

Minutes of Public Hearing on 2010 Budget for Germantown, held by the Town Board of Germantown on November 5, 2009 at 7:00pm at the Germantown Town Hall, Germantown, NY 12526.

Present: Supervisor Roy Brown
Councilwoman Joan Snyder
Councilman Joel Craig
Councilman Jeremy Smith

Not Present: Councilwoman Graceann Lamberta

Recorded by: Town Clerk Charlene Diehl

The Clerk read the Notice to Meet:

Notice is hereby given that the preliminary budget for the Town of Germantown for the fiscal year beginning January 1, 2010, has been completed and filed in the office of the Town Clerk at the Town Hall, 50 Palatine Park Road, Germantown, NY, where it is available for inspection by any interested person on Mondays 10:00-12:00pm, Wednesday evenings 6:00-8:30pm, Fridays 10:00-12:00pm and Saturdays from 10:00-1:00pm.

Further notice is hereby given that the Town Board will hold a Public Hearing on the proposed budget Thursday, November 5, 2009 at 7:00pm at the Germantown Town Hall. Any person may be heard at this time and speak in favor or against the preliminary budget as compiled, or for or against any item or items contained in said budget. Pursuant to Section 108, Article 8 of the Town Law, the proposed salaries of the following elected officials are hereby specified as follows:

Supervisor - \$7,200
Councilperson - \$10,400 (4@\$2,600)
Justices - \$12,000 (2@\$6,000)
Town Clerk - \$6,600
Highway Superintendent - \$49,731.00

The salary for the Highway Superintendent was corrected to be \$49,711 instead of the \$49,731 posted. Personnel Service Clerk was corrected to be \$30,600.

Supervisor Brown said that the proposed 2010 budget had no overall increase to taxpayers. While the General Fund is up the Highway Fund is down, but the tax rate will remain the same.

Councilman Smith asked for a complete list of all the funds in the town bank account so he can have a complete understanding. He thinks the town should have a listing of every single account, as he was unclear about a recent transaction regarding remaining sewer monies.

He inquired about the intent to cut the salaries of the board members, and Supervisor Brown said the numbers presented at the first meeting were the requests of all departments, without anything being changed, and that after working through the numbers some of those cuts were not necessary. Mr. Smith commends the board for no increase but thinks during this time we should think about cutting and keeping a budget as low as possible, i.e. he doesn't think the town attorney needs to be at every meeting.

Councilman Smith also asked about the sidewalk project and the reality of the highway department being able to contribute the in-kind services that the town needs to fulfill their part of the grant. Supervisor Brown said one of the reasons the town bought the loader was to help demolish the existing sidewalk and that he is positive the town will be able meet their obligation, and that the town has been putting \$20,000 in the budget for a few years that will count toward the town's portion of the grant.

Councilman Smith inquired about the insurance coverage and his fear that the coverage the town currently had was not enough. Supervisor Brown said Greg Fingar made a suggestion that will increase the town's coverage at no change in cost.

Supervisor Brown brought the board's attention to the Sewer portion of the budget, and said he was at a wastewater treatment plant meeting the previous day with other municipalities. They raised the point that many municipalities do not raise their sewer rents on a regular basis and then find themselves in the position of needing to do major repairs and lacking the money to do so. The suggestion is that all towns build in a reserve for their wastewater treatment plants.

Mr. Brown said the board needs to start looking at raising the rates each year, and planning for the replacement of necessary components. Councilwoman Snyder said that money needs to be put away, even if the fee increase is nominal every year. She said we should also see about putting additional houses into the district to bring monies in.

Councilman Smith asked Supervisor Brown if he had an estimate of what the repairs to the sewer district would be. Mr. Brown said he didn't have a figure at this point but he will be meeting with someone who is willing to come down to the plant and do an analysis of what improvements need to be done. This gentleman works with a company who helps municipalities get funding for necessary improvements to sewer districts.

Councilwoman Snyder asked about the prospects of bringing in an assisted living facility and Supervisor Brown said that option was still out there, although he hadn't heard anything about it lately. She is concerned that a lot of folks in the sewer district are retired and on a fixed income and will be unable to pay the increases each year.

Supervisor Brown said it's a two-fold solution – that we need to upgrade the plant and bring more users into it; the board needs to be more aggressive about the plant.

Councilman Craig said the numbers have to be crunched to see how long the recoupment would take by adding into the sewer.

Mr. Craig said he struggled with the same issues Councilman Smith had, which was cutting the budget even more. He said the town offers many programs and more and more the cost is being passed to the taxpayers, and we are getting to the point where some hard decisions will have to be made. He has nothing in mind, just thinks the board needs to review all programs and services to see where cuts can be made in the future. He was also disappointed that none of the department heads attended any of the budget workshops.

Councilman Craig asked if any figures on the ambulance had been received yet and Supervisor Brown said no, although the county had received the agreement. He also asked about the Emergency reserve under the sewer and Councilwoman Snyder told him the number was refigured.

Councilman Smith asked about the \$65,000 unexpended balance and was told it comes out of this year's budget. He also recalled that the board agreed no funds were going to be put in the budget for part-time summer help and that this summer he saw part-time workers mowing and suggests that instead of allowing the highway department so much leeway with the money they are given, that a special reserve fund be put aside for any expenditures that are needed for future equipment. Supervisor Brown said they can look into that, and that a highway reserve has already been set up and that ultimately the Highway Superintendent controls his own budget. Councilman Smith said if the board controls the amount of money the highway department is given there is less likelihood of that money being available to spend. He said he believes the highway department spends huge amounts of money unnecessarily on Maple Avenue on drainage.

Arthur Schiff congratulated the recent election winners and said that the board is skating on thin ice with the budget. He said a comparison between Clermont and Germantown's cost per mile shows that Germantown is significantly higher than Clermont's. He is aware that Germantown has 6.2 more miles of road than Clermont but thinks more is spent on payroll, i.e. insurance coverage, and that some type of cuts should be made to bring costs more in line.

Mr. Schiff asked about the sidewalk grant, and was informed that the town borrows money and then is reimbursed from the grant. He confirmed that money has been spent towards the project, and thinks the sidewalk has to be watched carefully. Supervisor Brown said he will look to save money where possible to keep costs contained, i.e. putting in concrete curbing instead of the granite that was in the original design.

Mr. Schiff brought up the town's insurance policy that he recently looked at and said the expired policy said it covers three armed part-time officers. Supervisor Brown said the policy in effect covers the part-time officers but for special events coverage is increased to cover all officers at the event. This helps the town keep costs down.

Mr. Schiff spoke about the zero-based budgeting and that for Germantown's future a more analytical approach should be taken, and more thought put into it. He said the Comprehensive Plan looks at the future and the board should use folks in town who have experience for future budget planning.

Councilwoman Snyder said the board basically looks at the budget every month, when they review the bills to see where the cash is going.

Councilman Smith said he thinks Roy, Joan and the board made wise decisions in being conservative with the revenues, and that the board should reach out to people to do some long-term thinking, planning, and analysis of where the town is going and anticipate a bit better on where they are going to need monies, and what projects will be coming down the road.

Motion to close the public hearing made by Councilwoman Snyder with a second by Councilman Smith, with all in favor and none opposed.

Respectfully submitted,