

RED HOOK TOWN BOARD MEETING

October 7, 2008

A meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Red Hook, Dutchess County, New York was convened in public session at the Town Hall, 7340 South Broadway, Red Hook at 7:30 p.m.

Present: Supervisor Sue Crane
Councilman James Ross
Councilwoman Micki Strawinski
Councilman Harry Colgan
Councilman Robert Latimer
Town Clerk Sue McCann

Also Present: Attorney for the Town Christine Chale
Business Manager Deborah Marks
CPA Ted Eglit
Budget Officer Rose Rider

Supervisor Crane opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. She announced that the night's meeting was to begin reviewing the Supervisor's budget as it was submitted to the Town Clerk on September 30, 2008. It is the Board's job collectively to look at it and make adjustments. She explained that she worked on the tentative 2009 budget with CPA Ted Eglit, Business Manager Deborah Marks and Budget Officer Rose Rider. The tentative 2009 budget was presented to the Board on October 1, 2008 and the tentative 2009 budget workbook was presented at this meeting.

Supervisor Crane asked Business Manager Deborah Marks to go to the end of the budget printout where it shows tax rates. She explained that it is the Board's job to go through the budget and make adjustments to try to get the rates down.

Business Manager Deborah Marks began to review the tentative 2009 budget with the Board. She explained that because of the way the economy is today anything related to fuel based products or services significantly increased so the Board should keep that in mind as they go over the budget. The State Comptroller requires the Town to disclose specific information, the previous year's actual amount expended for each line and the budget as modified for the current operating year as of August 31st. She began with review of the General A Fund.

Supervisor Crane addressed the Board regarding a conversation she had with the Justices who asked for more hours for their clerks because of their heavy workload. Supervisor Crane explained that when we go to 20 hours or more we affect the benefits and it drastically changes the amount in that budget line. She asked the Board to consider her proposal to increase their salary \$1.00 per hour which she thinks is a modest increase, but enough that it may make them feel appreciated and that we responded to their concerns.

Supervisor Crane then addressed the Deputy Supervisor's line in the budget. She suggested dividing that line into quarters so that each person on the Town Board has one quarter that they are responsible to serve.

Deborah Marks continued going through the tentative budget with the Board.

Supervisor Crane discussed the Assessor's office. She read a memo from Assessor Jeff Churchill who believes their office is understaffed. He is requesting an increase in the Deputy Assessor's hours from 19.5 per week to 28 per week, four days a week to meet the needs of the office. The Assessor also requested one additional week of vacation. Supervisor Crane said that the request for additional hours for the Deputy Assessor comes to them every year. She wanted to consult the Board because she feels it is important. The Assessor does work a lot of hours and Diana Picciano covers three days a week with a limit of 19.5 hours. The result would be a significant budget impact because of the benefits.

Councilman Ross asked Business Manager Marks if she compared these positions and asked what other Towns spend. He wants to know if the Justice's and Assessor's requests are valid.

Deborah Marks will check.

Councilwoman Strawinski asked if it would be possible to get another person part time.

Supervisor Crane spoke with the Assessor, Jeff Churchill, about that and he felt that would not meet their needs because the training process would be a tremendous burden on him. It is a very specialized office. Diana Picciano has been in that office for 12 years. He thinks it would be the most efficient solution because of her knowledge. Supervisor Crane asked too, that we compare ourselves to other Towns throughout the County.

Councilman Colgan feels the assessment complaints are slowing down and that it might not require so much effort.

Councilman Latimer sees it going the opposite way because of the economy. He thinks homeowners are getting appraisals that are coming in way short of their assessments and more people will be coming into the Assessor's office because of that.

The Board continued their review and discussion of the tentative budget.

Supervisor Crane spoke with our Attorney for the Town because our expenses have run way beyond what we thought they would be. There are many explanations such as the Intermunicipal Task Forces' work, the work we attempted to do in changing zoning and law changes that represent a fair amount of work. As a result, Supervisor Crane told Attorney Chale that she is going to propose that the Board consider going out for a request for proposals from attorneys firms to get a handle on what it is that we could achieve in savings by going to a retainer based contract. Attorney Chale wants to retain the Town, and will try to identify how to save. Supervisor Crane said that in fairness to the Town, we need to hear from other attorneys.

On a motion of Supervisor Crane, seconded by Councilman Colgan, moved to go out for a Request for Proposal for Attorney for the Town.

Adopted	Ayes	5	Crane, Ross, Strawinski, Colgan, Latimer
	Nays	0	

The Board continued review and discussion of the tentative budget. They will compare dog warden salaries and trailer park fees with local Towns.

Councilman Ross asked Deb Marks to see if we can draw more from the fund balance to keep the percent change somewhere around 3%. It would be a kinder increase and our fund balance can afford it.

Deb Marks reviewed the appropriations with the Board.

The Board began review and discussion of the DB Fund. They discussed the DB appropriated fund balance as well as the General B fund balance.

The next scheduled budget meeting is Saturday, October 18, 2008. They will continue with the General B fund.

On a motion of Supervisor Crane, seconded by Councilwoman Strawinski, moved to hold a Public Hearing on the 2009 budget on Wednesday, October 29, 2008 at 7:30 p.m.

Adopted	Ayes	5	Crane, Ross, Strawinski, Colgan, Latimer
	Nays	0	

On a motion of Councilman Latimer, seconded by Councilman Colgan, moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

Adopted	Ayes	5	Crane, Ross, Strawinski, Colgan, Latimer
	Nays	0	

Respectfully submitted,

Sue McCann, Town Clerk