

Town of Newfield Public Hearing  
November 2, 2011

The **Public Hearing** of the Newfield Town Board was called to order by Supervisor Driscoll at 7:00PM. Present: CP Laughlin, CP James, CP Trask and Supervisor Driscoll. Absent: CP Hart.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Supervisor Driscoll.

Supervisor Driscoll stated that the purpose of the public hearing was to hear public comment and opinion concerning a Local Law to override the tax levy limit established in General Municipal Law 3-c for fiscal year 2012.

#### PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Diana Bryant a Taggart Rd. resident stated that she cannot agree to raising taxes. If it means cutting then that is what people are doing in their own homes. Unfortunately it may mean cuts to the Recreation and Library. No one wants to see that but they may be what it takes and as a tax payer it is time to look at these things and trim some more. Do not use the Fund Balances, and do not raise our taxes.

Amy Heffron a Van Kirk Rd. resident stated that she was appalled that the Supervisor wants to pass this law. She felt that the public should know there were a lot of mistakes made this year and a lot of penalties that has used a lot of their tax dollars. The tax cap is really not 2% when you do the formula it is more like 3.4% so another 2% can be added. School tax increase and when do we say enough is enough. She doesn't want her tax dollars going towards Supervisor Driscoll's mistakes. It is her suggestion that Supervisor Driscoll step down and stop causing the tax payers money.

Diane Harrison a Shaffer Rd. resident stated that she agreed with everyone that the Town cannot keep adding on to the taxes. Do not use fund balances and start trimming back on the budget extras. Does not envy the Board for the job they have to do but it is their job and that is what they were elected to do.

Tom Reynolds a Van Kirk resident stated the Town Board when budgeting there is tendency to focus on the needs of the institution and not focus on the needs of the peoples providing the money. Private sector pay increases are less than the rate of inflation for the federal gov. Poverty rate is Tompkins County is 22%. Unemployment is high and there is no indication that it is going any lower and people on fix income are still trying to recover from the market crash in 2008. The tax base is hurting we should not override the tax cap. A tax base that is hurting cannot afford another tax increase. It should be back to basics and what is essential. Prioritize and the low priorities must simply go. We cannot afford to raise taxes on the people

Jamie Drader a resident of Pearl St. commended the Board for trying to this. They had the hardest task of anyone. But remember down the road we have to cut. No one in this room can run their homes on free money. Overriding the tax cap is wrong, using the fund balances is wrong. The Town needs to cut. The medium income for the people in this country for wage and salary is about \$753.00 per week. The good news is it is up 1.8% from last year. People just do not have the money to pay and it

is time the Town Board cut the non-essentials. Highway needs to be funded, we need to have roads and we need them in good condition.

Natalie Miller a resident on Main St. Stated that she is a landlord and her tenants cannot afford increases their rent. She hasn't had a raise in 5 years. Does not envy for what they have to do but they have to cut the budget and not override the tax bill. There is a lot of waste of monies and shouldn't have happen in our Town.

Gary Dresser resident of May Lane stated he is on a fixed income and he has to prioritize his bills and what he has to work with. If they have to work with that on a family level and prioritize the money coming in and sees no reason why the Town the size of Newfield cannot take and prioritize the money they have to work with. What you need what will affect the community as a whole how it will benefit the community as a whole and the non-essential things that have been added on over the years to make like life in the community a little bit better for instance the library until such time as the economy gets better. The Board needs to prioritize.

Diane Van Schoonhoven a resident Van Buskirk Gulf Rd. stated she was in support of everything that was said tonight. We should not override the 2% tax cap. She would support whatever it takes to not raise taxes.

Kevin Berggren, Highway Superintendent stated that he has worked for the town for several years and Richard has said how the town was always run by the seat of its pants in past years but he has never seen so much controversy as he has seen now. For instance he received an email today saying he was going to have to pay 25% of his health insurance. Two years ago when he took the position a resolution was made that I would ins. paid for this election period. The Highway Superintendent's prior to me have all had their insurance paid. He paid 20% when he was an employee so this is like a penalty for being an elected official. He feels he has saved the Town a lot of money working on the trucks, fixing the roads to last 10-20 years. If you are looking for someone to put a Band-Aid on problems then you have the wrong Highway Superintendent. If he does something he wants it done correctly. One of his trucks if over 20 years and if we don't keep the trucks running you will find them along the side of the road parked and the roads in the winter won't be done for people to get to work. I don't get equipment that we don't need. He felt the today was just a big slap in the face when he got that email. He doesn't want his taxes to go up either but the highway budget is going down. They are not wasting it and are putting it to good use.

Brian McIlroy, resident of Sebring Rd. asked how many town employees get 100% health ins. paid but if you're going to move to make Kevin pay is everyone else going to have to pay as well? Supervisor Driscoll stated that the proposal from the Town Board that the Superintendent of Highways, Town Clerk and Supervisor have their insurance reduced a law that was put in in 1994 by the Town Board. This Town Board has come to the decision that it be a 25% contribution to these offices. Mr. McIlroy asked what the current Highway Employees were paying. Supervisor Driscoll stated they are at 7%, 20% and 25%. Superintendent Berggren stated that when he was an employee

He paid 20% and now they are asking him to pay 25% as Highway Superintendent. This issue is only in proposal no resolution has been made as of this date.

Amy Heffron asked if in the past did Charlie Berggren or any other Supervisor's receive health insurance? Supervisor Driscoll stated that there were some who did and who did not.

Diana Bryant stated that she felt that the reason the Highway Superintendent's health insurance was paid in full was because the Newfield Highway Superintendent is grossly underpaid compared to other superintendent's in the County.

Karen Kenerson, stated that Kevin Berggren is a hard working individual and he doesn't get overtime like his men and she thinks that people should make some sort of contribution but the Highway Superintendent's do not get paid what they are worth and put in a lot of hours that they do not get paid for. Maybe a package of sort should be offered to Mr. Berggren.

Diane Van Schoonhoven stated that she wanted to add that she has noticed that the snow plowing and the attention to our roads has been tremendous. She said that the people are asking to Town Board to prioritize and we are not asking that you cut highway and in order to keep a good employee like this we should give him a raise & make his package more attractive to what other town's pay. That is what the people are asking you to do. They feel there are other areas in the budget that can be eliminated; Highway is not one of them.

Amy Heffron stated that she can see what Kevin is saying and he has done a tremendous job, he does not waste any money, he does keep his men in line and he catches a lot of flack for that from his crew. You are penalizing him, if he was hourly he would be paying 20% for his insurance and he would be making more money than he is now. You can always reach him when you need.

There being no one wishing to speak further the Public Hearing was adjourned at 8:40PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Katharine Crance  
Town Clerk

Nov. 21, 2011  
Date

The **Special Meeting** of the Newfield Town Board was called to order by Supervisor Driscoll at 8:40PM. Present: CP Laughlin, CP James, CP Trask and Supervisor Driscoll. Absent: CP Hart

Supervisor Driscoll stated the purpose of the Special Meeting was for the Town Board to consider the override of the Tax Cap Levy established in General Municipal Law 3-c for fiscal year 2012.

Supervisor Driscoll stated that there have been maybe 6 or 7 work sessions in which the Board has worked on making adjustments to the budget and in which they keep on making adjustments.

CP James reviewed with the community the tax cap calculations and the goals of the Town Board. The Board has been cutting and they need to find at least \$24,000.00 in order to get the budget within the tax cap levy. She said another thing she heard very strongly was not using the fund balance. To be perfectly honest with everything they have cut to date they feel they are obligated to use the fund balance. If they don't want to use the fund balance they would have to totally cut out Recreation, library, Senior Citizens and they still wouldn't be there. Anyone is welcome to join the Board look at this process.

CP Trask stated he didn't think that even cutting those programs that CP James spoke of which are unpopular with the public. Each budget line was looked and you can see where we cut money back to at least the 2011 budget or less. Staff was brought in to discuss their line items. We pared every line down to what they thought would get them somewhere reasonable within the tax cap. They are not even close without completely butchering the programs. By programs he meant the extras not the essentials. They talked with the Recreation Program and took nearly \$7,000.00 out of Recreation. This is not going to kill the program but it is going to take funds away and matching funds with the County. For that budget there were substantial amount of cuts. When the process of going through each budget was finished they still have a huge short fall. There was about \$110,000 to \$115,000.00 in cuts that were made. They are still \$266,000.00 away from meeting the tax cap. That is where the fund balance idea came in. CP Trask stated that he is not in favor of using the fund balance. They may have to use of the Fund Balance he didn't think having to use \$200,000.00 if fiscally responsible. It would not leave them in a good position as a town with \$136,000.00 left in the fund balance. He did not think that was responsible. He and Supervisor Driscoll had a conversation earlier and it comes down to the spectrum of fiscal responsibility. It is at both ends of the spectrum you have to be responsible when you have lots of money. You don't waste and you have to be more responsible when you don't have enough. By that he means you trim all you can

afford to trim to be responsible but you don't trim too much where you cannot provide to maintain the town. When it comes down to a comfort level the Town is at a level where CP Trask is not comfortable with as the others on the Town Board are not. So things bring us to the dilemma of do they raise the tax cap which obviously from what he heard from the community tonight the answer is we should not. That cuts should be made. So if cuts are going to be made the Board will have to make strong cuts to the programs and that is going to be unpopular with the people that use the programs. The recreation program will have to disappear. He is willing to work within the tax cap and he thinks the tax cap is the right thing to do if at all possible.

Amy Heffron asked if the Town had lots of money last year. CP Trask stated no. Mrs. Heffron stated that a Rec. Director was put on full time. CP Trask stated yes he was and that may have to change. Mrs. Heffron then stated that Supervisor Driscoll wanted to take \$5,000 out of contingency budget to give Tompkins County for their part of the Rec. Program. Then they ended up with no money because he left it out of the budget period. She also discussed other items that were taken out of the contingency for various other programs such as planning. She also discussed some of the fines that the Town has incurred and stated she thought that it was a misuse of the Town's tax dollars and no one is being held accountable for it. She thinks that Supervisor Driscoll should be held accountable for it. The Town Board doesn't even know how much money it has. CP Trask stated that he has a pretty good idea that we do not have much. He also stated that CP James has done a tremendous amount of work and has explained a lot to him and he has learned a lot and he has a much better feel for where the Town is now and he thinks the figures that he has in front of him are fairly accurate.

Diane Van Schoohoven asked how many people are actually being served by the programs they are considering eliminating such as the Recreation Program and Senior Citizens. Is there a consideration raising the fees for people who are using these services? Supervisor Driscoll stated that the funds that are expended for older population is \$3000.00 for the Senior Citizens which serves approx. 75-100 seniors, \$2000.00 for Gadabout and \$5000.00 for the Nutrition program. A total of \$10,000. The Library is \$21,300.00. The total request for Recreation Programs was \$106,000. Chris Harrison stated that when he was involved in the Football program everyone that participated was a volunteer. All monies were raised through fund raisers. Why can't this happen with the Recreation Program. A discussion was held regarding the other programs and the revenues for these programs.

CP Trask stated that Dustin James, Recreation Director has done a lot of work on the budget and is working to secure funding through TRIAD and grant writing.

Rodney Heffron, Van Kirk Rd. resident stated that expenses are not going to get any less any year any time and the only way you are going to get away from big tax increases it to grow the base. One of the things people are going to look at when they move into a community is what the school district is like and what is available for the children. Growth from Ithaca is growing in every direction but Newfield. If you take away programs for kids that also feed into sports programs at school what have you got to offer people who come to Newfield to build a house.

Tom Reynolds, Van Kirk Rd. Resident stated that people should have a choice where their money goes and if people want to support a program they feel worthwhile then they should support it, but people should have a choice and not have the town tell what they will support.

Diana Bryant asked why there was no tax on the Water District 1 tax bills this year. Supervisor Driscoll stated that there was a very large fund balance in that account.

Supervisor Driscoll stated that he wanted to tell everyone what the next steps were. Thursday evening (tomorrow) the Town Board will be meeting to adopt a Preliminary Budget in order for it to coincide with the posting of Public Hearing. The Preliminary Budget will be available for public viewing Friday Morning. The following Thursday is the deadline to pass the 2012 budget.

CP James stated that if you wanted to cut the fund balance the only places you cut that will affect fund balance are Water, Sewer, Highway and General. Supervisor Driscoll stated that \$78,500.00 cuts were made in the General Fund.

Supervisor Driscoll said they were very close to the 3.4, which is the Town's cap, by \$26,000.

After further discussions regarding fund balances and the cuts needed in the budget Supervisor Driscoll asked if he could have a motion to approve the Town of Newfield overriding the tax levy limit established in General Municipal Law 3-c for the fiscal year 2012. There was no motion supporting the override therefore the motion failed.

There being no further business Supervisor Driscoll adjourned the Special Board Meeting at 8:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Katharine Crance  
Town Clerk

November 22, 2011  
Date

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