

**TOWN OF NORTHAMPTON**  
**2015 Preliminary Budget**  
**PUBLIC HEARING**  
**November 12, 2014**

The Town of Northampton Public Hearing on the 2015 Preliminary Budget was called to order at 7:03 p.m. on Wednesday, November 12, 2014 by Supervisor Groff in the Municipal Building at 412 South Main St., Northville, NY. Supervisor Groff led the salute to the flag

**PRESENT:** Supervisor: James Groff  
Councilmen: Darryl Roosa, Ivar Anderson, William Gritsavage, and Art Simmons

**RECORDING SECRETARY:** Elaine Mihalik-Town Clerk

**Other Town department representative in attendance was:**  
Bookkeeper/Budget Director- Nathaniel Matthews

**ALSO PRESENT:** Jason Kemper, Northville Mayor-John Spaeth, Steven Norris and Chris Jacques

Supervisor Groff: I wish there were more people hear at this Public Hearing on the 2015 Preliminary Budget.

It needs to be said that this Budget is not the fault of anyone person. It is not Linda Kemper's fault. It is not the previous Boards' fault. After reading today the Audit done in 2011-2012 the Supervisor and Board were not given the information that they needed previous years to put together a good budget and to understand that they needed to raise the taxes a little bit.

Everybody has been afraid of this 2% tax increase that the Governor put in. Everybody else in previous years did not want to raise taxes and I can understand that. There should not be any blame to anyone else and if any of us made reference to anyone else. I apologize for it for myself and anyone else. It is no one person's fault, just accumulation of what has happened over the years, trying to keep taxes down, and working to stay within it. Unfortunately, we are not in a good position.

I am glad that someone brought it to my attention today and I thank him very much for that.

**LEGAL NOTICE**

NOTICE is hereby given that the Preliminary Budget of the Town of Northampton for the fiscal year beginning January 1st, 2015 and the 2015 Fire Contract with the Village of Northville and Broadalbin Kenneyto Fire Co., Inc. All have been completed and filed in the office of the Town Clerk, Town Hall at 412 South Main St, Northville, NY, where it is available for inspection by any interested person during regular business hours.

FURTHER NOTICE is hereby given that the Town Board of the Town of Northampton will meet and review said preliminary budget and hold a Public Hearing thereon, at the Town hall, 412 South Main Street, Northville, NY at 7:00 p.m. on the 12th day of November, 2014, and at that

hearing any person may be heard in favor of or against the preliminary budget as compiled, or for or against any item or items as therein contained.

Pursuant to Section 113 of Town Law, the proposed salaries of the following elected Town officers are hereby specified as follows: Supervisor \$17,000.00; Town Justice (2) \$11,628.00; Town Councilman (4) \$2,600.00; Town Clerk \$19,133.00; Tax Collector \$6,888.06; Highway Superintendent \$43,159.26. Dated: October 24, 2014

By Order of the Town Board, Elaine Mihalik-Town Clerk, Town of Northampton

Supervisor Groff **Opened Public Comment** Session at 7:10 p.m.

Chris Jacques: I understand that an Audit was done by the State Comptroller office about a year and half ago. Where would that information be?

Supervisor Groff: You can get it on line. I have a hard copy and I can make a copy of the Audit for you. It is on line.

Chris Jacques: I am not on a witch hunt. It's just confusing as to what the results to that Audit was. I know that Mr. Groff took over as Supervisor since then and you tried to merge the difficulties of the finances into this 2015 Budget.

I don't have any questions of the Board. I have been coming to the Town of Northampton since I was seven years old. The Town Board does a commendable job with what resources you have. I am just curious as to allegedly that Audit showed a large cash balance. But, I don't know what that is and that was something that was told to me and nothing that I have seen.

Supervisor Groff: If you go through the 2011-2012 Audit and read the Budget it will tell you, one of the things that I highlighted in here, is the result of the Board adopted Budgets with inaccurate estimates of Revenues and Expenditures. This is one of the problems, the Supervisor and the Board members were not receiving the information that they needed to put together a good budget. They would have probably raised within the 2% Tax Cap each year and we wouldn't be in this position.

Chris Jacques: Who is responsible for giving the Supervisor and Board members bogus information?

Supervisor Groff: I don't want to point fingers. But I truly believe from reading this Audit and from conversations with a friend and a few other people. The Board members and the Supervisor did not get the information that they needed to make a good budget to come up with the right thing. They were working very diligently to keep taxes down which we all want to do. That was part of the problem, the communications between this Board, Supervisor and the Budgeting Department.

Councilman Anderson: I have been on this Board for six years. I think that a lot of it was carried over from year to year and until that Audit came out everyone said I guess that's fine and if we're paying our bills and whatever. What we were told was that everything was fine.

Supervisor Groff: One of the other things was there were consistently unrealistic Revenue and Expenditure estimates in the Town Budget, misleading the taxpayers and everyone else. The Supervisor and this Board were not given the right information. All the Board and Supervisor were trying to do, is to hold down taxes. It is unfortunate they went through one period when the one bookkeeper quit and she had one a new bookkeeper.

Chris Jacques: Basically it's been an error that carried over?

Supervisor Groff: It's been quite a while in the coming.

Chris Jacques made reference to the article that was in the Sacandaga Express. I wanted to see that 2011-2012 Audit because it was odd that it had a lot of these budget issues that were not brought forward, whether or not that Audit helped bring them forward because it was done fairly recently.

Supervisor Groff: Correct me if I am wrong, Nate. The town has several different categories for the budget. A couple of them are well funded and have money and the other ones aren't. You are only allowed to transfer these between budgets. That is where the problem lays and that is basically what we tried to fix.

I am not a numbers guy. This is why we went with Nate because we had good experience with him with the Village. I honestly believe, that if the previous Town Board wanted to hire Nate they would have found this out before last year and they would have been doing something last year.

There is no one really to blame. I think that the previous Bookkeeper has been doing this for a long time. But then again you have a Board and none of us are Bookkeepers. Every month you are supposed to get a financial report. I know that the Board had asked before it and they were getting quarterly. We do now, get it every month.

Chris Jacques: You think that the previous administration didn't want to put forth a tax increase because it was unpopular?

Supervisor Groff: Again, I think that Supervisor Linda Kemper and the Board were given false information. They were told that they were in good shape and things were alright and they were trying to keep taxes down. If you go on line and read this Audit you will understand. They didn't have the information they needed to make the correct decisions. That's my feeling.

Councilman Anderson: That is pretty much what it was.  
Discussion ensued

Nathanial Matthews: You can get a copy of the report on the Comptroller's website. The part you are referencing has to do with some funds or several funds had an excessive fund balance. There are two funds that started out that had an excessive fund balance. Unfortunately, those two funds are not the Tax Revenue Funds.

Chris Jacques: I'm surprised with that sort of an increase; I'm the only one here tonight asking the questions from the whole Town of Northampton. I think it has something to do to the fact that people knew or this normal. What kind of attendance do you get at a Budget meeting?

Councilman Anderson: I think that there are more hear this year than have been in the past two or three years.

Chris Jacques: So if you don't show up, you have nothing to say. You can't complain if you don't vote and if you don't show up for the meeting.

Councilman Anderson: You are looking at a number that says 13.44 %. It's an increase of \$20 per \$100,000.00 home.

Supervisor Groff: I wish there were more people here so I could tell them it's not the fault of the Board or the previous Supervisor.

Chris Jacques: I wanted to gather information because I have a bunch of people that live in the neighborhood that is asking about the Budget. I had a question on my mind based on this Accountant's Firm that looked at it.

You guys are elected officials. You come in and take over what has been a problem. You can't be held responsible for something that pre-dates you.

Supervisor Groff: I will try and put together a Press Release tomorrow with the Budget stating that fact that this is not something that the Town Board or Supervisor did. Believe me there is nobody here that wants to raise the taxes.

Steve Norris: Why wasn't this Preliminary Budget posted on the Town website? If this were Supervisor Linda Kemper you would have crucified her!

Supervisor Groff: I never crucified anybody. Not me.

Steve Norris: You guys were very critical of her not putting things on the website. There was no reason why it was not put on. I was getting to see this Budget tonight at this meeting and you expect me to digest this.

Supervisor Groff: This has been in the Clerk's office since out last Budget Work shop meeting. I have never crucified anybody for not putting something on the town website because I can't put it on the website myself.

Had you called me on the phone Steve I would have mailed you a copy.

Steve Norris: Mr. Groff, why waste the paper? The whole objective these days is "not to print". Are we not paying someone to maintain the website? There is no excuse for this.

Supervisor Groff: It is a Preliminary Budget. You think it should be on the website?

Steve Norris: You found the time to get your Press Release on the website which was very partisan and I think it was very inappropriate. The Press Release was about the Budget and the previous Supervisor having over spent.

Supervisor Groff: I just apologized for that and I will apologize in the Press Release because I was misleading.

Steve Norris: My point is. I'm saying that if this Board found the time to put that Press Release on the website. This Budget is more important than that Press Release.

Supervisor Groff: We will try and make an effort to have the Budget available on the website next year.

Steve Norris: In your defense, I think that the Town tax is miniscule compared to the County Budget. I am not so terribly concerned about it. \$20.00 is not going to break anybody. My concern is having finally gotten a copy this Audit Report which is scathing and very critical of the Board. But, there are three Councilman Members that were on the Board. My question to you is and I understand you are not a numbers guys. Neither am I. Why didn't you hire an Independent Auditor to come in and look at the books? You had some questions and clearly something was going on there. This Audit Report indicates that there were substantial surpluses and moneys. Where did it go?

Supervisor Groff: The Audit, it is in two different Funds. You are not allowed to transfer it to different Funds.

Steve Norris: It's locked into those particular Funds?  
Response: Yes

Steve Norris: You need to advertise and let the public know that.

Supervisor Groff: I am going to the Press with these because I have made some mistakes and I have no problem telling the people I've made mistakes. One of them was blaming the other Supervisor and the Board. It wasn't just the public trying to get information it was the Board and the Supervisor on what was going on with the budget. If you read the whole Audit Report you will understand that, it is right in there and that was the problem. It's unfortunately you or any of the Board members or Supervisor couldn't come in and ask any questions or you got your head taken off. That was part of the problem and I know that there were personal things going on in life. That was part of the problem and it was everybody's problem. As a Board and myself and I am as guilty and these Board members are, from my days on the Village I put a lot of trust in the Treasurer's Nate and Sue. They did a really good job for me. That is why I hired him as Bookkeeper. If anyone has a question and I can't answer it, Nate will answer it. If he doesn't answer your question I want to know that he didn't answer it.

Unfortunately, Linda got a lot of the blame and she didn't deserve it. Things just didn't go good the last couple of years and she ended up being the brunt of it.

Steve Norris: I do understand that the Town did do a private audit some years ago. Are you going to do one?

Supervisor Groff: That was a long time ago. I would like to wait and get a year or two in. Nate is still learning and I'm still learning. I would like to wait until we have a little more money to do an Audit.

Steve Norris: There are also some increases in line items that I personally don't have a problem with. The Supervisor and Board Members are commendable for taking a cut in your salaries. You need to advertise that. You are basically going to offset by hiring a personal Secretary.

Supervisor Groff: Right now the way we're doing things it is working fine. I am hoping not to spend that money. Wendy is in this building and she is good with a computer. She is quicker in typing and that is basically what I use her for. The Town pay's 20% of Wendy Reu's salary and we have made a deal with the Village so we do not have any benefits or another employee. Nate helps me out and Elaine helps me out a lot. I think that we are fine right now and I am going to try and continue that way.

Steve Norris: The other question is about Public Safety. I am in favor of Public Safety but can we afford it?

Supervisor Groff: You can cut it out of the Budget but you are not going to see any significant difference. If we need it we have it there, so that we can use it. Discussion ensued on the problems on Houseman Street, the State Police and the Sheriff's Department.

Steve Norris: I would like to know what we pay for Medicare and Public assistance and what actually we draw in for it. I guarantee we're paying in more than we are receiving.

Supervisor Groff: That is a real problem in Fulton County and so is promoting for retail businesses so that we can get more retail sales. I feel that they are employing a lot of people out of the county.

Jason Kemper: I had a very difficult personal discussion with the Supervisor this morning and I want to thank him for his time.

Supervisor Groff: We'll take care of it, I promise. It is unfortunate that the communications happened the way that they did. Hopefully, we can get it straightened out and move on.

Regarding the National Cemetery in Saratoga County, I was there for a funeral on Monday. The signage, when you go onto Hwy 32 there seems there should be a sign

there directing you to the National Cemetery and on the road to turn in to it. Is there anyone I can contact?

Jason Kemper: They are looking into additional signage coming in onto Hwy 32. There is almost \$2M in Trail money being invested around the cemetery. So, you'll be able to go from Waterford on to the Dick's Bridge.

Steve Norris: You should do a press release because if you read the report there is a huge amount of money in the Fund Balance.

Nathaniel Matthews: The two funds that cannot be touched are the Sewer and the B - Outside the Village Fund.

Steve Norris: How did all that money get in there?

Supervisor Groff: If you read the Audit Report some of this was done without the Board Members knowing about what was going on.

Councilman Gritsavage: I think that Nate has balanced the B Fund by moving things around a little better. Some of it was really skewed.

Supervisor Groff: You know you couldn't ask anything about the budget. Hopefully, we won't have communication problems ever again.

Steve Norris: Is it correct that the Real Property Tax, the total is only \$235,000? That's probably the Town's partition of the Real Property Tax and not the total Revenue amount. The \$20 increase is miniscule compared to the County Tax.

Supervisor Groff: The Governor is always talking about how he has cleaned up Local Government and is trying to blame everything on the Local Government. Everything is pushed onto the Counties. They want us to pay for unfunded mandates and everything and we can't do it. Medicaid and Welfare in Fulton County are horrendous part of our Property Taxes.

Chris Jacques: Like you said, we need to promote more retail businesses.

Supervisor Groff: Approximately 50% to 60% of the people in this community drive to Amsterdam or they go to Saratoga to shop and spend their money. They have everything that they want. Lake Desolation is well used to travel to Saratoga.

Jason Kemper: Paying \$10 for a copy of the budget and having to leave work early. I would like to see you move forward and have that information out there. Have it up and on the website in the future. A lot of people are not going to take the time off from work or to come to the office and get a copy of the Budget. You can lock it in a PDF format so that no one can change anything. So the people can start looking at the proposed Budget before your meeting. You need to get the information out there.

Councilman Simmons: The Town and Village have been getting more on the website. I have spoken to our Webmaster and she gets very little information on events taking place in the Town and the Village. This can turn positive if we get more information placed on the website.

Elaine Mihalik: I'm asking about the \$3,000 that was in the current budget for a Deputy Clerk.

Nathaniel Matthews: There never was a line item for a Deputy Clerk in the budget.

Elaine Mihalik: There was a line item under the Town Clerk for a Deputy Clerk in the budget. I can show you it.

Supervisor Groff: Can you create a line item for the Deputy Clerk and transfer \$5,000.00 out of the Police line item? Would that be alright with the Town Board?  
All Board Members present were in favor of including a line item for a Deputy Clerk to the Town Clerk and to transfer \$5,000.00 into this appropriation.

Councilman Anderson: Did we include in this 2015 Preliminary Budget the \$600.00 for the Office of the Aging?

Nathaniel Matthews: Yes.

Councilman Anderson: Did we put anything in for snow plowing on the Roosevelt Terrace?

Nathaniel Matthews: Yes, that is included.

Supervisor Groff: The quote on the snow plowing of Roosevelt Terrace was for our portion along with the residents share for the snow plowing. I don't know if they will get everyone to pay for that.

Councilman Simmons: It's for snow plowing only; it doesn't have anything to do with the paving?

Supervisor Groff: No, not the paving.

Councilman Simmons: If you look at the Audit and you look at where we are today. With all the work that Nate has done and the situation that he indicates that we are in, if you look at these figures and where we are now, it's staggering. Without an explanation...

Supervisor Groff: It's misleading and it is unfortunate. There was misinformation given to the Town Board and the Supervisor. It was with that information that they were



receiving that they did what they felt was the right way to go and you can't fault them for that.

Chris Jacques: Would it behoove you by putting out a Press Release and have another meeting on the 2015 Budget? Just so people can understand what you gentlemen had talked about.

Supervisor Groff: We will have a meeting when we finalize the 2015 Budget. The public are more than welcome to come.

I will get a Press Release out but it is so hard to get people to come to the meetings.

Nathaniel Matthews: If the Town Board is not going to approve the 2015 Budget tonight then the Town is going to have to file for an extension and the absolute deadline for adoption is November 20<sup>th</sup>.

Councilman Simmons: I'm concerned because where is someone from the media? The newspaper reporters never came to this meeting. There are times when they are here and there is absolute nothing published.

Supervisor Groff: It's not that we don't want the reporters here. It's because they just don't come. The reporters don't even come to the Village Board meetings. They'll usually go to the meetings where there is a lot of controversy.

Steve Norris: I suggest in the Press Release that you should direct the people to where to find the Audit on line.

Nathaniel Groff: If the Town Board is looking at altering any other items in the 2015 Budget other than transferring the \$5,000 from one line item to another. I have no problem discussing the 2015 Budget next week but the County is already pushing deadlines for getting the upcoming Tax bills ready and if nothing else going to be changed. I would encourage the Board to adopt the 2015 Budget tonight. The County needs the figures and I can't give it to them until the Budget is adopted.

Councilman Gritsavage: I agree. It makes sense that the County needs the adopted 2015 Budget.

Supervisor Groff: I would invite anyone to come to the next meeting and at least discuss it with the Board with their concerns. There isn't a whole lot that we can do with this Budget. This Budget is actually a little less than last year's Budget.

Councilman Gritsavage: The only increases are with the insurance and retirement.

Jason Kemper: How is Revenues compared to last year?

Nathaniel Matthews: Overall there was a slight decrease. However, in the General Fund there was an increase.

The largest thing was Sales Tax because of Walmart. I increase that as much as we can.

Jason Kemper: When will you see that final hit from Walmart?

Nathaniel Matthews: Supposedly we are in it right now. The Sales Tax for the third quarter from what I project is pretty much spot on and better than what I had anticipated.

Jason Kemper: So you think you have seen the worst of the Sales Tax?

Nathaniel Matthews: Yes.

Steve Norris: The Runnings store has opened is doing well but I don't think it will truly offset Walmart but it certainly will help a little bit.

Supervisor Groff: The Harley Davidson has certainly made a difference and a few other places that have opened are going to help us. So, the hit wasn't as bad as we had anticipated.

Councilman Simmons: The \$5,000 anticipated in the line item for Police was there any type of a plan? The intention was to contract with the Village.

Supervisor Groff: We would contract with the Village only if we had too. There are Towns and other places that had to contract with the Sheriff's Department in order to have Police patrol within their Town. That wouldn't be enough to do it but we have a cushion of \$5,000. That wouldn't make a dent in our Budget if you were to remove the \$5,000. It's there is it is needed.

Councilman Simmons: I think that if we were going to officially contract with the Village on a long term bases it would require a lot more discussion and there is the Fish House factor.

Chris Jacques: You stated that the insurance cost is up over 7%. Do they put that out to bid with different various companies if they have an increase like that or do they stay with one outfit?

Nathaniel Matthews: It was the Health insurance that went up almost 11%.

Supervisor Groff: It's contractual. The hospitalization, we have to go through the Union too. We contract for Town employees and we need a comparable or better than what we already have. Discussion ensued

### **MOTION to close the Public Hearing**

Councilman Anderson motioned to closed the Public Hearing on the Preliminary Budget of the Town of Northampton for the fiscal year beginning January 1st, 2015 and the 2015 Fire Contract with the Village of Northville and Broadalbin Kenneyto Fire Co., Inc.at 7:50 p.m.

Seconded by Councilman Gritsavage and

Adopted by a vote of 5 Ayes: Groff, Roosa, Gritsavage, Anderson and Simmons

0-Nays

**MOTION to Adopt the 2015 Budget of the Town of Northampton**

Councilman Simmons motioned to adopt the Preliminary Budget of the Town of Northampton for the fiscal year 2015 and the 2015 Fire Contract with the Village of Northville and Broadalbin Kenyetto Fire Co., Inc. with the change to the Law Enforcement line item to read \$5,000.00 and create a line item for Deputy Clerk to the Town Clerk in the amount of \$5,000.00. Seconded by Councilman Gritsavage and Adopted by a vote of 5 Ayes: Groff, Roosa, Gritsavage, Anderson and Simmons  
0-Nays

Discussion: Councilman Simmons stated that he adopted the Preliminary Budget with some reluctance.

The regularly scheduled Town Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 19, 2014.

**ADJOURN:** Councilman Anderson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m., seconded by Councilman Roosa, and passed by,  
5-Ayes: Groff, Roosa, Gritsavage, Anderson and Simmons 0-Nays

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Mihalik,  
Town Clerk