

PUBLIC HEARING

Town Hall

11/4/76

8:00 P.M.

Present: Co. D'Antoni, Holbrook, Maloney, Piacentile, Supv. Gerber
Murray N. Jacobson, Town Attorney
John R. Bradley, Town Clerk
Harold Petersen, Comptroller

RE: PUBLIC HEARING ON PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR THE
TOWN OF CLARKSTOWN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 1977

Supervisor Gerber declared Public Hearing open; assemblage saluted the Flag.

The Town Clerk read the Notice of Hearing and affirmed as to the publication and posting for the hearing.

Supervisor Gerber explained that there are three steps in the budget procedure, first the filing of the tentative budget which reflects department requests, second the filing of the preliminary budget which is reviewed by the Town Board, and third, the adoption of the Final Budget prior to November 20th.

Supervisor Gerber further explained that the preliminary budget had been reviewed line by line by the Town Board during several sessions since its filing in October and that numerous reductions had been made, in particular such areas as recreation, highway department and a number of other areas.

Supervisor Gerber went on to explain that there are a number of fixed costs, primarily in the area of debt redemption which falls into two categories, one general and one covering primarily sewer construction. These amounts are fixed as amount to principal and interest as permanent financing is set. In the past year we were required to go to permanent financing of some seven million dollars of permanent financing in both sewers and general obligations. Because of the economic conditions throughout the State of New York and the problems of the City of New York and the State of New York, which effected all municipalities the rates we were forced to pay on the open market were almost twice as much as it would be today, resulting in the interest payment increasing. One large item in this budget is the change in the debt, principal and interest that has to be paid. Clarkstowns present outstanding debt amounts to approximately \$30,000,000. Of that amount, \$25,000,000 is the result of sewer construction which started in the early sixties. By law, this debt is exempt from the N. Y. State Statutory Requirements of the N. Y. State Constitution. Even though the sewer debt is exempt, this is still an obligation of the Town of Clarkstown.

Supervisor Gerber stated that in the general debt reduction in 1976 which we had to pay, was approximately \$1,454,000 which was fixed and has to be paid sometime in 1976. In 1977 we will be required to pay the general debt, \$2,018,372. In the sewer debt in 1976 the budget called for payment of principal and interest of \$2,065,000. We will be required in 1977 to pay \$2,282,000 an increase in excess of \$200,000.

Supervisor Gerber further stated that in the preliminary budget, the recreation budget today is slightly less than the adopted 1976 budget. Approximately one half of the recreation budget is returned either by fees or in State aid. One further

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explanation, the Town budget copies that you have received reflect Town wide charges which by law are taxable to all of the residents of the Town, whether residing in a village or in the unincorporated area. Certain taxes which are assessed solely to those people who live outside of the village. Such items as zoning and planning, specific items of the highway dept. are not assessed on residents of the villages.

Supervisor Gerber went on to explain the personnel distribution within the Town -- 96 police, 49 crossing guards, 134 employees in various other departments and 48 employees covered by CETA funds which are wholly reimbursed under the Manpower Act of the Federal Government and do not appear as a taxable item. No local funds are used. Appropriation is made until March 31, 1977. It is expected that it will be extended for at least another quarter after that.

Supervisor Gerber went on to state that at the present time the Town of Clarkstown has three labor contracts with its employees. One with the P.B. A. for the Police Officers, one with the C.S.E.A. for the bulk of the Town employees and one with the Special Bargaining Unit of the C.S.E.A. covering the managerial level of Town departments. All contracts have one year to run, unless amended or reopened by mutual consent by both parties. The Town Board has already made request to the personnel through their recognized organizations that they would look forward to their cooperation in this area. The Board has also indicated that in failing in arriving at any kind of agreement for 1977, the possibility exists that if cutbacks cannot be made or are not sufficient to cut back on the budget and therefore on the amount to be raised by taxes on the Town level that certain positions would have to be abolished across the board or by a department by department level.

Supervisor Gerber also pointed out that the tax bill sent out in January covers both Town and County taxes. Each dollar generally paid including school taxes, generally 53% of each dollar goes to schools, 3% for highway, 2% for special districts such as lights, 8% for sewers. In indicating the budget makeup there are special districts whose items are fixed and the Town Board has no control over these costs.

In closing, Supervisor Gerber explained that the purpose is to hear the comments specifically or generally on the total budget or any specific items contained therein. The Board has already indicated that there will be no adoption of the budget tonight, but between now and some date prior to November 20th, there will be, as required by law, the adoption of a final budget. The Board has indicated that there is no item that is sacred, there is no item that cannot be changed, except those that are required by law and are fixed obligations and statutory requirements or contractual agreements. Beyond that, every item is subject to change. Any item may be raised, lowered or changed in any manner. The only exception is the proposed salaries listed for the Supervisor, Councilmen, Town Clerk and the Highway Superintendent. The law specifically states that those items can only be lowered.

John Lodico -- suggests that fixed percentage of budget cost is not practical. Responsibility of the Board to govern and set the budget and not be influenced by any particular groups -- urged the Board not to bail out land investors under the guise of

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environmental control. Let the land be developed commercially. Consider cutting automobile vehicle program. Use pool system -- cut down immensely on insurance costs and maintenance and gasoline. Only persons on 24 hour call to have cars on week-ends and holidays. Pay mileage where possible rather than invest in equipment. No qualms about the worthiness of granting officials the small increase. Urges no further acquisition of land by the Town.

Marguerite Pedersen, New City -- Organized Taxpayers Association -- expressed disbelief in the proposed budget. Accused the Board of being responsible for unconscionable cost of government and raising of taxes -- re budget -- figures indicate tremendous increase -- approximately \$8,000,00 in salaries and benefits -- resulting in average cost -- 336 employees cost \$23,000.00 per year. Remove Police Department salaries, coverage left -- police \$31,000 per year -- others \$20,000 per year -- all figures include benefits. Police retirement @ 6 people equals \$7,000.00 per year for retirement. Summing up, people cannot afford to live in Clarkstown -- there is no way -- citizens cannot afford these costs -- don't freeze costs -- cut them back.

William Ericksen, Upper Nyack -- In comparison of figures from 1972 to 1977, preliminary budget, there is indicated a 164% increase in the budget. Brought attention particularly to those items of Town Comptroller (243% increase); Assessors Office (150%); Recreation Dept. (189%); Adult Activities (220% increase)

Dr. Gilbert Church, Nanuet -- Organized Taxpayer Assn. -- stated that a projected increase of 30% was intolerable, or for that matter no increase at all should occur.

Fred Hager, Valley Cottage -- Expressed his concern over the apparent increase in the tax. Advocates an effort for all to use their influence on the State Legislature to change the form of taxation to income rather than property so as to tax on the ability to pay.

James Coyle, Valley Cottage -- Agrees with Mrs. Pedersen and Organized Taxpayers Assn regarding recreation department expenditures of \$1,250,000. as proposed in preliminary budget. Town Attorney's Office -- excessive increase -- waste in accomodating builders in Rockland Lake area with regard to sewer installation. Suggests cut in personnel of Town Attorney's Office.

Fred Roland, New City -- taxpayer and Chairman of Clarkstown Conservative Party -- urged fiscal responsibility. Denounced repeal of property tax as the real need is to cut taxes, not the method by which they are collected. Stated that an area in which Clarkstown could save is in the Mini Bus service.

Val Dagaev, New City -- Chairman, Clarkstown Republican Club -- accused the Board of not having lived up to their campaign promises -- suggested that with a comptroller, finance officer and budget officer the Town is somewhat over financed. Cannot see why so many others are necessary -- re buget -- Supervisor -- 30% cost for personnel increase is excessive -- Purchasing Dept. -- did not approve of it. Town Attorney -- excessive number of attorney personnel and spending for outside attorneys as well. Other expenses -- seemed to feel that these amounts are excessive. Finds budget unacceptable -- no increase should occur. Recommends zero budgeting.

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Thomas Morahan, New City -- budget has some defects. With reference to taxation by Income Tax -- suggests that the wage earner would be hit but the higher brackets through loopholes would be exempt. -- Recreation -- no longer afford it, particularly music, fireworks, etc -- this is a department to make tremendous cuts in. Zoning Board of Appeals, cut back -- look for volunteers without salary from dedicated residents.

Kathy McDougal -- Vice Chairman - Rockland County Republican Committee spoke in opposition to the lease of the warehouse in Valley Cottage as being unnecessary, over costly, and a direct tax loss to the community. Decried the cost as indicated in the preliminary budget.

John Kupf, West Nyack -- two specific areas to cut are recreation and the mini bus system.

Rita Sackowitz -- taxpayer and member of the Clarkstown Taxpayers Association -- 17 year resident. Decried the cost of recreation, town cars (insurance at \$570 per car) -- do away with cars -- pay mileage at \$.15 and save money. Recreation should only be provided on a pay as you go plan except for senior citizens. This years budget \$200,000 over last year for insurance on cars -- why -- cut the budget and freeze it

John Petersen, West Nyack -- protested the increase in taxes -- asserted that as a rentor he is hit double each time the tax goes up by his landlord. Once more this year and he will be priced out of the community.

Mr. Flaghiser, West Nyack -- supports only no raise in taxes -- cut the budget.

John Morrow, Congers -- cited current cost of living with no end in sight -- please help where you can in reviewing the budget.

William Foley, Clarkstown -- his taxes have doubled in the last 4 years -- having been unemployed for almost a year he has learned you can get along on much less. Suggested the Board remember this and practice economics in reviewing the budget.

Stephen Tangelo -- member of Organized Taxpayers Assn. -- taxpayer is now squeezed -- some items he is concerned with -- Historical Review Board, Cemeteries, weeds and brush removal and veterans services.

Illoina Salowski, Valley Cottage -- Upset over abuse the Town Board had been receiving -- suggested that more calm be maintained and constructive criticism be offered -- the obvious political inferences by certain persons should be refrained from stick to the budget and budget items.

Joseph Pantano, New City -- the by-product of an extreme tax burden is in the effect that some members of the community may have to move out of Clarkstown. Houses numbering in several thousands are for sale and can't be sold as a result of the tax levy. Called for freezing of all salaries -- some salary increases since 1974 have totalled 70% -- cut the budget now.

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William Vines, West Nyack -- commented on several items -- suggested no salary increases at all -- the item "other expenses" totals over \$1,000,000 without definition as to where the money goes -- eliminate Budget Officer, don't fill personnel openings, consolidate departments -- took exception to the lease of warehouse in Valley Cottage as being poor judgment and excessive in cost. Called attention to the \$7,800.00 increase in Town Garage cost -- eliminate mini bus -- save \$70,000.00 -- stop paying for ROCAC -- reduce Bond indebtedness by issuing Serial Bonds. Eliminate town cars where possible and restrict use of same -- hold public hearings on labor contracts -- reduce ZBA and Planning Board to 5 members.

Joseph Schleimer, New City -- criticized the obvious political intent of some of the comments by individuals speaking on the budget -- stated that taxes have increased without services. Bureaucracy leads to more bureaucracy and ascending cost thereby. Cut back -- reduce administration and costs thereby -- suggested sharing educational and public buildings to cut costs of government.

Bill Thompson, New City -- stated he was shocked by the amount of the preliminary budget -- suggested that a goal be established before setting the budget and hold to it -- perhaps a good base would be not to exceed the cost of living or the rise or fall of the median income.

Ray Moore, New City -- stated that the Town Board seemed apathetic and did not recognize the taxpayers position. Attitude. Should be start with the bottom line and stay there -- taxes are reflected on the unsaleable situation with homes in Clarkstown.

Larry Barker, New City -- asked the Board to look at the budget with the attitude of "what can we save?" Not, "what can we get?" That will result in a saving to the taxpayers -- conduct the business of the town as if it were your own -- review your attitude -- keep costs down.

Larry Barson, New City -- preceding speakers covered most points he had intended to offer -- suggests the board become "heroes" not "villains" -- save the taxpayers of Clarkstown -- cut the budget -- correct the mistakes of the past and be "heroes"

Angel Spiri - Clarkstown resident for 25 years -- commented on salary of police chief of \$36,000 -- approved of mini bus but felt that the service is erratic and not too dependable.

Walter Plotnik -- spoke in generalities about the budget process, the yearly increase of taxes, the frustration of trying to change things in local government -- suggested that homeowners band together and refuse to pay their taxes until things are changed -- said he would be the first to do so if he could be assured of others to join him -- a move of this sort would advertise the situation and the publicity would lead to recognition of the situation in Clarkstown.

Steve Hagendorf, Spring Valley -- questions -- Kingsgate -- What happened to it -- despite all the detrimental effects predicted under the new name of "Tree Tops", Kingsgate is here -- question has the Town done anything to encourage business or industry in Clarkstown -- has anything been done to prohibit any additional construction which would require additional services -- Single

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family residences are in abundance for sale in the community -- new construction should not be encouraged. Suggested that each homeowner tell his bank he will no longer pay them for taxes -- open an escrow account and deposit to it with amounts payable to Receiver of Taxes after the town is sued for accountability -- as an example "Coop City" in the Bronx -- Debt Service -- almost 100% interest figure on Bond Anticipation Notes -- suggest issuing tax anticipation notes instead of bond anticipation notes -- spoke of M.B.I. assoc. to insure the bond issues of the Town so that the Bonds are guaranteed -- receive a AAA rating at low interest.

Ron Haven, Prince Street, Spring Valley -- offered some managerial analysis as a product of listening and attending the hearing -- question -- is the procedure for the budget mandated answer - yes (NOTE: ALL QUESTIONS WERE DIRECTED TO THE SUPERVISOR AND REPLIED TO BY HIM) Comment - the procedure uses is not clear Suggestion - have form indicating a 5 year span instead of two -- question -- could a detail mailing be made to taxpayers of the preliminary budget -- answer - yes, if taxpayers approve of the expenditure -- question -- at what point would a financial emergency exist due to the inability of the taxpayer to pay his taxes -- answer -- none -- believe ability to pay is individual decision -- question -- are any long range plans made to eliminate expenses -- question -- at what point would town consider abrogating labor contracts -- answer - Court's decisions indicate they cannot be abrogated -- question -- is attrition planned -- answer -- yes question -- do you have a plan for utilization of all clerical expenses -- question -- does the town use contract consultants in bargaining -- answer -- not at present -- question has the Town considered using volunteer consultants in preparing budget -- yes, now being done -- question -- do you now have guidelines for the budget -- do you plan a 5 year target budget -- what is your personal view of the preliminary -- Reply -- already on record that changes will be made -- other than those items dictated by law and contract, all other items are subject to possible change.

Seymour Korn, New City -- commented on minimum budget increase of Town Clerk's Office -- noted the vast amount of money in "other expenses" Is this account used by the Town in the same manner as an expense account of a salesman -- that is to hid the real accountability of the department.

Mrs. Robinson -- questions as to why she, who disposes of her own leaves and branches, should pay for the laziness of others -- suggests that each homeowner make compost and save money in the Highway Accounts.

Resident who did not give his name agreed format of budget incomplete -- there was no opportunity for comparison to years prior -- questioned cost of doubling unallocated insurance at \$200,000 without indicating the reason -- asked why Ramapo had only 1% increase -- questioned do you know what the comparison is to ours -- Supervisor suggested the Towns are not comparable because of the number of villages enclosed within the Town -- debt redemption would differ from Town to Town. He further (resident) suggested that users of the recreation be required to share more of the burden of same -- suggested newspaper advertisement of the preliminary budget so it could be available before the hearing night.

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Warren Marshall, Nanuet, New York -- suggested unnecessary law requirements create jobs which result in Taxes -- questioned tremendous fringe benefits in Police Department -- suggested cutting there.

Richard Giraschio -- New City -- in expressing sentiment of people he stated the people do not want a tax increase -- Town Board should cut the fat and hold the tax rate.

Fred Hager, Valley Cottage -- suggested that the Board consider a citizens advisory group to aid in the budget process.

No further persons wishing to be heard, Supervisor Gerber asked the members of the Board to respond. For himself, Mr. Gerber expressed his feeling that it is his obligation to make the decisions necessary to present a proper budget without doing away with essential services -- stated that where he is concerned, "the buck stops here" that is, the responsibility of presenting a proper budget is his.

Councilman D'Antoni, feels that he does not desire to cut only one department such as recreation -- the swimming and Senior Citizens programs he favors to keep, other programs he will keep or cut whichever way the people indicate -- he went on record as having been and still is opposed to the Mini Bus program. Does not feel the amount of good accomplished warrants the cost -- in any other area he will suggest cuts wherever necessary in order to run the Town on a business basis which the taxpayers can afford.

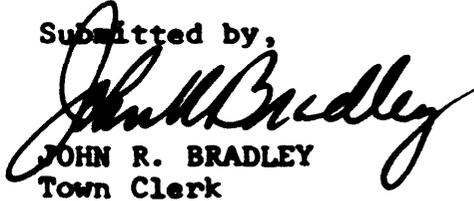
Councilman Maloney -- has listened and been concerned over everything that has been said -- does not want to be accused of not having moral courage -- when the time comes, for decision on areas that can be cut he will make that decision -- after listening and taking notes, he is certain that prior to Nov. 20th you will see many reductions in services and other areas.

Councilman Piacentile -- agrees that the Town Board will cut the budget in areas where required -- noted that a lot of political rhetoric had been made but also a number of excellent ideas had been placed before the Board at this hearing. The Board is not apathetic -- if cuts are made as an economy, he does not expect the taxpayers to crowd future meetings demanding more services and programs. Mr. D'Antoni wished to play the big hero regarding the mini trans program -- he did not tell the audience that at one of the budget meetings he was the man that insisted on the raise for the Supervisor and Councilmen and pressured for the increase that appears on the preliminary budget.

Councilman Holbrook -- has listened intently -- reads the feelings of the people "loud and clear" -- the Board is ready and able to do what has to be done to create the lowest possible tax to be levied in this town.

On motion offered by Councilman Maloney, seconded by Councilman D'Antoni and unanimously adopted, Public Hearing was closed -- Decision RESERVED.

Submitted by,


JOHN R. BRADLEY
Town Clerk

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