



TOWN OF RAMAPO
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Michael Specht
Supervisor

RAMAPO TOWN SUPERVISOR MICHAEL B. SPECHT MESSAGE FOR 2020 BUDGET - NOVEMBER 18, 2019

Proposal to Adopt the Town Budget for 2020

I am pleased to submit our budget for 2020 to be adopted by Board resolution tonight. The work on the budget started in late August and continued through October. We held meetings with each department head to review, in detail, their requirements for the coming year. The draft budget was then examined by all Board members and subjected to a public hearing on November 6, 2019. This final budget incorporates changes resulting from the Board review and the public hearing. The details of all changes are highlighted in Schedule A, attached to the budget as supplemental information.

Our proposed budget for 2020 is a continuation of my administration's commitment to financial best practices and transparency. We have established a plan that keeps us under the New York State 2% tax cap and reduces overall taxes without compromising service levels or community resources. At the same time, this budget provides for an additional \$2 million in funding to continue to restore the financial stability of the General Fund.

Highlights of the 2020 Budget

- Amount to be raised by taxes is \$84.4 million – 3% below the previous year levy and well below the voluntary 2% New York State tax cap for 2020
- Using a taxable assessed value of \$50,000 (approximate market value of \$400,000), this budget reduces the Town portion of tax bills throughout the Town:
 - Village of Suffern down \$57 – 5.6%
 - Villages of Montebello and Wesley Hills down \$58 – 2.4%
 - Village of Spring Valley down \$17 – 1.6%
 - Unincorporated Ramapo down \$206 – 5.5%

- The budget does not include any revenue from property sales; we continue to evaluate non-core surplus property sales to improve financial stability.
- The salary budget has no increases to the salary of elected officials; otherwise, management and staff compensation for 2020 is based on the terms of the existing collective bargaining agreements which are currently under negotiation.
- Expenditure levels overall are held flat without compromising service levels or community resources:
 - Expansive parks and recreation facilities including pools, youth programs, golf and tennis, senior citizen programs and cultural arts programs
 - Extensive road repair and maintenance plan for 2020
 - Quality of life improvements through active community engagement by all operating departments of the Town
- Economies and efficiencies are driving cost reductions:
 - Our cost-efficient municipal vehicle fleet lease program, which brings substantial savings in operating and repair cost as well as safety, is being expanded to cover the police vehicle fleet additions in 2020
 - Continued retirement incentives and a deliberate attrition policy has led to staff reductions and a net savings of approximately \$500,000 in 2020
 - Department managers are taking on more responsibilities in lieu of replacing managers who retire or otherwise leave
 - Reduction in the cost of digital and voice communication networks with improved security
- Restoration of the General Fund deficit continues:
 - A \$3.3 million improvement has been realized in 2019
 - An additional inflow of \$2 million to continue to restore the fund balance has been provided in the 2020 budget
 - Once again, we have been able to provide additional funding without raising taxes by appropriating excess fund balances in the other operating funds and special districts

Looking Ahead

I am proud of the recent accomplishments of our new administration:

- We are now up to date with our audited financial reporting and we intend to keep it that way.
- For the first time in five years, we achieved an operating surplus in the General Fund in 2018 – a tribute to proper budgeting and active financial management during the year.
- Based on our current best estimate of the operating results of the Town in 2019, we should once again deliver a budget breakeven or a modest surplus.
- We have made significant progress in the extensive multi-year project of updating the comprehensive plan for the Town.
- We were successful in obtaining a low interest rate Bond Anticipation Note in the amount of \$1.2 million to provide the funding for the complete renovation of the 4th Street Bridge in Hillburn.

As the Chief Executive of the Town, my strategy for 2020 is simple – “steady as she goes”. I pledge that I will continue to be laser-focused on ensuring we provide the basic resources and services needed throughout our municipality and remain responsive to the needs of our citizens.

I thank you for your continued support.

Michael Specht
Supervisor
November 18, 2019