

## Notes from the November 2021 meeting of the Hamilton, NY, Town Board (11.11.21)

During its regular monthly meeting, convened online via Zoom November 11, the Hamilton Town Council unanimously adopted the 2022 Town Budget totaling \$2,109,985. Because the increase in the 2022 budget is below the cap set by New York State, the Council took no action on a proposed local law that would have allowed for a “Tax Cap Override.”

The 2021 Town budget was bolstered by \$92,000 in funding through the American Rescue Plan Act, adopted by Congress to ease the impact on local economies caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Bookkeeper Brynley Wilcox said the 2022 budget will be supplemented by the second half of the Town’s allocation from the ARPA.

The Council anticipates that a share of the ARPA funding will help offset deficits in the operations of the Southern Madison County Ambulance Corps (SOMAC), which the Town underwrites to ensure the continued availability of an essential service. Council member Peter Darby reported on SOMAC’s continuing efforts to adapt to changing regulations and remain viable – challenges facing local ambulance corps in many small communities.

Among the Town’s efforts in SOMAC’s behalf, the Town highway crew maintains SOMAC’s vehicles whenever possible. Highway Superintendent Luke Dowsland reported on work done for SOMAC among the crew’s many October activities, including road maintenance and preparations for winter.

The property taxes collected in support of Town operations are based on assessments, and those assessments are regularly updated. Supervisor Eve Ann Shwartz reported on the updates being conducted by assessor Rochelle Harris, who has been posting regular notices and explanations online and in local media. Property owners will be notified of their new assessments in January, Shwartz said. Informal reviews will be held beginning in February, with formal grievance scheduled in May, all predicated on “making sure everyone pays their fair share,” Shwartz said.

Town Clerk Sue Reymers reported on two grants pending from the State, one of which – the “Valesky Grant” for \$100,000 – will be received in November. Reymers’ report described two shared services agreements for storing Village records at the new Town Office Building; the Council formally approved both agreements.

Council member Shari Taylor showed schematic drawings for the proposed Fayette Street park and playground that are part of the Earlville for Earlville initiative. The plan proposed by architect Jocelyn Gavitt is based on public input; a public review is planned November 16. Once a plan is set, the Partnership for Community Development can assist with identifying sources for funding.

During public comments, Suzanne Collins from the Hamilton Food Cupboard spoke with the Council about the possibility of locating a public drop box at the new Town Office Building. Collins and Clerk Reymers have been considering alternate locations where local citizens can leave food donations. The Council approved a motion to locate a drop box in the entrance of the TOB; in the same motion, the Council approved the TOB as site for the Food Cupboard’s shared surplus produce stand during harvest season.

The Council’s next regular meeting is scheduled December 14. Visit the Town’s website for details (<https://www.townofhamiltonny.org/>)

*Jim Leach for the Town Board*