

The meeting was held in person. The Supervisor called the workshop to order at 7:01 p.m. with an attendance roll call.

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| PRESENT: | Kyle Noonan | Councilmember |
| | Patrick Killian | Councilmember |
| | Mark Stewart | Councilmember |
| | John Donohue | Councilmember |
| | Jesse A. Fish, Jr. | Supervisor |

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| ALSO PRESENT: | Jeffrey Cruz | Principal Account Clerk |
| | Dianne Lewis | Deputy Town Clerk |
| | Erin Trombley | Town Clerk |
| | Josh Westfall | Building, Planning & Development Coordinator |
| | Elizabeth Bennett | Confidential Secretary |
| | Alex Portal | Post-Star |

Principal Account Clerk Cruz started off by mentioning that he had given the Board a copy of the draft preliminary budget summary and salary schedule, as well as the budget line item information for the Town Clerk, Receiver of Tax, Records Management, and Building Inspector.

TOWN CLERK

Beginning with tax collection, Town Clerk Trombley explained that she had done an in-depth comparison of figures across the county for the roles most similar to those in the Town of Moreau, but stated that they were not an apples-to-apples comparison, because while other Towns have Tax Collectors and Receivers of Tax, none of the other Towns collect school tax. She said she also compared figures with the Town of Queensbury, whose Town Clerk office work is most similar to that of Moreau, including school tax collection. Referencing documents she offered the Board at a previous meeting, she said when comparing various metrics for Queensbury vs. Moreau, Moreau does about 50% of what Queensbury does. She said her office performs about 50% of what Queensbury does with 33% of the staff and at 22% of the salary.

Ms. Trombley said she also looked at the percentage of time the office spends receiving taxes. She said she did this because the department's budget is divided across three lines in the budget, and she thought the line items should be proportional to the time spent on the three types of work. She identified that all of the overtime her department was accrued due to tax collection. She explained her budget process to that point, and how the figures she submitted included increases for staff, but also included overtime based on hours accrued by the Deputy Clerk during Town & County tax collection. She offered the Board data that explained the breakdowns.

She said the hourly rate she had proposed for Deputy Clerk I was \$26.50, a rate slightly above what had been proposed for all clerical positions at the October 22 meeting, or \$48,230 at 35 hours a week. The proposed rate for Deputy Clerk II was \$25.21, a rate slightly below the October 22 proposed rate, she said, or \$45,882 at 35 hours per week. She said that based on the October 22 proposal, she would adjust the Deputy II figure so that, with overtime, it would arrive at the same figure of \$46,300. Both proposed compensation figures included overtime, she said, which has historically been needed.

The other thing she wanted to highlight about her proposed figures was that it included a full-time, minimum wage staff person because the volume of work throughout the year is too high for three people. She said during taxes, other work is put aside and then has to be caught up on when tax collection ends. Volume is so high, she said, that it can take all day to open and sort the mail, not including processing any of the payments. Having an extra pair of hands to assist with this task during taxes would be a big help. Additionally, she said she mentioned before that archiving tasks are not being completed as they should, leaving two basements full of documents which are not inventoried or prepared to be digitized. She said all the documents should be cataloged, identifying those which can be disposed of, those which can be digitized toward a future end of being able to

share them with the public electronically via a new Town website. She said digitization has been in the Town budget for a number of years, but the Town is not ready to digitize because documents haven't been processed. She said the proposed new staff person's responsibilities would be 90% records management and 10% Town Clerk, reflecting that the new person could answer the phone, open and sort mail during tax collection, but without processing payments or running the cash register. She said this assistance during tax collection would also help offset overtime because without that assistance, one of the current staff members has to open mail all day, for example.

As for the division of rates across the three budget line items, Ms. Trombley said Deputy I was divided 60% Receiver of Tax and 40% Town Clerk, Deputy II is 35% tax, 50% Town Clerk, and 15% Records Access. Councilmember Killian asked if hours were being recorded according to the three categories. Ms. Trombley said they were not, but the titles and salaries are listed separately in the organizational meeting minutes. She said since they are budgeted for and accounted for separately, she wanted the figures to be accurate representations of time spent on the work, especially in Receiver of Taxes.

Councilmember Killian asked about the comparison figures with Queensbury. Ms. Trombley said she believed the department was out of alignment, and the comparison with Queensbury illustrates that it was. She said the figures she presented were based on existing Moreau figures, with an increase, particularly for Deputy I, who had been with the department for two years, trained her, her predecessor, and was in the process of training Deputy II. She said she didn't think it was fair that a new person walking in would make the same as someone with years of experience and who had contributed so much to keeping the work flowing. Further, she said Deputy II had expressed interest in having more of a dedicated role in tax collection, where she is already devoting much of her time.

Town Clerk Trombley gave a brief overview of the year-long tax processes; daily calls requesting receipts or confirmation of taxes due or paid, escrow changes, property sales—updates that are made regularly between the Assessor's office and Town Clerk. She said the time between tax collection seasons are short, for example from the end of school tax collection and the generation of Town & County tax bills is about one month, during which many back-end updates need to be completed. She said preparation for School tax collection begins in July, and August involves staff working as fast as possible to implement a host of changes.

Councilmember Killian asked if the Town Clerk saw the new staff member being able to assist with the water department. Ms. Trombley said she did not foresee the staffer having extra time to work with the water department. Councilmember Killian said that person could alleviate the load to allow current staff to work on other things. Ms. Trombley confirmed this, but added that water bill collection and payment reconciliation is already a function of the Town Clerk's office. Councilmember Donohue said he would support a part-time employee if they could reduce the overtime hours to 0. Ms. Trombley said she believed the person would reduce the overtime but not eliminate it.

Councilmember Donohue, referencing proposed wages said he felt what had been offered on October 22 was a generous increase, and that in the past he thought the Town had "nickel and dimed" employee pay. He said he thought this was a good step to bringing wages up to where they should be. Councilmember Stewart said he had done some math, and not to negate what the clerk had said, the October 22 proposed rate was an 11% increase over 2024 rates, and that was a rate he was comfortable with. He added he was prepared to move some funds to allow a part-time employee in addition. Councilmember Killian said it was a lot to digest, factoring in the town-to-town comparisons, previously discussed 3% raises, 4.1% inflation, and getting wages up to where they should be, as Councilmember Donohue mentioned. He asked for patience, and agreed with the idea of a helper who can assist in the office.

Councilmember Killian also mentioned software the Town may acquire may be able to assist. Ms. Trombley said the current version of Laserfiche that is being used to archive digital records would be "sunsetting" in the near future, but she didn't know the timeline. Councilmember Noonan asked if a grant hadn't been obtained to get a

new version a year before. Principal Account Clerk Cruz said additional licenses had been obtained, but for the same version of the software. He said he believed the push now was toward a cloud-based version.

Councilmember Stewart said he would be willing to go to the school with Ms. Trombley to see what programs they may have that could help relieve some of the school tax workload. He said the budget could be changed later or funds reallocated if needed, referencing changes made earlier in the year to pay for Town Clerk office overtime and items for other departments as needed. He also referenced information he, Councilmember Killian, and Mr. Cruz had been sent about an online tax payment service offered by NERIC that costs \$400 as an example of something to help. Councilmember Noonan asked if the Town Clerk had spoken with Kevin Fottrell, the South Glens Falls Central School District Assistant Superintendent of Business. She said she had but not regarding these issues. He suggested Ms. Trombley call Mr. Fottrell because he said in conversation with the Councilmember, Mr. Fottrell had indicated he wanted to work with the Town on these issues because he understands the burden school tax collection places on Town personnel. Councilmember Noonan mentioned the potential for a financial agreement between the school and Town perhaps to offset the cost of overtime. Councilmember Donohue suggested taking actual overtime figures when speaking to Mr. Fottrell. Ms. Trombley said she would have the final overtime tally the following Monday.

She said the department's processes had been dramatically improved over the spring tax collection, that collection was more efficient, and her records were accurate so that would translate to a smoother, more efficient Town and County tax season in 2025, as well as solid numbers to discuss with the school. Councilmember Stewart said the Clerk's concerns were heard, the Board would not leave the department in a lurch, and that there were some good options to assist before approving additional financial support the Town Clerk had proposed.

Ms. Trombley asked if the Deputy Clerk salaries would be distributed according to her proposed breakdowns based on actual time spent: Deputy Clerk I--60% Receiver of Taxes/40% Town Clerk, and Deputy Clerk II--35% Receiver of Taxes, 50% Town Clerk, 15% Records Access. Principal Account Clerk Cruz said the breakdown had been set in the past with 85% of the work from Town Clerk account A1410, and 15% for Tax Collection, which he said was similar to the water/sewer breakdown discussed at a prior workshop. He said at present, records management is really only allocated to the Town Clerk. Mr. Cruz said he could make the change if the Board supported it. Councilmember Stewart said he thought if there was data to back up the change it could be beneficial when speaking to the school.

Regarding records access, Ms. Trombley said according to the Association of Towns blue Town Clerk book, the first responsibility of the Town Clerk is keeping and maintaining records of the Town. Presently, Deputy Clerk II Jennings is undertaking the task of keeping and filing new records to avoid adding to the backlog. The Town Clerk said that in Deputy II's conversations with the NYS Archives, they estimated that it could take three years to work through the records to determine what to keep or purge, and that there could be grants available for that. The NYS Archives asked Ms. Jennings to track her time spent on archiving, Ms. Trombley said. In the end, she said she would like to follow the court's lead and digitize all the records, which would allow immediate access to appropriate files through Laserfiche. She said Queensbury currently offers records access through its website using Laserfiche, which saves a lot of manual labor. Ms. Trombley said it would especially save a lot of Building Department time pulling records.

Councilmember Stewart asked Mr. Cruz if changing the percentages would change the bottom line. Mr. Cruz said it would not. The Councilmember said that if an elected official is coming to the Board and saying this is the percentage of time being devoted to this work, then they should be changed because they would not be funding the percentages of the work correctly. He asked the numbers to be confirmed, and then they could see where the tax dollars are actually being spent. Mr. Cruz asked if the funds requested for an additional staff member should be added. Councilmember Stewart said he did not favor adding the additional funds until after conversation with the school had taken place. He said they would not let the office fail. Supervisor Fish said he was in favor of also seeing what the school was willing to do. Councilmember Noonan said that the only funds the Town receives are

the penalties for late payments, which could be \$100,000 one year, and this year it was not yet \$7,000 at the time of the workshop. He said Mr. Fottrell said that's no way to do business. He continued, saying they are not looking to make money off the school but to make a viable agreement between the entities. Supervisor Fish said the best solution would be for the school to collect the taxes. Councilmember Noonan said that was unlikely to happen.

Town Clerk Trombley said she had spoken to the Kingsbury Town Clerk. She said the Tax Collector or Receiver of Taxes for the Town is a part of the Town Clerk position, but that school tax collection is a completely separate job. In Kingsbury, the school pays the salary or stipend for the Town Clerk to act as their school tax receiver, and that they may also receive a stipend from the other Towns whose residents pay school taxes in their district. Supervisor Fish said that's like the school paying to have the taxes collected. Ms. Trombley said she inquired from NERIC how much it would cost for the school district to use NERIC to collect tax. She said the figure was \$66,000. Councilmember Stewart said a conversation with the school is the next step and they would not have all the answers that evening.

Councilmember Stewart asked what else had been requested. Ms. Trombley said she had asked for the staff to attend the annual New York State Town Clerks Association Conference in April, which was being hosted out of the area. She also said she thought with 5 or 6 printers in the office, some maintenance would likely be needed in 2025. She said she looked into it and as far as she was aware, there was no maintenance agreement with Seeley Office Systems, who maintains the large printers at Town Hall. There was discussion about the status of an agreement, when it would have been made, and what service was included because Seeley Office Systems (SOS) is being paid by the Town. There had been no line item for printer maintenance in the Department budget, Ms. Trombley said, and the other printer servicing is paid for under the Town Hall budget.

BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Principle Account Clerk Cruz directed the Board to account B3620. Building, Planning and Development Coordinator Westfall said he would like to add a full-time Code Enforcement Officer at \$56,000, which he said was on par with recent postings in Warren County. Under equipment, he said he was seeking an update to the existing Code Enforcement software they have already, some bookshelves, and an increase for training of the new employee.

Councilmember Stewart asked if the new position would be posted or retain the part-time Code Enforcement Officer to fill the role. Supervisor Fish said he had spoken to Pete Bachem, the part-time Code Enforcement Officer, who said he was unwilling to do the job full-time for \$56,000. The Supervisor said Mr. Bachem said he wanted \$62,000-65,000. Councilmember Noonan said he didn't think the Town could worry about that, though he said he hoped Mr. Bachem would stay. Supervisor Fish agreed and said he does a good job. Mr. Westfall said two county civil service tests had recently been posted which he said would probably take place in January. A provisional appointment could be made, but Supervisor Fish said that Building Inspection responsibilities would be part of the job too.

Councilmember Noonan asked if there could be \$9,000 added for Building Inspector responsibilities. Councilmember Stewart said it could be tricky because if Mr. Bachem takes the test, he may not score in the top 3. He said he favored posting the position at the actual rate. He said he thought there would be an active list by March. Councilmember Noonan asked if they have to post the job, or if they could wait, let Mr. Bachem take the test and see his results before deciding whether to post the position. Councilmember Stewart added to the idea, suggesting that they could approve the \$56,000 for the budget, appoint Mr. Bachem provisionally, then give him a raise immediately if he is permanently appointed in recognition of his years of service. He said this way the Town is protected, if Mr. Bachem doesn't test in the top 3 or refuses the position, the job is posted at a marketable rate and they can move forward.

Councilmember Killian asked about the requirement to score in the top 3 on the test. Supervisor Fish said you can be appointed provisionally pending the outcome of your test. He said if you have the top score, you're all set, but if you place in the second or third spot, the Town could still appoint you instead of the first person on the list. Councilmember Killian asked how many people typically take the test. Councilmember Stewart said there's no way to know. He said, as an example, one year 800 people might take the law enforcement test and the next year only 100 might take it. Councilmember Stewart said again he thought they should post the position.

In discussion regarding salary and increases, Matt Dreimiller, the Building inspector was set to receive a 3% increase, and Supervisor Fish said Mr. Westfall will receive \$86,500. Mr. Cruz directed the Board to account B8010. Councilmember Stewart informed Mr. Westfall that the decision had been made at a previous workshop to bring all the clerks in the Town up to the same base wage of \$46,350.

Mr. Westfall said most of the Department's expenses had been contractual. He listed \$35,000 for zoning, updating the Comprehensive Plan, his own salary. In straight contractual he listed legal fees, and MJ Engineering, who the Town uses for storm water, he said has special planning staff to assist with updating zoning laws. He said it would be about \$60,000 for support. Councilmember Stewart asked if that figure was high, because \$6,000 was designated under drainage. He said the proposed figure was eight times what it ever has cost. He said he understood attorneys for zoning, but there was already an agreement with the attorneys, so he questioned why there would be additional legal fees. Mr. Cruz explained that when legal fees are received for zoning and planning, they are charged to the Building Department budget.

Mr. Westfall said he thought a cut could be made, and suggested a cut to \$30,000. He said some of that line items might have been intended for the Planning budget, account B8020, but Councilmember Stewart said \$26,000 was allocated for Planning. Councilmember Killian asked what that is usually used for. Councilmember Stewart said it is normally for attorneys attending planning review. Confidential Secretary Bennett said the planning review legal would fall under the general contract and be billed out to the department, at what she estimated to be \$500 a month. She said it was under a trial for the remainder of the year to see how it worked out. Councilmember Stewart asked if Mr. Westfall would be comfortable adjusting the legal fees down from \$60,000 to \$40,000 in B8010 and from \$26,000 to \$20,000 in B8020. Mr. Westfall said he would. Councilmember Stewart said it would be a \$26,000 savings while still leaving a cushion of funds above what was spent in the past. He questioned the others at the table about their agreement with this, and they affirmed the decision.

Councilmember Stewart thanked Mr. Westfall for attending the workshop and thanked him for everything he had done for the Town so far, including a number of grants. Councilmember Donohue said Historian Reed Antis would be coming in to work with Mr. Westfall on some grants to help repair and maintain the Town's cemeteries.

SALARY DISCUSSION

Principal Account Clerk Cruz handed out a summary of salaries, which had been updated to include changes discussed up to October 22, but not the percentages for the Town Clerk/Receiver of Taxes discussed earlier in the workshop, which he said would not affect the bottom line. He opened the floor to discussion or questions. Supervisor Fish said he wanted to talk about the stipend for the Budget Officer completing the budget. For 2024 nothing was budgeted, he said, but since Mr. Cruz makes the budget, Supervisor Fish wanted to give Mr. Cruz a stipend for 2024 (2025 budget) and 2025 (2026 budget). He suggested a \$3,000 stipend be added for Jeffrey Cruz. Councilmember Killian asked why not keep the stipend at the \$3,700 allocated in the past. Councilmember Stewart said at the next meeting he would suggest a \$4,000 stipend for 2024, and agreed to budget that sum for 2025 as well because he said he knew how much work went into the budget and the workshops. He said everything else increased, and questioned why the stipend should go down.

Councilmember Noonan asked for justification for the Confidential Secretary raise that was being requested. Supervisor Fish said the position is eligible for FLSA, with no overtime, and there is a minimum salary. The wage being requested was the minimum for FLSA. Supervisor Fish said the Assessor is also in that category. Supervisor Fish said the change should have been made at the beginning of the year. Town Clerk Trombley offered a document showing the rule and the commensurate wage that went into effect July 1, and what the figure would be January 1, 2025. Councilmember Stewart said if someone was owed pay going back to July, it should be paid. Supervisor Fish agreed. Councilmember Stewart said he had never seen so much turnover of staff. Supervisor Fish said the issue of wages in the Town had been going on for years. Mr. Cruz said he would get all the information together for a meeting the following Tuesday.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Councilmember Stewart said the Board had received an email from Mr. Cruz about the status of the budget, and being near the 2% cap. Some requests had come in from the Recreation Department, he said, with figures below the RFP. He said there were \$780,000 in the HD account, so he proposed postponing the purchases of stone, a new ice rink, and barricades putting it out for a 30-day referendum. He said taking the funds from the AC fund in 2024 would relieve the 2025 budget of over \$20,000. Councilmember Killian asked what the AC fund was, and Mr. Cruz explained that it is a townwide recreation capital fund that can be used for equipment or capital projects. Councilmember Stewart said funds were added to the account in 2023. He said there was no reason to exceed the tax cap when those funds are available. To have the referendum complete before the adoption of the tax rate, he said the item would have to be on the agenda for the following week. He said he would also hold on buying golf carts as well.

Councilmember Noonan asked about the practice of returning funds to the County, which had been done in the past. Principal Account Clerk Cruz said that in 2018 the Town had \$300,000 withheld from sales tax distributed by the County. This practice, he said, was phased out and in the 2025 budget the total withheld would be \$0. He said the purpose of this practice was to reduce the County portion of Town and County taxes due by taxpayers. He said this had been phased out two years prior.

Councilmember Noonan asked about account A7550 for celebrations. This account was budgeted to be increased for 2025 because it was the fund used for parades and concerts, according to Mr. Cruz.

Councilmember Donohue asked about Transfer Station salaries under account LF8160. He said he was made aware that an employee working for the Town for ten years was earning \$17.42 an hour. Another employee makes \$15.97 an hour, he said, and minimum wage is \$15.50. He said he wanted to bring those employee wages up to a decent level because they are just as important as any other position. He said if you close Town Hall and the Transfer Station the same day, more people would call to ask why the Transfer Station is closed. The Councilmember proposed a \$1.50 an hour raise for anyone who has worked there 3 or more years, and a \$1 an hour increase for those who have worked fewer than 3 years. Councilmember Stewart suggested possibly splitting the \$12,000 manager stipend to give one of the employees a supervisory role and implement the suggested wage increases. Councilmember Donohue said he would like to see a part-time manager position there, someone who could cover breaks and bring consistency to the Transfer Station operations. He continued, saying Highway Superintendent Abrams is great and has done a good job overseeing the transfer station, but he really oversees it, and does not manage it.

Councilmember Killian asked if this would relieve Mr. Abrams of his role with the Transfer Station. Councilmember Donohue said Mr. Abrams runs the Town's largest department and has enough on his plate. He said there had been discussion of combining Buildings & Grounds with Transfer Station to create a manager. Supervisor Fish urged caution when considering separating Buildings and Grounds from the Recreation Department because then they would need their own equipment. Councilmember Donohue withdrew the suggestion. The question was raised how to pay for the increased wages. Councilmember Donohue confirmed with Mr. Cruz that the Transfer Station is self-funding, and that there was some room to grow within the

projected figures. Supervisor Fish said there were \$560,000 fund balance in the Transfer Station account. Mr. Cruz said the balance had been grown intentionally based on the potential need to replace a compactor, which would be very expensive. Councilmember Stewart asked if sales tax revenue could be used for this, and Mr. Cruz said you cannot use sales tax for that. Councilmember Stewart said he agreed to take \$20,000 from the fund balance, plus the manager stipend, to give the suggested pay increases and create a manager position. He backtracked slightly to ask how much a Transfer Station Manager should make, and how many hours the person would work each week. He asked if \$22 an hour would be a fair wage for a manager. Councilmember Donohue agreed with \$22 an hour and suggested a 20 hour per week schedule. Councilmembers Donohue and Stewart said the position should be posted. Councilmember Killian asked which account was under discussion. Mr. Cruz said it was account TS8160.

From the same account Councilmember Stewart questioned a line item of \$21,000 for repairs at the Transfer Station. Mr. Cruz said he wished Highway Superintendent Abrams had spoken about it when he met with the Board. He said he believed the repairs for 2024 included paving the driveway into the Transfer Station, and for 2025 they were looking at repairs needed at the Transfer Station booth. Councilmember Stewart question the contractual sum of \$123,500. Mr. Cruz said the biggest contractual expense was hauling followed by mileage and postage.

Councilmember Stewart asked about account HT7180. Mr. Cruz said that was the Recreation Town Outside fund, which he said had nothing budgeted for. He asked if the Board was comfortable using some of the money in the account in 2024 for the previously discussed ice rink, barricades, and stone, because if they are not, those items would need to be moved to the 2025 budget for this account. He advocated particularly for ordering the ice rink in 2024 since the money is there so it can be used this winter.

Councilmember Noonan wanted to highlight that the working tax rate, even with everything being spent in the budget, would be down from .850959 in 2024 to .810390. He used his own home figures to illustrate that even though his assessment increased, his total Town tax would be reduced slightly. He wanted to highlight that the diligence of the Assessor and keeping the values at 100% allowed for the budget that has been proposed for 2025 with everything in it while reducing the tax rate. He said he wanted to explain because so many people complain about their assessments and don't understand how everything comes together. Councilmember Donohue pointed out that the 100% of value is how Town sales tax is calculated. Councilmember Noonan added that tax exemptions and STAR rebates are also calculated based on that percentage.

Councilmember Killian asked about the status of the floating dock item under account HT7180. Mr. Cruz said the Recreation Director had requested it and thought they could do it but were not able to and he was unsure of its current status. He said the dock was for phase 2 of the new trail, and was intended to be a kayak launch and part of a revamped parking area of the trail but the project didn't get that far. Supervisor Fish said it would be a big help to clear the brush along the trail so the water would be more readily visible. Councilmember Stewart said nothing needed to be budgeted for at this time because funds from the HT fund could be requested at any time, and currently they did not have accurate pricing for the dock.

Resolution 356-2024 A motion was made by Councilmember Stewart, seconded by Councilmember Noonan to adjourn the meeting.

Asked if all were in favor, the responses were as follows:

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| Councilmember Noonan | Aye |
| Councilmember Killian | Aye |
| Councilmember Stewart | Aye |
| Councilmember Donohue | Aye |
| Supervisor Fish | Aye |

The motion carried 5:0. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

*A 2025 Budget Workshop was held at 7: 00 PM on October 24, 2024
at the Moreau Municipal Building, 351 Reynolds Road, Moreau, Saratoga County, New York.*

Respectfully submitted,
Erin Trombley
Erin Trombley
Town Clerk

DRAFT