

October 7th, 2014 2015 Budget Meeting

The Special Town Board meeting of the Town of Stony Creek was held on October 7th, 2014. Supervisor Thomas called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM with members present:

Councilman Nathan Thomas

Councilwoman Doreen Ryan

Councilman Carl Thomas

Absent: Councilman John Thomas

Attorney James Cooper was not required to attend.

Supervisor Thomas reported the purpose of the meeting tonight is the presentation of the Tentative 2015 Town Budget and with the goal of adopting the Preliminary Budget, if we can that way we would have time to give notice for a Public Hearing. In the past we have held it the day after election.

The 2015 Town Budget, there is a decreased by about .02% or 9¢ per \$1000.00. The tax rate for 2014 is \$453.40, the 2015 budget is \$453.31. The amount to be raised by tax for the town is \$640,648.00, which is \$10,316.00 less raised in 2014. The final value of the town right now is decreased by \$23,937.00, from last year. The usual 2-2½% on the State Land was increased by \$7200.00 increase in private, which mitigated a little bit.

Workers Compensation

The big source in Revenues is Workers Compensation.

Workers Compensation for 2015 will be \$19,531.00, which is a decrease of \$16,961.94.

Fire Protection Workers Compensation for 2015 will be \$1859.73, which is a decrease of \$4767.07.

NYS Retirement

The projected NYS Retirement due in December 2015 for Tier 4 contribution rate decreased from 20.8 to 18.5. He took out \$10,000.00 of what was budgeted for next year.

The big source for the Highway is the increase of Revenue from the County for Snow and Ice.

Supervisor Thomas stated there is a 2% pay increase for everyone except the Town Attorney which he didn't care for a raise in pay.

6:34 PM: The Town Board reviewed the Tentative 2015 budget.

6:38 PM Councilman John Thomas attended the meeting.

Summary Page of the Tentative 2015 Town Budget:

	Appropriation and	Less	Less	Amount to be }	Difference
	Provisions for	Estimated	Unexpended	raised by tax }	in 2014
	Other uses:	Revenue	Balance		
General Fund:	\$575,343.00	\$385,448.00	\$50,000.00	\$139,895.00 }	\$6014.00
Highway Fund:	\$821,238.00	\$273,485.00	\$47,000.00	\$500,753.00 }	\$4302.00
Fire Protection:	\$114,000.00	-0-	\$1000.00	\$113,000.00 }	Same
Totals	\$1,510,581.00	\$658,933.00	\$98,000.00	\$753,648.00 }	\$10,316.00

Total town tax is \$640,648.00. Town taxable value is \$1,413,263.00. Tax rate is \$453.31, which is 9¢ less than 2014 or .02% and a decrease of \$10,316.00 in the amount to be raised by tax.

Councilman John Thomas stated it looked like the Workers Comp. saved the town quite a bit this year. Supervisor Thomas stated yes, it saved the town \$16,961.00 and the fire dept. EMS \$4767.00 for a total of \$21,728.00 plus Warren County is going to increase the rate they pay per mile to plow and salt the roads, this will go from \$5200.00 to all most \$6800.00. The contribution rate for the retirement has decreased about 2%.

Highway; Bridges:

Councilman Carl Thomas stated at the last board meeting there was a lot of discussion about replacing a bridge. Is that included in this budget? Supervisor Thomas stated he added in \$3000.00 in the Bridges Contractual and Supt. Bradley stated about \$5000.00. So he thought adding \$3000.00 and what he has in there he should have enough.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated is that spending funds for private enterprises. It's to help an individual timber his property. You have a bridge adequate for normal use. He doesn't know if that is a good thing to do or not. He knows when we wanted a bridge on Murray Road there was no way we could spend it. He doesn't know what the figures are or anything about that. Again the other thing he thinks, Supt. Bradley said something about \$10,000.00 for that bridge but does that include engineering and stuff, because to raise it from 4 ton to 40 ton you're going to put a lot bigger beams underneath it and he has seen ice on that bridge. So if you get more restriction in your stream flow it will be doing damage up or down the road or somewhere else. He thinks you need to put a lot of consideration in it. That expenditure from his point of view. Supervisor Thomas stated they are good points and he added \$3000.00 so with that he doesn't know what the cost is. The Bridges Contractual went from \$10,000.00 to \$13,000.00. Those are points we should probably consider before we move ahead with it.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated the other thing to is, for nine months he's been hearing how badly our road maintenance or conditions, that we're not keeping up with the cost and things like that. What he hears and what he thinks, it doesn't seem to make sense to him, especially if he has another way to take the logs out, he just doesn't want to do it.

Supervisor Thomas stated right, it certainly warrants more discussion before we tell Supt. Bradley to go ahead and do it.

Councilman John Thomas stated he did talk to Supt. Bradley after the meeting last month on getting a price on what the engineer is going to cost to do it.

Assessors:

Councilman Carl Thomas stated another subject he would like maybe to get a discussion going on is the Assessor's Office. Assessor LaGrasse may be a little upset with this but we have one Chairman and two Associate Assessors and after all the Assessors are trained and certified they should be capable of doing the duties of the office and the Board should work together as one. He thinks the pay should be equitable and he thinks it needs to be reviewed. The Board, he thinks for newly elected officers we could set a base rate you'd be hired in at and then put a step type thing in. As they complete the education requirements bump it up to whatever rate we determine and there are three major components of education that they need to do and it has to be done in their first term, first four years. If you wanted to structure it, step like increase, you

wouldn't be paying all this money until they got qualified Assessors and you could have a fourth step if they are re-elected, going into a second term. Get them up to whatever rate is established for the Associate Official. He thinks this would help maybe to get a little better interest, maybe more for the town at least. Have some sort of structure that's an incentive maybe to keep them on it, because it's not really been working well he doesn't think in the past. It would add just a little to better their responsibilities to maybe do something like that. It's just a suggestion. Supervisor Thomas stated we would have to ask the attorney to check out the legalities of that because they are elected officials.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated the Town Board sets the amount.

Supervisor Thomas stated he's not saying you can't do it, we want to make sure it's legal.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated he would think the Board is responsible for their pay and setting the pay structure whatever it is and you can layer it and however you want to determine it. He thinks it's something the Board should look at, get a better handle on what's going on.

Supervisor Thomas stated either that or we could go to Sole Assessor. Councilman Carl Thomas stated we could do that. Supervisor Thomas stated just about every town has except for Stony Creek and Thurman. Councilman Carl Thomas stated in Warren County, he thinks that's correct. He was leaning that way a year ago but he thinks the three-man Board is the better way to go. You always have someone in training. The Chairman is Peter, what are you going to do. Certain times of year you really ought to have somebody and if you have three, anyone of the three should be capable of doing the requirement. The three-man Board is a good system, it just needs to be better structured or something and thinks the Board has that ability.

Councilman John Thomas stated on the other end of it, if the two are better trained they could take the normal stuff off Peter, he could have them do that and Peter could spend time on something else. But they have to have the training to do it.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated that's what he's saying. Once they get their certification they should be able to do that. Right now the Chairman gets like three times (pay wage) the other Assessors do. He thinks that's quite a disparity there. There's a whole lot of things we could do there and look at, we could get started somewhere.

Supervisor Thomas stated as it stands right now you could make it more equitable. That doesn't necessarily mean we're going to get more participation. Right now basically Peter is doing the work. Councilman Carl Thomas stated he understands that, he's doing all the work. Supervisor Thomas stated if he sees evidence of other participation then he might be more inclined to make it more equitable, but he doesn't see that if Peters doing the work.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated he's not saying that, he's saying start them at a base rate and as they complete their education step it up. That way the town will be saving a thousand dollars a year for an individual that wasn't training maybe.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated we can check with the attorney and see but would think the Board would have the power to do that. Supervisor Thomas agreed and stated it probably does.

Celebrations:

Councilman Nathan Thomas asked if this if for the 4th of July. Supervisor Thomas stated yes.

Councilman Nathan Thomas stated he doesn't see anything budgeted for it. Supervisor Thomas stated the last two times he took it out of Contingent and transferred it in there.

Real Property Taxes:

Councilman Nathan Thomas asked if we had this anymore.

Supervisor Thomas stated we will once we know what it is.

Parks and Rec.

Councilman John Thomas asked about repairs to the swimming area at the rec. field and if it's something we need to get a price on or is it already in the budget.

Supervisor Thomas stated it would be taken out of Parks and Recreation and the Fund Balance. He would lean more to do it that way rather than putting it in the budget because the General Fund Balance is around \$310,000.00. That's how he tries to do thing and tries not to take too much out of it. That's probably a \$10,000.00 repair. Councilman John Thomas stated it's something we need to do.

Highway; Capital Outlay:

Supervisor Thomas stated hopefully the additional \$10,000.00 in the Capital Outlay will help towards catching up with the roads. It's not an easy thing anymore with the cost of blacktop and everything.

Assessors:

Supervisor Thomas stated being no other comments he suggested the Board adopt the 2015 Preliminary Budget and if they want to make changes to the Assessor he isn't sure. He knows we can make changes to the budget after the public hearing. Once you set the Preliminary Budget you can't change it until after the public hearing but after the public Hearing then changes can be made.

Supervisor Thomas stated once the salaries are established and you have the public hearing he doesn't think you can change them until after the first of the year by Local Law and another public hearing, unless you have specific proposal.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated he would say right now if you asking, he would say start the newly elected assessors at \$2400.00 a year.

Councilwoman Ryan stated, how do you know when you can increase it?

Councilman Carl Thomas stated as they complete their training courses.

Councilwoman Ryan stated, what do you expect it to increase by, by how much you just can't give an amount.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated basically you can take, start them at a base like \$2400.00 a year. Wherever you set it divide that into he would say four steps, each time they complete a major course, there's three of them. Councilwoman Ryan stated for a total of how much? Councilman Carl Thomas stated whatever you set them as a max.

Councilwoman Ryan stated it seems like more of a process with coming up with numbers she thinks.

Councilman Nathan Thomas stated you current Assistant Assessor is \$3400.00 total as purposed.

Councilwoman Ryan stated what kind of trainings would you expect them to get? Councilman Carl Thomas stated they have to get State Training to be certified as an Assessor, its required training and they have to complete it with in the first term of office within three years. If they don't then they should be removed from office, but in the meantime you're not just paying him to be there. Supervisor Thomas stated there's specific things the first year and he thinks the two-three year you have to have three or four other courses. Councilman Carl Thomas stated there's a total of three courses actually there's five, if you want to include the Ethics and Orientation. Then you have the other three main courses which is market stuff, basically you're supposed to

finish them in three years, one a year. Councilwoman Ryan stated you can't always expect something done in a certain time because they may not be able to do it.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated what we have to go by is what are we paying them for.

Councilman Carl Thomas asked Assessor LaGrasse if he was getting any help now. Assessor LaGrasse stated no. Assessor Brandon Thomas helped him when he first, at the beginning of the year for like two sessions and very fleetingly and it's not what Councilman Carl Thomas was doing when he was Assessor. In other words what he feels the Assessors, other than the Chairman should do. The first is be knowledgeable of what decisions he's made and follow up with that and be able to do the assessment feature, do the calculations and determine that assessment, there's much more to the job than that, those basic skills and they haven't done any courses.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated that's what he's concerned.

Assessor LaGrasse stated maybe ethics, but they haven't done any subject matter courses.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated if anyone in the public has a question, Assessor LaGrasse is the only one that's going to be able to answer that question and it should be that anybody in the office can handle that and that's what we need to aim for. That's what he's saying if he can get some structure in there maybe we can.

Supervisor Thomas stated there is a possibility at the end of this year. We will have a vacancy because the State will remove them from office if they don't do the courses. Councilman Carl Thomas stated they haven't yet. Supervisor Thomas stated they have in the past, they will now. Councilman Carl Thomas stated that Brandon has to run this year he doesn't know if he is or not. Councilman John Thomas stated he is.

Supervisor Thomas stated he isn't sure, he would have to get a legal opinion because he's not sure you can set up a sliding scale on an elected official, he doesn't really think you can.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated let me say this, he knows other offices that have, not this county but in other counties they do, do it. That's what he has learned in his inquiries that he made and that's why.

Supervisor Thomas stated maybe you can, it makes sense. Councilman Carl Thomas stated it does, it's to our benefit that we do something like that, you don't normally hire people at the top and go from there.

Supervisor Thomas stated when you're an elected official he thinks, it doesn't matter if you have experience or not. Councilman Carl Thomas stated that's true. Supervisor Thomas stated anybody can be elected, the law doesn't look at it like you have to have this much experience. The law looks at it you got elected so you get paid. Even if you don't do the job period. You still get paid.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated he thinks it's worth looking into to see if we can and if we can he thinks we should move in that direction at least.

Supervisor Thomas stated it will probably be something we would do by Local Law.

Councilman Nathan Thomas stated in two months by January 1st, you could adopt a Local Law and start the process.

Councilman Carl Thomas stated its something to kick around and think about and see if we can make improvements. It's the time of year when it's going to get busy in the office.

104-14. A resolution was made by Councilman Nathan Thomas seconded by Councilwoman Ryan to adopt the 2015 Preliminary Budget and hold a Public Hearing on November 12th, 2014 at 7:00 PM on the 2015 Town Budget along with the 2015 Contracts on the Stony Creek Free Library, Stony Creek Fire Protection and the Stony Creek Historical Association. Roll call vote, all in favor.

Councilman Nathan Thomas stated the sign by the spring on Roaring Branch Road is all shot up and being the spring is no longer operational suggested removing the sign.

A motion was made by Councilman John Thomas seconded by Councilwoman Doreen Ryan to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 PM. All in favor, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Harrington
Town Clerk