

## Questions about 2023 Tax Increase

### **Why didn't we go with a smaller percentage and then in the next few years go higher?**

Unfortunately, we are past that point, there is no cushion left to balance this budget so we brought it down to basic operating costs in order to break even.

### **What is causing the huge increases in expenditures and what are we doing about cutting costs?**

There really was not a huge increase in expenditures this year, it's been a gradual increase throughout the years. The biggest increase this year is economy driven, it is gas, utilities, state rate, highway materials and vehicles. During the budget workshop the board cut a lot of the expenditures, and made it as bare bones as possible.

### **Please explain the "personal services" listings in the budget.**

Personal services is the payroll line.

### **What does the general category cover?**

All services for the Town and the Village

### **Can we have explanations of what companies the "Contracted Services" are in the many categories?**

Contracted Service is not a service, there are no companies. The contractual lines are everything you need to operate, insurance, office supplies, utilities etc....

### **Explanation of the Town Tax/Per Year Graph (graph on separate page)**

In 2008, if we stayed at a 2% increase steadily throughout the years, you can see where we would have been today. In 2011 there was a 50% drop in taxes. They used \$760,000 out of the fund balance to balance the budget. It recovered, the taxes went up 48%, then 15% the following year. You can see where the taxes should have increased 3-4% throughout the years to be where we need to be today.

### **Why couldn't the board do a smaller percentage increase this year and then increase it each year instead of being hit with huge increase now?**

Unfortunately, no. The board shaved this budget down to just operating costs this year.

### **Can you Address the Audit that the State Conducted?**

An Audit was conducted by the Office of the New York State Comptroller. They were in the office for about 7 months. The reports came out May of 2022, you can read them on the NYS comptrollers website and on [www.townofurbana.com](http://www.townofurbana.com) under news and events.

Supervisor Stull has been asking for an audit since 2014 but the State Comptrollers said they were too busy. One of the findings that came from the report said the Town was unaware that two bank accounts existed and how much was in them. The auditors called Supervisor Stull on vacation and he couldn't give an exact number at the time. When he talked to the bookkeeper, he was able to get the exact number. Both Supervisor and the Bookkeeper knew of the

accounts, they just did not know where the funds were supposed to be allocated. The Bookkeeper was a new employee.

**Why are we using three different banks?**

We are no longer using three different banks.

**The tax increase was a surprise to everyone. What actions will be done to avoid a surprise like this in the future?**

Currently information is being posted on [www.townofurbana.com](http://www.townofurbana.com), the Corning Leader Legal Section (Town Law requires this), The board outside the office and on Facebook. There were great suggestions that will be followed up on. An email list was started so people can be notified, in addition to the Leader we will post important items in the Shopper. If there is ever a substantial increase in taxes again, an explanation will go into the tax bill. Residents are encouraged to attend meetings and the budget meetings either through Zoom or in person. There is also a form that you can use to sign up for a board or to become involved.

**Is this a one year correction on the taxes? Will the tax bill remain the same or will it decline?**

The tax bill will not decline next year, but there will not be a huge increase either. Budget workshops are open to the public and are encouraged to attend.

**The 2023 budget shows a \$400,000 increase in expenditures, can you give us an idea of what is in the 2023 budget that needs to be in there?**

A lot of it is coming from the Highway department and the State Rates that we have to pay. Pipe, gas, and electric has also gone up. They are not actual numbers in the budget, we have not had actual numbers since 2013 due to internal accounting. We hired an accounting firm to re-create the actual numbers. It should be about 6 months before we get real numbers.

**Is the Pier project mentioned in the budget? How much revenue are we going to generate from the pier?**

There is a partial grant for the pier. There will be boat slips attached to the pier that will help generate revenue to pay for the Pier. Every year we don't do the pier project costs will go up. Enhancements to the Parks and Pier will bring in more tourism and generate money to the economy.

**What percentage of the budget is for salary, wages?**

Payroll is 39% of the total budget. We have between 38 to 80 employees depending on what time of year it is. Here is a list of employee titles:

- Supervisor
- Town Board
- Bookkeeper
- Clerk
- Registrar
- Tax Collector
- Budget Officer
- Attorney
- Deputy Clerk
- Dog Control

Justice  
Justice Court Clerks  
Lifeguards  
Summer Rec Counselors  
Swimming Instructors  
Park and Rec Administrator  
Law Enforcement  
Assessor  
Cleaner  
Planning Board  
Zoning Board  
Board of Assessment Review  
Board of Assessment Secretary  
Secretary for Planning and Zoning  
Zoning Officer  
Code Enforcement  
Watershed  
Watershed Secretary  
Highway Superintendent  
Machine Equipment Operators  
Laborers