

Dear Citizens:

As the Chief Financial Officer, I present for you a review of the 2019 Preliminary Budget. The following summary touches on the significant information in the proposed budget. You may review the full budget on the home page of the town website: [www.washingtonny.org](http://www.washingtonny.org).

The Town is holding a Public Hearing on the Budget on **Thursday, November 8<sup>th</sup>**, at 7:00 PM, at the Town Hall. I intend to hold the Public hearing open until **November 20<sup>th</sup>** so citizens have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the budget, review information and make comments.

On October 15<sup>th</sup>, the Town Board voted to override the tax cap because there are several budget increases that were required before we looked at local operations. The tax cap amount for 2019 is \$43,789.00.

1. **Fire and Rescue Services \$46,990.00:** The fire contract with the Village of Millbrook will be increasing by \$46,990.00 which includes paid rescue squad services for 13 hours a day, 7 days a week, upgraded firematic equipment, training for fire and rescue volunteers and fire house operations.
2. **Workers Compensation \$36,000.00:** Dutchess County has increased the fees for Workers Compensation by over 110% with the increase being \$36,000.00. The Town is currently seeking rates from other vendors to ensure the best value for our dollars.
3. **Debt Services \$22,000.00:** The Town has a Bond Anticipation Note for the Stanford Road Bridge Improvement Project which will come due in August. As a cost savings measure the Town is planning on a 10-year bond rather than a fifteen-year bond. In 2020 the Town will have another increase when we have a full year of payments due. Fortunately, in 2021 the town will make its final payment on a bond we had for the purchase of park land, which is now the soccer fields and walking path.
4. **NYS & Local Retirement System \$11,453.00:** This is an increase in New York State mandated contributions to the employee retirement system.

The Town Board continues to ensure that we are fiscally responsible and remain fiscally conservative. We recognize the following needs, which we consider as we move through the budget process.

- **The Town must continue to maintain public facilities and infrastructure.** The town has used NYS programs such as the Consolidated Highway Improvement Funds (CHIPS) to supplement our budget to fund road improvements such as the paving of North Tower Hill and Overlook Roads and the purchase of major pieces of highway equipment. The 2019 budget calls for \$250,000.00 for these projects, which must be paid for by the Town and is reimbursed by New York State.

The highway department concentrates on drainage improvements and culvert repairs, roadway maintenance and snow removal.

The Town Park is known as a jewel in our community and features the bathing beach, two pavilions that are available for rental for family gatherings, local organizations, reunions and business events, BBQ and picnic facilities, summer camp activities, athletic fields and a fishing pond. The Town has applied for Community Development Block Grant Funding to upgrade the accessibility of the bathrooms, bath house and parking area.

The maintenance and upkeep of the Town Hall and Highway Garage are always in the thoughts of the Town Board. The Town Hall has seen a facelift which was partially funded by CDBG money and the Salt Shed was replaced and partially funded by a generous donation of the Millbrook Tribute Garden, Inc. We are turning our attention to our fleet of vehicles, some being thirty years old. In conjunction with the Highway Superintendent, we are reviewing the replacement plan and how new purchases may be funded. Currently, the Town reserves \$60,000.00 per year for the purchase of new equipment.

- The Town must provide quality services and protection and care to our residents. The Town is very fortunate to partner with the Village of Millbrook and for fire and rescue squad volunteer services, as well as the East Clinton Fire District. A dedicated group of volunteers has provided us with excellent service and we recognize the value given to us for many years. As mandates on training and time constraints of our citizens increase, the number of volunteers available to serve us has changed. As mentioned earlier, rescue squad services have been partially contracted with NDP. Residents have requested that Town and Village officials look to increasing paid rescue service hours to 24/7. This will be explored as we enter 2019, and we will provide information to our citizens as it becomes available.

The Town continually thinks about our Emergency Management Procedures and the ability to maintain services during storm events. This budget calls for \$50,000.00 investments in dedicated generators for the Town Hall and Highway Garage. We are also investing in an improved server system and cyber security to ensure we are capable of operating without any disruption in services and keeping our information technology and your information protected.

- The Town must maintain fiscal integrity. Our primary objective is to ensure the strength the Town's financial position while maintaining a high level of services for our residents. This includes maintaining a healthy fund balance of 10 – 15% of the overall budget. In the past, the Town was

able to do so with sales tax revenue. In 2013, Dutchess County changed the way sales tax was distributed to the municipalities by capping the amount available to us.

The Town has continued to look at ways to receive revenue without burdening you with taxes. This year, the board has increased user fees, specifically for the use of the Transfer Station, Planning Board and ZBA applications. We'll continue to review and modify building permit fees when appropriate. As a reminder, be sure to obtain a building permit for construction projects happening on your property. It is for your protection and required by New York State Uniform Building Code. A certificate of occupancy or certificate of compliance is issued upon completion of work.

The Town Clerk encourages residents to purchase hunting and fishing licenses at the Town Hall rather than at a big retailer or online, as a small percentage of each sale is revenue for the Town. The same holds true for couples wishing to obtain a marriage license. Every little bit helps.

- The Town must recruit, train and retain employees that meet our goal of providing excellent service. We are fortunate to have employees with the best interest of the community at heart, which is easy to do when most of them live right here in our community. Our employees appreciate being able to serve their friends and neighbors, and I can proudly say that they have and always will go the extra mile for our citizens. The Town Board and our employees recognizes that salaries, wages and benefits are a large portion of the town budget. We continue to ensure that the costs associated with any benefits are appropriate for employees and a value for our citizens. The Town Board, Town Clerk and Highway Superintendent work as a team to ensure that we have the right level of staffing to provide you with the services that you expect.

We are thankful to the citizens of our community that volunteer their time, energy and talents to ensure that our programs and services operate smoothly.

The Recreation Department depends upon the 60 volunteer adults and 30 volunteer students that keep our programs enjoyable to hundreds of youths in our community. We urge all parents and care givers to consider coaching your child's team; it is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child and is very rewarding to you.

The Millbrook Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad is one of the most important assets of our Town and Village. The men and women of the department are unsung heroes. I encourage all residents to speak with

the members of the department to learn about the training and requirements necessary to fulfill their duties. If you have the time, I strongly encourage you to join their ranks. I also encourage you to talk with your friends and family that are property owners outside of the Town of Washington. Most of them will have a fire budget and tax that is much higher than what is paid here in town.

The Town has several Boards and Commissions that are served by citizen members. These include the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Assessment Review, Recreation Commission, Conservation Advisory Commission and Zoning Review Committee. Volunteers come with many different levels of experience and backgrounds. Currently, the Planning Board and the Board of Assessment Review have vacancies and we would love to answer any questions residents might have about joining either Board. The Planning Board is responsible for the review of all land subdivision applications, special use permits and site plan reviews. They meet the first Tuesday of every month. The Board of Assessment Review meets twice a year to review the requests of property owners that feel their property is over assessed. Volunteers must be eighteen years of age, have their primary residence in the Town of Washington and be able to attend several hours of training every year.

Letters of interest and resumes may be sent to Town Clerk Mary Alex at [malex@washingtonny.org](mailto:malex@washingtonny.org).

I invite you to call me or visit the Town Hall and speak with Mary if you have any questions regarding the 2019 Budget. You may also attend the Public Hearing on November 20<sup>th</sup> to express any thoughts or concerns.

The Town Board meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month at 7:00 PM. Meetings are open to the public and we welcome you to learn about your local government and the issues we are addressing.

Sincerely,

Gary Ciferri  
Town Supervisor

