

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Durham to work on the budget held October 2, 2003, at the Town Building in Oak Hill, N.Y.

Present: Robert Young – Supervisor
 William A. Carr, Jr. – Councilman
 Gary Hulbert – Councilman
 Linda Sutton – Councilwoman
 Robert Elpel – Councilman

Recording Secretary Charles Soderblom - Town Clerk
 Others Present: Wesley Moore – Highway Superintendent
 Scott Levine – The Daily Mail
 Cindy Moore - Bookkeeper

The Supervisor called the meeting to order at 7:20 P.M. The Supervisor's proposed budget was handed out for everyone's review and feedback. It was noted that for the most part it mirrored the budget adopted for 2003.

Mr. Hulbert asked why the 911 sign were in the Highway Department budget and it was explained that it was the best category for the expenditure - but is not in the Highway Budget, but in the General Budget under Garage. The question was asked of Mrs. Moore where the surplus for the month currently stood. Mrs. Moore explained that it is very difficult to monitor the surplus on a monthly basis. Fiscal 2002 we ended the year with \$240,000 in surplus and \$50,000 was applied to this year's budget which left approximately \$190,000 to operate in fiscal 2003.

Mrs. Moore provided the board with an analysis that she had done comparing 2003 budget to Mr. Young's proposed budget. Mrs. Moore explained that she had not been asked for input regarding Mr. Young's budget and felt that it was necessary to point out to the board the areas she has concern over - correspondence she has been receiving from the state as well as the health insurance provider, pertaining to the increases they are anticipating for fiscal 2004.

Mrs. Moore explained that the NYS Retirement System has estimated an 11% employer contribution payment for 2004. The payment was estimated at \$50,000, an increase of approximately \$25,000 over this year which already has seen a \$15,000 increase. This is attributed to the loss in investments that the State Retirement System has made and the discontinuation of employee contribution from employees with more than ten years of service. It was Mrs. Moore's suggestion that we consider other options regarding the retirement plan and asked the board to authorize her to check into our options. The board granted her permission.

Mrs. Moore expressed concern over the rising cost of health insurance. Our current provider, The Empire Plan, provides excellent coverage with no limits on yearly coverage. However, the monthly cost for a family is estimated at \$958 and \$456 for individuals next year. Currently full time employees (highway) receive 100% coverage

and part-time employees pay only 50% of the family portion of the plan. Part-time employees are defined by either working a scheduled 20 hours per week or an annual salary of \$3,000 to be eligible for health insurance benefits. Empire plan requires the employer to pay a minimum of 50% of individual and 35% of the family plan costs. Mrs. Moore is preparing an insurance comparison of comparable insurance coverage with other companies as a way to reduce the cost. It was suggested that the board consider eligibility thresholds and the possibility of increasing the amount the employee contributes to their coverage. It was pointed out that most private companies mandate that the employees contribute a portion of their health insurance costs. Most of the surrounding towns require contribution of their employees. Additional discussion followed and it was determined to revisit this topic at the next meeting.

Mr. Hulbert suggested that when the board considers pay raises that they look at individual dollar amounts rather than a across the board percentage with the reason being that a percentage gives the employee with the highest salary the largest increase.

Mrs. Sutton asked why the dispatcher's position had been omitted from the police budget. Mr. Young explained that he did not feel it was a necessary position but it was up to the board to decide. Mrs. Sutton pointed out that dispatchers duties would need to be absorbed into one of the other positions and that the money would still need to be budgeted.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Minutes approved:

Charles G. Soderblom, Town Clerk