

## Supervisor's Budget Holds the Line on Inflation

With our national inflation rate at a 40 year high, I wanted to make sure the 2023 Budget would not be putting any additional financial burden our Homeowners. Even though our Federal Government says the inflation rate is at 8.5 percent you know from grocery shopping alone that costs are much higher than that. When buying real items like food and gas we are paying as much as a 100 percent more on some items.

The Town of Clarence was not immune to the increase in costs running the Town. For example, this year, the town's budget line for fuel this year was exhausted by midsummer.

The tentative 2023 Budget was filed with the Town Clerk last week for the Town Board to review in October. The tentative budget is within the New York State Tax Cap, which is 2.0 percent, something I have tried to accomplish every year since becoming Supervisor. There are Towns in Erie County which are similar in size to the Town of Clarence in population with tax rates that are dollars more than ours.

This year's General Fund rate was lowered to \$0.73 per thousand. That is the lowest tax rate to date, during my time as Supervisor. That equates to a \$300,000 home paying a General Fund Town tax of \$220.00. In the 2023 Budget there is no increase in the amount raised by taxation from the 2022 Budget. The Town department heads have returned unused budget funds every year. These funds are then rolled over into the next year's budget which helps keep the amount raised by taxation the same or lower.

Sales tax for many Towns, including Clarence, is a major part of most Budgets. During COVID I held the line on spending expecting the sales tax revenue from Erie County to drop. Even with retail stores and restaurants closed the revenue from sales tax never dropped. The strong sales revenue has also made it possible to combat our high inflation without raising taxes.

There were other cost savings that helped with balancing the 2023 budget. There is a large cost savings shown in this budget realized by switching our old street lighting over to LED lights. Switching to LED lights has given us safer, better lit streets at almost half the price of our old mercury vapor lights. In addition to honoring all the fire company contracts for fire protection, the Town has also continued the cancer coverage for our fire fighters.

Moody's Investors reviewed the financial actions and again rated the Town AA1. This high rating allows the Town to borrow money for capital projects at a very low percentage rate. As the Town moves ahead with the new highway garage, the lower borrow rates will save the Town hundreds of thousands of dollars over the payback period.

The Town Board and two Town unions agreed on a new four-year contract. The 2023 Budget honors all union contracts and pay raises for the nonunion employees. Again, as in previous budgets, there is no pay raise for myself and Town Board members

Many thanks to the Towns Department Heads, Town Employees and Fire Companies for working with us on the budget and staying below the tax cap. My Finance Director Kim Ignatowski was the backbone

behind putting the 2023 Budget together. As always, a special thank you to Town Attorney Larry Meckler and my two Assistants Carolyn Delgato and Karen Jurek for their help.