

Minutes of the Town of Chesterfield Public Hearing on Preliminary 2024 Budget held on Thursday, November 9th, 2023 at the Town of Chesterfield Office, 1 Vine Street, in Keeseville, County of Essex, State of New York Pursuant to Due Notice.

Supervisor Barber called the Public Hearing to order at 5:45.

Everyone stood for Pledge of Allegiance.

Those Present were:

Supervisor	Clayton Barber
Town Clerk	Bruce Bourgeois
Councilman	David Gload
Councilman	Richard Klages
Councilman	Patrick "Bill" Mitchell
Councilman	John Casey
Town Attorney	Michael McCormick
Supt. of Highways	John "Jay" Champine
Budget Officer	Laura Ocasio

Guests Present:

Walter Chmura Christina Mullen
Nancy Thompson

Supervisor Barber welcomed all in attendance and stated the Preliminary Budget was 8.178% over tax cap but with recalibration and cuts the 2024 Budget is now 4.504 % over tax cap. He added Budget Officer Ocasio and Town Board did a good job to get as close to tax cap as possible. The tax rate per thousand should actually go down.

Supervisor Barber explained part of the issue in the past has been the Town of Chesterfield has been assessed at 100% while Town of Ausable was at 82%. The Town of Chesterfield paid almost twice as much for the Fire District as the Town of Ausable, 6.19/ thousand as opposed to 3.24/ thousand. With Ausable going to 100%, their contribution is now 4.18/thousand and /Chesterfield's will drop to 5.47/ thousand.

Budget Officer Ocasio added the new tax rate will actually reduce taxes for many residents. She then took questions from the public.

Walter Chmura asked about plowing the roads and suggested to avoid damage to property owners, the Town should have median markings throughout the Town to help guide the snow plow drivers.

Councilman Casey responded that it would be cost prohibitive with Supervisor Barber adding the Town of Chesterfield doesn't have the right equipment for it. Superintendent of Highways Champine says the County should do roads without medians but if the County did one everyone would want it done. Nancy Thompson said Trembleau can be very dangerous without median marking.

This opened a discussion on Trembleau Road. Highway Superintendent Champine admitted this is a tough road and the perfect place to request the County do a center lane but as the marking season is done, the County would have to do it next year, probably when Route 373 was done.

Mr. Chmura questioned the cost effectiveness of a Town Attorney being paid to be at meetings then charging more fees to the Town. Why not pay someone a retainer? Supervisor Barber responded the cost difference was not that different between a retainer and paying a Town Attorney as both requires additional charges for extra work.

Mr. Chmura asked if the contract with the State Police on Liberty Street was cost effective. Councilman Casey responded if there is no contract with the Town the State Police will leave and the response time to crime would be much worse.

Mr. Chmura asked whether the dog control officer was beneficial. It seems to him to be a losing proposition with more money being put into a position where nothing is done. Supervisor Barber responded Chesterfield will be teaming up with Ausable to make a position with decent salary to serve both municipalities better with more controls and oversight.

Mr. Chmura suggested with insurance rates rising, maybe the Town could enter into a consortium with other towns to save funds. Schools are doing it now. Supervisor Barber agreed this has value. Better negotiating power will equal better insurance rates. Supervisor Barber thought a committee from the Board should be formed to look into this. Councilman Mitchell added the Towns already share equipment so this is a logical step.

Mr. Chmura then asked if ROOST funds could be used to lower the tax burden. Supervisor Barber responded ROOST funds are not guaranteed and must be used for certain items.

Supervisor Barber thanked Budget Officer Ocasio for putting together a good budget.

Supervisor Barber declared the Public Hearing adjourned at 6:39 PM.

Bruce Bourgeois Town Clerk