.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Rasmussen -	Aye
Councilmember Gordon -	Aye
Supervisor Houghtling -	Aye
Councilmember Trainor -	Absent
Councilmember Tipograph-	Aye

TRAINING:

Supervisor Houghtling stated there are four newly appointed and elected Town Board members that want take the Newly Elected Officials Training. It is \$200 a person and there only put \$500 in the budget line for Town Board .4, she suggested increasing it to \$1,000. The Town Clerk will have a newly appointed Deputy and would like her and her Deputy to attend the Newly Elected Officials Training, but did not budget for this. This

would increase the A-1410.4 by \$400 to allow both the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk to attend the training.

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling to increase A-1010.4 to \$1,000, and A-1410.4 to \$5,460. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Gordon.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Rasmussen -	Aye
Councilmember Gordon -	Aye
Supervisor Houghtling -	Aye
Councilmember Trainor -	Absent
Councilmember Tipograph-	Aye

The following changes were made:

Page 15. **General Employee Benefits, A-9060.8** - increase from \$51,000 to \$56,878

Page 3. **Highway Employee Benefits, DA-9060.8** – increase from \$114,546 to \$125,570

Page 1. **General Town Board, A-1010.4** – increase from \$500 to \$1,000

Page 3. **General Town Clerk, A-1410.4** – increase from \$5,060 to \$5,460

HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT FULL TIME VS. PART TIME:

Supervisor Houghtling commented, that she talked to Pete McCagg regarding his mention of being more part-time during his campaigning for Highway Superintendent. She stated, if he is the board will want to adjust that salary because the current salary is based on a full-time working Highway Superintendent.

Supervisor Houghtling stated, she checked in with Pete, and he wants to be full-time, he has some things in his personal business where he will have other people overseeing that work and would like to take on the job as a full-time Highway Superintendent, therefore there is no need to adjust that salary.

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 7:32pm. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Tipograph.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Rasmussen -	Aye
Councilmember Gordon -	Aye
Supervisor Houghtling -	Aye
Councilmember Trainor -	Absent
Councilmember Tipograph-	Aye

Respectfully submitted,

Marcie Robertson
New Lebanon Town Clerk

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