TOWN OF BRUNSWICK
PUBLIC HEARING
NOVEMBER 5, 2026, 6:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL

The following is a summary of the Town Board Meeting as recorded by the Town Clerk.

To view a recording of the full meeting, please see the YouTube link below:

11-5-2026 Public Hearing Preliminary Budget

Board Members Present: Supervisor Herrington, Councilman Christian, Councilman Sullivan, Councilman Balistreri, Councilman Cipperly.
Absent: Town Attorney, Dave Gruenberg
Also Present: Town Clerk, Alicia Saunders

Supervisor Herrington called the Public Hearing to order at 6:06 p.m. and asked the Town Clerk to read the Notice of Public Hearing. The notice had been published in the Troy Record, posted at Town Hall, and made available on the Town's website. The purpose of the hearing was to receive public comment on the Preliminary 2027 Town of Brunswick Budget.

Supervisor Herrington began by noting that, over the past thirty-one years, the Town has gone twenty-six years without a tax increase. However, due to current economic conditions and rising costs, including fuel, health insurance, and road salt, a tax increase was necessary. He then invited Mr. Patrick Poleto and Ms. Becky Legacy to provide an overview of the 2027 Preliminary Budget.

Mr. Poleto reported that the total Preliminary 2027 Budget was $12,976,950. He provided a historical comparison of the General Fund tax rate, explaining that in 1994 the rate was $2.89 per $1,000 of assessed valuation, compared to $3.41 per $1,000, 32 years later. He explained that several factors contributed to the proposed tax rate increase this year, beginning with the rising cost of health insurance, which has increased by 13.9%. As an example, he noted that a family health insurance plan in 2027 would cost approximately $10,300, of which the Town is responsible for 90%.

Mr. Poleto explained that the Town has accumulated savings over the years, including funds received during the COVID-19 pandemic. He discussed the ongoing reservoir project, noting that the Town has had to drain the reservoir several times over the past year and a half. The project has cost approximately $2.4 million. As the project nears completion, the Town has utilized COVID relief funds and accumulated savings to cover the expenses rather than issuing bonds. However, this has resulted in a reduction of the Town's reserves.

Regarding the Highway Fund, Mr. Poleto reported that construction of the new Highway Garage is expected to cost approximately $4.4 to $4.5 million upon completion. He explained that approximately $3 million from the General and Highway Funds' reserves would be used toward the project to help reduce the amount of financing and spread the remaining payments over a 30-year period.

Mr. Poleto further explained that the use of reserves for these projects has significantly reduced the Town's interest income, creating a need to account for the decrease in the budget. He provided the following examples: the General Fund's projected interest income decreased from $261,000 in 2026 to $115,000 in 2027. Similarly, interest income for the Highway Department and new Highway Garage decreased from $129,000 to $60,000.

Mr. Poleto noted that negotiations for the Union contract were still ongoing and would also have an impact on the Town's budget. He added that a 4% increase had been included for Town office staff.

He also mentioned that following the 2027 payment on the Town Hall bond, only the remaining scheduled payments would be outstanding, which would provide some financial relief in future years.

Mr. Poleto discussed the increase in participation in the Town's summer camp program, explaining that additional counselors were needed to accommodate the number of children attending. As a result, the Town's payroll increased from an average of approximately 50 employees to 159 employees during the past year.

Regarding the Historical Property budget, Mr. Poleto discussed the Garfield School building, which is owned by the Town and operated by the Historical Society. He explained that the building is in need of a new roof. The Town has received several estimates and plans to put the project out to bid after the first of the year. The estimated cost is approximately $110,000.

Turning to the Highway Fund, Mr. Poleto explained that the Highway Department would be responsible for 70% of the bond payments for the new Highway Garage, with the Water Department and Special Sewer Fund covering the remaining portion. He also reported that $521,000 had been budgeted for CHIPS funding, which is used for road paving projects.

Mr. Poleto stated that the Highway Department is anticipating the purchase of a vehicle next year. An additional $450,000 has been included in the equipment budget for the purchase of a new vacuum truck. The Town is expecting a $200,000 grant toward the purchase, which would offset a portion of the cost. He noted that the department's current vacuum truck is no longer usable.

Mr. Poleto reported that the Town is under the 2% tax cap for the 2027 budget, whereas the previous year the Town exceeded the cap due to the addition of the new ambulance service. He explained that the Town had recently received its certification for the ambulance service and would begin collecting fees through a third-party provider. He also noted that the Sycaway, Brunswick No. 1, and Center Brunswick Fire Departments are included in the Town's tax cap calculations.

Supervisor Herrington asked Mr. Poleto about the library's budget increase and the total amount allocated for 2027. Mr. Poleto confirmed that the library's budget included a 4% increase, bringing the total allocation to $170,158.

Supervisor Herrington opened the meeting for public comment.

VISITORS WHO WISH TO SPEAK:

Alex Dugan, president of the Board for the Brunswick Community Library, Ms. Dugan began by expressing her appreciation for the Town's continued support and the standard 4% annual increase in funding. She explained that this year the library was requesting a 17% increase, which would bring the Town's contribution to $192,817. Of the requested $29,000 increase, approximately $29,000 would be used to increase the library's operating budget by 10%. Ms. Dugan reviewed the library's expenses, noting that operating costs have continued to rise due to the challenging economy. She also discussed the increase in program attendance and explained that the additional funding would allow the library to hire another part-time employee to assist during its busiest hours, Monday and Thursday evenings.

Supervisor Herrington asked whether the library receives funding through the school budget. Ms. Dugan confirmed that the library receives approximately $35,000 to $38,000 from the school. Councilman Balistreri asked how the library generates its remaining revenue and whether it receives funding from the Upper Hudson Library System.

Ms. Dugan provided a breakdown of the library's revenue, which includes approximately $35,000 from the school, $163,000 from the Town, $28,000 in gifts, endowments, and grants, $20,000 in donations, including daily contributions and donations received during programs, $3,500 in federal aid, $6,000 from fundraising events such as Garden Day and Fall Fest, and $7,000 from the County. She reported that the library's total operating budget is approximately $292,041.

Councilman Balistreri noted that the additional $7,000 included in the 2027 budget would bring the library's operating budget to approximately $300,000. He further explained that providing the additional funding requested would result in an estimated 3% tax increase and put the Town over the 2% tax cap. He also suggested that the library look into the 2% tax cap exemption available through the State.

Ms. Dugan asked that the request be considered for future budgets and thanked the Board for taking the time to hear her presentation.

Sue Vitolins,Miller Road, Ms. Vitolins asked for clarification regarding the Contractual Services line item in the budget. Mr. Poleto explained that this category includes office supplies, software programs, and training for various departments.

Ms. Vitolins then asked how much money would remain in the Town's reserves and how those funds would be replenished. Councilman Sullivan explained that maintaining and rebuilding reserves comes down to responsible budgeting, similar to how individuals manage their own personal expenses.

Mr. Poleto provided an overview of the Town's fund balances and recent expenditures. He explained that the General Fund had approximately $5 million last year, of which $2.4 million was used for the dam project and $2 million for the construction of the new Highway Garage. The Highway Fund had approximately $2.3 million last year, with $1 million used toward the new Highway Garage. He also noted that slightly more than $200,000 was taken from savings to cover road paving costs due to the significant increase in asphalt prices this year. Ms. Vitolins asked what the remaining fund balance would be following these expenditures, and Mr. Poleto estimated that approximately $1.2 million would remain.

Ms. Vitolins asked whether the proposed 4.2% tax increase would help replenish the Town's fund balance. Mr. Poleto explained that tax revenues are used to cover budgeted expenses throughout the year. The budget is continually reviewed to monitor expenditures and identify potential cost savings. Any funds remaining as a result of savings would then be returned to the fund balance.

Ms. Vitolins further asked whether the 4.2% tax increase, which would generate approximately $28,000, represented the only difference to the overall Town budget. Mr. Poleto confirmed that it did.

Ms. Vitolins concluded by stating that, as a taxpayer, she understands the financial challenges of rising costs, noting that many of her own household expenses have increased significantly. She commented that $28,000 is not a substantial amount in the context of the Town's overall budget and acknowledged that unexpected expenses can arise throughout the year that must be addressed.

Tim Gilchrist, Creek Road, Mr. Gilchrist asked for clarification regarding the fuel line item in the budget, noting that it did not reflect an increase. He asked where the increased fuel costs had been accounted for and how they were being addressed in the current year. Mr. Poleto pointed out where the information could be found. Mr. Gilchrist noted that the information differed from the version he had printed from the Town's website.

Mr. Gilchrist then commented on the increase in funding for the historic property, referencing a previous grant received through the Senate. He expressed hope that the Town would continue looking into available state grants and member item funding opportunities that could help offset these costs. He also took the opportunity to mention that, as a former Library Board member, he has been a strong supporter of the library.

Mr. Gilchrist also asked about the Town's share of sales tax revenue and referenced the County Executive's proposal to reduce the smallest portion of the property tax burden. He asked whether there had been any discussions with the Town regarding reallocating sales tax revenue between the cities and towns to ensure a fair distribution of the tax increase.

Additionally, Mr. Gilchrist referenced previous Board discussions regarding developers, including stormwater permits, Sharp Road, and other projects. He noted that fines and related costs are sometimes treated by developers as simply part of doing business. While acknowledging that the Building Department has been overwhelmed with development activity, he questioned whether these costs had been evaluated to ensure that the financial burden was not falling solely on taxpayers.

Mr. Gilchrist also addressed the construction of the new Highway Garage and the decision to finance nearly 50% of the project on a pay-as-you-go basis over a 30-year investment period. He commented that this was a significant amount and noted its impact on the Town's fund balances. While acknowledging that the decision was made conservatively, he pointed out that circumstances and costs have changed. He further noted that rising fuel costs and other increases are not necessarily temporary and may take considerable time to return to previous levels. He suggested that the Town consider whether it would be possible to go back and bond a larger portion of the Highway Garage project. He acknowledged that this would be a policy decision for the Town but wanted to offer it for consideration.

Mr. Gilchrist concluded by offering comments regarding the overall budget presentation, noting that there were two different approaches he would have taken in presenting the information.

Supervisor Herrington closed the public comment period

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilman Sullivan made a motion to close the Public Hearing, which was seconded by Councilman Balistreri. Unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Saunders

Town Clerk