

**TOWN BOARD PUBLIC WORKSHOP**  
**August 20, 2015**

**The August 20, 2015 Public Workshop was held at 7:00 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  
John P. Wasielewski, Councilman  
Daphne V. Jordan, Councilwoman  
Jeremy W. Connors, Councilman  
Lyn A. Murphy, Town Attorney  
Cathy L. Drobny, Deputy Town Attorney

Lynda A. Bryan, Town Clerk - excused

**Supervisor Tollisen-** Good evening everyone, this is public workshop number 3. This public workshop is to deal with the highway budget, long term traffic improvements, and to discuss a 20 year plan to complete road improvements to the 115 miles of road that we have in Town. The first public workshop was held on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015, if anyone would like a copy of the minutes there is one extra copy. There was a public workshop last night at 6 pm before the Town Board meeting, those minutes are being typed and will be available for the Board to review, once approved informally by the Board, since it is a workshop, they will be posted on the Town's website. We are here to discuss the reality of the Town budget and how do we look at a long term plan for the necessary road improvements given the ever increasing budget that continues to be tight. The Board is fully aware of this and has thought of different ways to do that, I have met with the Highway Superintendent and we discussed what the cost would be to pave the number of miles of road per year on a 20 year plan as well as the cost of equipment to add and replace the trucks. Last night the Superintendent of Highways explained that over the past several years we were supposed to be spending about \$718,750 on road paving per year and we spent \$100,000 the past year and even less this year. Those numbers don't take into account the CHIPS money that we get from the State every year, but the highway budget continues to be fiscally strained especially with the harsh winters we have had recently. We are spending over \$250,000 this year alone in salt to handle the weather conditions. So we are looking at paving 5.75 miles of road and adding needed trucks and equipment for long term use it will be about 1.2 million dollars that needs to be added to the budget. The question becomes, how do we pay for that? Our options are to continue to move forward, the Town is in good financial shape our surpluses are building back up, the general fund balance is moving up, our sales tax numbers are a little higher than was budgeted, our

mortgage tax numbers are on budget, we will see what the end of the budget period brings, but we seem to be on budget. The biggest issue that we face, which is my responsibility to bring this forward, is how we look long term at the road improvements that need to be made. If we don't make the necessary improvements the roads are going to be in worse shape when we go to pave them. John, can you please explain how we came to 1.2 million dollars for the increase to the budget?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** That money would be split between getting our black topping to where it should be and equipment purchases.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** What is your black topping number?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** \$737,000

**Supervisor Tollisen-** So you're looking at \$750,000 on average and then adding to your equipment budget which would be about \$450,000-\$500,000.

**Councilman Wasielewski-** So how many miles of roads can you pave with \$750,000?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** It depends on the process this year some of the roads that we did we didn't do as in depth. For example Lower Newtown Road 3 years ago we did a 3 inch recycling process that ground out 3 inches then put it back down cured and covered it with a thin top coat which costed about \$125,000 for one mile. Another example, this year we did Clippership, which is off Guideboard into Rivercrest, we did a chip seal, which is a fiber and oil coating that goes down then stone on top and then we went over the top of that. I don't have the exact length, but this year alone we put almost \$38,000. That process is cheaper so I felt the road didn't need the 2 or 3 inch recycling. Some of these roads are getting into disrepair so I won't be able to do that process.

**Councilman Connors-** How many years does that process last?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** All of it went under CHIPS so the minimum that is turned into CHIPS has to last 10 years, but I am hoping to get more than that out of it.

**Councilman Connors-** In some cases there are issues with the base, which is beneath what we can see, right?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Correct, as another example a road we did this year was Locust Lane just past Pirate's Hideout on the left, it is a dead end. What happened was the road was years of stone and oil, not actually blacktop and the snow plow broke through that and there was exposed earth. So we did full depth reclamation and placed binder and top coat.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** I know there are only a few people in the audience, but you are part of this workshop so if at any point you have any questions or comments, please speak up.

**Ron Clapper of 94 Lower Newtown Road-** What would you say the condition of Lower Newtown Road that you said was done 3 years ago?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** We are only talking from Harris to Button, not the entire road. Considering the amount of truck traffic from Valente that the road gets I feel the road is in very good condition.

**Ron Clapper-** What about from Button Road down?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Button Road down could use some work. It is not as bad as a lot of the roads, but it is not in the best shape.

**Ron Clapper-** What I have seen around the Town of Halfmoon is the base has been beaten right to death, physically right to death, I mean we're talking major road construction in the Town of Halfmoon if you are going to bring it back to where it should be because these trucks are killing our roads. It is the trucks not the cars.

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** That is why I went on the 3 inch recycling on that rather than 2 inch and there was major tire rutting also on the lane from Button Road out from the loaded trucks going that way. With the 3 inch and the 1 inch top overlay that has held up pretty well. It is cheaper than milling off 3 inches then hauling in binder and then topping it itself. The recycling process brings it back to a Type 3 binder, add cement when we did it and they also had some oil to bring it back.

**Councilman Connors-** I have reviewed all of the work that Mr. Pingelski has done with this and the numbers that he has submitted and I think it really leaves the Board with no other option, it is the big elephant in the room but to get to that potential number, you would almost have invoke a highway tax.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** There is always a choice, the choice to continue on and do the best you can, but I think that is the less wise decision for the Town of Halfmoon long term because where we did a road on Lower Newtown, Mr. Clapper is here and talking about how the roads get beat up and we need a plan so the roads get resurfaced and repaired. This is what we are talking about, a 20 year plan; right now we are on a much longer plan, probably about a 100 year plan at this point.

**Councilman Connors-** I can tell you that we have an obligation as a Town Board, as well as Mr. Pingelski as the Superintendent of Highways to ensure safety for the residents in the form of highways and other services that are provided. At this point putting band aids on things is not fair not only to the residents, but to Mr. Pingelski to try to consistently work with a fund balance that isn't equitable to what we need to be providing. We definitely have exhausted all of our resources and I think we have to look in other ways.

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Keep in mind the 20 years is an example I took over 8 years ago the first road that I did with a recycling and the topping was Beach Road so that road now is 8 years old, do I think we are going to get another 12 out of it? I would like to say so, but probably not. So just to give you a visual, a 20 year life expectancy out of a road is a stretch, especially with the increased traffic.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** Like you spoke about last night John, the exceptionally harsh winter, the salt, the frost, all of that actually buckled some roads where you had to go out and repair them to

the best of your ability and then from there take care of them in the springtime. Looking at numbers I asked to pull some numbers to see what this would cost if there was an imposed tax. If you take a \$158,000 house, for instance, it would be about \$10 a month in highway tax. If you increase that to a \$250,000 house it would be about \$18 a month, and that is not full market value it is assessed value because everyone knows that the town is not at full market value, I think we are at 58%.

**Mike Cavanaugh of 7 Spice Mill Boulevard-** Would businesses be subject to a highway tax?

**Supervisor Tollisen-** Yes.

**Mike Cavanaugh-** Based on assessed value?

**Supervisor Tollisen-** Yes based on assessed value. It would be town wide. Let's use my house as an example; my house would be \$200.92 per year for highway tax so with each parcel having a different value that's how you would come up with your total. The last thing I want to do as supervisor is sit here and say that we need a tax, but my responsibility is much bigger than that.

**Ron Clapper-** John, is there a way to invoke some sort of restrictions on trucks as far as truck routes through the town? I know other towns have done it.

**Attorney Murphy-** There are provisions in the highway law that allow you to establish truck routes throughout the community to try to limit where they go and they have to utilize those routes.

**Ron Clapper-** If we're building roads we don't want them coming right behind us destroying them. Now I have lived on Lower Newtown 25-26 years and I never saw tractor trailers on the road other than the stone and gravel and the mining, now we have them from I don't know where or what's in them, but they're running all hours of the night too. That's a burden on that road because that road wasn't built for those trucks as we know.

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** A lot of those roads weren't, absolutely.

**Councilman Connors-** I live on Church Hill which is a no truck road. The problem is GPS takes the trucks that way down to Lower Hudson River Road.

**Ron Clapper-** You should see the circus on the bottom of Lower Newtown Road when I have to go left or right, I mean it is a potential hazard.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** It is dangerous.

**Ron Clapper-** Absolutely, but my point is if we're going to build roads and I don't object to that at all, but I do object to these tractor trailers destroying our roads after you've built them. We have to establish truck routes that these people have to follow. And also weight limits, I think weight limit is a big thing I don't see any enforcement of weight limit other than the state police on the Northway.

**Councilman Connors-** The sheriff's office does conduct commercial vehicle enforcement and actually they use our highway.

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Generally they are in town on Wednesdays.

**Councilman Connors-** Yep, and at the town highway they pull them in as well so they'll go around patrolling and grabbing some of those vehicles to weigh them and do a complete level 2 inspection on them.

**Ron Clapper-** I haven't seen a Valente truck pulled over here in 25 years.

**Councilman Connors-** I can tell you back when I was involved in law enforcement that I would pull them over quite often for various different violations.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** Those comments are important to us because as we're looking at this that's something else that we need to look at more in depth because you are right, if we're doing these improvements we want them to be long term. We don't want to put the effort into it only to be destroyed in a lesser time period than they should be so I think those comments are absolutely fantastic and we appreciate you making them. That is something that we need to internally, amongst our attorneys and ourselves, figure out a way to work that out.

**Ron Clapper-** And also John, have you looked at any options as far as widening any of these major corridors through Halfmoon?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** No for the simple reason that I don't have the money I need to take care of what road is there; none the less do a widening. It is very expensive, but I know what you are saying.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** We are regularly on DOT too, we are regularly on their back.

**Ron Clapper-** Well we allow so much building in the Town of Halfmoon, it's growing so fast. There's no place for anyone to go. You can't get through Halfmoon now, what used to take 5-10 minutes now takes 45 minutes easily.

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** That's the entire area, they're coming through Halfmoon. We're not only our traffic, but we are also getting everyone else's.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** Just think of the traffic light improvements at Route 146 and Vosburgh Road in the Sheldon Hills development. That process is taking forever, it's finally there and when you're talking and meeting with DOT they basically say that they don't want to put up traffic lights or the extra infrastructure that's needed. They say their job is to create flow so there's the argument to stop development in Halfmoon. Stopping development in the Town of Halfmoon is the wrong approach because our budget depends on mortgage tax which is buying newly constructed houses and buying and selling of homes and sales tax. So if we don't build in town we just hurt ourselves because every other town around us continues to build and they continue to drive through our town and keep the traffic flow. That doesn't mean we can't look at long term solutions to fix it, we absolutely want to. We've had a situation on Farm to Market Road, Kinns Road, and Route 9 and Mike who is sitting here is one of the people who wrote to me and said that we need to do something about this so I talked to Supervisor Barrett and we wrote a joint letter with County DPW's signature on it as well, submitted it to the State DOT. Then DOT comes back and says there is something needed to be done at that intersection because there is so much traffic, but we don't have the money, so until we long term look at improving that area there is nothing we can do to help you. That is the type of mentality they have, and I am not criticizing State DOT because they're within their budgets too, but that's the reality of what we get forced to face and then we have to try to find ways to make it work. I'll give you another example, on Sitterly Road the traffic is horrendous and as holidays come it gets even worse and it's at a standstill at certain times so together with the Town of Clifton Park, we submitted a grant to the State, the State said you're right, the State

denies our application for turn lanes to help increase traffic flow, and instead they gave us money for the two traffic lights at Sitterly and Woodin Road communicate better. So we can improve on thing but they won't give us the money for the other so then we as the Town of Halfmoon submitted a grant to get our side of Sitterly Road paved and we got the grant for almost \$400,000. We say we can do this paving for a lot less money so we asked to use the rest of the money to put in the turn lanes we need and they said no. So we're in a bureaucracy process that they give you money, but it isn't flexible enough to do the things that you need so now we're forced to figure out other ways to try to make it happen. We are working on those plans. That is what we are faced with.

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Also with building too, it's not fair to stop building, there are property owners that have held on to property for years and invested sweat and tears into that to get a return and to stop building would take that out from underneath them. That wouldn't be fair to them either.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** I think the Town, and I'm not going to speak before me, but since I have been here, I have made it clear that the larger multi-unit complexes that were here in the past are not something the Town is looking for. The Town is looking for commercial growth and developments are great, we like the single family houses, we are looking at potentially changing our zoning for conservation easements, which results in using the same amount of land in a more compact facility. This makes larger tracks to open space which reduces the amount of roads that need to be constructed and reducing plow, salt, and repaving costs long term. We are looking at some long term plans and solutions, none of which are easy.

**Mike Cavanaugh-** So if money was raised by a Highway tax could, through the Town Board, it be re-appropriated to use for something like pay increases for employees.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** No.

**Mike Cavanaugh-** So the money would have to stay within the Highway Department?

**Supervisor Tollisen-** If you're creating a Highway Tax it must be used for highway purposes and it would not be used for payroll or anything else.

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Even if I do black top repair for a water main break I back charge the Water Department. Highway money can only be spent on highway items.

**Ron Clapper-** If there was an abundance of that money would it be used to resolve some of the salt issues, if necessary?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** It would, right now my major plan is to update the equipment and black topping. I don't ever want to spend a dime on salt.

**Ron Clapper-** I think I know where he's going with this, I will probably go along the same line that if there's an appropriation for road improvement than that money should be strictly used for roads. If we're going to impose a tax for roads then let's make sure every dime is spent on our roads, nowhere else.

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** That is my vision, it's not for \$2 an hour raises or anything like that.

**Ron Clapper-** No, no, but you know how things go. Once something is in place sometimes it varies.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** To be very honest about it, when we're discussing this \$1.2 million Ron, we talked about paving and the equipment that goes with it. I just want it to be clear; I know that you probably already know that but if someone else is reading this later I want it to be clear that those are the two items that we are looking at taking care of. Salt is a legitimate expense of the highway budget to this date we have spent a quarter of a million dollars on salt just this year. John's budget has \$205 left for the rest of this year. Hopefully we won't get any snow until the end of this year, but that's not the reality so we will have to find money for that. I do understand both of your concerns, which are legitimate, but the consensus of the Board is that the money will be used for those purposes. We are not going to find something else to use the money for.

**Ron Clapper-** Was there any outside paving done by contractors over the past few years?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Yes, the paving we have been doing has been done by Gorman Brothers which is taken off the Saratoga County bid process. They bid for the whole county and we work off of that bid. The only road we have done this year ourselves is Locust Lane because it is so short. Our paver is very old and being that it is a dead end, with traffic I don't have enough people to pave the road, control traffic, and haul blacktop. It is also a process that we can't do; the recycling is not something we can do. Also, the nova chip that we put down is a special mix of black top and the machine actually puts a membrane down in front of the blacktop that fills any existing cracks and it adheres to the current pavement, which we can't do.

**Ron Clapper-** Do you plan on doing that in the future?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Yes we plan on continuing to use Gorman or whoever has the bid.

**Ron Clapper-** Do you plan on doing this work and eliminating outside contractors?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** No.

**Ron Clapper-** So it will still be both?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Yes, our paver is probably 25 years old.

**Ron Clapper -** I'm not objecting to you getting a new paver, John, I am all for it. The more we do within our town the better it is for us.

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Well one way it was saving money is when we did our blacktopping this year we had trucks from the Town of Malta and the Town of Stillwater hauling with us and when they haul I send them trucks. So the time that the outside company is in town is shorter and it is cheaper so we do work together that way.

**Councilman Wasielewski-** On the matter of where this highway tax money can be spent I would just like to clarify, we could not in any case spend those monies on anything else but highway related issues, correct?

**Attorney Murphy-** Correct, legally we cannot.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** I will tell you our finance director is here, Bonnie, and I asked her to plug the numbers in for me for \$1.2 million yesterday and the way it would be in our budget to the Town Board would be \$737,000 in improvements and \$463,000 in machinery. That would be in addition to the CHIPS money which is about \$155,000, so with that we are at \$892,000.

**Councilman Wasielewski-** John can you explain the equipment needs a little more for me, I know last night you stated a new plow truck fully equipped goes for \$235,000, so were talking about \$500,000 here for equipment. What do you anticipate for your equipment purchases?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** I put in for a plow truck at \$235,000, a F550 with a sander and plow which is about \$65,000, a pickup with a plow on it is about \$35,000, a mower for the sides of the road is \$100,000. This year we bought an excavator and we stepped up the size and I used the money from equipment so we didn't have the money for a wrist that would go on that so I put that in this year's budget that's \$3,100, and I also allocated \$25,000 for a used bucket truck. Again, we do have a grant in now for a mower if that grant comes through then the excess equipment money would go towards paving. The \$1.2 million is strictly for equipment and paving.

**Councilman Wasielewski-** So right now there is a strong need for equipment replacement and additions?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Yes actually I should be putting in for two plow trucks. Right now we don't have a spare and we are increasing the roads and when that truck is ordered in January 2016 we won't see it until October 2016 so it would be for the 2016-2017 snow season.

**Councilman Wasielewski -** I am thinking beyond this initial year, a lot of equipment will be purchased, theoretically, in the first year do you see just as much of a need in years 2, 3, 4?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Probably years 2 and 3 most definately.

**Councilman Wasielewski-** A similar dollar amount?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Yes because of the loader, we have two loaders, one is probably two years and the other is much older and to replace that kind of stuff it is a lot of money. And it is stuff we cannot do without. Another thing is my equipment repair budget will probably be exhausted soon this year, just mentioning that the equipment is getting older. We may be saving money by not replacing it, but we're spending money on repairing it also.

**Councilman Connors-** A lot of it is coming out of spec for personal assurance and safety of the workforce, right?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** Yes.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** Just looking at the highway appropriations for snow removal again, the actual amount that the town spent last year on salt was just short of \$325,000. We have already spent \$250,000 this year and with the increase in the cost of salt that we were given, \$5.27 per ton, just to break even with what we budgeted the previous year we now looking at a \$290,000 projected 2016 salt and snow removal budget. That is the reality that we cannot ignore.

**Councilman Wasielewski-** I understand the equipment and the road infrastructure needs, I think it is very clear to all of us. My concern would be with additional hires because these aren't one or two year costs, these are thirty to forty year expenses to the Town for every employee that we hire. What is your anticipation, if any for new hires?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** I have been lucky enough to use gentleman from the Water Department part time and we also have another gentleman that came on this year, part time that we use throughout the summer and in the winter when needed. So I do try to borrow from other departments to keep that down.



**Councilman Wasielewski-** I think Ms. Hatter would tell you that retiree costs and health insurance costs are major expenses for the town so part time use of employees or existing employees would be even better. So you don't anticipate any full time hires?

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** I didn't put any in for this year.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** The Town Board this year reviewed the insurance and it was our opinion that insurance costs long term for employees is going to be the biggest detriment to the general fund and we changed the policy so that new hires now have to pay 50% of their own health insurance costs, whereas it started off as 0% and has been increasing over the years.

**Highway Superintendent Pingelski-** That was an eye opener for me, we just replaced, not added two employees at \$14.88 an hour, if they were to take the family insurance plan at 50% that is \$600 per month off the top for insurance alone.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** The issue that health insurance keeps going up is something for those in Washington to resolve.

**Ron Clapper-** Absolutely, but most private industry does not give health insurance after you retire. The state has really done a number on chopping theirs down too. When you retire you are on your own.

**Councilman Wasielewski--** It is not only health insurance for retirees it's the actual retirement benefits that are way out into the future for the Town of Halfmoon.

**Ron Clapper-** Yes, but I don't see how the Town of Halfmoon or any other township is going to be able to afford these benefits in the future. Full dental, medical after you retire, those days are gone and we need to wake up and get with it too, we can't pay for everything it is impossible.

**Supervisor Tollisen-** That is why we made that change. We have a benefits counselor that we deal with for health insurance and it is amazing when they tell us of all the regulations that we need to follow and make sure we have affordable health insurance coverage for employees or we have to pay fees because of the Obama health care plan. So we are trying to reduce costs while getting penalized for trying to do the right thing by trying to reduce the Town's cost. Anything else? Okay thank you to everyone that came tonight, the next public workshop is September 2, 2015 and another on September 9, 2015. We will get these minutes produced and up on the website.

**ADJOURN 7:41 PM.**