

A regular Town Board Meeting was held on October 17, 2024, at Lysander Town Hall, 8220 Loop Road, Baldwinsville, New York.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kevin Rode, Supervisor
Peter Moore, Councilor
Robert Geraci, Councilor
Jeffrey Kudarauskas, Councilor

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Town Clerk, Dina Falcone, Ken Svitak, Highway Superintendent, David Herkala, Town Attorney, and several guests and residents.

Supervisor Rode called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM with a pledge to the Flag.

ADOPTION OF SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 MINUTES

RES#180/2024

Motion made by Councilor Moore seconded by Councilor Kudarauskas to adopt the September 19, 2024 Town Board Meeting minutes.

Supervisor Rode Aye Councilor Kudarauskas Aye Councilor Geraci Aye
Councilor Moore Aye

ADOPTION OF OCTOBER 3, 2024 MINUTES

RES#181/2024

Motion made by Councilor Moore seconded by Councilor Kudarauskas to adopt the October 3, 2024 Town Board Meeting minutes.

Supervisor Rode Aye Councilor Kudarauskas Aye Councilor Geraci Aye
Councilor Moore Aye

Supervisor Rode mentioned that the public hearing regarding amending the Farm Animal Local Law, will be sent to the Onondaga County Planning Board. Their next meeting is November 13. The Town of Lysander Planning Board has made its recommendation, and it is on the website. The public hearing will be re-opened on November 21.

Supervisor Rode mentioned the vote for the budget which will be held on October 24, 2024 at 5:30 PM. The budget vote will be the only item on the agenda.

MOTION TO OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE 2025 WEST PHOENIX FIRE (ENTERPRISE FIRE COMPANY) AGREEMENT

RES#182/2024

Motion made by Councilor Geraci seconded by Councilor Kudarauskas to open the public hearing regarding the 2025 West Phoenix Fire (Enterprise Fire Company) Agreement at 6:31 PM.

Supervisor Rode Aye Councilor Kudarauskas Aye Councilor Geraci Aye
Councilor Moore Aye

MOTION TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE 2025 WEST PHOENIX FIRE (ENTERPRISE FIRE COMPANY) AGREEMENT

RES#183/2024

Hearing no comments, **Motion made by Councilor Geraci seconded by Councilor Kudarauskas** to close the public hearing regarding the 2025 West Phoenix Fire (Enterprise Fire Company) Agreement at 6:32 PM.

Supervisor Rode Aye Councilor Kudarauskas Aye Councilor Geraci Aye
Councilor Moore Aye

MOTION TO OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE 2025 TOWN OF LYSANDER PRELIMINARY BUDGET

RES#184/2024

Motion made by Councilor Kudarauskas seconded by Councilor Moore to open the public hearing regarding the 2025 Town of Lysander Preliminary Budget at 6:55 PM.

Supervisor Rode Aye Councilor Kudarauskas Aye Councilor Geraci Aye
Councilor Moore Aye

The 2025 Budget Presentation was given by the Comptroller, Collin Zapisek. The PowerPoint can be viewed on the website: www.townoflysander.org.

Supervisor Rode:

I don't have a long discussion here, as people can see, we did work through the budget, and there was an increase this year. I think the Town Board we're addressing needs that have been there for quite a few years. One of the items I just went by fund, the A fund, the General Fund, what people inside the village and everybody in the town space, we're bringing the Parks Department back to a pre COVID staffing level. We've increased the use of the parks tremendously since COVID. We get busy there. Now we have youth lacrosse there. Pop Warner has now blossomed into more of a spring setting also. They also have the fall football season with cheerleading. And then we have the spray park, which is used more and more every year, and with the spray park comes additional costs: the water, the sewer, all of the things related to the maintenance of the spray park. But you know, it's definitely been a benefit to the town. It's impressive to see the use of the park. With that, we're trying to offer more programming, so we're getting back to those 2020 levels, the pre COVID level of staff.

If we look back to the 2020 budget, we pretty much have about the same amount of people for the 2025 budget that we have at the park. We're getting back to a more normal, you know, life and work. So, with that, we've got those increases in cost with the staffing levels that have come over the last five years. On the B Fund side, there was a large increase. It's a very small fund. It's only a couple of \$100,000 - it's our Planning, Zoning, and Codes offices. Most people know that Karen Rice is going to be retiring, so we have to find somebody to replace her position. I'm going to watch a lot of people retire as I have put a lot of time into the town with the knowledge that she has 35 or 36 years of working and you have to replace that. The only way to replace that is have somebody come in and train there. She knows the job. So, with that, we've got a budget for somebody to come in for five or six months, because Planning and Zoning is important. When the Town Engineer wants a map, he wants to know where it is. When anyone has a planning question, you want to try to build that historical information and knowledge that you have doing the job. So, the majority of the Part Town fund is probably going to increase for one year. And that being said, Karen is the only clerk in that department. We have a full-time codes officer. We have a part-time codes officer that works 20 hours a week. Other than that, it's Karen – and is the only one of those [staff

members] for all of those building permits. Anything that goes through planning and zoning, it all goes through her hands. So, we run pretty lean in the town of Lysander when it comes to departments and staff.

So then that leads us to the D Fund, the Highway. For the first time since 1996, maybe 98 we're going back to an additional MEO to get back to a 10 MEO staffing level. We've also added two full time laborers in there. That being said, as you saw, the majority of our special district budget was to drainage districts. We haven't addressed the drainage district problems that we have in the town of Lysander, and luckily, our Highway Supervisor has been working with us to use the Highway Department to address them. That being said, I don't have an accurate mechanism to account for the revenue that the highway will receive from those positions.

Because ultimately, what happens if highway workers are doing anything outside of highway work, you build that, you build that district, they're doing the work for, or you build that area, and then they get an inter fund revenue. We don't have an accurate mechanism, but with the work that we have to do in the drainage districts, we build that back with the special district people who get the services paid for, and then the HW Department gets the revenue for it, we don't. We've never done it. So, this is our first attempt, hoping at the end of 2025 we see significant revenue.

So, some of those increases won't be at the level that we're presenting in the budget, but I don't have an accurate mechanism to account for the revenue. The other thing with the Highway, you know, the Highway supervisor - we're supposed to be plowing the roads, keeping the County roads clear 24 hours a day is for our contract, which I am not saying we haven't done our best, but we need to budget and staff that appropriately to have the opportunity to possibly do a night shift run to keep the main roads clear. We also have one vehicle in the budget for purchasing and we also have additional vehicles that we're looking to use ARPA funds on, and possibly state funding that when we receive it, to purchase a six-wheel truck, 10-wheel truck and a street sweeper. Our street sweepers, we have two of them, are 20 and 25 years old. They are showing their age every time we pull them out and something breaks. It is five or \$6,000 so; you know these are the areas.

Yes, it's an increase, but we're looking to give the town the service that it deserves, and unfortunately, that only comes with staffing and labor costs. Those were my highlights, and I'll ask the Board if they have anything to say at this time. Okay, I will open it up to questions from the public. All I ask is you come up to the microphone and state your name if you want to and ask your question instead of asking from the audience.

Liz Schmitt: *First, I'd like to thank you for clarifying some of the expenses that why the budget would have gone faster than the rate of inflation. But I think a lot of what you said about deferred needs in the town and retooling after COVID made a lot of sense. So, thank you for those comments. I guess I wanted to circulate looking at property taxes as an important source of revenue. We have backed off from the regular assessment that we were the market assessment, I guess would be the term for a couple years now. And I'm wondering about, you know, concerns about equalization rate and getting too far away from market assessment. Sorry, I don't want to traumatize anybody, but I'm wondering what plans are to reinstitute or redo a market assessment. Is that something talked about because it obviously it impacts how we assess a tax rate, to raise the levy in terms of these assessments. Thank you.*

Supervisor Rode: *Regarding revaluation or reassessing is, you know, when we froze assessment a couple years ago and I voted no, it was more of a - I don't - I'm missing the word of it. I knew it didn't mean much when Van Buren decided, because we're tied together with the school district, when Van Buren decided to freeze assessments that really made Lysander have to go on with the game, because, as we saw last year, the equalization rate kicks in, and the first year we were down 10% - Van Buren only went down 5% you notice, usually, if you looked at your school taxes, Lysander and Van Buren were a couple pennies different. That year, Lysander paid about \$1 more than Van Buren. Well, this year, you know, the state caught up with it at our equalization rate, and we're both down to about 80% and I know people were asking for the people who still get the star exemption. If it's a star exemption through your tax break, people were like, 'we didn't get our full amount of star exemption'. It's because if we drop 20% of our equalization rate, you get 20% less than your star exemption. So, in my case, I think my star exemption started at \$3,300 in 2022 and in 2023 it was down to \$3,000 and in 24 it was down to \$2,700 because it directly follows our equalization rate drop. That's the minus. Can I sit here and tell you that freezing assessments cost you money because you lost \$300 off? I can't because that would play into the tax levy of the school district, and you would have to do a lot of mental gymnastics with calculations to understand if it was a benefit or a detriment to the town. I do know that the Assessor, and we'll have her in again, usually comes in quarterly. You know, she's trying to see the market to settle. If you talk, if you listen to County and their consultants, this market's not settling for 12 to 15 years. And a lot of that is in the interest of the MICRON development; some of it has because people are still moving here. So, we, we don't have an accurate measure. She's hoping that, hopefully in the next couple years, you see the plateau, and that's when the revamp will come in. How would that work? I guess it would depend how far down we are at that point. But ultimately, you look at our budget, we have \$1 amount to raise. So, the assessment, the assessed value, is not a determining factor in that. Because you have a budget just like your house, it costs you so many dollars a year to run your house. It costs so many dollars a year to run the town. The Town Board decides how many dollars we're putting toward - but there is a bottom. And if you look at tax rates in the county, which, if I find my sheet here... (spreadsheet was pulled up and referenced on the screen)*

This is one of those New York state tax rates. (Referencing the screen): This plays into the total number, and that's why, if you look at your tax rate, it is \$1.66 that adds in the special district. We come in at the lowest tax rate in the county, which for us, you know, we're 17 cents under here the proposal tonight, we're still lowest tax rate in the county.

I can almost guarantee that if we update these numbers, then you look at taxable values, what goes back into assessments being frozen. Because, besides, you know you have assessments, but then you have PILOTs - the AB PILOT expires in 2026 and they've already put the county on notice that they're looking to talk because, you know, MICRON came through and got a bunch of great deals, so they're probably asking for the same thing. So we'll see how that changes if that does go back on the agenda. But regardless, you know, we have a bare minimum to run for the town. And you know, when you look at the town levees and you sort them overall, we can't compare to every town. Salina has six. They've got five or six pools. They have a lot of different parks. We have one. We don't have pools, so it's hard to compare tax rates. But when you sit there and look overall and go, Wow, how can we be? You know, town of Van Buren, our sister town to the south, 368, there is a floor to maintaining services, to the to the townspeople, the taxpayers that we were pretty close to that floor for the last couple of years. And you know, I when I got voted in, I think my reason for being here is to provide the people, the services that we haven't been supplying. And my nine months of sitting here, probably 60% of my calls are special district quality of life issues, and that's what I'm trying to adjust with this budget. So I asked the board, you know, at the work sessions, we had the department heads come out for the first time ever in recent history, and what the department heads actually show their budgets to the board. And we worked on them together, and this is where we came to So, you know this, this is a great thing to be able to look at for people. And you can download it. I could put it on a website. We can put a link to it so people can see the period in tax rates. But when you compare those numbers, and you know, you can complain about a 10% increase, but I think we're providing great services, and we're looking to provide more for the townspeople. And as we grow, people are looking for that. You know, with the highway department, we're looking into brush pick up, because we have areas now, unfortunately, if people cut their brush, they throw it in their backyard, they don't understand that's in the drainage district. So that creates other problems for drainage, swamps and other issues. So we're going to grow and become more of a DPW, as opposed to a highway department,

where we were just maintaining roads, plowing the roads. And I say just, I don't mean that, you know, we're covering more ground, and we need the people to do it. We need that crew to take care of the catch basins that we haven't been taking care of or addressing. Per state guidelines, with MS four, we're supposed to check every catch basin in the town. No other towns that I've talked to and it is under the highway supervisors. It doesn't happen, but we have to start making those things happen. We have to get on that path. Because when you clean a catch basin out and you see you need to repair it, it's better than finding out it failed, because now you have a hole in it. So that's what we're trying to get to. It's a it's a trudge forward.

Councilor Geraci: *As we try to address the issue of what are the pauses and balances of freezing assessments or Supervisor Rode said, bottom line is you have to raise x number of dollars to support the budget. The reason I like the idea of freezing the assessments is you can tax everybody generally by raising taxes generally to get to meet your bottom line. Or when you have assessments going up as radically as they were going up, the folks who own those houses that had those values go up were actually paying more. And I thought, and I think that that's a very unfair thing, because what you're doing is taxing unrealized gains. You're still sitting in the house. You're not making any money off of it. You go to sell the house, you ought to be paying capital gains, of course, but just because you're sitting there and your house value, just because the market is going up, your value of your house goes up, but nothing else has changed in my house, I'm not making any more money. I'm not talking about myself, but just talking in general about people. So the alternative is in a volatile real estate market, which we're in, Supervisor Rode is saying, the county is saying this is going to go on for a good 10 to 15 years. It's just patently not fair to raise individual assessments unless you've made some specific improvements in your house, you put a pool in, you added an addition, you did this, you did that. But if the house is sitting there and hasn't changed from 2024 to 2025 or then why on earth would any government say, Well, you have to pay more just because the value of your house going up when, in fact, nothing else has changed. And that's why, federally, you don't pay on realized capital gains, on realized capital gains taxes. You only pay taxes on what you earn or what you make on a property at some point, maybe when things stabilize and you know, real estate values go up maybe a percent or two on every year, then we might want to revisit the idea of going back to full value assessment. So because you do have to be careful that there's not unfairness built in just because your taxes have your assessment hasn't changed, but this house next to you has changed because it's sold. So there's no magic formula, but I just want you to think about what I just said in terms of, is it fair to tax unrealized gains? I don't think it is.*

Councilor Moore: *and I totally agree with that sentiment, and the sheet I put up there, if you zoom in on it. It's been so long I went out over the last five or six years of budgets in the school district getting back to freezing assessments. The School District, the first, last three, up until the last two years, had never had to increase the tax rate. The assessments grew so much that it covered the budget or any increases the last two years the school you've seen the effects of the freeze of assessments. You have, you know, minor increases to a \$20 per 1000 budget of, you know, 40 or 50 cents one year and 20 or 30 cents the next year. But that's because our assessments were climbing so quickly. It covered the tax rate that the levy the school needed to raise. You know, it's, it's just part of the budget. It's the dollars of it. At the end of the day, you have so many things you have to pay for. And how the boards, or in this in the schools case, to the School Board. The Board of Education decides what the best path forward is. So, I know that was a long way to talk about assessments.*

Norma Newman spoke about the cemetery budget and thanked the board for the help they have given the cemeteries that are publicly owned. They appreciate all of the money to fix the roads, mowing, etc. she is very grateful, and the funds are put to good use.

**MOTION TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE 2025
TOWN OF LYSANDER PRELIMINARY BUDGET**

RES#185/2024

Hearing all comments, motion made by Councilor Geraci seconded by Councilor Moore to close the public hearing regarding the 2025 Preliminary Budget at 7:10PM.

Supervisor Rode	Aye	Councilor Kudarauskas	Aye	Councilor Geraci	Aye
Councilor Moore	Aye				

Citizens Comments

James Siddal of Smokey Hollow Road asked about the Trooper's Barracks rumors.

Supervisor Rode: (verbatim due to the issue) *Okay, so the town of Lysander has had a 20 year lease in one of the New York state charters. The lease is up at the end of this year. We had started talking to the New York State Troopers. And of course, it's not just the people who are here. You go to Albany and there's a real estate liaison - I believe it's Major Litardo who came [and spoke with us], so we had met with him. For those who don't understand, the Trooper's lease - they pay roughly \$984 a month. We'll just keep that close, and that's what they paid for the last 20 years. That payment never should have occurred. They should have been there rent free, which was news to all of us on this board. A grant fell through back when they were going to build the Trooper's Barracks, or there would have been no rent as per the current lease. The town is responsible for everything that happens or occurs in that building, utilities, repairs, maintenance, etc.. Every seven years we have to paint and carpet with no additional funds from the State Trooper's or the State. This year, I started negotiations with the Troopers, we showed our costs with the real estate arm, and we had asked for what we thought was an acceptable rate of rent. I don't want to disclose that, because I think it would, I don't think it needs to be said, but it was very reasonable, but probably not reasonable when you should be paying zero. There's further negotiations to be discussed regarding this issue.*

Fred Burtch of Plainville Road mentioned the Farm Animal public hearing and if it would be opened again. Since it was adjourned, the answer is yes, it will be re-opened for comments after the matter is sent to County Planning. He also asked about the response area of the NYS Trooper's, and if TOL is the only town that pays for the building. He suggested using funds from other towns to fund the station. However, the building is owned by TOL, so that is not an option.

Town Board Comments

The Board thanked those for attending and chose to move on to the agenda.

Supervisor’s Comments

Supervisor Rode stated that the meeting for the vote on the 2025 Budget will be held on Thursday, October 24, at 5:30 PM in the auditorium. There will be one motion on the agenda for the budget only.

Department Head Reports

Dina Falcone, Town Clerk mentioned the October 5, 2024 recruitment event that was held at Town Hall. Although the weather was perfect for the event, it was not well attended. **Ms. Falcone** suggested each fire department host individual open houses at their respective fire departments. **Supervisor Rode** mentioned that the event may be held at the park next year.

Town Board Comments

The Town Board members talked about the budget, and that they are taking care of what they need to and thanked everyone for attending.

Regular Agenda Items

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN SUPERVISOR TO SIGN THE 2025 AGREEMENT WITH ENTERPRISE FIRE COMPANY (WEST PHOENIX FIRE DEPARTMENT)

RES#186/2024

Motion made by Councilor Moore seconded by Councilor Kudarauskas to authorize the Town Supervisor to sign the agreement with Enterprise Fire Company (West Phoenix Fire Department). *The agreement is to be provided by the Fire Company and will be provided on the website.*

Supervisor Rode Aye Councilor Kudarauskas Aye Councilor Geraci Aye
Councilor Moore Aye

MOTION TO REFER THE AMENDMENT OF SECTION 51.1 OF THE FARM ANIMAL LOCAL LAW TO THE ONONDAGA COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

RES#187/2024

Motion made by Councilor Kudarauskas seconded by Councilor Geraci to refer the amendment to Section 51.1 of the Farm Animal Local Law to the Onondaga County Planning Board. *The next meeting of the Onondaga County Planning Board is November 13, 2024. The public hearing will be held on November 21, 2024.*

Supervisor Rode Aye Councilor Kudarauskas Aye Councilor Geraci Aye
Councilor Moore Aye

TABLED

Motion made by Councilor _____ seconded by Councilor _____ to hire Anthony Gorgievski as MEO in the Highway Department at the rate per the union contract, with a starting date of _____, 2024.

MOTION TO DECLARE KITCHEN FRIDGE SURPLUS

RES#188/2024

Motion made by Councilor Moore seconded by Councilor Kudarauskas to declare the following item surplus:

- Kitchen fridge – Tag No. 1101

Supervisor Rode	Aye	Councilor Kudarauskas	Aye	Councilor Geraci	Aye
Councilor Moore	Aye				

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Councilor Geraci seconded by Councilor Kudarauskas to adjourn the Town Board Meeting at 7:45 PM.

Supervisor Rode	Aye	Councilor Kudarauskas	Aye	Councilor Geraci	Aye
Councilor Moore	Aye				

This is a true and complete recording
of the action taken at this meeting.

Dina Falcone, Town Clerk