TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK TOWN BOARD
2026 PRELIMINARY BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

November 5, 2026

The meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Clifton Park was held in the Town Office Building at 7:00 p.m. Supervisor Barrett presiding.

Present: Supervisor Barrett
Councilwoman Bellamy
Councilman Fantini
Councilman Manir
Councilwoman Reid
Town Clerk Fantini

Also Present: Town Attorney Dailey
Mark Heggen, Comptroller

Town Clerk Caitlin Fantini read the Public Hearing Notice advertised in the Times Union on October 29, 2026.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

Supervisor Barrett asked whether everyone had an opportunity to review the proposed budget and directed a question to Mark Heggen regarding any changes made between the original budget draft and the current version. He noted that a few figures had been updated based on revised information submitted by the local fire departments.

Mark Heggen confirmed that two fire districts submitted revised figures, reflecting changes between their tentative and preliminary budget submissions. He updated the budget accordingly. He also explained that, during the budget workshops, the Highway Superintendent identified several employees whose job grades and steps were incorrectly reflected. Mark Heggen corrected those classifications to ensure they accurately reflected the employees' proper grades and steps, making the necessary adjustments without increasing the overall budget.

PUBLIC HEARING

Start 7:05 p.m.

Kevin Goggins of Thoroughbred Way apologized for not having had an opportunity to review the entire proposed budget, explaining that he had been looking for it alongside the meeting minutes, which had not yet been posted. He stated that one item immediately caught his attention: an additional $10 million expenditure that appeared to have been requested. Mr. Goggins asked which fund the proposed $10 million would come from and how much money was currently available in that fund. He also questioned how the money would be used and what procedures or financial safeguards were in place to ensure the funds would be spent appropriately if the proposed expenditure were approved. He asked whether the fund balance and related financial information were publicly available.

Supervisor Barrett explained that the proposed $10 million expenditure had been briefly discussed the previous evening. He clarified that the Town's General Fund balance was approximately $12 million, confirming that Mark Heggen's earlier estimate of $12 million and change was accurate.

Kevin Goggins asked for confirmation that the proposed $10 million expenditure would be drawn from the Town's approximately $12 million General Fund balance, questioning whether this would leave only about $2 million remaining in the fund.

Councilman Manir clarified that the Town Board had not formally requested or approved the proposed, emphasizing that the matter was still under discussion.

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Kevin Goggins stated that was the proposal and expressed concern that, without an opportunity for residents to ask questions and receive clarification during a public hearing, the proposal could move forward without sufficient public discussion. He cautioned that the next step could be for the Town to treat the expenditure as finalized and proceed with allocating the $10 million without residents having had an adequate opportunity to understand or question the proposal.

Councilman Manir thanked Kevin Goggins for his questions and emphasized that the budget discussion had taken place during a public meeting. He pointed out that Mr. Marvin LeRoy had attended the meeting and shared his opinion. Councilman Manir stated that was the extent of the discussion and feedback received so far. Councilman Manir added that, just as Kevin Goggins was expressing his opinion, Mr. Marvin LeRoy had also shared his perspective during the public meeting. He emphasized that the Town Board had not made any decision or taken any action regarding the proposed $10 million expenditure at that point.

Kevin Goggins stated that, in his opinion, spending $10 million from a General Fund balance of approximately $12 million was unreasonable. He referenced information he believed he had seen from the State Comptroller suggesting that the Town might be holding more money than necessary. He questioned how maintaining a larger fund balance affects the Town's credit rating, particularly when the Town may need to borrow money in the future. Mr. Goggins expressed confusion about the financial reasoning behind considering such a large expenditure and stated that the proposal did not make sense to him. He concluded by asking whether he had misunderstood the situation and whether the Town Board was actually considering spending the $10 million or not.

Councilman Manir clarified that the discussion had taken place during a public meeting the previous evening. He stated that the resident in attendance had the right to express his opinion regarding the proposed expenditure, just as Kevin Goggins had the right to express his own views. Councilman Manir emphasized that both individuals were entitled to share their opinions during the public discussion.

Kevin Goggins questioned the Town's reliance on guidance from the State Comptroller when evaluating its financial position and determining how to manage its fund balance. He expressed skepticism about the Comptroller's handling of New York City's pension fund spending, alleging that the Comptroller was allowing delays in pension expenditures to help the city balance its budget. Mr. Goggins questioned whether that office should be relied upon to guide the Town's financial decisions. He encouraged the Town Board to remain focused on its existing financial approach and urged members not to proceed with the proposed $10 million expenditure. He reiterated that he did not believe spending such a substantial portion of the approximately $12 million General Fund balance was justified and expressed his belief that Clifton Park residents would not consider it an appropriate financial decision.

Heidi Merrill of Balsam Way stated that she attended the meeting specifically because of concerns about the proposed budget and agreed with the previous speaker that the proposed $10 million expenditure was unreasonable. She questioned how the Board could seriously consider spending such a large amount when the Town already had a surplus and financial reserves available for emergencies. She referenced the flooding that occurred the previous year and questioned how much the Town had spent addressing those damages, emphasizing the importance of maintaining adequate reserves for unexpected events. Ms. Merrill also raised concerns about the increasing financial burden on elderly residents and taxpayers, explaining that her mother was worried about being able to afford the expenses associated with maintaining her home and potentially selling it. Drawing on her professional experience as a financial manager at RPI, she explained that effective budgeting requires knowing what funds are intended for and ensuring that money is used responsibly. She contrasted responsible budget management with situations in which departments simply sought additional funding without a clear plan for how the money would be used, resulting in unnecessary spending and waste. She expressed concern that the proposed expenditure appeared to reflect decisions influenced by former supervisors who had not held office for nearly three decades. She also praised Supervisor Barrett for his efforts to save money and maintain the Town's financial resources. Ms. Merrill reminded Board members that they represent all residents, regardless of political majority or minority, and urged them to consider the concerns of the entire community. Acknowledging that she had not previously attended many meetings despite reviewing budgets and participating in elections, Ms. Merrill encouraged residents and Board members alike to remain engaged in local government. She

concluded by urging the Board to exercise financial restraint, consider the needs of its constituents, address the growing affordability challenges facing residents, and explore providing tax relief to those struggling with rising expenses.

Supervisor Barrett responded to residents' concerns about the proposed $10 million expenditure by defending the Town's overall financial management and tax record. He stated that the proposed budget does not exceed New York State's tax cap and emphasized that Clifton Park has never exceeded the cap. He acknowledged that he has concerns about how the tax cap is calculated, particularly during periods of high inflation, when municipalities were not given additional flexibility to account for rapidly increasing costs. He also stated that, according to the State Comptroller's rankings, Clifton Park has nearly the lowest taxes in New York State. Supervisor Barrett explained that the Town does not impose a property tax for its General Fund, relying instead on other revenue sources, particularly sales tax. He pointed to Saratoga County's 7% sales tax rate and his experience serving as chairman of the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors as evidence of the region's historically low-tax and low-spending approach. He emphasized that the Town has worked for many years to establish a strong General Fund balance because it does not have the predictable revenue stream that a municipal property tax would provide. He attributed much of the Town's sales tax success to commercial development around Exit 9, including retailers such as Boscov's, Target and Kohl's, as well as the revitalization of Clifton Park Center Mall, which he stated was approximately 98–99% occupied. He explained that successful commercial development benefits both the Town through increased sales tax revenue and the Shenendehowa School District through an expanding property tax base. He also highlighted the Town's investments in infrastructure, explaining that General Fund reserves fluctuate as money is saved and allocated toward major projects. Supervisor Barrett stressed that maintaining substantial reserves is particularly important because the Town depends heavily on sales tax revenue, which can fluctuate with economic conditions. He referenced the COVID-19 pandemic and other unforeseen emergencies as examples of why municipalities need sufficient financial resources to respond to unexpected events. He explained that the Town uses its financial resources not only for emergencies but also for infrastructure, recreation and community improvements, including pickleball courts, playgrounds, sewer infrastructure, stormwater systems, parks and sidewalks. He also discussed the Town's handling of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding received during the pandemic. Supervisor Barrett noted that Clifton Park received substantially less funding per capita than larger municipalities such as Saratoga Springs and Albany. He argued that some municipalities used temporary federal funding to establish new programs and hire additional employees, thereby increasing permanent operating expenses that remained after the federal funding expired. He stated that Clifton Park took a different approach by directing much of its funding toward infrastructure improvements and providing assistance to social service organizations without unnecessarily increasing the Town's ongoing fixed costs. Addressing concerns about the Town's credit rating, Supervisor Barrett stated that Clifton Park is one level below the highest possible rating and explained that he believes the Town will never achieve the highest rating because it does not have a municipal property tax. Drawing on his years of experience in banking, he explained that credit rating agencies and financial underwriters place significant importance on predictable, recurring revenue when evaluating municipal finances and borrowing capacity. Because the Town relies heavily on sales tax rather than guaranteed property tax revenue, its future income is less certain. Supervisor Barrett concluded by defending the Town's financial position and emphasizing that maintaining a strong General Fund balance is essential to protecting Clifton Park's financial stability. He argued that the absence of a Town property tax makes it especially important to exercise caution with spending, preserve adequate reserves and ensure that sufficient funds remain available for future emergencies and necessary investments.

Marvin LeRoy of Shadowbrook Drive commented on the proposal submitted by himself, former Supervisor Dailey, former Deputy Supervisor Kelly, and former Town Clerk O’Donnell regarding the Town’s fund balance. He noted that Clifton Park has not had a general town tax since the 1960s but continues to collect various taxes, including highway and special district taxes. He emphasized that the proposal does not call for exhausting the Town’s fund balance, but rather evaluating what constitutes an appropriate or excessive reserve. Mr. LeRoy stated that when he left office in 2000, the Town had approximately $3 million in reserves, representing 20–25% of an annual budget of approximately $12–13 million. He noted that the State Comptroller’s Office had cited the Town twice for maintaining that level of fund balance. He estimated that the current fund balance is approximately 70–90% and questioned whether that level is necessary. He also clarified that his comments were not intended as criticism of the Town’s accounting staff

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or auditors, expressing appreciation for their longstanding service and the quality of the Town's audits. He concluded by emphasizing that the discussion should focus on determining an appropriate fund balance and began referencing a list of Town roads to illustrate community needs.

Councilman Manir ask Mr. LeRoy to clarify his earlier statement regarding the Town maintaining a 20–25% fund balance. Specifically, he asked what Mr. LeRoy meant when he stated that the Town had been "cited" by the State Comptroller's Office.

Mr. LeRoy clarified that the Town had previously been cited by the New York State Comptroller's Office for maintaining a fund balance of approximately 20–25%. He agreed with earlier comments regarding the Comptroller's Office and explained that, at the time, the office conducted audits of municipalities with significant fund balances. He stated that he recently contacted the Comptroller's Office while conducting research and was informed that its current auditing priorities have shifted toward municipalities experiencing budget deficits.

Members of the audience began calling out comments during Mr. LeRoy's remarks.

Mr. LeRoy asked to finish his remarks without interruption and stated that he had additional information he was unable to share at the previous evening's meeting. He referenced the National Government Officers Association, noting that it recommends a fund balance of no more than 16.7% of annual general fund expenditures, equivalent to approximately two months of operating expenses. He also stated that the New York State Comptroller's Office recommends fund balances between 5% and 15%, depending on a municipality's size and complexity. Mr. LeRoy reiterated his position that Clifton Park's fund balance is excessive and questioned the need for such substantial reserves, noting that the Town's fund balance had grown from approximately $3 million in 1999 to an estimated $16 million or more. He acknowledged that certain funds are dedicated or restricted but stated that some restrictions were established by prior Board actions and could potentially be modified through further Board action. He reiterated that he, former Supervisor Dailey, former Deputy Supervisor Kelly, and former Town Clerk O'Donnell were willing to assist the Board in reviewing the Town's finances and helping the public better understand the fund balance. He also stated that maintaining a large amount of money in the bank was not necessarily essential to the Town's credit rating, explaining that timely payment of obligations was a more significant factor, although reserves do play a role.

Supervisor Barrett disagreed with Mr. LeRoy's statement regarding the relationship between the Town's fund balance and its credit rating, indicating that he did not intend to debate the additional points raised in Mr. LeRoy's remarks.

Town Clerk Fantini advised Mr. LeRoy that his allotted time for public comment had expired.

Several members of the audience began shouting in response to the time limit being enforced.

Supervisor Barrett reminded those in attendance that all speakers are subject to the same allotted time limit for public comment.

Mr. LeRoy offered to yield the floor to another speaker and return later so as not to interfere with others wishing to comment. He noted that, during his eight years in office, he had allowed members of the public the opportunity to speak and emphasized that the Town's fund balance was an important issue that needed further discussion. Mr. LeRoy added that his intention was to be helpful and assist the Board in addressing the fund balance concerns.

Supervisor Barrett referenced a previous occasion when Mr. LeRoy publicly criticized him regarding his efforts to bring Boscov's department store to the vacant mall, adding that those efforts ultimately worked out well.

Mr. LeRoy stated that if the discussion was going to become a debate between himself and Supervisor Barrett, he wanted to ensure that it was conducted fairly.

Supervisor Barrett stated that he was not initiating a debate but was responding to Mr. LeRoy's comments. He referenced Mr. LeRoy's previous public criticism of his efforts to bring Boscov's

department store to Clifton Park and remarked that he considered that matter and the current discussion to be resolved in his favor.

Councilman Fantini requested that the discussion remain focused on the Town's budget.

Kris Fitzgerald of Thoroughbred Way addressed the Board regarding concerns about the proposed use of the Town's budgetary surplus and the conduct of the Board throughout the year. She questioned the involvement of Town Attorney Kevin Dailey in several matters, including the handling of documentation related to an employee workplace investigation, proposed revisions to the Ethics Board Town Code, restrictions on public comment, the proposed development of playing fields at Windover Farms, employee complaints regarding professional conduct, and the repeated hiring of outside legal counsel at significant expense. Ms. Fitzgerald also questioned whether Mr. Dailey's prior representation of the Windover Farms developer presented a concern regarding his involvement in the proposed playing field development. She expressed concern that the Town Attorney, who was not elected by residents, appeared to be driving numerous Board initiatives and influencing the current Board majority. Regarding the proposed road improvements, she questioned whether the Highway Department had conducted a comprehensive review supported by an independent civil engineering assessment to establish the need for the proposed work. Ms. Fitzgerald emphasized the importance of fiscal responsibility, stating that budget surpluses should not be viewed as justification for spending without first identifying specific needs. She expressed concern that several recent initiatives appeared to reflect personal or political agendas rather than the best interests of the Town and questioned whether the Board majority was acting independently in its decision-making.

Judge Jennifer Jeram representing the Clifton Park Town Court, addressed the Board regarding requested salary grade adjustments for Court employees that were not included in the proposed budget. She noted that Judge Rybak was unable to attend. Judge Jeram explained that Court staff had not received salary grade upgrades in approximately 27 years and requested that the Board consider adjustments to promote fairness and equity among Town employees. Specifically, she requested that Court Department Head Connie Brown's position be upgraded from Grade 8 to Grade 10, consistent with other Town department heads, and that Court Clerks' positions be upgraded to Grade 7, consistent with comparable Town employees. She expressed strong support for the Court staff, commending their dedication, professionalism, and assistance since she began serving as Town Judge in January. She asked the Board to reconsider the requested salary adjustments and recognize the contributions of the Court employees.

Councilman Manir thanked Judge Jeram for her presentation and acknowledged that she had previously brought the salary concerns before the Board. He stated that he would consider proposing salary increases for Court employees, recognizing that they had not received adjustments in many years. He noted that any proposed increases would need to be reviewed with the Town's financial staff to ensure the budget remained within its limits. He also emphasized the importance of treating all Town employees fairly, noting that other employees may have gone without raises and that he was still reviewing those requests. He clarified that making a proposal did not guarantee its approval, as the full Board would need to vote on it.

Judge Jeram acknowledged the importance of fiscal conservatism and referenced a memo submitted in August that suggested potential measures the Town could consider to increase revenue. She noted that the suggestions were outside the Court's direct authority but offered them as possible ways to help address the Town's financial needs. Judge Jeram further emphasized that Court employees have significant responsibilities and work very hard. She noted that they regularly interact with members of the public, including individuals who may be unhappy or upset when appearing in Town Court, and commended the staff for handling these challenging interactions.

Pamela Koniszenski of Main Street questioned whether the Town's approximately $12 million fund balance could objectively be considered excessive, noting that the term was subjective. Speaking from her perspective as a financial adviser, she distinguished between maintaining a substantial emergency reserve and spending approximately $10 million on a single project, which she considered excessive. She suggested that, rather than approving a large expenditure for road improvements all at once, the Board consider addressing projects in smaller phases, allowing each portion to be reviewed and discussed individually. Ms. Koniszenski emphasized the importance of maintaining sufficient emergency reserves, noting that unexpected expenses

could arise and that borrowing money when reserves are insufficient would result in additional interest costs. She commended the Town's approach to maintaining reserves and expressed concern about spending down the fund balance without adequately accounting for future emergencies.

Supervisor Barrett agreed with the comments regarding the importance of maintaining adequate emergency reserves and explained that the Town has historically followed a cautious approach to spending. He distinguished economically sensitive revenues, such as sales tax, from property tax revenues, which are generally more predictable. He stated that when sales tax revenues are performing well and the Town has identified needs, the Board evaluates potential expenditures while remaining mindful of the need to avoid spending too much, too quickly.

Caryl Hugg of Jonathan Drive asked Supervisor Barrett to clarify whether the current administration had ever been cited by the New York State Comptroller's Office, referencing Mr. LeRoy's earlier statement that the Town had received citations during his administration.

Supervisor Barrett stated that he was unsure whether the Town had been cited by the New York State Comptroller's Office as Mr. LeRoy described. He indicated that the issue may have been mentioned previously but noted that there was no associated penalty.

Ms. Hugg began by emphasizing her support for fiscal responsibility, transparency, and accountability, stating that taxpayer dollars must be managed responsibly and that these principles are an obligation to Clifton Park residents, not a political issue. After reviewing the Board memorandum, she indicated that she had several questions. She began by asking Town Attorney Kevin Dailey whether he had been reelected or had chosen not to seek another term.

Attorney Dailey stated that he served four terms as Town Supervisor and chose not to seek reelection after completing those terms.

Ms. Hugg asked Mr. LeRoy whether he had sought reelection when his term as Town Supervisor ended and, if so, whether he had been unsuccessful.

Mr. LeRoy stated that he retired after serving eight years as Town Supervisor.

Ms. Hugg questioned the financial qualifications and expertise of the four individuals who authored the memorandum regarding the Town's fund balance. While acknowledging their previous service to the Town, she stated that prior elected or appointed government experience does not necessarily establish expertise in municipal finance. She also questioned the appropriateness of Town Attorney Kevin Dailey participating in public criticism of the Town's financial management, emphasizing the importance of maintaining clear professional boundaries between his role as Town Attorney and his involvement in the memorandum. Ms. Hugg questioned the memorandum's characterization of the Town's fund balance of more than $16 million, compared with an annual budget of approximately $18 million, as excessive. She stated that the memorandum did not provide a comprehensive financial analysis identifying restricted, committed, assigned, and unassigned funds, anticipated capital expenses, infrastructure obligations, or projected costs for maintaining roads, equipment, buildings, and municipal services. She acknowledged the recommendations referenced from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and the New York State Comptroller but emphasized that such recommendations should be evaluated in the context of the Town's specific financial circumstances and obligations. Ms. Hugg stated that infrastructure and equipment needs should be identified and addressed through a responsible, documented financial plan. She recommended an independent review by a qualified municipal finance professional rather than drawing conclusions from the memorandum alone. She emphasized that fiscal responsibility, transparency, and accountability should apply equally to all residents, regardless of political affiliation or support for the current administration. She urged the Board to make financial decisions based on facts, sound financial practices, and the long-term interests of the entire community. Finally, Ms. Hugg stated that if the Board majority approved releasing $10 million from Town reserves, she encouraged residents to consider filing an application under New York State Public Officers Law Section 36 seeking removal of Board members through the Supreme Court, alleging malversation in office.

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Attorney Dailey stated that during his tenure, he prepared eight Town budgets, as did former Supervisor Marvin LeRoy. He acknowledged that the Town's financial circumstances have changed significantly since that time, noting that the Town now has substantially greater revenues and resources. Attorney Dailey stated that he developed the Saratoga County sales tax distribution formula while serving on the County Law and Finance Committee, explaining that the formula has provided significant financial benefits to Clifton Park over the past 35 years. He credited the Town's longstanding budgeting practices and specifically commended Supervisor Barrett for his budget management over approximately 27 years. However, he expressed concern that the Town was maintaining excessive fund balances based on State audit and control recommendations. Attorney Dailey clarified that his concern was not with the Town's overall budgeting practices but with ensuring that reserves were appropriately evaluated in relation to future financial obligations. He cited the need to construct a replacement highway garage following a fire from a few years earlier, estimating that the project could cost more than $4 million. He also noted that the Town had received approximately $872,000 in insurance proceeds toward the project.

Mark Heggen clarified that the Town received approximately $1.2 million in insurance proceeds following the highway garage fire. He explained that a portion of the funds was used to construct a permanent structure over one section of the facility and that the Town had also completed design work for a replacement garage.

Attorney Dailey stated that the Town anticipates needing to construct a new highway garage within the next one to two years and questioned whether the project would be funded through borrowing or the existing fund balance. He expressed his personal opinion that using fund balance would be an appropriate funding source, citing the previous construction of the Buildings and Grounds building, which was funded through approximately $2 million from the fund balance. Attorney Dailey clarified that his primary concern regarding the Town’s reserves was the anticipated highway garage project and reiterated that he believed using available fund balance for its construction would be a prudent use of those funds. He noted that he was offering his perspective as a former supervisor and did not have a vote on the matter.

Supervisor Barrett explained that decisions regarding borrowing versus using available fund balances are evaluated based on anticipated needs, revenue trends, available surplus funds, and prevailing interest rates. He noted that the Town has paid cash for certain projects when financially feasible and when doing so would not negatively affect its financial position. Supervisor Barrett also discussed Saratoga County’s sales tax revenue-sharing program, established and approved decades ago by the County Board of Supervisors. He explained that distributions are generally based on population, with the Town of Clifton Park receiving a larger share due to its size, population, infrastructure, and associated municipal expenses. He noted that the City of Saratoga Springs opted out of the countywide revenue-sharing formula more than ten years ago and expressed his opinion that the decision was a mistake.

Anthony Morelli of Gloucester Street thanked those in attendance and noted that, in previous years, budget hearings had received very limited public participation. He asked whether any adjustments had been made to the Supervisor’s proposed budget, expressing concern that a step in the budget review process may have been overlooked.

Supervisor Barrett clarified that no substantive changes had been made to the proposed budget. He noted that a few corrections were made, including updated figures for two fire departments that did not affect the Town’s budget, as well as corrections to errors in employee grade and step calculations.

Anthony Morelli acknowledged that a series of budget workshops had been held and noted that all Board members had participated in the discussions.

Councilman Manir stated that he had not yet submitted any budget recommendations, as he was waiting until after the budget hearing and noted that there was still time until the 17th to provide input. He explained that his primary concern was exploring ways to adjust employee salaries without increasing the overall budget. He added that he had not yet had an opportunity to meet with Mark to discuss the matter and was continuing to review the proposed budget.

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Anthony Morelli asked about the Board's customary process for making budget adjustments during the public hearing. He noted that, historically, Board members used the hearing to present adjustments following budget workshops and prior discussions, including proposed employee raises and other funding changes. He referenced the previous year's hearing, when adjustments were made to the Tree Committee budget and basketball funding, and asked where the proposed adjustments were for the current budget.

Councilman Manir reiterated that he had not yet discussed or submitted any proposed budget changes. He noted that in previous years he had shared his recommendations with the Supervisor before the budget hearing, but this year he was still reviewing the court budget figures, staffing levels, and employee salaries. He expressed concern about employee compensation and stated that he wanted to meet with Mark Heggen to discuss possible options before presenting any recommendations to the Board.

Anthony Morelli asked whether any other Board members had proposed adjustments to the Supervisor's budget. He emphasized that the public hearing was the appropriate opportunity to present and discuss any anticipated budget changes so residents could provide input before the Board acted. He expressed concern that potential adjustments, including employee salary increases or other funding changes, might be introduced after the public hearing or shortly before the next Board meeting, limiting the public's opportunity to comment. He acknowledged that the Board could make changes before the final budget vote but stressed the importance of transparency and allowing residents to understand and respond to proposed changes while they were present at the hearing. Mr. Morelli asked Board members to disclose any proposed or contemplated adjustments and clarify whether the Supervisor's proposed budget would remain unchanged for the upcoming vote.

Councilman Manir thanked Mr. Morelli and explained that, based on the limited public attendance at the previous year's hearing, he had anticipated a similar turnout and planned to submit his recommendations directly to the Supervisor. He stated that he needed to consult with the Town Controller before proposing specific budget adjustments to ensure the figures were accurate. He reiterated that his primary goal was to explore options for adjusting employee salaries without increasing the overall budget. He added that if adjustments could not be made within the existing budget, he would need to reconsider his proposal and determine whether an increase was necessary. He emphasized that he wanted to be transparent with the Board and the public about his intentions.

Member of the Audience asked Councilman Manir whether his budget concerns were limited to employee salaries.

Councilman Manir confirmed that employee salaries were his only budget concern and that he had no other proposed adjustments at this time.

Councilwoman Reid noted that there is a significant distinction between relatively small and substantially larger budget adjustments, referencing amounts of $500, $500,000, and $5 million.

Councilman Manir reiterated that he needed to meet with the Town Controller to review.

Councilwoman Reid noted that the Board had approximately a month to review the proposed budget, referencing the budget workshops held on October 7 and 8.

Jim Manuel of Shadow Wood Way addressed the Board regarding concerns about the proposed budget and the Town's financial reserves. He stated that he and his wife enjoy living in the community and would like to remain there, noting that affordability, particularly for older residents, is an important consideration. Mr. Manuel questioned the need for changes to the Town's current financial practices, stating that he was generally satisfied with the condition of the Town, its roads, facilities, and overall management. He expressed concern about maintaining adequate financial reserves and cautioned against reducing available funds, noting that unexpected events or emergencies could require substantial expenditures. He also commented that, while property taxes have increased considerably since 2000, he still considers the Town relatively affordable compared with Long Island. He emphasized that residents would support necessary improvements and community needs but encouraged the Board to exercise caution before making changes to the Town's financial position.

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Supervisor Barrett responded that the Town's approximately $12 million in reserves provides financial flexibility for future capital projects and unexpected needs, while also offering financial security. He acknowledged that the amount does not have the same purchasing power it once did. He noted that the Town does not levy a general fund property tax and stated that maintaining a substantial surplus would be more concerning if residents were also subject to high taxes. Given the Town's current financial circumstances, he characterized the reserve level as sensible and prudent.

Christine Jimenez of Patroon Place addressed concerns regarding employee compensation, budget priorities, and the Town's financial reserves. She commended the Supervisor's budget document but suggested providing an Excel breakdown showing employee raises as percentages to allow for easier comparisons. She referenced an estimated upstate New York average salary increase of 3.4%–3.6% and expressed concern that some proposed raises appeared significantly higher. She emphasized the importance of fair and equitable compensation across positions and years of service, noting that disparities could create employee morale and retention issues. She also expressed support for reinstating the Deputy Supervisor's stipend. Ms. Jimenez noted that the Town serves approximately 38,000–39,000 residents, maintains approximately 250 miles of roads, and has a relatively small workforce of approximately 135–150 employees. She praised Town employees for their work and stated that employee compensation should be prioritized alongside infrastructure spending, including the proposed $5 million for roads. She also expressed support for maintaining substantial financial reserves and questioned the need to spend down the Town's surplus. Comparing municipal finances to household budgeting, she advocated maintaining emergency savings and minimizing debt to protect against future financial uncertainty. She voiced concerns about other municipalities experiencing budget deficits and the possibility of future tax increases or workforce reductions if the Town's finances were not managed cautiously. Additionally, Ms. Jimenez shared her experience with a sinkhole near her driveway that took approximately three years to address, despite funding appearing in the budget. She questioned why road projects were carried over when funding had already been allocated. She concluded by reiterating her disagreement with the proposed reserve calculations and spending priorities, emphasizing the importance of retaining employees, maintaining adequate reserves, and keeping the Town affordable for residents.

Supervisor Barrett responded to Ms. Jimenez's comments regarding employee raises and explained the Town's grade-and-step compensation program. He noted that employees receive annual raises, in addition to periodic step increases based on their position and length of time at a particular step. He described the compensation structure as generous and stated that it has helped the Town remain competitive with both public- and private-sector employers. Supervisor Barrett added that employee retention and recruitment have remained strong, attributing this in part to competitive salaries and the Town's affordable health insurance benefits. He also discussed the Town's 2011 healthcare renegotiations with its two CSEA bargaining units. He explained that the changes resulted in approximately 25% savings during the first year, with those savings continuing over several years before healthcare costs eventually returned to their prior levels. He estimated that the cumulative savings amounted to millions of dollars compared with what the Town would have paid without the changes. He noted that the renegotiation benefited both the Town and its employees by reducing healthcare costs and helping preserve the Town's ability to provide annual salary increases.

Mike Sposili of Jamison Drive asked for clarification regarding comments made by Mr. LeRoy about the need for additional investment in Town roads. He referenced the previous evening's discussion and asked whether the concern was that additional funding was needed to improve road conditions. He also asked Supervisor Barrett to confirm whether the proposed budget had remained essentially unchanged, aside from the minor corrections previously discussed and adjustments related to the Highway Superintendent's submissions.

Mark Heggen confirmed that the paving budget amount included in the proposed budget reflected the funding requested by the Highway Superintendent, along with the requested CHIPS funding.

Mike Sposili reviewed three Highway Department budget line items: blacktop paving, CHIPS-funded road paving, and paving slip lining. He stated that, when comparing the tentative 2027 budget requests with the adopted 2026 budget, the combined funding reflected a reduction of approximately $28,300. Mr. Sposili questioned the apparent discrepancy between concerns

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expressed about the condition of Town roads and the Highway Superintendent's budget request, which was lower than the prior year's allocation. He suggested that if road conditions were as serious as described, a larger funding request might have been expected from the department. He asked the Board to consider this discrepancy and emphasized that the figures reflected a reduction rather than an increase in road paving funds.

Mark Heggen clarified that CHIPS funding is a New York State reimbursement program and that the Town's budgeted amount is tied directly to the anticipated state revenue. He explained that the 2026 CHIPS request was $650,000, while $550,000 was included in the Town's budget. He noted that the amount available can increase or decrease depending on allocations determined by the New York State Legislature, and the corresponding budgeted expenditure is adjusted to match the anticipated revenue.

Supervisor Barrett clarified that the Town budgets annually for road paving and receives supplemental funding through the State's CHIPS (Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program). He explained that CHIPS provides state funding to counties and municipalities to help offset road paving costs. He noted that the final CHIPS allocation for the upcoming budget year had not yet been established and sought confirmation of that timing.

Mark Heggen explained that the Town's CHIPS funding allocation is typically established during the following year's state budget process. He noted that reimbursement covers the period from April 1 through March 31, corresponding with the Town's road paving season, as paving generally does not take place during the winter months.

Mike Sposili raised additional questions regarding three areas of the proposed budget. Regarding highway paving, he noted that the 2026 adopted budget included $1 million for blacktop paving, while the proposed 2027 budget increased that amount by only $71,700. He questioned why the increase was not more substantial if road conditions were as serious as previously described, setting aside CHIPS funding. He also questioned the Highway Department's fuel allocation, noting that projected 2026 expenditures were $160,000 compared with the adopted budget of $135,000, while the proposed 2027 budget remained at $135,000. He expressed concern about budgeting less despite higher projected expenditures and uncertainty surrounding future fuel costs. Finally, he questioned the proposed reduction in the Legal Department's other legal fees from the 2026 adopted budget of $50,000 to $20,000 for 2027, noting that projected 2026 expenditures were approximately $60,000. He asked whether the proposed allocation adequately accounted for ongoing legal matters and outside counsel expenses.

Attorney Dailey clarified that was not a figure he had submitted for the proposed budget.

Supervisor Barrett acknowledged Mr. Sposili's observations and stated that the budget questions raised warranted further discussion.

Mike Sposili thanked Mark for the explanation and clarified that his comments were observations as he reviewed the Town budget for the first time. He expressed concern about the apparent inconsistencies in budget requests and spending priorities, stating that if departmental needs were as significant as described, he would expect to see larger requests in the operating budget rather than relying on funds from the Town's reserves.

Jim Baisley of Barkwood Lane commented on the Town's fund balance and referenced a prior State Comptroller's audit that had raised concerns about the amount of money held in reserves. He stated that the funds were primarily accumulated through sales tax revenue rather than increased property taxes and recalled that this distinction had been discussed during the earlier review. Mr. Baisley recalled that, in a previous instance when the Board determined the fund balance was excessive, approximately $2–$3 million was returned to Town residents through checks distributed to taxpayers. He suggested that if the Town again has excess funds, the Board should consider repeating that process and returning money directly to residents.

Supervisor Barrett responded that was a good idea.

Jim Baisley recalled that residents previously received refunds of approximately $150 and noted that he still had his canceled check.

Supervisor Barrett asked whether the previous taxpayer refund was issued in 2007 or 2008.

Mark Heggen confirmed it was 2007.

Jim Baisley clarified that he was not suggesting the Town eliminate its fund balance but rather return a portion of the excess funds to taxpayers, noting that the amount previously refunded was relatively small.

Councilwoman Bellamy stated the previous taxpayer refunds were distributed not only to property owners but also to renters.

Ann Connolly of Valdepenas Lane referenced comments made by former Town Supervisor Marvin LeRoy at the November 4 Town Board meeting regarding the Town's reserves and his suggestion to allocate $10 million toward road repairs. She questioned the proposal, noting that the Highway Department had not spent all previously allocated funds. Ms. Connolly raised concerns about communications between Mr. LeRoy and several Town officials, referencing emails obtained through a records request, appointments to the Town Ethics Committee, and campaign contributions. She expressed concern that the Board majority could vote to release the $10 million from reserves and subsequently approve spending through additional resolutions despite public opposition. She questioned whether the funds would ultimately be used for road improvements and expressed concern that spending could deplete reserves and potentially lead to a Town property tax. She also raised concerns about potential future capital spending, the incoming administration under Supervisor-elect Anthony Morelli, and the possibility that remaining reserve funds could be exhausted. Additionally, she questioned whether the proposed actions constituted political retribution and referenced pending sexual harassment complaints and potential litigation costs. Ms. Connolly stated that she would encourage residents to pursue action under Section 36 of the New York Public Officers Law if the Board approved releasing the $10 million. She urged the Board not to proceed with the proposal, emphasized that residents opposed a Town tax, and asked the Board to consider public concerns before taking action.

Stephanie Ranze of Fairleigh Way spoke in support of concerns raised by Ann Connolly regarding the proposed $10 million allocation from Town reserves. She questioned the timing of the proposal following the recent election and alleged that political considerations may be influencing budget decisions. Ms. Ranze raised concerns about the hiring of a Deputy Town Clerk at an approximately $70,000 salary, questioning the employee's political connections, qualifications, and the timing of the appointment. She also questioned whether the position could be related to future staffing changes involving the Town Comptroller's office. She expressed concern that taxpayer funds were being used to accommodate politically connected individuals rather than serving residents. She criticized what she viewed as a lack of transparency and accountability by the Board and concluded by quoting Proverbs 16:18, cautioning against arrogance and unchecked power.

Joseph Osse of Hemlock Drive shared his observations regarding the preliminary budget and the Town's financial reserves. He stated that reserve recommendations based on national averages may not adequately reflect Clifton Park's circumstances, including rising costs for materials, equipment, labor, and potential emergencies. He emphasized the importance of maintaining sufficient reserves to address unexpected events, such as tornadoes, flooding, and other natural or man-made emergencies. Mr. Osse expressed concern that proposed additional funding requests should be considered within their appropriate budget accounts rather than relying on the Town's emergency or rainy-day reserves. He requested greater transparency regarding the reasons for using reserve funds and how proposed expenditures would be categorized and justified. He cautioned that spending 60%–80% of the Town's reserves at once could leave the community financially vulnerable when future emergencies arise. He also noted that he had not seen sufficient spreadsheets, supporting data, or financial analyses to explain the recommendations regarding appropriate reserve levels. He urged the Board to ensure that financial guidelines reflect Clifton Park's specific needs and circumstances, maintain the Town's financial safety net for future generations, and provide residents with greater transparency before making significant decisions involving reserves.

Mary Beth Bulger of Twinbrook Court expressed support for maintaining the Town's existing fund balance, crediting the responsible financial oversight of previous Town administrations under Supervisor Phil Barrett for building and preserving the reserves. She stated that having a financial cushion provides residents with a sense of security and helps protect the Town against unexpected emergencies. Ms. Bulger asked several questions regarding the proposed $10 million transfer from

the General Fund balance, including where the money would be held, whether it would earn interest, who would oversee its management and distribution, and whether all of it would be dedicated to paving projects. She also questioned whether the Highway Department's existing 2026 allocation of approximately $7.6 million was insufficient, particularly given that some proposed budget amounts were lower than the previous year's allocations. She additionally raised concerns about aging Town infrastructure, specifically the sewer system in her neighborhood, which was designed in the early 1970s, and recurring failures of residential grinder pumps, which are now under Town jurisdiction. She suggested that maintaining adequate reserves would be prudent to address these and other infrastructure needs as they arise. Ms. Bulger questioned whether any perceived excess fund balance should instead be distributed carefully among various Town departments and entities as needed. She expressed the opinion that the existing reserves should largely remain intact unless a demonstrated need for their use exists. She concluded by reminding the Board that it represents the residents and should make financial decisions in accordance with the interests and wishes of the community, emphasizing the importance of protecting the Town's long-term financial stability.

Supervisor Barrett provided background on the evolution of the Town's sewer systems, explaining that when he first took office, the Town was responsible for only a few hundred sewer customers. Over time, privately owned water and sewer systems developed by builders were transferred to municipal ownership under state law. He noted that the Town now owns all of these systems, with Crescent Waste being the last major system acquired. He described the transfer of the CK Sanitary sewer system, which served thousands of homes and businesses in both Clifton Park and Malta, as a significant undertaking. He explained that the Town had little advance notice of the transfer and quickly established a Sewer Department to assume responsibility for the system. He stated that the transition required substantial work but was successfully accomplished and that taking ownership of the privately operated sewer systems has been beneficial to the Town.

Heidi Merrill of Balsam Way addressed Town Attorney Kevin Dailey, asking him to confirm whether he was appointed to his position and whether his role was to represent the Town.

Attorney Dailey confirmed that Ms. Merrill's understanding was correct.

Heidi Merrill expressed concern regarding what she perceived as one-sided representation by Town Attorney Kevin Dailey during Town Board meetings. She questioned how residents could be assured that the Town Attorney represents the interests of the entire Town and all residents, rather than one particular side. She asked Mr. Dailey how he could personally assure the public that his decisions and representation serve the best interests of the entire community.

Attorney Dailey responded that he makes decisions based on the duties and responsibilities of the Town Attorney as outlined in Town Law and follows those statutory guidelines.

Heidi Merrill questioned the appropriateness of Attorney Dailey making a recommendation involving former Town Supervisors while serving as Town Attorney. She stated that she had difficulty reconciling those roles.

Attorney Dailey stated that he was entitled to express his opinion as a citizen under his First Amendment rights and clarified that his interest was specifically related to the proposed new Highway Garage. He indicated that he would advocate funding the garage through the Town's reserve fund. He further clarified that there was currently no intention to remove $10 million from reserves, explaining that the figure was an idea proposed by former Supervisor Marvin LeRoy.

Heidi Merrill stated that, based on her understanding, Attorney Dailey had co-signed the proposal with former Supervisor Marvin LeRoy. She reiterated her concern that Mr. Dailey was serving as Town Attorney while participating in the proposal.

Attorney Dailey clarified that he was not the author of the proposal and was not advocating for the $10 million withdrawal. He reiterated that he supported using reserve funds only for the capital improvement project.

Heidi Merrill stated that Attorney Dailey's actions did not reflect the position he had described. She added that she makes an effort to remain neutral.

Supervisor Barrett asked Mark Heggen for an estimate of the Town's outside legal counsel expenses incurred to date for the current year, acknowledging that additional invoices may still be outstanding.

Mark Heggen reported that the Town had spent approximately $41,000 on outside legal fees to date.

Supervisor Barrett noted that the Town had not yet received all outstanding outside legal counsel invoices. He clarified that the projected $60,000 in legal expenses was an estimate, as the remaining bills had not yet been received.

Mark Heggen explained that the projected outside legal expenses are estimated from September 1 through the end of the year when preparing the budget. He noted that the final amount could be approximately $60,000 or closer to the $41,842 already incurred.

Supervisor Barrett noted that the final expense total would depend on whether any outstanding legal bills were received in the following year.

Mark Heggen clarified that legal expenses are accrued in the current year if the services were performed during that year, even if the invoices have not yet been received or paid.

Supervisor Barrett suggested that Attorney Dailey provide an estimate of anticipated outside legal expenses for the upcoming year. He noted that the proposed legal budget may need to be adjusted to account for ongoing matters and other issues that could arise in the near future.

Attorney Dailey agreed to provide an estimate of anticipated legal expenses for the upcoming year. He clarified for the public that he had not been consulted regarding any of the figures included in the Town Attorney's budget.

Supervisor Barrett clarified that he was consulting Attorney Dailey at that time and reiterated his request for an estimate of anticipated legal expenses for the upcoming year.

Caryl Hugg asked Supervisor Barrett whether either former Supervisor Marvin LeRoy or Attorney Dailey could explain the $5 million referenced in the memorandum as being provided to the Town Board for donations to community charities.

Supervisor Barrett responded that the proposed $5 million allocation for community charities was not currently under consideration. He added that former Mr. LeRoy had been given time to address the matter over the previous two evenings.

Caryl Hugg clarified that the proposal referenced $1 million for each Town Board member to donate to a charity.

Marvin LeRoy disputed that interpretation, stating that the memorandum did not specify $1 million for each Board member to donate to a charity. He clarified that it referred to funding for any public project, including nonprofit projects.

Caryl Hugg responded that a nonprofit organization is a charitable organization.

Marvin LeRoy stated that the language regarding public projects, including nonprofit projects, was intentional and was meant to encompass the types of projects. He began to explain that the wording was structured to allow each Town Board member to consider such projects.

Councilman Manir asked former Mr. LeRoy to clarify the proposed $10 million reserve withdrawal, noting that public comments had referenced several different amounts, including $1 million per Board member and $5 million for other purposes. He explained that his understanding was that reserve funds could be used to address unexpected emergencies, such as a fire at the Highway Garage, rather than having to borrow money or otherwise finance the repairs. He stated that the various figures being discussed had caused confusion and requested clarification of the proposal.

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Mr. LeRoy stated that he had attempted to include as much information as possible in his allotted time and requested another opportunity to speak after everyone else had finished so he could complete his remarks.

Supervisor Barrett criticized Mr. LeRoy's use of his allotted speaking time, stating that more time could have been used to explain the proposal rather than discuss history and offer criticism. Supervisor Barrett then identified several additional budget matters for Board consideration. He requested that Attorney Dailey provide an estimate of anticipated outside legal expenses for the upcoming year. Supervisor Barrett also proposed adding $10,000 to the budget for Clifton Park EMS to help offset the costs of providing emergency medical services during the Town's July 4th celebration, noting the substantial staffing, equipment, and resources required to serve the thousands of attendees. Additionally, Supervisor Barrett advised the Board that several grievances had been received from the Highway Department. He had provided Board members with an analysis of the union's requested employee grade and step adjustments, including the potential budget impact for each affected employee. He noted that the matters would proceed through the grievance process.

Councilwoman Reid stated that she regretted not keeping a tally of residents speaking in favor of and against the preliminary budget, noting that much of the discussion had shifted to the proposal submitted by former elected officials. She observed that no members of the public spoke in favor of the proposal and that most speakers expressed opposition. Councilwoman Reid stated that residents had elected Anthony Morelli as the incoming Town Supervisor and that he should have the opportunity to review the reserve funds and determine how they might be used. She added that he may have ideas for community improvements and that allowing him to review the funds would respect the residents' election decision. Regarding concerns about road paving and highway facilities, Councilwoman Reid noted that the Highway Superintendent had run unopposed and stated that those dissatisfied with the department's management could consider running against him in the next election. She also remarked that the Highway Department had left some paving funds unspent.

Supervisor Barrett stated that the Highway Department had left paving funds unspent over multiple years, including the previous year, and that the unspent funds had been carried forward into subsequent years on several occasions.

MOTION BY Councilman Fantini to close the public hearing, seconded by Councilwoman Reid. All in favor. Noes none. MOTION CARRIED.

Motion carried at 8:55 PM

Caitlin Fantini
Town Clerk

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