

TOWN BOARD
TOWN OF OYSTER BAY
REGULAR MEETING
October 20, 2020
7:00 p.m.

HEARING - BUDGET

To consider the Preliminary Budget for the Town of Oyster Bay for the Year 2021 (M.D. 9/22/20 #24).

JOSEPH SALADINO
SUPERVISOR

RICHARD LaMARCA
TOWN CLERK

P R E S E N T:

SUPERVISOR JOSEPH S. SALADINO
COUNCILWOMAN MICHELE M. JOHNSON
COUNCILMAN LOUIS B. IMBROTO
COUNCILMAN THOMAS P. HAND
COUNCILMAN STEVE L. LABRIOLA
COUNCILWOMAN LAURA L. MAIER
COUNCILWOMAN VICKI WALSH

A L S O P R E S E N T:

RICHARD LaMARCA, TOWN CLERK
JEFFREY P. PRAVATO, RECEIVER OF TAXES

Minutes of the meeting
taken by:

TRACIE A. CINQUEMANI
Reporter/Notary Public

1 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Good evening,
2 ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to Town of Oyster
3 Bay Town Hall for our Budget Hearing, the evening
4 session, for Tuesday, October 20, 2020.

5 To lead us in prayer, as we begin every
6 Board Meeting, I'd like to welcome Reverend
7 Christopher Sullivan of Saint Rose of Lima Church
8 in Massapequa.

9 Reverend, the floor is yours.

10 Please all rise.

11 (Whereupon, a prayer was recited and a
12 moment of silence was observed.)

13 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Thank you,
14 Father.

15 Thank you for all that you do for us in
16 terms of our spiritual needs, and thank you for
17 leading us in prayer in this important evening.

18 God bless you.

19 To lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance,
20 please welcome a distinguished member of the VFW
21 Post 5942 in Plainview, Army Specialist 5, Tom
22 Ferenholtz, who served in the United States Army
23 from 1968 until 1972.

24 Specialist Ferenholtz, the podium is
25 yours.

1 (Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance
2 was recited.)

3 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Thank you for
4 your dedication and your service to our Nation in
5 defense of our freedoms, and also thank you for
6 your continuing efforts in the community, with our
7 Veterans, with our residents, and for setting an
8 example second to none, especially for young people
9 who need a hero like you, sir.

10 God bless you, and thank you very much
11 for being here.

12 Now, please join us for a moment of
13 silence for our men and women in the United States
14 Armed Forces serving here in the homeland and
15 abroad, and in recognition of the men and women in
16 law enforcement, all of our first responders, and,
17 of course, our healthcare heroes.

18 (Whereupon, a moment of silence was
19 observed.)

20 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: May God bless
21 them all. Thank you very much. Please be seated.

22 So this is a continuation of our
23 hearing that we started this morning as we unveiled
24 the 2021 Budget of the Town of Oyster Bay, and we
25 continue to thank everyone for their cooperation

1 and thank our staff for all of their hard work in
2 putting this together.

3 Now, many of you know, we talked about
4 this, this morning, it's Breast Cancer Awareness
5 Month, and those of you who came in through these
6 doors on the West Side may have noticed the "Glow
7 of Hope" -- the pink lights that are out there --
8 and we appreciate all who are working in
9 healthcare, and we think of all who have suffered
10 from breast cancer and those who have passed on,
11 including one of the members of our Town of Oyster
12 Bay family, Mary Diglio, but many, many people are
13 obviously fighting this terrible disease, and our
14 hearts and prayers go out to them all.

15 Some know that October is also Fire
16 Prevention Month, and tonight we have special
17 guests from the Hicksville Fire Department -- and
18 I'm going to ask you to stand as I call your
19 names -- as we welcome First Assistant Chief Chris
20 Moskos, Sr. Let's give him a hand, please.

21 (Whereupon, there was a round of
22 applause.)

23 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: To you and all of
24 the members here this evening, we take special
25 pleasure in thanking you and recognizing the

1 exemplary individuals, the members of the
2 Hicksville Fire Department; particularly, those who
3 display great heroism and poise in helping others
4 in times of emergency and in times of crisis, and
5 that's what happened on the morning of
6 September 28, 2020, at approximately 5:30 a.m.
7 Members of the Hicksville Fire Department,
8 including the Chief of Department, Gary Lewis, who
9 is a Town of Oyster Bay employee who we're very
10 proud of, Lieutenant Andrew Niemczyk (applause) --
11 Lieutenant Niemczyk of Engine Company 3, and
12 Captain Chris Moskos of Heavy Rescue Company 8.

13 (Whereupon, there was a round of
14 applause.)

15 That morning they responded to a
16 working fire -- and for those of you who aren't in
17 the fire services, that means that the house was
18 engulfed with flames -- on a house located on
19 Sutherland Road in Hicksville with reports of a
20 victim trapped inside.

21 Upon arrival, Lieutenant Niemczyk and
22 Captain Moskos immediately began search operations
23 in extremely thick smoke conditions, which we all
24 can imagine is incredibly dangerous. It takes
25 tremendous training and it takes nerves of steel to

1 go into a burning building successfully as you did.

2 In the process of searching, the two
3 first responders found a 90-year-old woman lying on
4 the floor unconscious. Collectively, they carried
5 the unconscious victim outside to safety where she
6 was discovered to still be alive, thank God. She
7 was then transported due to your actions via
8 ambulance to the hospital.

9 Now, those on hand noted that the
10 victim was removed in the nick of time, and if
11 there was any additional delay, she might not have
12 made it, but their job did not end there.

13 Lieutenant Niemczyk and Captain Moskos
14 then went back to the fire engine to stretch hose
15 lines into the house. Together with other
16 department members, they were effectively able to
17 extinguish that fire, and they protected the other
18 homes nearby that could have been also ignited in
19 the blaze.

20 Gentlemen, you and the members of the
21 Hicksville Fire Department are quite simply
22 amazing. We appreciate your efforts, we appreciate
23 your bravery, and let's give all of them a
24 tremendous Town of Oyster Bay round of applause for
25 saving this woman's life.

1 (Whereupon, there was a round of
2 applause.)

3 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Thank you,
4 Captain Chris Moskos and Lieutenant Niemczyk.

5 The community of Hicksville and the
6 Town of Oyster Bay are indeed tremendously indebted
7 to you both. We take tremendous pride in
8 recognizing both of you for demonstrating the
9 ability to act quickly and skillfully when fellow
10 citizens are in need. Your alert and essential
11 actions were lifesaving and exceedingly worthy of
12 the Town's highest honor, so I ask you to join us
13 up front as we make these Town of Oyster Bay
14 presentations to Captain Chris Moskos and
15 Lieutenant Andrew Niemczyk.

16 (Whereupon, there was a round of
17 applause and a photo session.)

18 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Anything you
19 would like to say to the public in general about
20 your efforts and the rest of the Department?

21 They can run into burning buildings,
22 but they're nervous to speak in front of a handful
23 of people.

24 God bless you, guys, and thank you so
25 much for your efforts. Let's hear it for our

1 heroes.

2 (Whereupon, there was a round of
3 applause.)

4 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: It is important
5 to note, we talk about heroes in sports, heroes in
6 government, I guess there's some heroes in
7 government, we talk about heroes in all kinds of
8 lines of work, but to think about the efforts of
9 these volunteers who put their lives on the line,
10 again, thank you. You are our heros.

11 (Whereupon, there was a round of
12 applause.)

13 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: As stated, we
14 adjourned this afternoon, and we are continuing
15 right now with our Hearing.

16 Just so you know, questions and so
17 forth must be germane to the 2021 budget, and we
18 are here to express what we are proposing and then
19 to listen to the public on the budget.

20 So if the Clerk would please call the
21 role.

22 THE CLERK: Supervisor Saladino?

23 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Present.

24 THE CLERK: Councilwoman Johnson?

25 COUNCILWOMAN JOHNSON: Present.

1 THE CLERK: Councilman Imbroto?

2 COUNCILMAN IMBROTO: (Not Present.)

3 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Councilman
4 Imbroto should be joining us at some point. I am
5 going to text him right now.

6 COUNCILWOMAN MAIER: I just did.

7 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: You just did.

8 Thank you.

9 THE CLERK: Councilman Hand?

10 COUNCILMAN HAND: Present.

11 THE CLERK: Councilman Labriola?

12 COUNCILMAN LABRIOLA: Here.

13 THE CLERK: Councilwoman Maier?

14 COUNCILWOMAN MAIER: Present.

15 THE CLERK: Councilwoman Walsh?

16 COUNCILWOMAN WALSH: Present.

17 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: All right.

18 At this time I'd like to ask our
19 Director of Finance, Rob Darienzo, to step forward
20 to give us a presentation, as we did this morning,
21 on the 2021 Proposed Town of Oyster Bay Budget.

22 MR. DARIENZO: Good evening, Supervisor
23 Saladino.

24 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Can you turn that
25 down a little bit?

1 COUNCILWOMAN MAIER: That's it. I
2 can't turn it down any more.

3 MR. DARIENZO: I'm too loud?

4 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: No, no, we can
5 hear you fine.

6 MR. DARIENZO: I'll whisper.

7 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Thank you.

8 For the record, your name and position
9 again?

10 MR. DARIENZO: Good evening, Supervisor
11 Saladino and Town Board Members. This is Rob
12 Darienzo, and I am your Director of Finance. I am
13 here to discuss the 2021 Operating Budget.

14 As you mentioned, we had a hearing that
15 started this morning, so I'll be as brief as
16 possible to not repeat myself.

17 The total proposed spending in the 2021
18 budget is \$311 million. In broad strokes, that's a
19 1.7 percent increase over 2020.

20 Salaries are up in 2021 mostly due to
21 contractual expenses, but also related to an
22 increase by a State mandated minimum wage increase
23 reliance on part-timers here at the Town.

24 Debt service costs are down in 2021 by
25 over \$2 million, and that is largely due to an

1 increased bond rating, which we are very proud of,
2 which is going to reduce the expenses for interest
3 in 2021, as well as the fact that we're simply
4 issuing less debt in 2021 than in past years, which
5 will also reduce our principal payments.

6 Legal fees in 2021 are set to be
7 approximately \$1.5 million, which is down
8 \$1 million from the 2.5 million that has been
9 authorized for the past three or four budgets.

10 The pandemic has obviously changed all
11 of our lives, and the Town of Oyster Bay's budget
12 has been similarly affected. We have increased
13 expenses for items like PPE and materials and
14 supplies related to retrofitting our employees'
15 work spaces to allow them to feel safe as they do
16 their jobs. Those expenses are reflected in the
17 General Services Budget.

18 We've also seen that most residents who
19 are staying home are creating more garbage because
20 they're doing home improvements or just a general
21 home cleanout, so we've experienced additional
22 tonnage that has been created during the pandemic
23 that we've assumed will also stay increased in
24 2021. We expect that some of this money that we
25 are spending will be reimbursed through FEMA and

1 their Stafford Act. They give us 75 percent of our
2 expenses back. We budgeted zero dollars for that
3 in terms of revenue, so we've planned for every
4 dollar to be expended and zero dollars to be
5 returned to us, so any money that we do get in the
6 form of reimbursement will be a boom to our surplus
7 in the 2021 budget.

8 Other than that, on the expense side,
9 things are pretty much status quo. The departments
10 were told keep your 2021 expenses in line with 2020
11 and, again, other than things that are mostly COVID
12 related, they heeded that mandate.

13 On the revenue side, we've held the
14 line on taxes for the third year in a row, which
15 follows a tax reduction in 2018 of \$1.3 million.
16 So we reduced taxes in 2018 by \$1.3 million, we
17 held the line on taxes in 2019, we held the line on
18 taxes in 2020, we're going to hold the line on
19 taxes in 2021.

20 So, if you take 1.3 and multiply it by
21 4, I am your Director of Finance, I can tell you
22 it's \$5.2 million, so \$5.2 million will be put back
23 -- almost four years have been put back, will be
24 put back into the pockets of your taxpayers while
25 we still take our cumulative deficit and turn it

1 into a surplus, reduce our net debt by record
2 amounts, and increase our bond rating, so we're
3 doing all the right things, and at the same time
4 we're lowering the taxes for our residents.

5 We talk about conservative budgeting on
6 both the revenue and the expense side. In terms of
7 revenues for 2021, we've budgeted zero dollars for
8 the parking permit fees that are going to be
9 collected in 2021, Zero. Any dollar that comes in
10 for anyone paying for a parking permit will go
11 towards aiding the surplus in the Public Parking
12 Fund.

13 I know I'm jumping around here. We had
14 five funds that were in a deficit when this
15 administration took over in 2017. We're down to
16 only two funds having a deficit at this time; one
17 of which is the Public Parking Fund; the other is
18 the Solid Waste District.

19 The Public Parking Fund because we
20 budgeted zero dollars in public parking permit fees
21 in 2021, they will see -- we expect their fund to
22 turn back into the black by the end of this
23 calendar year -- by the end of 2021's calendar
24 year -- based on parking permit fees and other
25 revenues that we have purposefully under budgeted

1 in 2021.

2 The idea is to be more conservative in
3 our estimates to insure that we don't count on any
4 revenues other than the things that we know we're
5 going to get, most importantly, the taxes.

6 There was recently a Town Board
7 authorization for a contract with, I believe the
8 company is VIP, to park cars at our D.P.W. complex
9 on unused acreage in the back areas of our D.P.W.
10 complex. It's expected to net us \$840,000 in the
11 first year and up to \$960,000 in Year 10 -- it's a
12 10-year contract -- that on the average will be
13 roughly \$900,000 a year, so \$9 million over the
14 course of 10 years.

15 In 2021, we budgeted zero dollars in
16 revenues for that purpose. So the idea behind that
17 is there have been other things that we thought we
18 would generate revenues from that didn't always
19 come to fruition, so we don't like to count our
20 chickens before they hatch, and so that deal has
21 now been signed, and we will receive that revenue,
22 but we budgeted zero dollars for that in 2021;
23 meaning, that we expect to have that much money and
24 money in other places that will just be surplus
25 that is generated in 2021 that is not part of the

1 operating budget, just with the idea of we don't
2 want to -- again, we want to underestimate our
3 revenues and possibly overestimate our expenses
4 where we can with the idea of under promising
5 budget items to our residents and over delivering.
6 Under promising and over delivering has always been
7 my motto.

8 In the past four years since you've
9 been here, in all those audits, we've shown that
10 with a surplus of 20 million, 15 million,
11 17 million, and 19 million. We took a cumulative
12 deficit of \$44.5 million and turned it into a
13 cumulative surplus of \$27.4 million.

14 Obviously, COVID and the pandemic has
15 had a large effect on our lives and not just the
16 expense side but also on revenues. We count on
17 items like sales tax and mortgage tax to help
18 supplement our budget.

19 The Town's budget is, again, just over
20 \$300 million. Of that, \$233 million comes in the
21 form of taxes. Those dollars, as we mentioned the
22 tax freeze, so we got \$230 million in 2018, we got
23 \$233 million in 2019, we got \$233 million in 2020,
24 and we will collect through the next year in taxes
25 \$233 million in 2021. That will be virtually

1 unchanged. That's roughly 75 percent of our
2 operating budget.

3 We do collect on average on a typical
4 year, between \$15 and 16 million in sales tax and
5 \$10 to 12 million in mortgage tax. The pandemic,
6 obviously, shut down our economy for largely the
7 second quarter of 2020, and we expect that even
8 though we haven't received our funds for the second
9 quarter of 2020 yet for our sales tax or mortgage
10 tax, we do expect a decrease in the 25 percent
11 range for those quarters, and so in the 2021
12 budget, we allocated 10 percent less than we expect
13 overall for the year for both sales tax and
14 mortgage tax. We feel that's a conservative
15 estimate.

16 We have our fingers crossed that the
17 pandemic will see itself be relatively solved by a
18 vaccine at some point during 2021, but even despite
19 that, we have anecdotal evidence that mortgages are
20 being seen at a rate just as typical as ever
21 because Manhattanites are moving out to the Island
22 and buying homes and moving out of the big city
23 once and for all.

24 As far as sales tax goes, we've also
25 heard anecdotal evidence that online shopping is

1 bigger and better than ever. So even though in the
2 second quarter some people couldn't go out to the
3 stores, they are spending their money online and
4 having things delivered to them.

5 The 2021 Capital Program is not
6 officially part of the operating budget that we're
7 discussing tonight, but it plays an important role
8 in the sense that the amount of debt that we issue
9 versus the amount of debt that we pay down is an
10 important part of how our operating budget moves
11 forward.

12 In 2021, the Capital Budget Committee
13 has approved \$55 million in authorization for 2021.
14 Those bond authorizations will come before this
15 Town Board in the next couple of months for their
16 approval. If the Town Board sees fit to approve
17 those resolutions, again, we will borrow
18 \$55 million in new money in 2021. That's the
19 quote/unquote "bad news." The good news is that we
20 will pay down \$65 million in debt in 2021.

21 At the same time, we have a refunding
22 opportunity -- a refinancing opportunity -- to take
23 existing bonds that were issued approximately ten
24 years ago, and when you compare the rates we
25 received ten years ago compared to the rates we

1 received today, we should save roughly \$7 million
2 in bond principal and interest just by a strict
3 refinancing in 2021.

4 So, between paying down 65, issuing 55,
5 right there you saved \$10 million, and by further
6 refinancing existing debt that's eligible to be
7 recalled in 2021, we estimate saving another
8 \$7 million. So right now we're looking at saving
9 \$17 million in overall debt principal in 2021.

10 \$17 million is a lot of money. It will bring the
11 grand total since you've been here over \$180
12 million in net debt repayments -- debt reduction.

13 When you took office, the overall debt
14 stood at \$763 million. By the end of 2020, it will
15 stand at \$598 million -- a reduction of
16 165 million. With the \$17 million estimated
17 reduction in 2021, it will take us to \$182 million
18 of a net reduction.

19 A net reduction means that not only are
20 we paying down debt at record intervals. We are
21 also spending the money necessary to improve roads
22 at a record pace to keep our parks and our
23 infrastructure at a level that our residents have
24 come to know and expect, to keep our fleet updated.

25 So, we are doing all the right things

1 in terms of still spending the money efficiently
2 and wisely and showing the restraint to not go out
3 and do whatever we want to do. We're doing what
4 needs to be done while still reducing our debt,
5 again, at record intervals.

6 If my memory serves me correctly, you
7 were sworn in on January 31, 2017, just under four
8 years ago, and on that day, I had barely met you,
9 but you were sworn in, in this room, and we spent
10 three hours that afternoon discussing the Town's
11 finances.

12 I gave you a crash course in where we
13 stood, and you gave me a crash course in where you
14 wanted us to go. You laid out a vision that would
15 not just stand for 2017 -- because you expected to
16 be here for a long time -- and here we are, again,
17 almost four years later, and the vision you laid
18 out that day in framework has carried on where we
19 are today as part of this 2021 budget.

20 We have shown great restraint in the
21 issuance of debt, we have shown great restraint in
22 terms of hiring new employees as others have
23 retired, and there's been a discipline shown that I
24 have not experienced in my time here.

25 It's enabled us to take our, again, the

1 most important metric for our rating agencies is
2 our cumulative surplus/deficit. When you walked in
3 the door, we had a cumulative deficit of
4 \$44.5 million, and since you have walked in the
5 door, we've had four completed audits, and those
6 audits have netted us an additional \$71 million of
7 surplus to take our \$44.5 million deficit and turn
8 it into a \$27.4 million surplus. It's an
9 astounding turnaround. It's almost unexplainable,
10 except it is explainable, it's math.

11 But we talked about getting our
12 cumulative surplus to a level of approximately
13 10 percent of our operating budget. Our operating
14 budget, again, is \$311 million in 2021. When you
15 got here, it was roughly \$300 million, so we talked
16 about getting our surplus to a total of
17 \$30 million, 10 percent, which is what the State
18 Comptroller's Office would deem more than
19 reasonable, and so, again, you came here at
20 negative 44.5, our bond rating was at
21 non-investment grade, which doesn't sound as cool
22 as junk. We were at a junk bond rating.

23 We received multiple upgrades from both
24 Standard & Poors and Moody's since you've been
25 here. In July of this year, Moody's upgraded our

1 bond rating for the second time this year. They
2 upgraded us in February; they upgraded us in July.
3 Standard & Poors went so far as to upgrade our
4 rating two notches in July. Now, they both told us
5 on separate calls, from separate firms, we don't
6 raise anybody's bond rating during a pandemic, but
7 they could not ignore all of the good work that's
8 been done here over the course of the past three-
9 plus years.

10 For those of you who were listening
11 earlier today, Councilman Labriola asked me about
12 our bond rating, specifically in terms of the
13 letters for Standard & Poors and Moody's, and I'm
14 sorry that I didn't have them committed to memory
15 this morning, but I can report to you right now
16 that with Standard & Poors, our rating is a BBB+
17 and with Moody's it's a BAA-1. So "B"s aren't the
18 best, but we're one notch away from being in the
19 "A"s with both firms, and I expect that those
20 increases to our ratings will come in the near
21 future.

22 Because these bond rating agencies
23 believe in trends, they believe in, again, multiple
24 years of positive results, we've shown them four
25 years of giant surpluses. At first, they weren't

1 sure what was going on. They were, like, wow, you
2 guys were terrible for a long time and now you guys
3 have completely flipped the script and done a
4 complete 180, and now you're generating large
5 surpluses, but, again, four years in a row is
6 something they can't ignore.

7 And now despite a global pandemic that,
8 again, has changed all of our lives, we expect that
9 the 2020 result of operations will still generate a
10 small surplus. Despite the fact that we're going
11 to lose, again, roughly 20 percent of our sales
12 tax, of our mortgage tax, of our building permit
13 fees, we won't be as greatly affected as other
14 places because of our lack of reliance on those
15 revenues, and because of our 2020 budget having a
16 built-in -- almost a built-in surplus that we
17 believe to be in the range of \$8 to 10 million, we
18 still believe we can absorb these revenue losses
19 and still generate a surplus in 2020.

20 I don't know how many other places are
21 going to be talking about a surplus in 2020, and
22 while I don't subscribe to Newsday or give them any
23 money to pay for their newspaper, I definitely see
24 their headlines, and there are other municipalities
25 that are raising taxes, raising their spending,

1 while us here in the Town of Oyster Bay are holding
2 the line on taxes for the third year in a row after
3 lowering taxes in 2018, it's -- everything we're
4 doing is basically the opposite of what others are
5 doing. We're zigging, they're zagging, and our
6 bond rating is on the way up. Other places are
7 struggling. Other places might have to resort to
8 cash flow borrowings, which we have taken ours from
9 a high of \$32 million when you got here to zero
10 dollars for the past two years.

11 I can't say enough about how happy I am
12 and how proud I am to be putting together the
13 budget and the financial plan in conjunction with
14 you and the Town Board over the past four years,
15 three years. It's really been a pleasure to see
16 and our finances turn from the darkest they could
17 be to where they are now, it's a testament to all
18 that we've done, and we're going to continue to do
19 it. We've done all the right things, we're going
20 to keep doing the right things, and the future is
21 bright here in the Town of Oyster Bay.

22 If there are any questions that need to
23 be answered, I am happy to answer them.

24 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Thank you,
25 Mr. Darienzo, for all of your hard work.

1 It takes months to put a budget
2 together, and it takes all year to make sure that
3 it's followed. We appreciate your professionalism
4 and your efforts in working together.

5 I have to say also I thank the Town
6 Board for all of their input, for their business
7 acumen, and all that they have done to assist in
8 the process with the Administration working
9 together.

10 We have so many pieces of great news
11 this year from turning the deficit into a surplus,
12 and, by the way, that's as of the close of 2019
13 when we speak of the \$27.4 million surplus. It's
14 even better now, but our books close for 2019 on
15 the 31st of December, and then we get our audit at
16 the end of June.

17 MR. DARIENZO: Correct.

18 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: So it takes some
19 time to get that done. We've generated these large
20 surpluses every year, we've reduced the debt by
21 record amounts, it will be at the end of the 2021
22 budget \$165 million of reduced debt.

23 MR. DARIENZO: It's 165 by the end of
24 this year. It's 182 by the end of --

25 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: I'm sorry.

1 \$182 million of capital debt reduction
2 while -- and that's net as you said -- and everyone
3 realizes that by net, we mean we're continuing to
4 spend money to pave our roads, to protect and
5 rebuild our infrastructure.

6 We've paved 100 roads so far, and this
7 is something the public has called for. We've been
8 buying new garbage trucks and Highway Department
9 trucks so we can handle the emergencies and keep
10 them running -- they put tremendous miles on those
11 large trucks -- and eliminated cash flow borrowing,
12 as you said we don't do any longer. We stopped
13 amortizing our retirement system costs, received
14 multiple bond rating increases, too, during COVID,
15 kept our budget expenses in line. This is a
16 balanced budget. It does not rely on any one
17 shots, any gimmicks, any land sales. We have
18 reduced our total salary costs, and, best of all,
19 we've done it while cutting taxes.

20 So, I want to thank you very much and
21 open the floor to any questions from the Town
22 Board.

23 (Whereupon, no questions were offered
24 from the Town Board.)

25 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Just so the

1 public knows, we've been through this process
2 earlier today. We do a 10 o'clock hearing and a
3 7:00 p.m. hearing so we give opportunities for
4 everyone in the public to be heard, make it
5 convenient for them. Many of the questions were
6 already asked and answered this morning, and we
7 appreciate all of your efforts.

8 So, at this time, thank you for that
9 very thorough budget presentation --

10 MR. DARIENZO: Thank you.

11 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: -- and thank you
12 for helping us to continue to cut the Town's taxes.

13 We hear the public loud and clear. We
14 have responded by getting the books back in shape
15 by restoring the financial stability of this Town
16 while cutting the taxpayers' taxes.

17 Thank you very much.

18 MR. DARIENZO: No problem.

19 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: At this point, do
20 we have any slips from those who would like to be
21 heard?

22 We ask that you keep your comments
23 germane to the 2021 Proposed Budget, and our first
24 speaker will be Arthur Adelman.

25 Mr. Adelman, please come up to the

1 podium?

2 MR. ADELMAN: Rob, Supervisor, Council
3 persons, I'm glad to be here this evening.

4 Unfortunately, two of my three pages
5 are not germane to the 2020 budget, and that's
6 because the information I need to look at a budget
7 is not available to me for the 2021 budget, so I
8 had to rely on information that I could obtain
9 based on the 2020 budget, which gives me
10 information and expenses that are primarily from
11 2019. So we will just take that aspect and put it
12 over here and discuss that some other time.

13 I question Rob and the Supervisor for
14 making a statement that we are reducing salaries.
15 Insofar as, I guess, I really can't talk about
16 what's been done over the last three months on
17 Personnel Resolutions because that's been done for
18 2020, but for the 2021 budget, I looked at one
19 item, Department of Environmental Resources, which
20 is where the animal shelter is based in.

21 I'm curious, do we have a Commissioner
22 of the D.E.R. now?

23 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Yes.

24 MR. ADELMAN: Who might that be?

25 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: That's

1 Commissioner Savinetti.

2 MR. ADELMAN: Savinetti.

3 Louis Savinetti.

4 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Yes, sir.

5 MR. ADELMAN: Ah, he's got a lot of
6 history.

7 Now, that budget line on the D.E.R., I
8 noticed there was a salary increase of \$200,000.

9 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: I think what
10 we're trying to get at, the message we're sending,
11 is the fact that we have 75 people retiring in
12 2021, we are greatly reducing our overall cost --
13 that equals about \$10 million in salaries and
14 benefits -- so that comes off the books, and we are
15 reducing our costs in other ways, but the total of
16 the salary line in the budget has come down
17 considerably since this Administration began in the
18 Town.

19 MR. ADELMAN: Well, I just look at --
20 the budget is very voluminous.

21 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: We are the third
22 largest town in America.

23 MR. ADELMAN: One of the things I am
24 not able to do when I go online and look at the
25 budget, which I'd like to see your IT department

1 work on, if I get to a department like the D.E.R.,
2 and the first line on top is salaries, I'd like to
3 be able to click it and have it open up the Excel
4 of all the personnel and all of the salaries that
5 make up that \$400,000, if that's what it is.

6 I would like to see when you talk about
7 architectural and engineering expenses where that
8 might fall, for what company, or what contracts or
9 what projects.

10 For example, in the D.E.R., they have a
11 line called architectural engineering, I think,
12 where the budget for last year was 275 and thus far
13 this year we've only used, like, \$40,000, and this
14 year the new budget line on that line is 240,000,
15 and I'm figuring, oh, they've got an uncompleted
16 project, so they're just using the balance from
17 2020, and now they're going to use it in 2021, or
18 are we going to have a transfer of funds in that
19 department and use up that \$230,000. It's
20 questions like that, that I don't -- I can't get
21 answers.

22 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: I think the
23 answer to that, you have to also take into effect
24 that some projects had to slow down because of
25 COVID. There was a time period when these outside

1 workers who were on some of these projects weren't
2 allowed to continue, and, of course, the State shut
3 down a portion of our work force, but in the Town
4 of Oyster Bay during COVID, we continued in so many
5 ways.

6 The Building Department never stopped.
7 The Parks Department continued. We kept every
8 park, our beach, everything open for our residents.
9 We had a resident here today, during the morning
10 meeting from Plainview thanking us for keeping the
11 pools and "saving their summer" was the phrase they
12 used. But in terms of our projects, yes, COVID did
13 affect some of those projects.

14 MR. ADELMAN: Well, would that be an
15 example of something that's the budget for 240 for
16 2021 is actually going to be the balance that was
17 unused in 2020? Because if it is, then I'm
18 thrilled, you know, you save money.

19 The other big salary jump I noticed was
20 Intergovernmental Affairs. The salary line on that
21 department went from 653 to \$953,000. That's, you
22 know, quite a jump, and, you know, I'm not sure I
23 even, you know, know what everybody does there.

24 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Intergovernmental
25 Affairs, among many different responsibilities,

1 applies for and successfully brings grants in from
2 New York State and the Federal Government.

3 The expertise of those employees
4 understanding how to apply for, follow through and
5 secure those grants means millions of dollars to
6 our Town for a wide variety of services including
7 the Public Works projects. They still go through
8 that department to secure the grants.

9 We do job training, which has been an
10 essential part of getting people back to work.
11 We've done résumé workshops, we connect employers
12 with potential employees, so they have turned out
13 to be one of the most important departments we've
14 had because they've helped so many people go back
15 work, in many cases, in new careers.

16 MR. ADELMAN: Right.

17 Again, going back to what I would like
18 to be able to do with that, if the budget was
19 presented in more of an Excel format, I could click
20 on that line to see if there was a compare to 2020
21 to 2021. Let's see, we only have four employees
22 for experts in 2020, and now we're using six, and
23 we had an increase in salary of \$75,000 for each of
24 the new people, and everyone else got little bumps,
25 then I feel better. But just to see one line and

1 an increase of \$300,000 is very disconcerting, I'm
2 sorry, and a good friend of mine works in that
3 department, and I don't want to see him lose his
4 house.

5 The other stuff I wanted to talk about,
6 unfortunately, pertains to the animal shelter and
7 it's not germane to the 2021 budget, but I could
8 ask one thing, and, that is, how many people are
9 working at the shelter right now full time, and
10 what are the job responsibilities of animal warden
11 and kennel attendant?

12 If the department head is there, I
13 would like to know what an animal warden does and a
14 kennel attendant, and how many people are still
15 working there.

16 Thank you.

17 SUPERINTENDENT SALADINO: Thank you
18 very much.

19 If you'd kindly take your seat, Arthur,
20 we'll get you that answer.

21 If we can have a member of our staff
22 from the animal shelter please come up and give an
23 answer on a kennel attendant and -- the other title
24 you had asked specifically was?

25 MR. ADELMAN: Animal warden.

1 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Animal warden.

2 ANIMAL SHELTER REPRESENTATIVE: Good
3 evening, Town Board. I am Christie from the animal
4 shelter.

5 So, we currently have seven wardens
6 that are working in various jobs. So the animal
7 warden is a Civil Service tested job. Right from
8 the Civil Service website, they are assigned to
9 patrol certain areas -- parks, beaches, stuff like
10 that -- to make sure dogs are not in the parks.
11 They issue summonses to owners of unleashed
12 animals-at-large, they keep records of their
13 activities, and they perform routine maintenance of
14 trucks and equipment.

15 So, they are the ones that go out and
16 patrol the areas, pick up stray dogs, make sure the
17 dogs are licensed. When we get complaints, they're
18 the ones who go out and speak to residents.

19 And then kennel attendant, from the
20 Civil Service website as well, they perform routine
21 tasks in the care of handling animals and in the
22 maintenance of the animal shelter, and they perform
23 related duties.

24 So, they're the ones that clean and
25 care for the animals, feed them, take them out on

1 walks, play with them, all that kind of stuff.

2 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Just to give us a
3 sense, can you describe what type of extensive
4 training goes into a position like that?

5 It's not something that someone is
6 going to be trained for in just one year. They --

7 ANIMAL SHELTER REPRESENTATIVE: No.
8 They do shadowing first with senior wardens before
9 they can go on the road themselves, so they are
10 shadowed to someone that's more superior, so
11 there's people that are at the animal shelter for
12 30 years, so they will be shadowed by someone like
13 that first. They ride along with them, they learn
14 how to write tickets through that, they come into
15 the office, they learn paperwork through the office
16 as well, they answer phones, they talk to
17 residents, they typically learn all aspects of what
18 we do at the shelter before they can be out on
19 their own.

20 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: I have asked that
21 we focus the Town's attention in the department
22 that you are a part of to insure that we have the
23 utmost of care for the animals in our control.

24 Has that been occurring?

25 Have we been taking care of animals

1 appropriately in this Town?

2 ANIMAL SHELTER REPRESENTATIVE: Every
3 day. All day.

4 SUPERINTENDENT SALADINO: And does the
5 budget reflect the concern, the care and the
6 commitment to animals in this Town?

7 ANIMAL SHELTER REPRESENTATIVE: Yes.

8 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Thank you for
9 your time.

10 Our next speaker this evening will be
11 Michael Margolis.

12 MR. MARGOLIS: Good evening, everyone.

13 Good evening, Town Board.

14 I guess my question, as Mr. Adelman
15 said, it's very confusing to go through almost 200
16 pages, which I've been trying to do for a week and
17 understand these numbers, but I guess my concern
18 more about the budget, and it's kind of upsetting
19 not to hear anyone from up here really talk, I
20 guess I missed it, I tuned in late this morning, so
21 I might have missed the questions that were asked,
22 but it seems like if we are the third largest town
23 with six Council people and a Supervisor, that we
24 begin to realize that next year is going to be, in
25 my opinion, a very, very difficult year for almost

1 every resident in this Town, if not every resident.

2 I mean, it doesn't take a genius to
3 walk -- I just walked down this side of the street
4 to Carvel. I didn't get anything. I'm trying to
5 watch my weight, but just walked down this side of
6 the street, and there's four out of, like, eight
7 stores that are closed. Every shopping center in
8 Plainview is half empty.

9 I know, and I respect what you say,
10 that \$233,000 [sic] is coming in no matter what to
11 the Receiver of Taxes, \$233 million, I'm sorry, but
12 I don't know if that's true because if anybody
13 actually looked at what's going on in the County,
14 I'm not even sure they've submitted the tax
15 documents from the County yet to be signed off by
16 the Legislature that were supposed to be done.

17 They say that 12,000 houses on the tax
18 roll, I'm sure they're not all in Oyster Bay, but
19 12,000 houses were inaccurately done. There's
20 still 12,000, I believe, SCAR hearings that haven't
21 been done, and maybe I'm wrong, maybe the County
22 just cuts us a check, which I could be mistaken,
23 but supposedly the County's broke, the State says
24 they're broke, the County says they're broke, so
25 where are they writing these checks from?

1 It's great to say that this money is
2 just going to come in, but I'm not so sure it's
3 just coming in anymore, and what happens if it
4 doesn't? Are we now in a lawsuit with the County
5 spending more money on legal fees?

6 So, I mean, if I am mistaken and we
7 just get this money, then that's great, but
8 \$233 million is lot of money, and, you know, we
9 seem to have all these surpluses, and we're keeping
10 things still, so, you know, it would be great if we
11 do have all this money, but I think stores, I think
12 people, I think people are going to need help and a
13 lot of help, you know. I know myself. I haven't
14 taken barely a paycheck since this all started, you
15 know. It's unfortunate that we, or it's fortunate
16 that the Town's giving everybody it seems like that
17 works here a raise, a significant raise in some
18 cases. We're not able to get the documents, which
19 I don't know what we're hiding, you know. Maybe
20 these people deserve raises, but I don't know any
21 business right now, and I talked about this at the
22 last meeting, that's giving anybody a raise.

23 I mean, it isn't like they don't
24 deserve it, but how can you plan when nobody knows?
25 We can all be shut down in three weeks from now.

1 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: So, Mr. Margolis,
2 that's why we've cut taxes. That's why we've gone
3 three years after our tax cut year without a tax
4 increase. That's why we have been straightening
5 out the finances -- the problematic finances --
6 that we faced when we began. We have saved money,
7 we have reorganized debt, and year after year have
8 saved millions of dollars. We've reduced the
9 number of employees, that's why we put in that
10 early retirement incentive. You might have been
11 here -- one of the Board Meetings -- where we held
12 a hearing on that. We have now 75 employees who
13 have already signed up for that early retirement
14 incentive. Those 75 less employees in 2021
15 represents between 5 and \$10 million of repetitive
16 savings year after year.

17 We did these things to straighten out
18 the Town's finances and protect the taxpayers, but
19 in terms of those closed stores, we understand what
20 businesses are going through. From New York State
21 closing down businesses because of a pandemic, we
22 get the hardships that they're going through. We
23 have done many things including insuring that
24 there's things like outdoor dining for restaurants,
25 insuring that we have provided assistance to

1 Chambers of Commerce from one end of the Town of
2 Oyster Bay to the other. The reason being by
3 giving these businesses the help that they so
4 desperately need, we're helping them to stay in
5 business. By not raising their property taxes, we
6 keep the Town solvent, when we were handed a
7 difficult situation back in 2017, that we're
8 clearly turning around, and that's not us talking
9 that's Wall Street. Four credit rating increases
10 including two during a pandemic. So we have been
11 making those fixes. We have been bringing
12 financial stability to this Town. We've been
13 making the Town stronger, making our services
14 better while we have not raised taxes.

15 So, we cut them in the first year of
16 our Administration, 2018, -- the first budget we
17 were responsible for -- froze them in 2019, froze
18 them in 2020. Now, we're freezing them again in
19 2021, but, yes, our expenses are going up just like
20 yours and every other person out there, every
21 business.

22 Costs go up every year, but we've found
23 creative ways to raise our revenues, and we've been
24 very, very conservative about those revenue
25 estimates to not get into financial trouble. We

1 have under calculated our revenue and over
2 calculated our expenses. We've calculated for the
3 reduction in sales tax and the reduction in the
4 mortgage tax, even though, ask any realtor, sales
5 are up and up on houses in the Town of Oyster Bay,
6 and why do people want to live in the Town of
7 Oyster Bay? Because of the quality of life we're
8 providing, because of the excellent education of
9 the school districts, and because of the proximity
10 and the quality of our recreational sites and all
11 that we're responsible for.

12 And we did this all during a pandemic
13 when no one suffered so much as a one day loss of
14 garbage service, one day loss of our SORT program,
15 our Highway has been out there throughout, our
16 parks and beaches have been open throughout this
17 pandemic giving people a way to stay sane, of
18 giving people an opportunity to get out of the
19 house safely. Our Public Safety Officers have been
20 working -- sometimes around the clock -- to keep
21 our residents safe, and all this commitment is for
22 our taxpayers and for those businesses.

23 MR. MARGOLIS: I respect that,
24 Supervisor, and I respect what you're saying, but I
25 don't think that enough is being, and maybe I'm

1 wrong, I'm not here everyday, I don't see what's
2 going on, and you can't tell that by inside here,
3 but, I mean, only on the first page really of the
4 numbers here, it says salaries 2020 amended,
5 87 million. 2021, estimated 92 million. That's an
6 increase of \$5 million.

7 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: We do have a
8 union here among many other reasons. We're not
9 accounting yet for the reductions because of the
10 retirements. 75 people are retiring through the
11 incentive alone. There may be more people who
12 choose to retire during 2021.

13 MR. MARGOLIS: So the 92 million number
14 what you're saying includes the 75 people who are
15 retiring?

16 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Yes.

17 So by doing that, we are overestimating
18 the expenses and underestimating the revenues.

19 Why are we doing that? Mr. Darienzo
20 spoke to that this morning and this evening. To
21 protect our residents and turn the Town around by
22 very responsible budgeting.

23 We're very proud of this budget.
24 Expenses go up across America. Here, too. We
25 understand that, but in terms of our work force, we

1 are reducing the number. We do have a union that
2 we work with, and that is the law, and we're
3 embracing all of our responsibilities, but services
4 continue to get better in the Town of Oyster Bay.
5 We know that from our residents. We know that it's
6 very obvious.

7 COUNCILWOMAN JOHNSON: I just want to
8 add that when the Town was having a hard time,
9 employees took pay cuts to help us get through that
10 time.

11 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: That's another
12 point.

13 MR. MARGOLIS: I'm just seeing what I'm
14 reading here. There's no footnotes or anything
15 like that, so it's hard to understand --

16 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: It's a very large
17 document. We're a very large town.

18 MR. MARGOLIS: It's hard to understand
19 all the different numbers.

20 The point that I'm making is simply
21 that, you know, I don't think that 2021, you know,
22 right now, a lot -- does anybody even know how many
23 houses in Oyster Bay have, you know, furloughed
24 their mortgage and are not paying their mortgages?

25 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: So to answer your

1 earlier question, there's a County guarantee on
2 property taxes to the Town of Oyster Bay.

3 MR. MARGOLIS: I understand that, but
4 my question is, and, trust me, no one, I think,
5 knows more about the County guarantee more than me,
6 but what happens if the County doesn't have money?

7 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: So rather than to
8 get into a civics lesson over this, but there is --
9 New York State has put in place NIFA to control the
10 County's finances.

11 If they're having a tough time at this
12 point after all the steps they've taken, you're
13 going to have to bring that up with the County
14 administrators, and I know that brings a lot of
15 frustration to you because you've been here many
16 times complaining about the County's situation, and
17 we are very sympathetic to your situation, but in
18 terms of the Town of Oyster Bay's responsible
19 budget, this is a rock solid budget with no
20 gimmicks, no tricks, no one shots, no land sales.

21 We have underestimated our revenues,
22 overestimated our expenses to bring about a budget
23 that will not fail, and I will tell you that we
24 will be standing here a year from now talking about
25 how the 2021 budget created another surplus and

1 will create, and hopefully, by then, another credit
2 rating increase. Wall Street -- you can't fool
3 them -- they've seen this, and we've received four
4 upgrades in our credit rating, two during a
5 pandemic, and as Mr. Darienzo said, they've given
6 us positive outlooks, and they've told us the trend
7 in the Town of Oyster Bay is working, and we're
8 returning the Town back to fiscal stability, and
9 I'll say fiscal strength.

10 And just to add to that, something I'm
11 hoping that you will read about in the media, the
12 New York State Comptroller has taken the Town of
13 Oyster Bay off of the fiscal stress list for the
14 first time since that list was created. There are,
15 I believe, three levels of fiscal stress. We were
16 at the worst, and now we're not even on the list.

17 So Wall Street has said the Town has
18 done an amazing turnaround in their four credit
19 rating increases, the State Comptroller has taken
20 us off the stress list, we're no longer under
21 financial stress, we have cut taxes and now held
22 the line for the fourth year putting \$5.2 million
23 back in the coffers of our taxpayers -- good honest
24 people like you, Mr. Margolis -- and we've done it
25 all by turning around what was tremendous deficit

1 in the operating budget to a surplus we're
2 extremely proud of and tremendously lowering the
3 capital debt while still paving the roads, while
4 still fixing the infrastructure, rebuilding the
5 bridges, buying the garbage trucks. We're proud to
6 sit here before you, the public, and speak to these
7 accomplishments, and they were done in a miraculous
8 amount of time. In four years. We are very proud
9 that we have turned around the Town of Oyster Bay.

10 MR. MARGOLIS: Thank you for your time.

11 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: Thank you, sir.

12 I don't have any other slips, and we
13 greatly appreciate everyone's participation in this
14 2021 Budget Hearing, and we thank you very much.

15 Before we close, do we have anything
16 from our Board Members who would like to add or
17 ask?

18 (Whereupon, there was no response given
19 from the Board.)

20 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: We thank you very
21 much for your participation in these two budget
22 hearings today.

23 May I have a motion?

24 COUNCILWOMAN JOHNSON: I will make a
25 motion that this hearing be closed.

1 COUNCILMAN HAND: Second.

2 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: All in favor,
3 please signify by saying, "Aye."

4 COUNCILWOMAN JOHNSON: "Aye."

5 COUNCILMAN HAND: "Aye."

6 COUNCILMAN LABRIOLA: "Aye."

7 COUNCILWOMAN MAIER: "Aye."

8 COUNCILWOMAN WALSH: "Aye."

9 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: All opposed,
10 "Nay."

11 (Whereupon, there was no response given
12 from the Board.)

13 SUPERVISOR SALADINO: The "Ayes" have
14 it.

15 Thank you very much, ladies and
16 gentlemen.

17 (TIME NOTED: 8:19 P.M.)

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25