

**TOWN BOARD PUBLIC WORKSHOP**  
**August 19, 2015**

**The August 19, 2015 Public Workshop was held at 6:00 pm by Supervisor Tollisen in the A. James Bold Meeting Room at the New Town Hall with the following members present:**

Kevin J. Tollisen, Supervisor  
Paul L. Hotaling, Councilman  
Jeremy W. Connors, Councilman  
Lyn A. Murphy, Town Attorney  
Cathy L. Drobny, Deputy Town Attorney  
Lynda A. Bryan, Town Clerk  
John P. Wasielewski, Councilman  
John Pingelski, Highway Superintendent

Daphne V. Jordan, Councilwoman - Excused

**Supervisor Tollisen:** Good evening everyone. This is a workshop of the Town Board to discuss the highway road improvements and the reality of the budget and at our last public workshop on August the 12<sup>th</sup> I set forth the realities of the budget. Where we are, where we stand, and where we need to be and whether or not the Town Board wants to make any changes or leave it as is and do the best we can with respect to the road improvements. There is a summary of the last workshop if anyone wants it up here, these meetings are recorded and they are on our website as well so we want the public to be fully aware of what is going on in respect to the budget. With respect to our last meeting, I think we left it that I asked the board to think about their ideas with respect to moving forward. Again, just to recap, the town is spending far less in its budget for road improvements than the projected. What I see what should be happening with respect to pavement, we should be paving about five and  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles of road per year and the average pavement per mile is \$125,000 resulting in \$718,500 per year that we should be spending on pavement. This year we have received CHIPS money, in addition to the CHIPS money from the state we set forth about \$100,000 towards road improvements which again is far less than what we should be spending, so I know that this has gone on for some trend and as Town Supervisor it is my responsibility to bring these issues before the Board and I am bringing these issues before the Board tonight, again in a public workshop so that we can address them. Our Highway Superintendent is here, certainly this is a public workshop, which means that if you have questions or anyone would like to speak or ask questions certainly you can. I run it pretty informal so if you have a question or you want to jump in just let whoever is talking finish. One of the things that I did want to pass out to the Board is a report from the State Comptroller's Office detailing how municipal spending across the state

has been going down with respect to infrastructure and the needs of the towns and municipalities are going unmet because as we get squeezed more, we have to do more with less. Some of the things that go away are road improvements. So I would like to pass this out to the Board, if anyone else would like a copy of it I have some more up here. Would anyone else like a copy of it? This summary from the Comptroller of the State of New York sets forth some of the issues that the municipalities are facing. So with that I mean I've set forth, in the last public workshop, the issues that I have with respect to it going forward and I would like to hear from the Board and the public with respect to their comments. Would anyone like to go first? John why don't you, if you would, come up and summarize some of the things that you are experiencing you're the guy that's in charge of our Highway Department and why don't you set forth some of the issues that you see and what you perceive going forward as long term solutions, short term solutions, etcetera. I'll tell you that, while John's coming up here that we actually met with John today, we are starting the budget for 2016 and it was our last meeting of the day so the numbers that we see here are very fresh in our minds, but John if you'd like to say some words.

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** As far as the money that's gone into the budget for improvements it has been decreasing over the years as much as in 2008 \$335,000 down to last year I was able to spend about \$66,000 and this year I was given \$100,000 in improvements which, the only money that will be spent on blacktopping this year will be the CHIPS money due to the harsh winter that we had and the budget being as tight as it is the only place I have to take money from, for salt and snow related issues would be my improvements budget that was money that was going to go to blacktopping. I have already hit that line item that started at \$100,000 last year to pay for last year's salt from January to April for \$14,500 so that line has already been hit so the only paving that we have done this year is the CHIPS money we have received and like the Supervisor had said we should be paving roughly 5.75 miles a year, based on 115 miles in town expecting to get 20 years out of a road, which at \$125,000 like he said to be over \$718,000 a year and that has not been happening, every year that goes by we fall further and further behind and the last two winters that we had, the easiest way to explain it has been very harsh on the roads. If you take a jug of water and fill it and put it in your freezer it's going to swell and it's going to crack the jug, that's what has happened to the roads, especially over the last two years with the hard winter. A lot of cracks and what happens is the cracks come through and then next year water gets in them and the cracks get bigger and create potholes and the roads just totally fall apart. So that's been a huge issue too that we are going to have now and even more in the future. Does anyone else have any questions?

**Councilman Wasielewski-** If you had to rate the condition of the roads in the town right now A, B, or C, how many would you rate as A being the best, or B or C as needing to be done as soon as possible?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** It is tough, each road would have its individual rating. I would say there's probably 10-15 that could really use attention now, that aren't going to get taken care of this year. That many, costing that much money aren't going taken next year or the year after, that's just going to escalate the problem if we don't try to nip it in the bud now.

**Councilman Wasielewski-** So you're saying that the ones that might be B's this year, next year will be C's because they're not be attended to.

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Absolutely, if we have another harsh winter, hopefully the Farmer's Almanac is incorrect, but released this week, more snow than usual and colder than usual so I think everybody understands the frost, heating, cracking, and coming back down is terrible havoc the last two years on the roads and it decreases the 20 year life span of the roads.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** Just so we are clear, we, the Town budget has spent \$250,000 in salt this year, for the beginning of this year so with \$205 left in the salt budget for the remaining part of the year obviously we're going to need to be finding money so we're looking at an expenditure in excess of a quarter of a million dollars next year for salt and it may, because of the increase in the cost of salt that we just got the quote on, we are looking at potentially \$300,000 just in salt which does nothing as far as helping the roads except, we absolutely have to have it to make sure are roads are passable and our residents are safe, but it does not long term help with improvements to the road.

**Councilman Connors-** John I just have something too, not just the roads the equipment as well? I have been over to the Highway Department as well and I have seen that it's taking a toll on our equipment, the increased mileage and stress and workload put on the equipment has a propensity then to break down, am I correct with that?

**Superintendent Pingelski-** Yes and another thing is that watching the budget closely with all the items is our vehicle repair budget is hopefully going to make it until November before it is out of money. With the older equipment, obviously, there are more repairs.

**Councilman Connors-** And with that too, vehicle shortages for areas you're having to essentially have to send an individual to do twice or three times the work.

**Superintendent Pingelski-** Well we've had no increase, in some time, less the mileage of road we have been maintaining so we've been doing much more with less.

**Councilman Connors-** In comparison to other towns around us, for instance, Clifton Park, I'll use them as an example, they have set routes for a set person. You're actually taking them and spreading the workload out.

**Superintendent Pingelski-** Right each route has been increasing, none the less, and to compare to Clifton Park, not to knock them whatsoever, they have two men in every truck that goes out. We're sending trucks out with one person to increase the amount of territory we can cover, if we were putting two in a truck we would be cutting all that in half. The crew does an excellent job with one man trucks, the traffic that we have and the lack of driver etiquette of people on the road out.

**Councilman Connors-** I think the safety record they have speaks volumes too of your leadership so I thank you for that, thank you for answering my questions.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** Just back to the amount of pavement that we need to do per year of about 5 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles, that's based on a 20 year plan for the Town so we're talking about these roads being done in such a manner that they need to last for 20 years so that's the bare minimum of what needs to happen.

**Councilman Hotaling-** John, going towards the equipment, to replace equipment, you had stated in our budget meeting today that if you were to order a plow truck today it would probably be 2017 before we saw it.

**Superintendent Pingelski-** It would be in the 2016 budget, it would go into effect January 1<sup>st</sup> because of the time frame I would order that truck in January and we wouldn't see it until September/ October.

**Councilman Connors-** And that is because of buildout correct?

**Superintendent Pingelski-** It is, the buildout and then the truck has to go to the factory and get outfitted and then there are trucks in line so that is the turnaround.

**Councilman Wasielewski-** Are we buying custom trucks?

**Superintendent Pingelski-** No, the last one we bought was off, actually, another county's, we piggy backed off of I'm going to guess Oneida County or one of them.

**Councilman Wasielewski-** So the delay isn't due to any customization?

**Superintendent Pingelski-** No, absolutely not, we sit down with the dealer and everything's on there that is specked, we don't have to take everything or we can add stuff and then build that truck to what will fit our needs and then that gets built then it goes to the snow plow manufacturer and just for a single axel truck with a snow plow weighing standard capabilities is \$235,000 for one truck.

**Councilman Wasielewski-** And that's fully equipped with plow?

**Superintendent Pingelski-** It is ready to plow snow.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** Just so the Board and public are aware, we have looked at grants for the Highway Department we've looked at member items with our state representatives so we're doing everything we can to help purchase the equipment we need within our budget and also looking for grants that may be available, the Board is aware that we did submit one for this year and we are also working with our state legislators on that.

**Councilman Connors-** So for Ms. Murphy, we are one of only a few towns that does not have a supplemental fund for Highway Departments correct?

**Attorney Murphy-** Correct, we do not have a Highway Tax.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** Does anyone in the audience have anything to say? So again the critical issues that we have are, how do we come up with the money moving forward, do we continue to do the best we can which I don't think is the proper approach, it is certainly a practical approach, but I think long term if you allow the roads to continue to fall into disrepair they are going to be a lot more expensive to replace when the time comes to replace them, so I think we need to be diligent in our responsibilities as a Board. I think we need to continue these public workshops and seek input from the public, we have minutes from the first public workshop on our website, we have it on our board, we have put it in the newspaper, we need to continue to get the word out to our residents that this is something that we need their help on. I'll just put it out there that I am happy to meet with anyone who has any ideas I'll show the realities of our budget, the monies we take in, and how the money is spent. We have tried to tighten it as much as we can, but costs continue to rise so we need to be good stewards of our money, but also work within the reality that we don't want our town to fall into disrepair, we have a very good town. I am proud of the town that we live in, I think we have a number of great things, we have great people that live here and I think the reality of the situation is that we need to look forward, not only for now, but into the future of how to best take care of the things we need to take care of which for this public workshop are road improvements and help for the highway department. Anyone else? Alright we will close the public workshop for tonight, we are going to have another public workshop tomorrow night, again I will ask the Board to come up with their ideas with respect to this and we will adjourn until tomorrow night. Thank you very much.

Workshop ended at 6:17 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Lynda A. Bryan,  
Town Clerk, Town of Halfmoon