

A Responsible 2026 Tentative Budget

This week, I presented the 2026 Tentative Budget to the Town Board. My mission remains clear: protect taxpayers while ensuring the services you depend on remain strong, reliable, and efficient. This plan stays within New York State's property tax cap while keeping the general fund tax rate flat. At the same time, it continues investments in public safety, infrastructure, recreation, and quality-of-life services that make Clarence a community we are proud to call home.

Balancing Costs with Fiscal Discipline

One of this year's biggest challenges has been the rise in utility costs. Just as families across Clarence are paying more at home, the Town faces the same pressures. While we remain fortunate to have one of the lowest tax rates in New York State, I know that higher assessments and cost increases add strain to household budgets.

This is why fiscal responsibility is at the heart of our budget. We are managing the Town's increased expenses with care, while recognizing the financial pressures residents face. Careful planning and smart investments allow us to keep services strong without unnecessary burdens.

Staying Within the Tax Cap

The 2026 Tentative Budget adheres to New York State's 2.00% property tax cap. Meeting this standard requires discipline, conservative planning, and efficiency so that services are maintained without raising unnecessary costs.

The General Fund tax rate remains at \$0.571183 per \$1,000 of assessed value—unchanged from 2025. The Highway Fund is \$0.811517 per \$1,000. For a \$100,000 assessment, that equals \$57.12 for the General Fund and \$81.15 for the Highway Fund. Predictability matters for households and businesses, and this budget provides it.

There will also be no pay increases in 2026 for the Supervisor or Town Board. At a time when families are making tough choices, local leadership is doing the same.

Supporting Public Safety & Services

Public safety is a core responsibility of local government. This budget continues Cancer Insurance coverage and supports the LOSAP (Length of Service Award Program) for our volunteer firefighters. These measures help recruit and retain the dedicated men and women who protect our community.

The Highway Fund supports roadwork, drainage, snow removal, and seasonal maintenance. Clarence is known for safe, well-cleared roads in the winter, and several additional repaving projects are scheduled in 2026.

The General Fund maintains key community services - parks and recreation, youth and senior programs, planning, code enforcement, and public works. Highlights of the 2026 plan include:

- Two additional Resource Officers in our schools
- Renovations at Fogelsonger Park
- A new pavilion at the Clarence Hollow Farmers Market
- Restoration of the former Highway building into our first indoor recreation center
- Sidewalk expansion along Sheridan Drive
- Continuation of the Green Print Program and other conservation initiatives

A Community Plan

A budget is more than numbers - it's a reflection of our priorities and values. Clarence remains attractive because of its excellent schools, safe neighborhoods, recreational opportunities, and low tax rates. During my tenure, I've focused on careful, sustainable budgeting, and this year's plan continues that commitment.

Finally, I want to thank our elected officials, Town employees, and volunteer fire companies for their dedication. Their service keeps Clarence safe, vibrant, and fiscally strong. Together, we will ensure that our community remains a great place to live, raise a family, and do business for generations to come.