

State of New York
County of Fulton
Town of Caroga

Minutes of the Caroga Town Board Budget meeting held Wednesday September 18, 2024 at the municipal building located at 1840 State Highway #10 at 7:00 pm with the following persons in attendance by roll call. The flag salute followed.

Supervisor Ralph J. Palcovic - Here
Council Member John Glenn – Here
Council Member Barbara DeLuca – Absent
Council Member Richard Sturgess – Here
Council Member Matthew Cooper – Here

Also in attendance were Joanne Young Budget Director, Jeremy Manning – Bike Trail Manager, Dave Cummings – Golf Course Manager and Walter Hogan – Weed Harvesting Coordinator. There were two members of the public in attendance.

The Budget Director reviewed the cover page. The tentative budget is two cents higher than last year. It is under the 2% tax cap. Another \$28,000.00 can be raised in taxes and stay under the tax cap which is another \$0.17. The \$0.52 (per thousand) from the fire truck purchase was reallocated to part of the fire contract, highway, and general funds. The budget director stated we have to look at fund balance and what the tax rate could be. There is more of a fund balance in the general account. It could be reallocated to the highway. The town also has a higher taxable assessed value.

The Supervisor and budget director decided that most departments would receive 3% raises. If the board wants to know what was asked for by different departments the budget officer stated we can discuss that.

The budget was then reviewed line by line. The following are line items were discussed by the budget director.

A1010.1 Town Board did not request a raise
A1010.4 Legislative CE increased \$50.00.
A1010.41 Grant Writer line was increased to \$10,000.00. (future garage)

Justices did not request an increase. They received a huge increase last year.

Supervisor A1220.12 line was increased to \$1,000.00, for things going on in the office.
Line A1220.21 Software was increased to \$3,750.00 due to the cost of the software support.

Page 2 a 3% increase for each department – personnel. Bookkeeper, Budget, Assessment. The Assessment Review board line was funded this year. This was a paid position this year.
Assessor A1355.2 equipment was increased for the purchase of a new computer and printer.
Town Clerk line-item increase was wrong in the budget. The correct amount for 3% was lowered to \$49,440.00. The clerk's request of \$55,000.00 was available for the board members to review.

The clerk stated she has worked for the town for 31 years. The clerk compared her salary to that of the code officer - \$57,000.00. According to retirement reporting the clerk puts in 1963 + hours per year. We don't know how many hours the code officer works. He needs to submit a calendar. The bookkeeper/budget director puts in about 600 hours per year. The clerk's hourly rate is still lower than the code and bookkeepers. The clerk mentioned longevity as a method to equalize and stabilize salaries – to keep them from going up and up. The other job titles compensation is not included in this line. The clerk schedules all of the drug testing. She noted the highway Superintendent did not inform the clerk of his newest hire. A “pre-employment” test will be scheduled. The clerk notified the Supervisor that she can formulate an IT policy at no cost to the town due to her resources and connections. Our vendor wanted to charge \$400 - \$700 to develop a policy. The clerk thought she was still under paid for her years of service and experience compared to others salaries. A board member noted the clerk received a significant raise last year. The clerk asked why did the code officer make \$57,000.00 a year? Council Member Glenn stated he was CSEA employee. The clerk stated she is a Registered Municipal Clerk and a Certified Municipal Clerk. The Supervisor stated the code salary is competitive with other jurisdictions. Other clerks in the county cannot be compared. The clerk only wants a fair salary.

Board Member Sturgess wants to review the budget, and digest it. Changes can be made at upcoming meeting. Council Member Cooper is new and wants to put some thought and research into this process. He stated he likes to make educated decisions. Council Member Glenn considers the budget sheets a wish list, then the board decides what they want to do.

Page 3 A1440.4 Engineer CE was increased to \$100,000.00 due to the potential building projects. Council Member Sturgess asked where that money came from. The budget officer stated that is part of the tax increase. Council Member Sturgess thought the engineering on the golf course building should come out of the golf course money. In a recent meeting with another engineer the cost was around \$100,000.00 for the golf course project. Supervisor Palcovic recently learned that additional engineering is needed on the proposed highway barn site due to topography changes. That figure may change downward. Council member Cooper stated the money on the line item doesn't have to be spent. It can roll over to fund balance.

Council Member Sturgess asked about the Elections line A1450.4. The budget officer stated the figure comes from the county Board of Elections. He asked about having a special election. The clerk stated we are not doing one. Supervisor Palcovic and the budget officer thought the process was cost prohibitive.

Building PS A1620.1 was increased. Right now, the custodian is only paid minimum wage. The budget officer thought if we are looking to hire she recommended raising the salary to \$18.00 an hour. The line was increased to possibly paying a little more. Council Member Sturgess asked the budget officer to do a break out so the board could see all of the expenses of a department in one spot. The budget officer explained that the budget codes are set by the State of New York. The budget has to be submitted in the format it is in. A separate report will be created for the board for golf course, boat wash, and bike trail, similar to what is created for the monthly report. Council Member Cooper asked what line A1620.4 is for. It is for the expenses for town hall, heat, electric, phone, internet, any IT work, and roof repairs. The clerk stated she worked on that as well this week. The Supervisor has to review the scope of work before the clerk posts the information.

Page 4 the main changes are for insurance costs, and association dues. Insurance is going up. Line A1920.4 municipal dues was increased by \$150.00. Council Member Sturgess asked about line A1670.41. The budget officer stated that is for mailing and printing.

Page 5 no changes for the Dog Control Officer or Humane contract. Code office A3620.1 received a 3% increase. Line A3620.2 equipment was increased to upgrade the code computer. Another PC in the office will be updated with windows and a new monitor. The line went from \$500 to \$700. The code car payment comes out of A3620.4, as does his cell phone and any training, or supplies for the office. The gas comes from the highway and it is supposed to be kept track of when the car is gassed up.

Page 6 again 3% for registrar, and BTI. BTI did put in a request for an increase for the technicians, who are also making minimum wage, to be comparable to other towns and to be able to retain them. A \$0.50 increase or \$16.00 something above minimum wage was asked for. It was noted that some of the BTI staff have been here for multiple years. The program is weather related and typically have always under spent their budget. Currently there are only three full time applicators. He would like to hire a fourth. Council Member Cooper stated line A4050.11 has a 14% increase on it. The A4050.1 is the manager's salary. He is paid year-round. Council Member Sturgess didn't think the minimum wage increase was a raise. Council Member Cooper was heard to say he did and he didn't. It is still a percentage. The budget officer stated the departments that currently make minimum wage are – BTI, Boat Wash, Youth Counselors, Janitor, and some in golf course. The weed, and golf course have a pay scale. Council Member Sturgess was surprised there wasn't a scale for the BTI. The Supervisor stated it is something the board can talk about. Council Member Cooper wanted to think about it. The budget officer stated the budget sheet submitted can be reviewed by the board. The BTI manager submitted supporting document showing what other towns pay. Council Member Cooper is thinking in terms of relating it to other departments and make sense to him. Supervisor Palcovic noted the BTI department is licensed/ trained as certified applicators and may warrant a schedule in the future.

Page 7 Council Member Sturgess asked about the Deputy Highway Superintendent line, YTD is zero. The budget officer stated the position is paid on a yearly basis. It was noted we've had 3 different ones this year. The budget officer stated they are prorated for however long they served. The Highway Superintendent did not put an increase in line items A5010.11 deputy or A5010.12 – Secretary. Line A5010.1 did not receive a 3% increase. The deputy is not listed in the union contract.

Line A5132.4 was increased by \$10,000.00 for repairs to the garage. This line is also for heating, and electric.

Street lighting A5182.4 Council Members Sturgess and Cooper reviewed the line and noted year to date the town has spent just shy of \$2,300.00 for lighting and in 2022 the expense was \$43,000.00. Council Member Cooper stated it cost \$150,000.00 to convert to LED. There are still payments on the 7 - 8-year program. Council Member Sturgess noted the net savings justifies this. Council Member Glenn agreed.

Page 8 has golf course publicity on it. The numbers are not all in yet from Mr. Cummings. There is a \$500.00 increase in line A6410.41. The budget officer stated we have spent a lot on advertising this year. On the bottom of the page is the bike trail. Mr. Manning stated his budget is a little different than what he sent the budget officer. The manager position has a 3% increase.

He also requested a line item for publicity in his budget. Mr. Manning did not want to use funds from A7145.4 for publicity anymore. The budget officer noted line A6410.4 is publicity and it is unused year to date. The line could be renamed and another \$1000.00 put on the line. There is also funding on the tourism line. Mr. Manning noted next year he wants to promote the trails at an event in Whiteface. The biggest change in his budget is he requested a salary of \$24,000.00 as the manager of the trail system. He noted with the \$16,000.00 grant he's received \$8,000.00 will be reimbursed to the town through the Smart Growth Grant not all of those funds will be spent this year. The RTP Grant there is plenty of money in that to fund \$4000.00 of his salary. The town as part of the RTP Grant is a match last year was \$12,203.00. His thinking was to put all of that funding into the manager's position. As it is now Mr. Manning stated he works up there full time for six months if not more. He figured he make \$11.00 an hour up there. That does not include his time for writing grants. The Line A7145.1 - \$80,000.00 from the RPT Grant, \$31,000.00 is a roll over from the unused portion of the Smart Growth Grant we are currently working under. He still has eight weeks of work to do this year. There will be some left over this year. A very small amount of the bike trail was tax funded he noted. Supervisor Palcovic noted the bottom line is \$163,680.00. He asked Mr. Manning to explain to the board what is it going to cost the town? Out of that figure the budget officer stated it would cost the town around \$18,000.00 for the bike trail. The budget officer explained the town received about \$15,000.00 in donations. Mr. Manning stated his bottom line was \$171,000.00 for the program. The town has to already match, which was approved last year \$12,000.00 for the RPT Grant. On the revenue side it was noted that coming in are expected donations, sale of merchandise and grant money of around \$130,000.00. Mr. Manning stated if we are going to spend it, it has to be in the budget. If there isn't approval to spend it we don't use it. There are other things being developed but they can't be put in the budget right now. He is working to bring additional revenues in which is more work too. Mr. Manning again reiterated that his salary request was \$24,000.00. That would put him at \$16.00 per hour instead of \$11.00.

The Budget officer stated she didn't have all of Mr. Cummings numbers. The golf course superintendent didn't ask for a raise, but was given a 3 % increase. The manager position has three employees on that line item A7180.11. Mr. Cummings recommended that his position be eliminated. If there is a strong second level manager they could report to Mr. Stedman. Mr. Cummings is looking to restructure the golf course. He encourages his employees. One of the valued employees has computer and people skills. Two employees were let go they did not have the maturity for the job.

Line A7180.11 was reduced to \$28,000.00.

Line A7180.2 was increased per Mr. Stedman to \$16,600.00 for small equipment, accessories, and miscellaneous purchases.

Mr. Cummings questioned the amount of money paid to National Grid during the months of January, February, and March. He did not understand the expense of nearly \$2,000.00. Supervisor Palcovic thought it was because of the mercury vapor light. He suggested changing it out to LED.

Youth Services: there was a request for a 3% increase in Colleen Ricciardi's salary. An increase in the life guard salary were also requested. It was noted that minimum wage is also going up for the counselors. The budget director noted that the school pays for ½ of whatever the town spends on the youth program.

Page 10 Celebrations A7550.4 not a lot has been spent to date.

On Planning CE A8020.4 less was requested. The line went down from \$2,400 to \$1,500.

Comprehensive Plan A8020.41 was kept at \$1,000.00.

Environmental Control - They do have a grant for the boat wash coming in next year in the amount of \$33,000.00. Comparative rates were looked at for the boat wash people and stewards that work in other locations. The Town of Caroga only pays minimum wage. The budget director wondered if they should be paid more than minimum wage. Some of the stewards have worked for the town for years. Council Member Glenn stated the Mr. Harazin suggested paying \$15.75. Minimum wage is \$15.50. They also want to hire the equivalent of three full time staff. There are only 3 on the payroll and one has only worked sporadically. Council Member Sturgess asked for clarification on line A8090.11 as to why the line was increased to \$10,000.00 despite the fact nothing has been spent YTD. The budget director explained we had separated in the past; we have only been paying the staff over at the boat wash station A8090.1. If they are looking at having positions at other locations and the fact that when we got the grant the state wanted to see where the people were utilized. A lot of those positions have been filled by Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI). So, the town has not been paying them. Supervisor Palcovic explained we have to be competitive with the rates paid by AWI.

Council Member Cooper asked if we had done an operational needs study on how many people we need, where we need them and drawn out a task utilization? The supervisor explained we have the data on where the need is. The numbers we are registering are ahead of the curve. Council Member Cooper asked do we have enough people? Do we have too many people?

Council Member Sturgess reminded the board that we have found invasive species on three boats this year? Three. We've already got invasive species.

Supervisor Palcovic stated we are going to continue to fund these programs. He noted we are getting grant funding for these programs. Council Member Glenn suggested keeping the numbers where they were last year for next year. Maybe next year we can fund some ProcellaCOR.

Anita Long wanted to comment on the Comprehensive Plan. They discussed before a grant for the comprehensive planning which required a match which would help the town set up for other grants maybe in the future. "It that something that is a possibility?" She suggested putting money on a line in the amount of \$10,000.00. Mr. Manning stated you cannot use any of the grant writing fees as a match.

Line A8090.13 Mr. Hogan stated this year the program was run with four divers. Right now, all of the divers plan to come back next year. There has always been one tender. It's possible one of the divers can serve as a tender when they are up on deck. Mr. Hogan didn't anticipate that much milfoil. He cut his salary right in half A8090.14. If he continues on. He figured he can do the job

in half the time. The Supervisor thanked him for this. On the equipment line A8090.2 a motor will need to be replaced on the lake management boat. He estimated the cost to be in the range of \$8,000.00. Mr. Hogan wasn't sure about the use of a Garmin and noted there are some camera systems for \$500 - \$600. He will see if this is a feasible option. He will get some government bids on the motor. The only area to treat for next year is Bennet's Bay. The cost would be less than \$5,000.00. Mr. Hogan put together his budget based on a year in flux. He cautioned the board not to change the budget too much. He stated perhaps the board wants to keep line A8090.14 at the same amount in case he does not come back. Mr. Hogan suggested using the funds in the budget to have a steward at the marina. He noted this program is educational. We have to take care of our boats. People are aware of the problem and so we are seeing less. If we don't have a presence people will go back to their old ways. Mr. Hogan commended Mr. Harazin.

Council Member Sturgess stated it is not the marina's responsibility to ensure that the boat getting launched at their marina has been washed or decontaminated? Is there a higher force? Council Member Glenn stated there is a state law that the boat is to be clean/dry &.... It is on the individual. There is no enforcement at the launch site? Mr. Hogan raised the issue of having some teeth in the law at a conference this summer at Paul Smiths. Council Member Glenn noted there are signs saying all boats must be inspected before being launched. Mr. Hogan noted in Schroon Lake they passed a local ordinance that requires you to have your boat washed. This will be discussed at a future meeting. Supervisor Palcovic wanted to get back to the budget.

Page 11 no changes in the Garbage collection/ landfill testing lines. Council Member Cooper has two comments. Refuse EQ A8160.2 has no money on the line. The budget director stated there is a reserve for that. He also suggested changing the name of A8720.4 from PLRT to Caroga Tourism Committee CTC.

Page 12 Undistributed are required funding for retirement, social security, and worker's compensation. The budget director noted the workers comp in the highway line item has gone up significantly for next year. This is set by how much we pay the county. Golf Course unemployment took a jump based on what we have paid to date this year. The golf course health insurance A9060.81 was reduced as there is only one on the policy. Council Member Cooper noted the increase to \$20,000.00 in the Golf Course Unemployment line. He stated we haven't had this problem in the previous years. The budget officer stated we haven't had as many people apply for it. Supervisor Palcovic stated everyone thinks it is free money. Council Member Cooper stated he disagrees with that value. (the \$20,000.00) The budget officer stated if we lower it, it just becomes a budget adjustment for next year from contingency. Council Member Cooper asked if we had too many employees? Supervisor Palcovic stated this discussion is for the organizational meeting.

Mr. Farber arrives for the Zoning meeting.

Installment Purchase is the lighting contract for the LED lights.

Page 13 has the reserves for the board to fund for next year. Listed were the Capitol Fund A9950.9, Weed Harvester A9950.91, Garbage truck A9950.92 and then the two set up last year for the Golf Course Eq. A9950.93 and Golf Course improvements A9950.94. The budget director noted

currently there is \$58,000.00 in the Weed Harvester reserve – no need to fund that at this point. Usually, the board waits until December to see about funding reserves. The board does not have to fund reserves it is for the board to decide on future planning. There is \$78,966.00 currently in the garbage truck reserve. The budget shows an additional \$20,000.00 in funding for 2025. It was noted the highway trucks are in the highway portion of the budget.

The budget officer stated she has reviewed all of the expenses. The 2025 budget was increased by about \$100,000.00. A lot of that was the engineering costs. The line went from \$10,000.00 to \$100,000.00.

The budget officer quickly reviewed the revenue portion of the budget. It was noted that the sales tax line was increased because historically we have underbudgeted it. The other significant increase is on page 14 under interest and earnings A2401. We have done well with the CD's.

At 6:50 pm Zoning Board Chairman Anthony Russitano arrives for his 7 pm meeting.

The budget officer wanted to work for another five minutes. The meeting continued. The budget officer stated the code officer is predicting more income from building permit fees.

Page 15 there is an increase for the stewards grant A3060 in the amount of \$33,000.

Page 16 A3798 Trail Grant \$130,300.00 is the money anticipated for the grant Mr. Manning talked about. That offsets his other part of the budget.

Page 16 Highway the budget officer did get information from Mr. Voght. Personnel DA5110.1 is a contractual issue with the union. It was noted that there hasn't always been a full staff. General repairs contractual was increased by \$5,000.00. It was noted a budget modification was made due to the bridge work. Machinery and equipment DA5130.2 is for the purchase of equipment. Mr. Voght had put in for \$150,000.00 but the line was listed as \$90,000.00. He may be looking for a small truck. Machinery CE – DA5130.4 remained at \$85,000.00. Council Member Sturgess asked if the YTD included the recent engine work done on the big truck. The budget officer didn't think the line included the recent work. It was noted we are overbudget on that line right now. Possibly was the budget officer reply. Council Member Sturgess figured we are \$10,000.00 over already.

Page 17 Snow removal is the winter personnel DA5142.1 and contractual for salt/sand DA5142.4. There is a \$4,000.00 increase in CE.

Employee benefits: the budget officer stated there is nothing that can really be changed. It is retirement, Medicare, an increase in worker's compensation, and health insurance.

There is an installment payment on the excavator DA9785.6 going forward for another four years.

Page 18 the last thing is transfers: highway reserve DA9901.9 it was noted some of the equipment reserve has been used for a new truck. There is currently \$42,000.00 on the highway equipment reserve. Council Member Sturgess noted we have not put the reserve in for this year. The budget director stated some of it was used to pay for the \$162,000.00 purchase. She stated we are probably

not going to be able to fund the reserve especially if we have to transfer money into the machinery and equipment line to cover repair costs.

At 6:56 Supervisor Palcovic made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Council Member Sturgess. All board members were in favor of the motion. Then the budget officer asked to set a date for the next meeting. The budget officer stated she will have the new pages for the board of the department reports. The board set Monday October 7th at 6 pm. Supervisor Palcovic reiterated the closing of the meeting. Gavel.

Submitted by Caroga Town Clerk

Linda Gilbert, RMC, CMC