**Colton Town Board Public Meeting Budget Workshop, October 26, 2023**

**County of St. Lawrence, State of New York, 94 Main St., Colton NY 13625**

Present: Ronald Robert, Town Supervisor Councilpersons: Lisa Fisher

Jennifer Cole, Town Clerk Jacob Poste

Kevin Beary

Meeting attendees: Kirke Perry, Brittney Gravlin, Shelley Rayner, Linda Shaver, Ellie Menz

Zoom attendees: Anne Townsend, Dennis Eickhoff, Peggy Shea, Cynthia Hennessy, Peggy Mousaw

Supervisor R. Robert led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting opened at 5:58pm. This public meeting was advertised by flyers being distributed around the Town of Colton in both post offices, local businesses, and the display case at the front of the Town Hall. This meeting was called to discuss the tentative 2024 budget for the Town of Colton. Councilman Stephen Knight was absent for this meeting. He requested a letter that he composed be given to all council members and be a part of this meeting’s minutes. The letter is as follows:

*Oct 27, 2023*

*TO: Colton Town Board and Community*

*FROM: Steve Knight, Council Member*

*RE: Town Budget Meeting*

*Good evening. I apologize for my absence tonight but a family responsibility prohibits my attendance.*

*I have participated in the development of the 2024 budget and reviewed all aspects of tonight’s “1st PRELIMINARY” budget, including capital requests by department heads and proposed appropriations from existing fund balances. To date, I support the current draft budget as presented.*

*Last meeting, we discussed whether there is a need to raise taxes in 2024 and I expect there will be further discussion tonight. I met with Shelley Rayner, bookkeeper, and Darren Richards, DPW, today to confirm several factors related to my decision on this matter. They include:*

*➢ Current and anticipated General fund, unappropriated fund balance for 2024*

*➢ Unappropriated fund balance for highway and library*

*➢ Remaining balance of transfer station costs*

*➢ Anticipated grant for transfer station*

*➢ Financial implications of the Erie Blvd case*

*All things considered, the Unappropriated General Fund balance is anticipated to be at least $1M. The impact for planning purposes of a ten percent reduction in Erie Blvd’s assessment would be approximately $10/$100K of assessed value. While never certain, we anticipate a transfer station grant within the next three to four years of $300-350K.*

*Knowing what we know at this time, I do not see a need to increase taxes for 2024.*

*Thank you.*

Discussion on recordings of public meetings. Legal or illegal? Many physically in attendance stated that recording a public meeting is legal.

Supervisor Robert asked for an increase in the Supervisor equipment line of $2,000.00, line A1220.2 for a new computer.

Councilman Beary asked about the $5,000.00 that was in the 2023 budget for the Morgan Rd. Beach. Discussion on DEC tests and general fund. This subject is no longer a project the Town of Colton is pursuing.

Deputy Clerk line increase? Supervisor Robert would like the town clerk’s office open five days a week, Monday – Friday. Line will need to be increased from $9,500.00 to at least $12,000.00 if the deputy is to work when the town clerk is unavailable and every Friday. Current Deputy Clerk cannot commit to all Fridays. Deputy Clerk line remaining at $9,500.00.

Discussion on tax increase. Small increases over years instead of a huge increase all at once if something major happens. Transfer station completion, grant monies, etc. Current budget revenues to be taken out of the general fund balance is $131,000.00 to balance this budget.

Discussion on quarterly tax payments.

Discussion on general fund balance with the assumption that no grant monies will be received during the 2024 year would still be approximately $1.5million. Also, what is an acceptable fund balance according to OSC? Typically, 30% is what most municipalities go by. Some use 50%.

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*Cont’ Oct 26 public 2024 budget meeting*

Discussion on Library budget, general fund balance ($192.00.00), and a trust fund ($97,000.00). Library did

increase their levied amount by $2,980.00. Overflow costs are going up. Revenue hasn’t gone up, but expenses have. Ms. Fisher recommended that the $2,980.00 come out of the library fund balance to make up for the difference. All board members were in agreement.

Discussion on the 6% increase for the preliminary budget. Some department heads are requesting more. The town typically follows the union contact. Currently the union contract is being negotiated.

Discussion on public meetings vs public hearings. Timeliness in scheduling dates for the budget process.

Reminder – the Colton tax levy is *not* increasing in all departments as the current preliminary budget stands.

Motion #1

Ms. Fisher made the motion to schedule the public budget hearing for November 1st at 6pm, seconded by Mr. Poste.

Ayes 3

Noes 1-Beary

Absent 1-Knight

Motion carried

Motion #2

Ms. Fisher made the motion to approve the minutes from the October 11th 2023 budget meeting, seconded by Supervisor Robert.

Ayes 3

Noes 0

Abstained - Poste

Absent - Knight

Motion carried

Motion #3

Ms. Fisher made the motion to approve the minutes from the October 16th 2023 budget meeting, seconded by Mr. Poste.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1-Knight

Motion carried

**Adjournment:**

Motion #4

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Beary made a motion to close the public meeting at 6:49pm, seconded by Ms. Fisher.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1-Knight

Motion carried

Meeting minutes by Colton Town Clerk Jennifer Cole

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