

Catskill Town Board Committee Meeting
Catskill Town Hall
September 21, 2022 6:30 pm

Present:	Dale Finch,	Supervisor
	Jared Giordiano,	Councilman
	Patrick McCulloch,	Councilman
	Dawn Scannapieco,	Councilwoman
	Paul Vosburgh,	Councilman

Also Attending: Audre Higbee, Assessor

Supervisor Finch opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. He asked Ms. Higbee, Town Assessor, to present the board on the revaluation process.

Ms. Higbee thanked the board to talk about the subject as it is long overdue and is not the easiest subject to approach; cost, creating agita in the community and asked to consider the benefits of a revaluation those being assessment equity, increased state land assessments, fewer challenges to assessments.

Ms. Higbee reviewed the process of revaluation. Develop a new database and collect accurate data; review of neighborhoods and sales which are currently based on data 30 years ago. The best time to have a revaluation is not at the height of a market cycle but to wait through several cycles since a revaluation utilizes three years of sales and if you revalued at a peak market, as the market cools the new assessed value could exceed actual market value.

Supervisor Finch stated the timeline is reasonable and we have an opportunity since funds are available. He asked Ms. Higbee to give more information on the state funding. Ms. Higbee stated NYS provides supports funds of \$5 per person and \$2 per person for follow up revaluations. The state likes to have revaluations every 3 to 4 years. The town has 6,000 parcels and state aid is contingent on future revaluations.

Councilman Vosburgh asked the reason for a revaluation. Ms. Higbee stated equity and code is not staffed to review changes to buildings so value is not being collected. Councilman Vosburgh gave an example of his own home which he purchased in 2019 and the market has doubled so now he would pay more in taxes. Ms. Higbee stated in a revaluation a third would go up, a third would go down and a third would state the same. She is not predicting anything for Catskill. Supervisor Finch stated the valuation of a home does not necessarily mean taxes would go up. Ms. Higbee stated there are ranges with different types of homes, square footage, and attributes. Supervisor Finch mentioned location and neighborhoods.

Councilman Giordiano stated with the current equalization rate our county rate is bad. We are missing value, especially in the village. Supervisor Finch stated sales do not trigger an increase in taxes any longer. Ms. Higbee stated higher end homes assess for less as she does not have equity to support a higher assessment so modest homes become regressive, holding more value, and getting taxed at a higher rate because there can be equity support on mid-level to lower-level homes.

Councilman Giordiano asked the difference between aerial and onsite data collection. Ms. Higbee stated there is a lot of aerial viewing which is good in the own and the state has realized this is a much more affordable option for valuation, but every property cannot have an aerial valuation. Approximately ten to fifteen percent will be site visits. Councilman Vosburgh asked if we need permission. Ms. Higbee stated you cannot go on posted property so there is camera view and aerial view. Assessors by law cannot demand to enter a home.

Ms. Higbee stated the previous Assessors have done a great job over the years with the property files. The cost for a revaluation would be between \$350 to \$375,000. The state could help with the highly complicated appraisals such as the cement plants and railroads.

Ms. Higbee reviewed the timeline and how the process of revaluation would flow. Once the board has the date, records would be updated, and they would start assessing. Property owners would be notified of the new value which would give the property owner a chance to review and grieve their assessments. The impact to the first tax bill would be the school tax bill. Ms. Higbee recommended a later start date. Councilman Giordiano stated we have been talking about revaluation for twelve years. We have the lowest equalization rate in the county. Supervisor Finch stated the whole process is not raising taxes. Ms. Higbee stated some people are not paying their fair share so there will be a reallocation.

Councilman Giordiano recommended starting in 2024. Supervisor Finch concurred. The vendor process can begin in 2024 and put funding aside this year. Supervisor Finch stated we have ARPA money available to use and we need to discuss how to earmark this money.

Ms. Higbee stated if any board members had any questions or wished to discuss more in depth to reach out. The big fact to remember is it is the law to do revaluations. Councilman Vosburgh stated if we do it will put us at 100%. Ms. Higbee stated that is the goal. Supervisor Finch thanked Ms. Higbee for the presentation.

FIREWORK DISPLAY – The board received an application for a firework display to be held at the Rip Van Winkle Country Club in Palenville on October 15th at approx. 8:30 pm. *Resolution #84-2022 on motion of Councilman Vosburgh second by Councilwoman Scannapieco authoring a firework display by Young Explosives Corp at the Rip Van Winkle Country Club October 15, 2022 at approximately 8:30 pm for a private party. Adopted Vote: 5 Yes*

Supervisor's Comments – Some tentative budget numbers are in. Please talk to your departments prior to budget workshop meetings to limit the length of the meetings.

Everyone received the updated salary structure and the COLA update. It is a guide.

We will need to schedule a public hearing at our next meeting for the property tax cap. The Association of Towns recommends we pass to override the tax cap.

Councilman Vosburgh stated insurance rates increased 30%. Councilman McCulloch stated ours is 18%. Supervisor Finch stated the state rate is 11.5% max.

Fire Departments – work on getting the public hearing with Athens. Councilman McCulloch stated we need to sit down with Leeds first.

Supervisor Finch mentioned the union contracts and the first date of negotiations being October 31st. Councilman Vosburgh stated if there is no agreement the contract carries over. He stated fuel costs have reduced to \$3.40 yet the pump price is almost \$5.

Councilman Giordiano asked about the comprehensive plan, and we should start moving to review. Councilman McCulloch stated it should not cost too much as we have a plan.

Supervisor Finch stated the board needs to decide what to do with the ARPA money.

Councilman Giordiano asked about the builders. Supervisor Finch stated Ted is ok with the contract and they are supposed to be coming down with a window contractor. The project is based on window delivery.

Councilman Vosburgh asked about the ambulance and if the insurance adjuster looked at it. Supervisor Finch stated he spoke with Marshall Sterling, and we are insured for \$136,000. Need to talk to George June. It was not the fault of our operator, and it is a blessing no one was injured.

Supervisor Finch stated the contract with Athens for ambulance coverage is 8% increase. Councilman Giordiano would like to discuss including ALS service as we are not getting paid for ALS coverage and they are receiving it. Supervisor Finch asked if everyone is ok with a one-year deal, Leeds fire multi year deal and unions multi-year deal.

Supervisor Finch next mentioned the emergency call out and overtime. *Resolution # 85-2022 on motion of Councilman McCulloch second by Councilwoman Scannapieco authorizing a four-hour overtime for an employee due to an unforeseen emergency; one-time non-precedented decision and exception to the town's compensation and benefit manual. Adopted Vote: 4 Yes 1 Abstention (Vosburgh)*

Councilman Giordiano stated the Town Judges' do not have the authority, only the Town Board has the authority to offer overtime and there should be an update to the employee manual. Councilman Vosburgh stated it is hard to decide when we do not have a concrete answer.

With no further discussion a motion to end the meeting was made by Councilman Giordiano second by Councilwoman Scannapieco. Meeting ended 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Izzo
Town Clerk