

**SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT
ON THE 2018 CHATHAM TOWN BUDGET**

November 16, 2017

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In preparing the 2018 Chatham Town Budget, a top priority of the Town Supervisor and Budget Officer has been to help the Town Board manage municipal resources efficiently and effectively and, by so doing, provide accountability for tax dollars spent to support the Town of Chatham's operations.

The Chatham Town Budget, combined general fund, and highway fund for 2018 is \$2,896,695 (this is a total appropriations not the total taxes) which will be below the state mandated tax cap of 1.84%, with a minimal tax increase of 1.017%.

The 2017 Town Outside rate was \$3.25:

Therefore, for Town Outside, this represents a tax rate of \$3.29 per thousand of assessed value or an increase of \$0.04 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. For the average homeowner with an assessed value of \$200,000, this represents an annual increase of \$6.83 for the combined General Fund and Highway Fund.

The 2017 Village rate was \$1.65:

Therefore, for the Village, this represents a tax rate of \$1.33 per thousand of assessed value or a decrease of \$.32 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. For the average homeowner with an assessed value of \$200,000, this represents an annual decrease of \$66.71 for the combined General Fund and Highway Fund.

In early 2016, shortly after I took office, our town accounting firm determined that the town finances were in "fiscal stress." The challenge then, and still today, in preparing the 2018 Budget, was to construct a budget which would allow the Town to be able to adequately save funds for extraordinary expenditures, which had not been anticipated in any single year, and expend funds for the true cost of operating the

Town government. In addition, we continually need to find alternatives, in both the short term and long term, to solve the budget problem, control the growth in taxes, and stay under the state mandated tax cap requirement, while improving services for our community.

Throughout the budget process, the Citizens' Finance and Planning Committee has helped identify opportunities for improving the town's operations, while observing good business practices, and it has also advised the Town Board on strategies to reduce costs and strengthen controls to safeguard the town's assets. The Town Board is responsible for maintaining the Town's fiscal health and making sound financial decisions that are in the best interests of the Town and of the residents who fund its operations.

Earlier next year, the Citizen's Finance and Planning Committee will recommend to the Town Board the adoption of a policy to maintain healthy levels of fund balances. The official policy will be based on the recommendations of the New York State Comptroller's Office to municipalities on how to set this type of policy. The policy we adopt will set guidelines for maintaining fund balances for the General Fund and the Highway Fund to ensure the protection of town finances in succeeding years.

In conclusion, the 2018 Budget is a sound fiscal plan that will maintain the Town on a steady course of recovery from the "fiscal stress of 2015-2016" while continuing to provide services to our residents. I wish to thank our Budget Officer, Tammy Shaw, and Bob Balcom, chair, and all the members of the Citizens Finance & Planning Committee for their many hours of work; our department heads for exercising fiscal constraint in preparing their budget requests; and Mike Bucci, CPA, and Lisa Gill of Patterson Koskey Howe & Bucci, for preparing the Town's accounts. In addition, I wish to express my appreciation to my fellow Town Board members for their participation in the budget process and for having devoted many hours of hard work and deliberation throughout the budget meetings.

Highlights of Budget Changes:

- Town Assessor will remain at the current salary to match what the County would charge to provide assessor services. Clerk's hours will be reduced from 520 hours to 260 hours per annum. New computer for department.
- Maintenance Work (Town Hall) will be eliminated. Duties will be outsourced.
- County Sheriff's Enhanced Enforcement Patrol will continue to provide town-wide surveillance and ensure public safety.
- Veterans allocation will remain the same: \$1,000 for flags and wreaths at the cemetery.
- Ghent/Chatham Seniors Club allocation will remain the same: \$2,000 to supplement field trip costs for seniors.
- Crellin Park recreation programs will be funded. There will be increases in the Summer Tuition Program to cover additional minimal wage increases and gradually get the program self-sustainable.
- Major highway department equipment will continue to be bonded.
- Collective Bargaining Unit (Highway) salaries for 2018 will be increased by 2%.
- Salaries for non-bargaining town employees increased by 1.2%.
- All Town expenditures are reviewed by the Supervisor, Budget Officer, Town Board members, and Town Clerk.
- Funds appropriated for new town website and dedicated email addresses to all department heads to provide additional security.