

The regular monthly meeting of the Hamilton Town Board was held on Thursday, November 8, 2012, at 7:00 p.m., at the Town Office, 16 Broad Street. Present were: Supervisor Eve Ann Shwartz, Deputy Supervisor Peter Darby, Chris Rossi and Carolyn Todd (on skype) – Town Councilors, Bert Glazier, Highway Supt., Mayor Miller, G. Hayes, G. Meres, S. Meres, Amanda Beatrice, and another Colgate U. student, and S. Graham. D. Holcomb had to work. Public was welcomed by the Supervisor.

Mayor Miller explained S. Graham would be present briefly as they had to go to Lebanon at 7:30 p.m., and the Town Clerk had bought over the Fire Contracts earlier today. G. Hayes said the Earlville firemen were holding a breakfast Saturday.

Mayor Miller asked how can you explain to the Village residents the Town's tax increase and what more in services they are getting for them. P. Darby said no more services for the increase, it is making up for the tax break they got two years ago. Two years ago the Budget covered about half our ongoing expenses. Eve Ann said the Town and Village have helped each other out – the Town sold their truck to the Village for less than they could have gotten. She said they do their very best with the Budget. The Mayor asked what is the Town's Fund Balance. Eve Ann said the 2011 Year Fund Balance was: One Million Fifty Seven Thousand, Eight Hundred and Eleven, (\$1,057,811) a decrease of 10% from prior year – and we are projecting that it will be down to \$802,000 by the end of this year because we used a lot of the fund balance to pay for new equipment per our Capital Project. Right now our Fund Balance is One Million, Three Hundred Thousand (\$1,300,000) and a truck still has to be paid for (\$200,000). Peter said right now the Budget covers our operating costs, but it does not replenish our reserves. Next year we have to start replenishing our reserves, Peter said. It will be used for Capital Equipment, bridges etc. Eve Ann said. Eve Ann said we will not be maintaining these high fund balances- but it is still a good cushion, the Mayor said. Eve Ann said they are not

using the Fund Balance to reduce taxes. Hold your taxes as steady as possible, Peter said.

G.Meres said he agrees in replacing equipment with new vehicles, with warranties, etc. Gair realizes most of the revenue is directed through the Highway Dept. P. Darby said there has never been money allocated to go into reserve; it has been surplus. Peter said next year when we are taxing at a fully sustainable rate, if at the end of the year there is surplus money, then it will come back as a credit to the taxes. Peter explained the Budget: Appropriations, less Revenues, less Unexpended Balance – and that gives you the amount to be raised by Taxes. Less Appropriated Reserve – which is the money that is appropriated for the purchase of equipment. Peter explained Bridge on Hill Rd., and Solar Project amounts – are one time expenses. B. Glazier has done a long range plan; a 20 year plan .

G. Meres said you are sitting on a lot of money left over; after you take out \$200,000 expenses annually – do we need to keep a Reserve that is as large as what we are indicating here – it seems that we are still going to have a lot of money left over. I know a lot of it is for emergency use and even still it still seems like there is a lot of money left over, but are we becoming more of a Bank than a Government. Shouldn't we be minimizing that a little bit more, Gair asked. You don't want to become a bank and not a government. P. Darby explained we need about \$300,000 starting operating expenses, we had \$200,000 storm damage which we were reimbursed from FEMA, and we feel we need that in savings for any possible storm damage. We will be upgrading, networking, new computers in the office this year, Peter said, and that's being funded out of the reserve. G. Meres said you still have too much access for the what if's, the maybe's. He feels having two times, three times too much in excess savings does not make sense to him; having \$180,000 set aside makes sense. Eve Ann said they have a Plan: they tried to put in estimates of interest, costs, re-sale values, and they are following Cazenovia's lead. Eve Ann said we haven't tested the assumptions, and they will

need a couple years to see how it plays out. She feels there is no slush here, and they are trying to bring it down. The surplus helps us take advantage of opportunities as they come along – such as Solar Project, possible future Village/Town shared building project. Does the amount need to be that high for us to do what we need to do, especially with the economic climate/burden everyone is sharing today, Gair said. Gair is not sold on that, but he understands a huge storm could happen tomorrow, and the reality to plan for needed equipment-he just is not sold that the Town needs as much. Gair said the climate change can help us – not as much salt and sand was needed last year; or as many hours plowing. When it snows we make money – by plowing roads for the County, Peter said.

S. Meres said: she was here to observe, take notes, and listen to what everybody has to say – so be precise, because I am taking notes.

Eve Ann said we will move on to the Minutes, we had a busy month, and had a lot of meetings. We've been keeping Cathy busy.

A Motion to Accept the October 11, 2012 Town Board Minutes was made by C. Rossi, seconded by P. Darby and carried.

A Motion to Accept the October 25, 2012 Town Board Minutes was made by P. Darby, seconded by C. Todd and carried.

A Motion to Accept the November 1, 2012 Town Board Minutes was made by C. Rossi, seconded by P. Darby and carried.

Supervisor Shwartz then opened the Public Hearing on Local Law #1 – 2012 year, entitled: a Local Law to Override the Tax Levy Limit Established in General Municipal Law 3-c. She explained Town of Hamilton taxes would go up 17.51%, the Villages of Earlville and Hamilton taxes would go up 17.29%. She asked if anyone present wished to speak. S. Meres asked how does that break down and Eve Ann said for a \$100,000 property it would be \$30 more. Our Taxable Tax Base grew by 2 Million dollars, Eve Ann said; primarily the Colgate Inn, and others;

per G. Meres question. The Grand Total of Taxable-Town is: \$264 Million, Eve Ann said. It's growing and that is good, Eve Ann said. Peter said next year will be his last year, and he wants to achieve getting the Budget back to being sustainable. There is a 2.75% increase on the County's Tentative Budget Eve Ann said-per C. Todd's question. She explained some good programs are being slashed. C. Todd said the County- taking 6 million dollars out of the reserves- is just postponing the problem. Some County Programs are being out-sourced, she said. The County's Fund Balance did not go down, it is stable, Eve Ann said. Sue Meres said if there is more money coming in and is a surplus at the end, instead of money going into Capital Reserve-wouldn't you give it back to the taxpayers. Is there a give back, or you just hold it for the taxpayers, S. Meres asked. Peter said in the future ,if at the end of the year we have not spent the money that we have collected, then there will be line- unexpended fund balance-which will be a credit given against the taxes. They've tried to make the Budget more transparent; they said. Eve Ann said you can credit B. Glazier and P. Darby for a good plan. Also Sue (Bookkeeper) will keep the budget figures in house now. C. Rossi said we can keep examining and fine tune-what we are saving, spending, and make sure we are not carrying too much over. Eve Ann asked if any more questions on Local Law #1-2012 year.

A Motion was made by C. Rossi, seconded by C. Todd and carried to close the Public Hearing on Local Law # 1 -2012 year. Vote was unanimous.

Resolution # ___ was made by P. Darby, seconded by C. Todd and carried to Adopt Local Law # 1 -2012 year entitled "A Local Law to Override the Tax Levy Limit Established in General Municipal Law 3-c". Vote was unanimous.

Resolution # ___ was made by P. Darby, seconded by C. Rossi and carried to Accept the 2013 year Preliminary Budget of the Town of Hamilton as the 2013 year Adopted Budget of the Town of Hamilton. Vote was unanimous.

Would Town's credit rating be changed because of the tax override, Gair asked. Eve Ann thought we would have a good rating.

B. Glazier then gave his Highway Report. Cleaned and serviced the summer equipment for storage. They have replaced missing signs on Hill & Horton Rd., and replaced the snow fence on Larkin Hill. They cleaned up tree limbs and trees, sanded several roads, they put on wings on the plows, equipment is ready for winter, did some ditching, and picked up 3 dead deer.

The Town Board then looked over the October 2012 Finance Report hand-out. Sue said not every account is reconciled yet. Eve Ann wondered why the expenses under the special fire districts – shows that we have actually handed over more money than was budgeted. Sue said she is trying to adjust the coding; as there have been 3 different bookkeepers in the 2012 year: Tackabury, Linda & now Sue. Sue needs more help, and more money was put in the budget for next year, but needs assistance (CPA help) for this year, too.

Eve Ann said Sue feels she needs more training and support from a CPA firm, and they need to do this training now. They discussed Piaker & Lyons (Norwich) and Carol LaBlanc. C. Todd asked what line item of the budget would this be taken from, and Sue said she was working on that. G. Meres asked about 2 accounts that money had been budgeted for--ex. \$35,000; and had not been used yet. Peter explained that there is a line in there for: things that are not anticipated. Some accounts are set by Law; and come from the NYS Comptroller's Office, Eve Ann said.

A Motion was made by P. Darby, seconded by C. Rossi and carried to hire Piaker & Lyons to provide additional support for the Bookkeeper, Sue Reymers, for the 2012 year – rates \$65 an hour/\$75 an hour.

Eve Ann said NYS Comptroller's Office went to Madison County and said they were not doing the Sales Tax right – you are giving all the Towns a credit against taxes that would be collected -for their share of the sales tax-instead of showing it as a direct income to the Town. This year (2013 Year Budget) we are showing the Sales Tax Revenue (\$194,000 – more or less) – it is seen as an actual Tax Revenue.

Income: B1120-- \$68,945-- General Revenue for the Town Outside; and DB 1120-- \$68,945 –Highway Fund, Eve Ann said. That money will be received directly from the County. The County has been collecting the Sales Tax Revenue from the State, and they would collect it from 2012, but we would never get it until 2013 – so the County has been getting this money and using it as their cash flow; Eve Ann said. We have the option of getting our Sales Tax Revenue twice in one year, she said. They discussed highway equipment (truck replacements).

Eve Ann then talked about Computer Upgrades and Rewiring Office – Sue, Peter and Eve Ann looked at “This PC Needs Help”, plus checked Perry’s and State Bids for pricing of new computers, etc. She said he will service these new computers, do backups, etc. Sue said there is a 3 year warranty covering parts available from him, too.

A Motion was made by P. Darby, seconded by C. Rossi and carried that the Town of Hamilton purchase three new computers, sign up for the backup, and pay the labor costs – with “This PC Needs Help”.

A Motion to Pay the General Bills was made by P. Darby, seconded by C. Rossi and carried.

A Motion to Pay the Highway Bills was made by C. Rossi, seconded by P. Darby and carried.

The Total Warrant figure of General and Highway Bills is \$68,663.82.

Resolution #___ was made by P. Darby, seconded by C. Rossi and carried authorizing the Tax Collector to charge \$1.00 fee for Tax Reminder Notices. Yes Votes: Peter, Chris, & Eve Ann. -- No Vote: C. Todd.

Eve Ann then went over the Codes Officer Report that Paul submitted, and said she was glad it was a more detailed Report. She would also like the location of where the work is being done, rather than the person purchasing the permit.

G. Hayes wondered if there was still interest in sharing the Codes Officer with the Village of Earlville, and Eve Ann said yes.

Eve Ann told the Contract has been signed regarding the Highway Garage-Solar Project and is ready to be submitted. They have time to apply for Grant money. Also talk of insulating the building, new windows – maybe combine the projects together, Eve Ann said – to reduce energy costs. B. Glazier has someone coming from Syracuse to give an estimate. C. Rossi said for Grant purposes: if we want to say we have done research in this area – it might help.

Chris said the Energy Working Group did not meet this month – they will meet in December. They are communicating via email and finalizing the copy for the website – to send that page content to Matt to get the page made on the Town Website. She thinks calling Supervisors in the surrounding municipalities – talk to them to come to a presentation by DELTA on road use protection. Jim Goldstein showed interest, John Salka, & Charles from Sherburne. She wants to get in touch with Priscilla & Ron Bono. Town Board discussed when and where to hold the DELTA presentation. C. Rossi has been reviewing the notes from the Albany Law Session that Steve Jones went to, and it seems like they were on the right track with recommendations for road use protection, but the other thing is: it looks like the State would respect present Zoning and Comprehensive Plans for Towns as much as possible, with the intent of looking at what the land usage plans are, not regulating how development is done, but planning for development. They are putting a lot of emphasis on the Comprehensive Plan, Chris said, and she would like to get a copy. Chris said also we should get in touch with the lawyer who did the zoning on the wind issues, and check back with him to see if we need any updates. Eve Ann said the lawyer's name is Joe Catalano. The Towns need to work together, Eve Ann said, on this issue.

Eve Ann said- Other Shared Services: Fuel Oil – a letter was sent to Bert and G. Hayes, from Sue. They discussed concerns, and G. Hayes said what about the fire trucks. Bert will continue researching/updating information on this.

G. Meres asked if they ever thought of putting in an outdoor wood burning station at the Highway Garage; as there is always a surplus of wood, and the location is not next to a huge development of houses; and it would provide a source of heat.

Eve Ann wanted to share that the County has been talking to Towns about the possibility of the County taking over the Tax Collection System for the Towns, and she has not really had a chance to talk to Cathy, the Tax Collector, about this – it is just an idea. Eve Ann said the County is already set up, they have the soft ware in place, the staff, and she said: the way the County- I don't know when it started this way – that is the way our County collects their own County taxes-is through the Town Tax Collectors, and we have a system/relationship with the County. Eve Ann said: but it is possible for Towns to Contract with the County to collect taxes, and it is something that we need to look at, as we are looking at the Highway Dept. and every way we can possibly save money – we have to look at the Town Office. It would cost us more money to upgrade, new tax collection software, training, and we have a Deputy Tax Collector employed for the busy time of year; Eve Ann said. Cathy asked: how soon are they talking about this – Eve Ann said it is just in the discussion stages – it is a possibility – they would like Towns to participate. Eve Ann said she certainly has been talking to the County about it, and she has been thinking about how we utilize our resources here, and how to get the office to be more efficient. She sees how much work Cathy is doing; and the County already has the employees and soft ware in place – it would mean sending checks to the County, as opposed to sending the checks to us. Eve Ann is not sure what service we are providing tax payers – what is it costing us to have a Town Tax Collector, which is a chunk of her work, and also a big reason we have a Deputy Tax Collector for the number of hours. Eve Ann said we have gotten rid of Highway wing men and we have to look at the Town Office as well. She brings it up as something to think about and will get more information for the December meeting; see the possibilities. G. Hayes asked if this was for Villages, and was told no, these are the taxes paid in January. C. Todd asked if there was a cost from the County to do this- and Eve Ann said right now there is no cost – they would like to

see the Towns do it. Eve Ann said they see it as an efficiency for the whole County, better utilization of their employees year round, less entry of uncollected taxes which they have to enter themselves. There does not seem to be any desire to charge the Towns more money to do that – and other members of the Finance Ways and Means Committee had a discussion about it, and people seem to be in favor of it, Eve Ann said. Eve Ann said she does not know if it could happen this year-other Counties and Towns do it-but it's something she wanted to bring up to the Board. She said she is going to pursue it and if she has a proposal she will bring it to them in December. She said: we have to act pretty quickly to work out the details – and she would have to obviously get Cathy's input on this. No doubt the first year would be very confusing to the taxpayers, Eve Ann said. Cathy asked: are most Supervisors in favor of this – Eve Ann said people are talking about it and looking at the idea, different Towns have tax collection software, but they are looking at it as an employee savings, too – long term for Towns, she thinks. I don't have a poll, I don't know, Eve Ann said. Cathy said: When you are elected – you are elected Town Clerk and Tax Collector for 2 years. Eve Ann said: All I know is the Town could not make a decision to take away the Tax Collection from the Tax Collector right now, but we could enter into a Joint Agreement with the County to do it as an Interim (Test Process) to see how it would work for us. C. Todd said from a Shared Service point of view-the County generates all the tax bills and sends them out to the taxpayers. Then when anyone is delinquent in paying-in March Cathy sends out a delinquent notice-and after April: the County tries to collect the delinquent tax money-- so in the terms of efficiency, this is a step in saving resources on that. Eve Ann said it is different, a change, and we need to look at the positives/negatives associated with it. Eve Ann said a Joint Agreement for the 2013 year – would require quite a bit of hustling. Peter said he thinks they should pursue it.

Gair Meres said he wanted to interject on this: When you are a Citizen in a Community, and when you are getting good road service, or you are getting good service from the Town; sometimes coming in and paying your Tax Bill--writing

that check out, and giving it to another person that lives in this Town who is your Tax Collector, offers that bit of closure for that consideration of that Contract with the citizens. Sending it in the Mail to the County, or going through a Third Party –with an Internet check (or something) you start to lose that whole Community – that sense of Community starts to get fractured and broken, so unless this is a huge savings—he thinks there is something to be said about each member of the citizenry of this Town coming into the Town Office and writing out a check and paying the Town for services that are rendered; and there is a degree of appreciation that is felt with that. He hates to lose that just for a few dollars, you can't put a price on that type of thing. There is something to be said for that, Gair said. Eve Ann said there is something real in that, for sure, she does not know what percent comes in to pay their taxes vs. sticking it in the mail. Cathy said yes, and you have your cash payments from a lot of people. Eve Ann said: If we chose to do this, there would be a loss of some kind – and she appreciates what Gair is saying.

C. Todd said regarding Shared Services Committee: They did have a meeting at the end of October and they did discuss the idea of some training for the web site. On June 4, 2012 there was a training session with Matt – the Village of Hamilton is interested in doing that again – and if the Town was interested; they could share the cost. C. Todd said she appreciates the work everyone at the Town Office does in posting on the website, but would like the web site kept more current. C. Rossi asked if Cathy, Sue, and other office staff would like further training sessions; and they agreed. C. Todd thinks the cost would be about \$180.

A Motion was made by C. Todd, seconded by P. Darby and carried authorizing the cost to schedule a further training session on the web site.

Eve Ann is very proud and grateful that the Web Site was done this first year that she has been the Supervisor. She is grateful for Chris and Carolyn doing all the hard work of getting it active and everyone else in the Town Office; Cathy is the one who has been mostly posting things on – C. Todd thanked her.

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Eve Ann said she already gave a report on the 2013 year County Budget earlier in the evening, she will be trying to get some of these non-profit budgets reestablished; and will know more in December.

A Motion to Adjourn was made by P. Darby, seconded by C. Rossi and carried at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine S. Hotaling, Town Clerk

