

TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK TOWN BOARD
2026 PRELIMINARY BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

November 6, 2025

The meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Clifton Park was held in the Town Office Building at 7:02 p.m. Supervisor Barrett presiding.

Pledge of Allegiance

Present: Supervisor Barrett
Councilman Morelli
Councilwoman Reid
Councilwoman Walowit
Councilman Manir
Town Clerk Ranze

Also Present: Town Attorney Pelagalli
Mark Heggen, Comptroller
John Scavo, Director of Planning & Zoning

Town Clerk Ranze read the public hearing notice as advertised in the Gazette on October 26, 2025.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

Supervisor Barrett reviewed suggested proposals following the Budge Workshops.

Supervisor Barrett reported on two state legislative items the Town has been monitoring. The proposal to remove EMS support costs from the tax cap calculation has not been signed by the Governor, so the Town will continue under current tax cap rules this year. The Governor signed the occupancy tax legislation submitted by Saratoga County, which enables proper collection of occupancy tax on short-term rentals. The County is now developing a short-term rental registry, and all municipalities must adopt local code updates establishing definitions, permitting, inspections, and related requirements. Clifton Park has already held a public hearing, and work continues to finalize the necessary local legislation in advance of the County registry going live early next year.

Supervisor Barrett explained that years ago the Town sought its own occupancy tax, and although it passed the Legislature, it was vetoed by Governor Cuomo resulting in an estimated loss of more that \$2 million in revenue to the Town. With Saratoga County's recent occupancy tax increase from 1% to 3%, municipalities will now receive 1% of the added revenue, which will benefit Clifton Park given its number of hotels and short-term rentals. Also noted that the Town had been waiting on both the EMS tax-cap and occupancy-tax legislation before adjusting the budget, as either could impact the Town's financial position. With only the occupancy-tax legislation enacted, the Town will move forward accordingly.

Proposed Projects and Updates

- Dog Park – Ground improvements estimated at \$60,000; grant funding will be pursued.
- Country Knolls Pool – Roof replacement, new carpeting, and parking-lot repaving.
- Barney Road Pool – Roof replacement needed.
- Whipple Bridge (Vischer Ferry Preserve) – Short paving sections on both sides to address washouts; coordination with Canal Corp.
- Celebrations – Committee to reconvene to plan Canal Days and upcoming anniversaries, including the nation's 250th and the Battles of Saratoga.
- Basketball Courts (Clifton Common) – Address moisture and green film with regular cleaning; cracks are non-hazardous; resurfacing not recommended.
- Pickleball Facility – Discussion of possible additional fencing based on user feedback.

Councilman Morelli stated he met multiple times with pickleball users, along with Kieran and Dan Clemens of Buildings and Grounds, to review concerns. The facility is heavily used and the

players reported issues with balls crossing between courts and into the seating/picnic table area. Users of the courts had created a makeshift barrier; while well-intentioned, they are unattractive and pose safety concerns. A professional solution has been identified with an estimated cost of \$10,000. Larger requests such as lighting or walkway reconfiguration are not recommended at this time, but this targeted safety improvement is considered appropriate.

- Garnsey Park – Proposed enhancements – Improved signage and a pavilion, similar to those in other Town parks. These additions are intended to encourage greater public use of this significant open-space resource.
- Grooms Corners/Heritage Square Planning – Grooms Tavern has been fully restored and is now an active cultural and historic center. The Town also acquired the Grange building and a connecting house creating a unified three-property historic area. Buildings & Grounds have cleared and opened the newest parcel linking the sites. Combined properties offer significant future opportunities, though substantial planning and potential grant funding will be needed. Friends of Grooms Tavern and the Historic Preservation Commission are interested in advancing plans, and an engineering cost estimate – including work related to a blacksmith shop – has been obtained.

John Scavo states the engineering estimate covers the entire Heritage Square complex, including updated costs for additional parking. The plan includes connecting the parking area to the blacksmith shop and Grooms Tavern, as part of a comprehensive site layout and access analysis. KB Engineering submitted an \$8,500 proposal for preliminary (30%) engineering work to support future grant applications. The scope includes Grange, structural and stabilization analysis (\$3,500), Blacksmith Shop/Pole Barn, Storage and workshop assessment (\$2,500) and Palmer House – Initial capital improvement assessment (\$2,500). The Preservation League advised that this level of engineering detail will strengthen future funding requests after last year's application was not successful.

Councilman Morelli noted that the Friends of Grooms Tavern had not reviewed the specific engineering proposal but are willing to help fund a structural report for the blacksmith shop roof, which will be considered at a future agenda meeting. He added that the Grange is currently used for storage by the Not-So-Common Players, and the Friends group and Historic Preservation Commission have asked the Town to explore alternate storage options for them. Buildings and Grounds also recently reinforced the front porch of the Thackery House to ensure it remains stable through the coming winter while long-term plans continue to be discussed. Also explained that grant applications for the blacksmith shop have been unsuccessful, and a \$30,000 structural report is needed to strengthen future funding requests. The Friends of Grooms Tavern have committed \$10,000 toward the report. The full proposal will be considered at the next agenda meeting, and if it does not move forward there, the remaining \$20,000 should be budgeted for 2026.

- Improvements to Senior Transportation Reservations

Supervisor Barrett noted ongoing discussions about improving the senior transportation reservation process through enhanced scheduling software and efforts to strengthen coordination with CAPTIAN's volunteer-based CAORLINX program, which provides free senior transportation. He added that building security upgrades were also raised during the budget workshops and may warrant consideration in the upcoming budget.

- Workplace Safety

Councilman Morelli highlighted physical security upgrades as a top priority for next year's budget. After recent reviews of the Town's workplace violence policy, proposed improvements include installing panic buttons in key offices and adding security cameras at Town Hall, the Senior Center, and the Public Safety Building. The estimated cost is approximately \$15,000. He stressed the need to balance public access to Town facilities with ensuring a safe work environment for employees.

Supervisor Barrett summarized the workshop discussions, noting that proposed initiatives ranging from dog park upgrades and building improvements to celebration events, pickleball enhancements, and Garnsey Park additions would total roughly \$535,000 if all were undertaken.

Also recommending a grade increase for a Transfer Station employee, consistent with longstanding practice of advancing successful laborers from Grade 3 to Grade 4 after about a year of service. Further noting that the Longkill Park renovation is already funded and will move forward in 2026 following extensive collaboration with the Park District. With no public present to comment, he invited the Board to discuss or act on the proposed items.

Councilman Morelli voiced support for the recommended personnel upgrades and agreed that the dog park and basketball courts are priorities for improvement. Noting both facilities would benefit from updates, and enhancing the dog park in particular could boost usage and draw residents to a less-frequented area of town, making it a worthwhile community investment.

Supervisor Barrett explained that the dog park is overdue for updates and that new features would be a welcome improvement. He noted that the costliest items under consideration are the basketball court resurfacing, estimated at about \$170,000, and the roof, carpet, and paving work at the Country Knolls building. The carpet is worn, but the annual rental income of over \$21,000 from the church helps offset that expense. He added that the Town will seek grants for the dog park improvements and then moved toward introducing a motion on the proposed amendments.

No public present.

MOTION BY Councilman Morelli moved to include the proposed amendments to the 2026 Tentative Budget, seconded by Councilwoman Reid. All in favor. Noes none. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY Supervisor Barrett to close the public hearing, seconded by Councilman Morelli. All in favor. Noes none. MOTION CARRIED.
No one else wished to be heard.

Motion carried at 7:53 PM

Stephanie Ranze
Town Clerk