

PATTERSON TOWN BOARD MEETING
PUBLIC HEARING
PRELIMINARY BUDGET
PATTERSON TOWN HALL
1142 ROUTE 311
PATTERSON, NY 12563

October 12, 2016

MINUTES

PRESENT: RICHARD WILLIAMS, SR., SUPERVISOR
KEVIN BURNS, COUNCILMAN
CHARLES W. COOK, DEPUTY SUPERVISOR
PETER DANDREANO, COUNCILMAN
SHAWN ROGAN, COUNCILMAN
EILEEN CORBLEY, DEPUTY TOWN CLERK
NANCY TAGLIAFIERRO, TOWN COUNSEL

Salute to the Flag and Roll Call.

Supervisor Williams called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 p.m. with 20 in attendance.

Mr. Williams stated assuming we read the Public Hearing Notice:

SEE ATTACHED LEGAL NOTICE

Mr. Williams stated this is a budget that we labored hard on. It has been a very difficult budget. I am very proud of the work that the Town Board has done on this budget. We met with most of the Department heads, as well as most of the other groups that we fund. We had a very difficult time this year, in that, we had a tax cap that was less than one percent. It is important for us to stay below that tax cap for the residents of our Town, so they can get their rebate check. That was our goal. I'm proud to say, we met that goal with the Preliminary Budget. There could, potentially, be changes and keep it below the tax cap. The one last thing I would like to add, is the budget schedule for the budget. In the past, the Town Board has sought to do an accelerated schedule for adoption of the budget, so that the budget was adopted before the general election. This year, we have an issue, in that there is a proposition on the ballot for the library to increase their funding. We need to have that proposition voted on before we can adopt the final budget. We are going to move adoption of the budget back to November 16. I hope to have everything completed before the November election, so everyone can see what the budget is going to be. The budget this year, has held the line with all the departments, as far as salary increases, as far as spending increases, there is very little different from last year's budget. Most of the Town employees received a one and a half percent raise. There were a number of employees that were singled out, because of their contribution to Town Hall and their work ethic and the effort they put forward, which we felt was above and beyond. Seven employees were given a three percent raise.

Mr. Bruce Major stated I would like to ask that this budget be left open and held over to the next meeting. As your Public Notice lists, this budget was supposed to be available to the public on the 7th, which was this past Friday. At 11:00 a.m. this morning, it was still not on the website. I came into Town Hall and I was able to get a copy. I noticed that the Clerk received it somewhere around 9:40 a.m. this morning. As of 5:00 p.m., it still wasn't on the website. Shortly before I left this evening to come here, it was on the website at 6:30 p.m. I don't know how you expect the public to speak on the Preliminary Budget, when the only thing that was available to look at was the Tentative Budget. I looked at both budgets, I haven't had time to really look them over. There have been some noted changes. Clearly, there have been some salary adjustments. There have also been budget line moves. I really think the public should have an opportunity to look at the Preliminary Budget before they comment on it. Thank you.

Ms. Eleanor Smith, President, Patterson Fire Department stated after reviewing our budget that was submitted to the Town, we have seen that the Town has removed the entire vehicle replacement for the ambulances, as well as our total EMS budget. Besides that, there is another \$1,322 missing from the vehicle replacement and we want to know why that was cut. Part of this budget was to maintain supplies to use on our rigs. We have jump bags, oxygen, and defibrillators on our rigs and also in all the chief's vehicles. You wiped that completely out. We spoke to Rich, and Rich said that the Town is moving forward with our own EMS proposal, their own organization. They clearly know that the Patterson Fire Department is also moving forward with an EMS organization. We spent a lot of money and time, which we don't get a penny for, but we are out there all the time for you. We worked hard and spent many hours on this plan, so that we could ensure that the Patterson residents are safe and have an ambulance when they call.

I have some questions for the Board on their plan. Our plan, has redundancy in it and has a back-up plan for a second call in district. I would like to know what your back-up plan is.

Mr. Williams stated the Board has not seen the recommendation from the Committee. The Board doesn't have an answer for you.

Ms. Smith stated when Matt and I met with you, you said that the Town Board will be moving forward with the plan of having our own organization.

Mr. Williams stated that is not what I said. The discussion that we had on Tuesday, was currently the committee is looking at five different proposals. One of them was a County EMS. The County has no interest in moving forward with EMS. We were looking at four other proposals. One of them we didn't consider a viable proposal. That left on the table the Patterson Fire Department Volunteer Ambulance Corp and it left the Town contracting with a private ambulance service; such as M-Star and it left on the table the potential of the Town starting its own ambulance service.

Ms. Smith stated is it not true that the recommendation from your EMS committee was to move forward with the Town EMS and that you are all considering that.

Mr. Rogan stated we haven't received that recommendation yet.

Ms. Smith stated I am really confused. I'm getting mixed messages and mixed information.

Mr. Williams stated we are going to move forward tonight with the committee and the report. I think it will be presented to the Town Board. I'm jumping the gun a little bit. When we get there, we can discuss that a little further, perhaps.

Ms. Smith stated there are things you need to consider.

Mr. Williams stated let's talk about your EMS lines. If the Town moves forward with its own ambulance service, the Patterson Fire Department won't necessarily need to provide ambulance service. We can't have that money in the Fire Department District line. If the Patterson Volunteer Ambulance Corp is the choice, we go forward with that, then, likewise; we can't have that EMS money within the Fire Department budget. It has to come out, so we can transfer it to the Patterson Volunteer Ambulance Corp.

Ms. Smith stated if you didn't already have this in mind, why did you remove it from our budget.

Mr. Williams stated because whether we go with the Patterson Volunteer Ambulance Corp, which is what you are proposing, or we go with the Town Ambulance Corp, that money can't be in the Patterson Fire Department lines and we can't then pull it back out.

Ms. Smith stated we can.

Mr. Williams stated no, you can't. That is what I am trying to tell you. You can't either. If we give it to the Fire Department, it goes to the Fire Department. Legally, you cannot then give it to the VAC. That is why we separated it out.

Ms. Smith stated well, that was not explained to us.

Mr. Williams stated when we were discussing this, the tones went off and everyone had to leave quickly. We never finished the conversation. Whichever way we go, that money is still sitting there. As I did say to you on Tuesday, when we did talk about this, there is the possibility that, going forward, even if the Town were to do its own private ambulance service, there is potential for the Fire Department working with the community and Town to get some of that funding back, because we would still want someone to back-stop whatever ambulance is going to be. There needs to be two ambulances available for the Town of Patterson, at certain times.

Ms. Smith stated right and we have that. We have two ambulances and we put our second one in service, for the volunteers to take, until we get this new organization up and running. We are moving forward, regardless of what the Town decides. The membership has voted on this, the Board has agreed to pursue it. We feel this is the best protection for the citizens of Patterson. I asked you, "where would you put your ambulance" and you said, "maybe outside of the Town Hall."

Mr. Williams stated I said we had options.

Ms. Smith stated and you were going to hire one full-time person and sixteen part-time people. There was a lot of thinking going on already on something that wasn't decided. For you to have 24/7 coverage, in my mind, I think with Obama Care you can't work more than 20 or 24 hours a week for part-timers, so that means you are going to have 14 people working each week, to cover that time. That full-time employee is probably going to have to be Civil Service. We are a not-for-profit organization and we can do more and we have the knowledge and background and we are in the business and the Town is not in the business of EMS.

I have other questions. If you do put your ambulance in, what happens when there is a breakdown, when it goes out of service, when there is a second call in district. For example; just the other day, there was a second call in Patterson, twenty minutes later at Plaza at Clover Lake. The tones went out for mutual aid, they went to Carmel, Lake Carmel, Brewster, and Mahopac and almost forty minutes later an ambulance got to the Plaza at Clover Lake and picked that poor guy off the floor. This is not acceptable. We will not let that happen. We will have redundancy, it will make sure that the second call is covered and we are also looking for a mechanic. If our mechanic is there, he will also back-up as a driver. We have a plan that has been thought out for over a year. We spoke to our attorney and he has guided us.

What are you going to pay your employees. I'm thinking you already have this in place. You took it out of our budget, your committee has recommended that you pursue the Town EMS, but without the real numbers, I haven't seen any real numbers, it's all speculation. In 2015, when TransCare was going to do 24/7 it was over \$300,000.00. That was two years ago, for two EMT's. I can't imagine what the cost will be now. It will be a lot of money.

What about the hassle of billing. The Town will have to bill. What kind of benefits will they be receiving. You have to budget for overtime. You cannot rely on mutual aide, which I think your organization will be relying on. We will continue in the direction of forming our own organization.

Mr. Cook stated what do you anticipate your ambulance budget to be.

Ms. Smith stated our organization or budget now. Our budget now is almost \$90,000.00, which was cut out.

Mr. Cook stated you said you are moving ahead, so what would be your first year's budget.

Ms. Smith stated we have a couple of different plans in place. We are waiting to see what the Town agrees to. I think you keep it the way it was and take that money you are paying for that service, to be given to us to start our organization.

Mr. Cook stated what we are giving to M-Star.

Ms. Smith stated right. We will be doing the billing and we will be obtaining the revenue from that to supplement our organization and hopefully, it will be self-sufficient.

Mr. Williams stated the request that came in from the Fire Department was a guarantee there would be \$350,000.00 in the budget for EMS.

Ms. Smith stated right, which is what you are paying now.

Mr. Williams stated we are actually paying a little bit less.

Ms. Smith stated because you budgeted for 20 days a month and you are only paying for 8 days a month, because the volunteers are covering the other days.

Mr. Williams stated we budgeted for 20 days, 7 days a week, every day of the month from 6:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. and up to 20 nights between 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 a.m. and the Patterson Fire Department have been covering the rest to keep the cost down. We respect that. We are at a crossroad with EMS and fire services, both. I hear daily that you are getting more volunteer's in, that's great. I'm also hearing, you don't have manpower at certain times during the day.

Ms. Smith stated this plan will alleviate that. We believe our plan is going to work.

Mr. Williams stated I want to convey, that we greatly appreciate the service that is performed by the Fire Department and the men and women who put their lives at risk every day to make our community safe. We want to make sure we provide adequate money in your budget, so you can perform your service and do it in a safe manner. We struggled this year with this budget. We are under a state mandated tax cap and we feel it is important for our residents to stay under that tax cap, so they can get their rebate check. We need to work together. We need to develop a better partnership.

Ms. Smith stated we are open to that. We were told.....

Mr. Burns stated let Rich finish, please.

Mr. Williams stated we can't have a situation where both Fire Department's come to us and say, "we don't have the volunteers anymore", "we can't get an ambulance out". The Town has to start taking over providing that service. Three months later, you buy a brand new ambulance. No, discussion with the Town. We need to have those discussions, before you make those purchases. I recognize you are the experts. I don't do fire or EMS. I need to listen to you, but we also have to temper that what it's going to cost our residents.

Ms. Smith stated I don't think the residents are going to cry about a little bit of money that might be extra for them to have an ambulance there when they call.

Mr. Williams stated the second budget we received, called for almost 18% increase.

Ms. Smith stated right that was to have a mechanic. It will alleviate later on. It's our way of building up to what are needs our and cover it and to make sure both the fire side and EMS side are always covered.

Mr. Dandreano stated I think we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Mr. Williams stated you suggested that we must be pretty far down this road to have all these details that is not the case. We put together a panel of what we thought were people that were very knowledgeable about this; David Raines, two people from the Patterson Fire Department, others, Pete.

Mr. Dandreano stated three from the Patterson Fire Department.

Ms. Smith stated who is that. I thought it was only two.

Mr. Williams stated I thought it was only two.

Mr. Dandreano stated I think we are getting a little ahead of ourselves.

Ms. Smith stated who is the third person. I want to know who the third person is.

Mr. Dandreano stated I appreciate you bring up these points, but this is the Preliminary Budget hearing. It's agreed that the money is set aside for EMS. When I get to my agenda, I have the committee report for the Board, with the committee's recommendations.

Ms. Smith stated well, it's all around Town.

Mr. Dandreano stated you have valid points and I think you need to come back with them. We are talking about the budget right now.

Ms. Smith stated I just don't want someone misrepresenting us, saying that they are part of the Fire Department, when they are not.

Mr. Dandreano stated I might have misspoke.

Mr. Williams stated I will ask the Town Board to put it on-line so everyone can see it.

Ms. Smith stated I'm really here to ask for our budget to be put back together again. We are asking for our EMS.

Mr. Dandreano stated like the Supervisor said, we can't put that money into the Fire Department. It's for EMS.

Ms. Smith stated we are not stopping our EMS. We are continuing to provide EMS services.

Mr. Burns stated this sounds less like cooperation and collaboration and jamming something down the Town Board's throat.

Ms. Smith stated no.

Mr. Burns stated this is exactly what it sounds like. Your saying, "this is what we are doing and this is what we want and we want this money". We've had this dialogue for a long period of time, where we are exploring options about EMS. It's great that you guys come up with a proposal, there are other people who are working diligently to have a proposal, too, and we need to talk about these things and not just say, "we are going to do this and dam it, you better put the money back in our line". I don't think that's a collaborative effort.

Ms. Smith stated that's not what I'm saying.

Mr. Burns stated that's what I'm hearing. That's what it sounds like to me sitting here.

Ms. Smith stated what is going to happen on March 31, 2017, when we don't have any money in our budget and you fail, if you do the EMS.

Mr. Burns stated I haven't seen a proposal. I haven't seen your proposal. I think we should vet the proposal.

Ms. Patricia Brooks, Town Comptroller stated the contract for the EMS would be a separate contract. It's not the Patterson Fire Department that is providing the EMS service, correct.

Ms. Smith stated yes.

Ms. Brooks stated your proposal is another organization. For the State Comptroller, that contract has to be paid out of General Fund, not the Fire Departments' budget. So, that money was moved to ambulance contractual, \$340,000.00.

Ms. Smith stated in my mind, it's saying that if you took this money out of our budget and you are saying you're not doing the EMS that is the way I was looking at it. There was no discussion about how this was going to be done. That was never explained. You have to understand my point. It was \$90,000.00 short.

Mr. Williams stated I'm sorry you didn't hear me when I was sitting there across from you, saying there may be opportunity for you to get that money back, depending on how we move forward with the service. The Town Board has to digest this report. The report will be on the next agenda. You will be part of the discussion.

Ms. Smith stated Matt will be here. He can answer more questions.

Ms. Brooks stated the amount of the EMS that was in your budget, we were told by Matt Spzinder that was fully ambulance money and that is why that was moved over. The \$43,000.00.

Ms. Smith stated you took the vehicle replacement and our entire budget, so it came to about \$90,000.00.

Mr. Williams stated that was the two ambulances which would be going with your VAT. The two ambulances and the EMS line, the \$43,000.00 which amount to about \$90,000.00.

Ms. Smith stated yes, right.

Mr. Larry Maxwell, Patterson Fire Department stated if I understand correctly, there is a line that pays for M-Star right now and will next year. But there is another portion that goes to the Patterson Fire Department, is that somewhere else now.

Mr. Williams stated the EMS portion of the Patterson Fire Department budget has been moved over to the ambulance line.

Mr. Maxwell stated in addition to the contract that you have with M-Star. So, whatever you were paying M-Star plus that amount.

Mr. Williams stated correct. It is all one lump sum amount.

Ms. Brooks stated it's not the full amount.

Mr. Williams stated there are a lot of steps in all of this.

Mr. Maxwell stated I know there is a time frame. Whether Patterson does this ambulance, the Town does it or if you are setting up. In 2014, Governor Cuomo signed an incorporation law in New York State, which is incredibly extensive, and even his own lawyers don't understand. I know that from attending a session by one of the men who drafted the law. He said for not-for-profits and even for profits, it is so different and there is a time frame. No matter what change. If you want to make any change, you have to get an approval from the Secretary of State. If for example, (inaudible) or Patterson, you are going to have some other ambulance thing, in my understanding, you wouldn't have that in place for six months, at least, because of government approvals and certifications. So, is there a transitional plan. You do need to have the defibrillators, there are certain things that all first responders need to

have. Is any of the first responders stuff still in the Patterson budget to get that simple equipment.

Mr. Williams stated there is no transition plan, right now, because we are not sure of the direction we are going. There has been some discussion about how we would transition all this. It depends on an agreement of all the parties. We can't commit to the Patterson Fire Department to a course of action, without discussing it with them. No, it won't take us six months to get it up and running. If the Town were to do it, it would not take us that long.

Mr. Maxwell stated if you would have the state approvals and everything like that. So, if there is no plan, whether Patterson Fire Department, or yours in place, should the budget change. Should not a recommendation be approved before a budget is changed. That is usually the way it is done with any other corporation or entity. Even on the County or State level.

Mr. Williams stated we know EMS service in Patterson is going to change. Regardless of whose plan you look at, it's going to change. We've adjusted for anyone of those possible scenarios.

Mr. Maxwell stated should there not be that portion for the first responder supplies, whether there is any other ambulance or not, from police, as a first responder, I need to have certain equipment on site with me. I'm fire police, I'm on the site before the ambulance. I have to have stuff to be able to help and if we don't have a budget line for that, maybe that part needs to be looked at.

Mr. Edmond O'Connor stated who is taking care of Putnam Lake.

Mr. Williams stated it is currently one service. Patterson ambulance is responding Town wide.

Mr. Rogan made a **motion** to keep the Public Hearing open through the next meeting, in two weeks at 7:35 p.m.

Seconded by Mr. Dandreano. All In Favor: Aye. Carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

EILEEN CORBLEY, Deputy Town Clerk