Thank you Supervisor Gozelski and the Castile Town Board for allowing us time to speak to you this evening.

My name is Bob Capurso and I am the President of the Silver Lake Association. As an offshoot of the Association, we have formed a Taxation Oversight Committee consisting of myself, VP Betsy Kent, VP Bob Martin, Assistant Treasurer Mary Gavigan, and Silver Lake resident Linda Fitzpatrick. Our goal is to look into the latest assessments which happened in 2022 as well as the taxation rate change for the Town of Castile and Wyoming County.

Assistant Treasurer Mary Gavigan has reached out to Assessor Tina Rados to acquire assessment data from 2021 vs 2022. Mary has analyzed the data and has revealed the following:

Assessments at the Lake, as well as in the rest of the Town of Castile, have increased by an average of 30%. Some assessments increased by 60 to 70% around Silver Lake. At the same time, tax rates for the Town of Castile went up 4% which is 2% over the State Mandated Cap. Likewise, Wyoming County tax rate went up 6%, 4% over the State Mandated 2% Tax Cap. This brings the total tax rate increase for residents to 10%. This is on top of the excessively high assessments.

Alarmed members called or emailed me that the taxes, mailed out in January for the Town and County, were unmanageable to say the least. These are mainly seasonal residences. To pay more at the lake than they do at home is unrealistic. Silver Lake residents do not receive the services that other Town of Castile residents do and they do not vote here, leaving them feeling unrepresented. Many Silver Lake residents are claiming they cannot afford to remain at the lake given these steep increases in taxes.

Silver Lake has been a family lake for generations. We pride ourselves in having cottages that have been passed on from grandparents to parents and children thoughout its history. This is quickly coming to an end. Homeowners cannot possibly pass their places on to their children given the amount of yearly taxes necessary to retain them. We are being taxed out of existence. The Association is hearing the cries and is saying “enough”.

Many say that if we can afford a place at the Lake then we can afford the taxes. Well I am here to tell you, that is not true. In my own instance, for example, I built my own house in 1982 in Bergen. The house was paid for while I was in my late 40s and with that equity, we could afford to get a home equity loan for the cottage. We are now on a fixed income as are most Silver Lake residents and cannot absorb these continued increases. We are just local hard working people who were able to save and obtain a lifelong dream of owning a cottage. That doesn’t make us rich by any means. We just want to enjoy this great community without being taxed out of it. We come here from all over Western New York and spend our money here. High taxes have jeopardized our dream of staying here.

What will happen in the future? Folks will likely begin to sell their places to out of town or even out of state buyers that have lots of cash. They will likely open Air BnBs, and ignore the family feel of the Lake. These non-residents have shown they have little respect for our Lake or its local laws.

A case in point happened this past winter. An out of State owner from New Jersey hired a local contractor to build a structure on his property on the east side of the lake in Fairview Tract. He had no permits nor did he apply for any variances. Our Silver Lake residents pointed out this structure and Don Roberts at the County Zoning Office put a Stop Work Order on the structure. After the public Zoning Hearing for variances in Castile, the requests were rejected. The owner was told to take the structure down. Is this what we can expect in the future? Absent owners/landlords who have little respect for our local laws and ordinances.

In reference to the 2022 Assessments, we are all aware of the debacle with the assessment mailings. They were sent out late and many residents didn’t get them at all. To somehow blame the Post Office or any other entity for this mess is preposterous. It was a local problem and a local mess. People are mailed Assessments all over the country without incident. Folks are still, to this day, trying to connect with Assessor Tina Rados, to obtain a grievance meeting. She explained that she doesn’t look at individual properties initially but puts them into a formula which prints out the assessments for her. When graciously reviewed individually, our data shows that her reductions for grievances range between 15 to 19%.

We, the Silver Lake Association, are therefore requesting a 15% assessment rollback for any Town resident who has not had a grievance meeting with Assessor Tina Rados. This can either be achieved by an across the board reduction or individually, where residents must come to Assessor Tina to claim their reduction. This will go a long way to show good faith to residents and prove that you, the Castile Town Board, care about keeping this Lake the wholesome family place it has been since the days of its inception.