**Colton Town Board Public Meeting, October 11, 2023**

**County of St. Lawrence, State of New York, 94 Main St., Colton NY 13625**

Present: Ronald Robert, Town Supervisor Councilpersons: Lisa Fisher

Kevin Hawley, Highway Supt. Jacob Poste

Darren Richards, Code/Safety/DPW Supt. Stephen Knight

Jennifer Cole, Town Clerk Kevin Beary

Meeting attendees: Shelley Rayner, Laurie Wright, Kirke Perry, Anne Townsend, Andrea Malik, Ellie Menz, Bill Swafford

Zoom attendees: Dennis Eickhoff, MaryJane Watson, Cynthia Hennessy

Councilperson Jacob Poste was absent for this meeting

Supervisor R. Robert led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting opened at 2:06pm. This public meeting was advertised in the local North Country Now paper. This meeting was called to discuss the tentative 2024 budget for the Town of Colton.

Bookkeeper Shelley Rayner gave a brief explanation on how the budget process works, how numbers are figured and any possible changes that the board may propose.

Mrs. Rayner stated that the current budget that is proposed is not increasing taxes. The Transfer Station Improvements are not included in this budget.

Questions were asked by the board about salary increases, building equipment line increase and the engineering line increase. DPW Superintendent Darren Richards spoke of the work to be done at the wastewater plant. A crane lift is needed. As well as an air vent system. Also, new billing software. Colton Highway Superintendent Kevin Hawley needs new equipment as well. A new loader is crucial for loading trucks with sand etc. Highway currently has two but the newest one is a 2013. Ms. Fisher requested that there be a portion of the 2024 budget dedicated to Winterfest and other town events for advertising etc. Suggested dollar amount was $1,000.00 in line A7550.4. The Planning Board would like a 3% increase in their wage per meeting. They put a lot of work into many projects, i.e., comprehensive plan, wind law and solar law. There was a decrease in line A8020.131 Planning Personnel Service. It was requested that the line be increased back to $2,970.00. The library has a wall that is deteriorating. This building is a “historic building” therefore certain criteria needs to be met when making repairs. The appraisal for the repair of the library wall is $45,000.00. The library board is requesting that the town pay for approximately 80% of this repair. The library has an unappropriated fund balance of $192,000.00. There is also an investment account with $97,000.00 in it currently, $35,000.00 cannot be touched. Explanation and discussion on tax increase, levies etc. Ms. Rayner recommended that the time to start slowly increasing taxes is now. The town of Colton has not increased taxes in six years. With pending Erie Blvd litigation and pending transfer station improvements, with the possibility of no grant match the board should consider raising taxes. If you do not start now, in the long term there will possibly be a large increase, which the taxpayers would not be prepared for. Questions on investments. Usage of the town’s fund balance. Usage of Highway fund balance. Questions on outside fire protection services as well as ambulance services. Fire tax levy limit and the fire contract renewal which is every four years. Mrs. Rayner and Mrs. Cole both brought to the board’s attention that Mr. Kirke Perry is present at most meetings as the Zoom Coordinator. Mr. Perry does this on his own time with no pay. Discussion on the proper pay amount for this service. Mrs. Cole offered an explanation on the reasoning for her salary increase.

Next meeting for 2024 budget purposes is scheduled for October 16th, 2023, at 6pm, Colton Town Hall

**Adjournment:**

Motion #1

With no further business to discuss, Ms. Fisher made a motion to close the public meeting at 5:05pm, seconded by Mr. Knight.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent – Mr. Poste

Motion carried

Meeting minutes by Colton Town Clerk Jennifer Cole