

Statement of Supervisor Chris Burdick
2017 Town of Bedford Budget
December 6, 2016

Please also refer to the Budget Message of Town Comptroller Abraham Zambrano posted to the Town's website at <http://www.bedfordny.gov/departments/finance/>

One of the most important duties of the Town Supervisor is to initiate and coordinate the annual budget process and tonight the Town Board will hold a public hearing and then consider adopting the final 2017 budget. The process began months ago with my appointment of Comptroller Abe Zambrano as the budget officer for the 2017 budget, meetings with the Town Comptroller and each of the department heads, followed by Town Board work sessions with the department heads. Early in the process I asked the department heads to prepare their proposed budgets, which apart from contractual obligations, were to show no increase. The department heads have done an excellent job in crafting their budgets. Their careful management with the work of our Comptroller has resulted in a healthy financial position for the Town, an improving forecast for coming years, controlling the growth in taxes and staying within the State mandated tax cap while improving services for our community.

Tax Cap Compliant Budget

The 2017 budget as proposed is “tax cap compliant”. There is continuing misunderstanding about the tax cap, and understandably, because it’s confusing. It’s been misnamed the 2% tax cap. It’s actually the lower of 2.0% or the rise in the cost of living together with some other factors. It is the State that computes the property tax cap. And for the last couple of years, it’s been under 2%. First the State figures the cost of living increase. The State computed the 2017 cost of living increase as 0.68%, which is significantly less than the cost of living increase for 2016. Added to that is the “growth factor” – which to simplify, is an allowance for assessed value increases due to construction or other improvements. The State assigned Bedford a growth factor of 0.94%. The sum of these two items results in Bedford’s tax cap of 1.62%.

The combined general fund and highway fund budgets for 2017 is \$28,466,412. This represents a tax rate of \$32.9424 per thousand of assessed value or an increase of \$0.64 cents per \$1000. For the average homeowner with an assessed value of \$65,000 this represents an annual increase of \$41.88 for the combined General Fund and Highway Fund.

Budget Picture by “Funds”

Apart from the special districts, the Town’s finances are divided into two funds, the “General Fund” and the “Highway Fund”.

Earlier this year the Town Board adopted a policy to maintain healthy levels of fund balances. The policy is based on the recommendations of the New York State Comptroller to municipalities to set such a policy. The policy we adopted sets a guideline of maintaining fund balances for the General Fund and the Highway Fund at not less than 15% of the subsequent year’s appropriations. Our fund balances will comfortably meet the Town Board’s adopted policy.

Revenues

Turning to the revenue picture, our Comptroller is projecting 2017 non property tax revenue of \$8,357,265 which is \$ 121,675 higher than the 2016 budget of \$8,235,590. Our Comptroller projects 2016 Sales Tax revenue projected to be \$2,523,035 which is \$123,035 over our budget of \$2,400,000; mortgage tax is projected to be \$1,078,057, which is \$38,057 over budget; parking revenues of \$38,767 under budget; fines and forfeited bail projected to be \$664,852 which is \$9,852 over budget; safety Inspection Fees are projected to be \$877,318 which is \$137,318 over budget.

Town Services and Programs

While meeting the tax cap and also maintaining healthy fund balances, the 2017 budget also provides for the wide array of services and programs which the Town provides.

Public Safety – Police Department

The Town of Bedford Police Department is a full time, full service police department with 40 sworn officers serving a community of approximately 17,500 residents over about 40 square miles. Uniformed officers of the Patrol Bureau provide services along approximately 161 miles of roadway within the town, as well as assistance along Interstate 684 and the Saw Mill River Parkway. The Bedford Police Department also maintains a full service investigative division with detectives that investigate all criminal cases that are reported annually. The key features of the 2017 budget is to provide sufficient funding for the renovation of and additions to the police station, which last was renovated over 30 years ago. Additional services and programs to be provided in 2017 include:

1. Moving Ahead with Police Station Renovations The Town is moving ahead with the major capital project of a complete renovation of the existing Police Station with two small additions. The department is temporarily housed in the lower level of the Town House, which underwent major renovations and improvements to outfit it properly for the department operations. The renovation of the police facility is necessary due to substantial wear and deterioration of the structure. In addition, the layout and lack of space had become functionally obsolete for serving the department's mission. The total project, including the renovations and improvements to the lower level of the Town House, are estimated to cost approximately \$7 million. This figure is substantially less than the original construction project previously in the Town's Capital Plan, estimated to cost between \$13 and \$15 million.
2. New Patrol Cars Running patrol cars much beyond 100,000 miles is not cost efficient, given the repair costs, and also subjects the officers to vehicles which may not perform properly or break down in the course of service. The budget supports the debt service for purchasing new vehicles to replace older/high mileage vehicles in the fleet on a realistic and predictable replacement schedule.
3. Updated Software- Fully implement updated Impact records management system to increase efficiency of operations and more easily integrate various other software platforms used by the department.
4. License Plate Recognition Program (LPR)- In order to help identify potential threats to our community, funds were budgeted to expand our current mobile license plate recognition capabilities to stationary locations.
5. Traffic Safety Equipment - Increased commercial vehicle enforcement using newly acquired commercial weight scales to ensure compliance with Department of

Transportation regulations. This will contribute to the preservation of our roadway infrastructure and improve safety for motorists traveling the roadways within the jurisdiction.

Department of Public Works (DPW)

DPW, through its three division, Highway, Water and Recycling, is responsible for maintaining 128 miles of Town roads (97 paved and 31 dirt), 14 miles of sidewalk, supplying water to over 2,100 homes and businesses, operating (through our contractor, Winters Brothers) the Town's new recycling center and operating a wood and leaf waste composting facility. The 2017 budget for DPW provides for improvements and additional needed funding in certain areas, including:

1. Moving Ahead with the Sewer Plan Our Commissioner of Public Works, Kevin Winn, a professional engineer, has a central role in developing the Town's plan to bring sewers principally to the central business districts of Bedford Hills and Katonah. While the plan envisions contracting out the operation of the sewer system which will be created, the Department of Public Works will have a key, continuing management role. Assuming the Town Board continues to move ahead and the referendum is adopted next March, 2017 will be a pivotal year for the development of the construction drawings, adoption of the sewer law and fleshing out the details of the plan. This critical project, so important to the environment and especially water quality, also is crucial to the long term financial viability of our business districts.
- 1) Paving An additional \$50,000 per year for paving Town roads, when coupled with other Town funding sources. The total annual funding is increased to \$1,150,000 from the previous \$1,100,000 funding level. This increase is necessary to take into account escalating asphalt cost over the last few years. We anticipate paving approximately 7 miles each year.
- 2) Adams Street Highway Garage Renovations and Additions In 2016 we began the expansion of our Adams Street Highway Yard in Bedford Hills. As planned, the first phase was completed with the construction of the new recycling center on Railroad Avenue on NYSDOT property. We are quite fortunate that the NYSDOT allows the Town to use the property at no cost under a "Use and Occupancy" permit. More about the new center below. The relocation of the recycling center from Adams Street freed up space for expansion of the adjacent highway operations, beginning with environmentally friendly salt storage facilities complying with NYS Department of Environmental Conservation standards. The construction is being performed by Town employees, substantially reducing the cost of the project. The improvements also include renovations and additions to the garage building to provide truck washing facilities and improved vehicle maintenance facilities.
- 3) LED Street Lamp Conversion The Town was one of only two municipalities in New York State which received a \$250,000 NYSERDA grant for converting over 570 street lamps to the more energy efficient and less costly LED lighting. This ambitious project will become a reality due to the grant together with debt service appropriation (which will be funded with cost savings based on increased energy efficiency and reduced maintenance costs).
- 4) Additional Services at New Recycling Center With somewhat more parking and ground space, in addition to single stream recycling, low cost senior trash collection and electronics recycling, the new Recycling Center also will provide shredding

services on a quarterly basis (stay tuned for the schedule). We are working with Bedford 2020 to evaluate whether other services might be provided.

Recreation and Parks

The Town's Recreation and Parks Department provides each hamlet its own beautiful, well maintained and landscaped park, complete with pool, playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts, Little League and other sports fields. The Department also operates for the benefit of the community the Bedford Hills Community House, the Bedford Hills train station and Canine Commons (the dog park). The Department also runs a senior nutritional and programs for seniors. The Town's recreational and parks facilities also are utilized for a wide and expanding range of events and programs. Each year the Department through its operating budget and capital funds works to carry out improvements and upgrades to the facilities as well as provide more to the community. The 2017 budget includes the following:

6. Programs and Special Events Maintaining all existing programs, the Department will expand and modify programs in response to community requests and interest (subject, of course, to budgetary constraints). A recent example is the camp out this past summer in Katonah Memorial Park (in its second year) which will be extended to the other hamlet parks. We are grateful to our continuing partnerships with a number of community organizations and agencies which enable us to continue to offer popular events and also introduce new programs and special events to complement those currently offered.
7. Several Park Projects Planned Each year we provide for replacements and improvements in each of our parks.
 - a. Katonah Memorial Park: In partnership with the KBLS program, we will carry out improvements to Rasor Field. In addition, we plan improvements for the upper ball field infield, backstop and safety fencing project; drainage and repaving at by the pool entrance and pool bathhouse & gate house exterior cleaning and staining
 - b. Bedford Hills Memorial Park: We will continue on the planning and design of a proposed pedestrian access pathway from Haines Road into the park as well as a looped walking path to the rear of the park; carry out pool shell and gutter maintenance and repairs in the spring; and perform exterior bathhouse cleaning and painting Interior floor cleaning, patching and restoration
 - c. Bedford Village Memorial Park: We will expand the concrete pad, patch and modify the gazebo generously funded by Chowder and Marching Club. In addition, we will perform improvements to the fenced baseball field in partnership with BPRBA. We also are considering new pool facility shade structures. We will continue the planning and design for a seasonal storage building to replace the metal storage containers current located behind the pool facility.
8. Improvements to the Bedford Hills Train Station We are delighted that the once vacant, little used train station now is teeming with community events and activities. Sprucing up is overdue. The Town Board will be utilizing capital funds for modest interior renovations to the main portion of the building and the space at the north end to provide greater utilization by the community.
9. Improvements to the Bedford Hills Community House We will continue the planning process for the restoration of the main auditorium that has expanded to include ceiling insulation and replacement The cleaning, painting and re programming of a second floor activity room will allow greater scheduling opportunities for programs & training.

Comprehensive Plan, Libraries, Commuter Lots and Other Town Operations

1. Comprehensive Planning The budget includes funds for consultancy services in connection with our ongoing efforts to update the Town's Comprehensive Plan. The Town Board is zealously committed to protecting and preserving the special semi-rural character of the Town and preventing uncontrolled growth. The Plan is an integral element of these policies.
2. Financial Operations Thanks to the efforts of our Comptroller, Abe Zambrano, we will be implementing a state-of-the-art financial tracking software that will provide up to date information for decision making. This "MUNIS" software will reduce paper consumption and will enable us to expand and facilitate the use of credit cards to pay for fees and services offered by the Town.
3. Hamlet Libraries The 2017 budget also includes funding for the three libraries so that they can continue providing services to our residents. With a total of \$1,359,662 budgeted for the libraries in 2017, the Town Board is pleased to provide the majority of the funding for the operations of the libraries.
4. Commuter Lots – Trying to Eliminate Those Waiting Lists The already approved 10 year capital plan financed through debt service will fund improved and updated parking technology. We are hopeful that the improvements coupled with some other initiatives may enable us to decrease or perhaps eliminate the waiting lists at the commuter lots.
5. Improved Customer Service and Information Access The budget and capital plan also will finance new software in the Town Clerk's office and together with a new phone system, these improvements will allow staff to better serve the public and enable faster retrieval of vital and historical records.

Implementation of Capital Projects

On the debt side, we benefit from a continuation of historically low interest rates. The Town also is benefitting from substantial savings due to the reaffirmation of our AAA bond rating and reductions in our overall indebtedness. Fewer than 3% of municipalities in the state have the coveted AAA bond rating.

In conclusion, the 2017 Budget is a sound fiscal plan that will maintain the Town on a steady course while providing tax relief for our residents. I wish to thank our Comptroller Abe Zambrano for his many hours of work on the budget and our department heads for the fiscal constraint reflected in the 2017 budget. I also wish to thank my colleagues on the Town Board for their participation in the process with many hours of budget work sessions.