

# Wheatfield passes preliminary 2021 budget, as Moody's improves town rating

**BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO**

The Town of Wheatfield unanimously approved its preliminary 2021 budget on Monday.

The budget shows \$13,915,791 in appropriations, a decrease of \$360,831 from the 2020 adopted budget.

The town's estimated revenues for the year are \$8,609,095, down \$264,546 from the previous year, and the approximate fund balance of \$1.45 million is down \$150,000. Both are largely attributable to the ongoing pandemic.

The 2021 preliminary budget does include a slight tax increase. Budget Director Ed Mongold explained the necessity succinctly at the last budget presentation, saying, "This tax increase is basically 100% attributable to the garbage district. The cost of garbage pickup has increased by almost \$290,000 since 2019."

He went on to break down the numbers further saying, "For a typical homeowner that's assessed at \$125,000, the tax levy increase would be \$7.99 on an annual basis. The total taxes would increase from \$514.91 to \$522.96. That represents a 1.55% increase," Mongold said.

The tax levy will increase by \$53,715 (from \$3,802,981 to 3,856,696), representing a 1.41% increase, which is below the state-wide tax cap of 1.56%.

Supervisor Don MacSwan applauded the efforts of Mongold and other town officials for their work on the budget. He also noted the town was recently rated Aa3 by Moody's Investors Service – the fourth highest rating in their Long-term Corporate Obligation Rating system. Obligations rated Aa3 are judged to be of high quality and are subject to very low credit risk, per the Moody's website.

"We've done our best and all of our department heads have returned money back to the budget as a cost savings to the Town of Wheatfield in our tough time, like all the other communities are having too," MacSwan said. "I want to thank all of our department heads for their contributions to make it work for us, and again, if it wasn't for garbage costs going up, that's what makes it very difficult as we all know."

Among the night's motions, the board passed a resolution allowing volunteer firefighters to accrue five additional points each month during a state disaster emergency for the Volunteer Firefighters Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP). The move coincides with New York state's recent amendment to the General Municipal Law.

St. Johnsburg Fire Co. President

Michael Heffron explained that due to COVID-19, it has become difficult for volunteer firefighters in the Town of Wheatfield to accumulate the necessary points to remain in the program and accumulate a pension. Points are accrued in a number of ways, fighting fires being only one. Numerous safety meetings and fundraisers, which traditionally have allowed for points to be allotted, have been cancelled during the pandemic.

Heffron said the points program is a vital incentive that drives up volunteerism.

The board also passed a resolution to establish a capital reserve fund to finance the costs of various types of parks and recreational equipment.

MacSwan took a moment to explain the move.

"Instead of trying to take it out of one budget – we found out this year how difficult it is when money is tight – this will set money aside over a period of years to (make a large equipment purchase)," MacSwan said. "Speaking with our recreation director (Mike Renali), as the equipment starts to age, whether it be playground equipment, etc., as time goes on, we'll have money set aside. So instead of trying to take the money out of a single budget to supplement or replace playground equipment or any other equipment, we'll have money set aside and it won't be such a burden on the town."

# Town of Niagara adopts 2021 budget

Stavatti Aerospace lands at USARC site

**BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO**

The Town of Niagara voted to adopt its proposed 2021 budget on Wednesday. The total overall budget as submitted is \$9,515,442.

Other notable figures includes a general fund (nontaxable) balance of \$4,079,726, a decrease of \$189,615 from the previous year; highway – \$1,433,941 (an increase of \$63,655); water – \$1,045,873.00 (an increase of \$41,242); sewer – \$2,220,902.00 (an increase of \$ 52,902); fire – \$635,000 (an increase of \$20,000); and lighting – \$100,000, (an increase of \$5,000)

The total amount to be raised by taxes is \$2,582,599, which is even with the New York state mandated tax cap.

The budget includes a home-stead tax rate increase of \$48/\$1,000 of assessed value or \$48 on a home that is assessed for \$100,000. The non-homestead tax rate is \$40/\$1,000 of assessed value or \$40 on a home or business assessed at \$100,000.

Supervisor Lee Wallace spoke on some of the challenges for this year's budget and the tax increases.

"We try to go right up to the tax cap and, as you can see, we still have to take money out of the fund balance," Wallace said. "The budget really has almost no increases in equipment and contractual services. The only increase is basically due to salary applications."

Wallace said COVID-19 had a significant impact on the Town of Niagara compared to other municipalities as it traditionally relies heavily on sales tax revenue.

"COVID-19 is tough on all of us but it's hurt us more in revenue because our general fund budget, which is made up of a number of departments, it's not funded by property tax. It's funded by revenue sources. So we were hurt significantly by sales tax and also by court fees and things like that."

In other town news, Stavatti Aerospace formally took over the site adjacent to the Niagara Falls International Airport on Oct. 31. The town recently cleared the way for the move by rezoning the property at 9400 Porter Road from light industrial to heavy industrial.

The company says that the Stavatti Niagara site – which will serve as a prototype development, production and aircraft Low Rate Initial Production Center – is expected to generate nearly 600 aerospace engineering, develop-

ment and manufacturing jobs within the next five years.

Anticipated key programs for the Niagara site are next-generation Stavatti military, commercial, and general aviation aircraft that include the SM-27 Machete (turboprop), SM-28 Machete (turboprop), SM-31 Stiletto, SM-100 twin-engine intermodal transport and SM-150 personal air vehicle.

Wallace said he and other board members are excited for the project and the prospects that it could create.

"I'm very excited about the project," he said. "The whole Town Board is behind it. You know, it's been a long process. The town has been in negotiation with the Department of Defense for this project since 2005 and it's been off the tax rolls for over 60 years. The project looks like it's going to bring a lot of jobs and a lot of prospects and a lot of prosperity to Niagara County and the Town of Niagara and we're real excited."

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**NOTICE**

**TOWN OF WHEATFIELD LOCAL LAW NO. 1-980 ARTICLE III SECTION 2**

Parking of vehicles is hereby prohibited on all streets within this Town between 2:00 A.M. and 6:00 A.M. from November 15th to April 1st. Violators of this section shall have automobiles towed away at owner's expense.

Section 1219 of the Vehicle and Traffic Law and Section 214 of the Highway Law of New York State, specifically prohibit the placing or leaving of snow, ice or other substance, upon any highway (which includes pavement, shoulders and ditches).

Paul Siegmann  
Highway Superintendent

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**  
**POWER AUTHORITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK**

The Power Authority of the State of New York (Authority) will hold a public hearing as detailed below on a proposed form of Contract for the sale of hydropower to Petri Baking Products, Inc., and Premium PPE, LLC and on the Contract Extensions for the sale of hydropower to New York State Electric and Gas Corporation and Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation.

Copies of the proposed Contract forms may be inspected at the Authority's office at the address below, or online at the Authority's Web site, [www.nypa.gov](http://www.nypa.gov).

Those wishing to make oral statements at the hearing are asked to provide to the Authority, in writing, in advance of the hearing, their name(s) and the name of the organization or group they represent. Oral statements should be limited to five minutes. Speakers should also bring two hard copies of their oral statements to the hearing.

Hearing Date: November 30, 2020  
Hearing Times: 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
Hearing Location: 535 Washington Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room  
Buffalo, New York 14203

Written statements provided to the Authority by close of business on Tuesday, December 1, 2020 will also become part of the record of the hearing. For further information, including the address of other Authority offices at which copies of the proposed Contract forms may be inspected, contact:

POWER AUTHORITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK  
Karen Delince, Corporate Secretary  
123 Main Street, White Plains, New York 10601  
(914) 390-8085 | [secretarys.office@nypa.gov](mailto:secretarys.office@nypa.gov)

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