

A public hearing was held by the Town Board of the Town of Moreau on November 9, 2017 in the Town of Moreau Municipal Building, 351 Reynolds Road, Moreau, New York for the purpose of hearing public comment on the proposed 2018 Preliminary Budget.

The Supervisor called the public hearing to order at 6:05 p.m.

Town Board Members Present

Alan VanTassel	Councilman
Gina LeClair	Councilwoman
Bob Prendergast	Councilman
Todd Kusnierz	Councilman
Gardner Congdon	Supervisor

Town Board Members Absent

None

Also present: Leeann McCabe, Town Clerk; Francine Thibodeau, Principal Account Clerk; Jeffrey Cruz, Principal Account Clerk; Paul Joseph, Highway Superintendent; Peggy Jenkins, Assessor; Stacey Lavin, Clerk to the Assessor; Reed Antis, Planning Board member and Town Resident; Members of the South Glens Falls Fire Company: Wayne Palmer and Ron Quinn Sr.; Steve VanGuilder, Moreau Emergency Squad; Town Residents: Vince Sporrer and Anne Kusnierz

The following notice of public hearing was published as a legal ad in the Post Star Newspaper on November 4, 2017:

TOWN OF MOREAU

NOTICE is hereby given that the Town Board of the Town of Moreau, County of Saratoga, State of New York, will hold a Preliminary Budget Public Hearing for the fiscal year beginning January 1, 2018 on November 09, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in the Town of Moreau Office Building, 351 Reynolds Road, Moreau, New York. At such hearing any person for or against any item therein contained or in favor or against said budget as compiled may be heard. Further notice is hereby given that said Preliminary Budget is on file in the Town Clerk's Office at 351 Reynolds Road, Moreau, New York, where it is available for inspection by any interested person during business hours. Copies of said budget will be available for distribution at the Preliminary Public Hearing to be held on November 09, 2017. Pursuant to Section 113 of the Town Law the proposed annual salaries for 2018 of Elected Officials are hereby listed as follows:

Supervisor		\$45,978
Council people	4 @	\$11,526 each
Town Justices	2 @	\$28,028 each
Town Clerk		\$45,248
Highway Superintendent		\$56,771

Dated: November 4, 2017

Gardner Congdon, Town Supervisor
Town of Moreau

Councilman Kusnierz welcomed everyone and thanked his colleagues for their attendance at six budget workshops. He stated that there were a lot of tough decisions to make. Councilwoman LeClair thanked Councilman Kusnierz for taking the lead on the budget process and working hard to make this happen.

Councilman Kusnierz presented a short slide show, which highlighted the history of budgets going back to 2009. He commented that the budget stays within the 2% tax cap. The history showed Budget Appropriations and Total Taxes Levied; General Fund – Fund Balance vs. Fund Balance used to balance budgets; Comparisons of Fund Balances at the end of fiscal years; Moreau Emergency Services Funding.

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Councilman Kusnierz stated that for the first time, the Town will not use any fund balance from the General Fund to cover 2018 appropriations. The Town will eliminate the Fire Tax while still increasing funding to the Fire Protection district by \$10,000.00. The Town's Highway Tax was eliminated in 2004. The changes allow for a complete restructuring of the Town budget by allowing the use of sales tax revenues to reverse the serious decline of fund balance in the General Fund.

Councilman Kusnierz stated that he had received a call from Senator Marchione today. She's involved with trying to help local governments across the State in her role as Chairwoman [of the Senate committee on local government] (amended 11/29/17 lm). She stated that she will advocate [for] (amended 11/29/17 lm) a \$100,000 grant application for the Fire Company. Councilman Kusnierz stated that the money can be used for items such as: trucks, upgrades, structure of the fire house. He stated that it can't be used for things that can walk away. He stated that she will be looking at the details of how the Fire Company will utilize the money. He stated that he would meet with the Fire Company after tonight's meeting so they can get the paperwork in place as soon as possible. He stated that it's a drawn out process. After completion of the application it goes to the Senate, the Senate then reviews it and it goes to the State Division of Budget for their review and then to the Comptroller. The final review is done by the State Dormitory Authority. Once they've signed off on everything, they'll issue a contract number and then the money will start flowing. He stated again that it's a long process, which can take from 6 – 18 months.

Councilman VanTassel thanked Ms. Thibodeau and Mr. Cruz and all the other Town employees, who spent late nights here. He stated that it was a collaborative effort. He included the Town Board and the Supervisor and also thanked Councilman Kusnierz for directing the process.

Councilman Prendergast thanked the Board members who spent the most time on the budget process. He stated that this was a good budget and that it stays within the 2% tax cap. He stated that it also addresses Fund Balance, which they've addressed for several years. Councilman Prendergast asked if the rebate checks will continue as long as they stay within the 2% tax cap and the Assessor replied that they would.

The Supervisor commended the Town Board as well and stated that he would like to see the use of sales tax be made a permanent part of the process.

The Town Assessor, Peggy Jenkins, addressed the Board and commended them for keeping a tight budget that's within the 2% tax cap. She also mentioned that she recognizes the tax payers needs as well. She stated that she's been without help and that it's imperative to put someone on full-time before August. She stated that the important time of year is early in the year. She also stated that 17 1/2 hours isn't enough time when you're trying to train. Ms. Jenkins also mentioned that a request for a lap top was taken out of the budget, which was necessary for her to work from home, should she become ill again. She again stated that the Board should be able to find money in the budget to start a full-time position in January. She commented that the person who would be taking the position is not asking for benefits, which would be worth \$9,000. She stated that the Board is slacking on their commitment to the tax payers.

Councilman Kusnierz thanked the Assessor and stated that she did a good job articulating [her needs] (amended 11/29/17 lm). He stated that the Town Board struggled with the budget and that their solution was to have a provision for an August start date. He stated that if they have additional revenues in sales tax money, they may be able to start earlier than August but as it stands right now, August is the date. The Assessor stated that she can't use her vacation days because she doesn't get a chance to. She stated that she doesn't understand how the Board can fund every other office with 2 or 3 people and not for the Assessor's office. She stated that the tax payers are the ones who suffer and also stated that she can only do so much. She stated that she's getting burned out and needs some relief.

Councilman Kusnierz stated that the Board worked hard on the budget and presented to the public in a way that's fiscally responsible. Councilman Kusnierz stated that the Assessor's budget wasn't cut back from last year. He also stated that he was under the impression, since they did the reval, that we were doing the updates and asked Ms. Jenkins if the Town was still receiving the \$5.00 per parcel. Ms. Jenkins stated that they've been maintaining 100% and that the \$5.00 per parcel was only for the initial reval.

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The Supervisor stated that, not long ago, the Assessor had a full-time clerk and she stated that there wasn't enough work for her to do to keep a full-time position. He's now hearing that she's overworked because of the lack of help. The Town Board agreed at that time to make the position part-time.

Councilman Prendergast stated that he would offer that the new Town Board look at this before August of next year. He stated that the real issue is having someone here for the public.

Councilman VanTassel stated that they would do everything in their power to try and make it happen before August. He also encouraged the Supervisor elect to get into that department before January 1st to get to know a little bit more of what goes on in there and to figure out how important it is to find some money for the position. He stated that things can change substantially if sales tax money comes in.

Wayne Palmer asked the Board what they will do if the sales tax money doesn't come in as planned. He commented that the Fire Company is not a supporter of the Fire Company being paid with sales tax money. The Supervisor assured him that the sales tax money would be there. Mr. Palmer stated that the tax payers don't know what they're really paying for fire protection if the tax isn't there.

Mr. Palmer continued to state that they can't keep working with 2% increases. He stated that the cost of doing fire company business is going up 20% – 30% each year and that 2% increases won't get the job done. He stated that at the end of next year, they will be \$2,000,000 in debt. Mr. Palmer stated that the budget they presented to the Board was realistic. There was a brief exchange between Councilman Kusnierz and Mr. Palmer, with the Councilman asking where the money would come from. Mr. Palmer replied that they have to do something, otherwise they won't have any fire protection. He also stated that even worse, someone could be killed because they don't have the money to properly train. Mr. Palmer stated that a \$60.00 increase per tax payer would take care of them and then they could work within the 2% increases for the next ten years. Councilman Kusnierz stated that he wouldn't stand for that kind of increase in taxes to the residents. He stated that there are a lot of people in the community on fixed incomes and depend on the rebate checks.

Mr. Palmer stated that there was a way to fix the problem and that is to make them a fire district and then the Board won't have to deal with them anymore.

Councilwoman LeClair explained that most departments ask for more each year. She stated that the Town of Queensbury and Wilton are referenced as to what they pay but she also stated that Moreau isn't Queensbury and we don't have the business that they have. She stated that there's more assessment, so there are more tax dollars coming in. She stated that they've tried twice to bring sewer down Route 9 and that it's imperative to increase our tax base and to bring in development. She stated that there's money in this budget for economic development.

There was a brief exchange between the Supervisor and Mr. Palmer, with the Supervisor explaining how little he had to work with when he was a fireman. Mr. Palmer stated that they didn't have to work with NFPA and OSHA guidelines at the time.

Councilman VanTassel stated that he understands Mr. Palmer isn't a fan of the budget but asked if he was a fan of the possibility of the \$100,000 grant. Mr. Palmer stated that he was a fan but the money would be 18 months out. Councilman VanTassel stated that it could be up to 18 months. Councilman VanTassel asked Mr. Palmer if he would be a fan of trying to work with the Town Board in the next few months and years to try and figure things out. Mr. Palmer stated that he would be willing to meet every week if he had to. There was a discussion between Mr. Palmer and Councilman VanTassel as to how many times the Fire Company has asked to meet with the Board. Councilman VanTassel encouraged Mr. Palmer to gather the members of the Fire Company and have discussions with the Town Board and work in a collaborative way. He stated that they need to find a solution that's fair to the Fire Company and to the tax payers at the same time.

Anne Kusnierz stated that it was interesting to see what was presented tonight and commended the Town Board on the job they did.

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Reed Antis asked if the Assessor had sent the Board a letter explaining the duties of her clerk. Councilman VanTassel stated that she did.

Mr. Antis asked about 61 Hudson Street and if money was budgeted to get rid of it. Councilwoman LeClair stated that someone might be interested in the property and that they would hear by the end of the year.

Mr. Antis asked if the Board is looking into creating more softball fields and Councilman VanTassel stated that they need to complete a master plan first. He stated that the Town has the money but they need to see what's planned first.

Mr. Antis agreed with Mr. Palmer's statement about using sales tax to pay for fire protection. He thought that people won't really understand what they do. The Supervisor stated that Towns are limited as to where they can use sales tax and they can use it for the Fire Company. He also commented that it doesn't change the contract with the Fire Company.

Mr. Antis stated that he believed the Fire Company is underfunded based on what he sees throughout the State. Councilman Kusnierz stated that the employees are under paid too. He stated that the Fire Company articulated their needs well but hoped that the public understands the Town Board's responsibilities as well. Councilman Kusnierz stated that the Board went line by line through the budget and attained what they needed to. He stated that they need to have constructive dialogue with the Fire Company.

Mr. Antis stated that the Fire Company has been coming to the Board for 16 years. Mr. Antis stated that good leadership would have reached out to the Fire Company to try and help. He stated that this is our Town's fire department, they're in debt and they need more money.

Mr. Antis asked how many miles are to be paved this year. Councilman Kusnierz stated that they don't pave by miles, rather by budgeted money and stated that this year's budgeted amount is \$551,000. The Highway Superintendent stated that they've paved 5 ¼ miles this year. Councilman Kusnierz stated that it all depends on the cost per ton and that affects the mileage. The Highway Superintendent stated that it makes a difference whether they are doing a complete re-do vs. an overlay.

Steve VanGuilder stated that the budget is doable. He commented that he lives in the City of Glens Falls and that he pleads with them not to cut money from emergency services. He asked the Town Board to do the same and not cut money from emergency services.

A motion was made by Councilman VanTassel and seconded by Councilwoman LeClair to close the public hearing at 7:00 p.m.

Asked if all in favor, the following responses were given:

Councilman VanTassel	Aye
Councilman Prendergast	Aye
Councilwoman LeClair	Aye
Councilman Kusnierz	Aye
Supervisor Congdon	Aye

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Leeann McCabe
Town Clerk