

**TOWN OF JOHNSBURG
TOWN BOARD MEETING
October 15, 2024**

In Attendance: Kevin Bean – Supervisor Jim Williams – Councilman
 Paul Heid – Councilman Anna Bowers – Councilwoman
 Arnold Stevens – Councilman Jean Comstock – Town Clerk

*TOWN CLERK – The Preliminary Budget was presented to the Town Board.

1. Pledge of Allegiance led by – Bruce Ashline
2. Call to Order Regular Town Board Meeting – 7:02PM
3. Resolution to Approve the Minutes of the October 1, 2024 Meeting Minutes
RESOLUTION # 179 – 24
Mr. Stevens made a Motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of October 1, 2024 and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Heid. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.
4. Resolution to Approve the Proposal for the Audit Services – Chris Heidrich – will the Bond cover this cost? Mr. Heid - It will be billed to the Sewer district; was this included in the cost of the sewer? Patrick Hughes – for two years, a full audit.
RESOLUTION # 180 – 24
Mr. Stevens made a Motion to approve the Proposal for the Audit Services and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Ms. Bowers. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.
5. Resolution to Support Barton Mines – Supervisor Bean read the Resolution
RESOLUTION # 181 – 24
Mr. Williams made a Motion to approve the Resolution in Support of Barton Mines and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Heid. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.
6. Resolution to Rescind Resolution # 23-252 – initial engineering for the park; capital fund should have been set up for this project; Mr. Williams – this is more of a technical Resolution rather than a lack of support for the park; we’re not ready to move forward with closing the mine at this time, there are still a couple of years left; we’d have to redo the engineering at a later date again; I fully support the Park.
RESOLUTION # 182 – 24
Mr. Heid made a Motion to approve Rescinding Resolution #23-252 and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Williams. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.

7. Resolution to Rescind Resolution #23-210 - \$150,000 set aside for the re-val; conversations with Attorneys; Ms. Bowers – we're at 78% and I know we need to do a re-val; we're giving a very short notice to our community members without their input; we're being asked to make a very hard decision; the money has been earmarked at the \$150,000 and now at \$91,000; we're using the same data from a couple of years ago, it doesn't sit well with me without a conversation with our community; Mr. Williams – Resolution #23-210 was not legally established per legal counsel; let's focus on this first.

RESOLUTION # 183 – 24

Mr. Heid made a Motion to approve Rescinding Resolution #23-210 and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Stevens. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.

8. Resolution to Contract with KLV Municipal for the 2025 Reval – Supervisor Bean - we have had conversations (the Board) obviously in conversations it's basically that we're at 78% of our equalization rate; sales tax, state land tax, occ tax – we've lost about \$100,000 just in State land; I've had conversations with real estate agent, use a maintenance plan thereafter; Mr. Heid– it is a difficult decision, but we are losing money; the losses we've had so far negate the cost of the re-val; we can use and verify the data; hiring an outside contractor to verify the data we have with specific parcels to get our equalization rate back up; Ms. Bowers – my biggest concern is that it was a source of contention previously, now we're using the same data; Mr. Williams – anyone who did permits will be done through the County; Ms. Bowers – Letitia still has to sign off on any data signed off on by the independent re-val company; Mr. Heid – she doesn't have to take the heat; Mr. Stevens – sat here for 2 years, people screaming yelling, cursing the work the Town Board was doing; claiming flawed data, now we're saying that the data is OK to use, we're using 20 parcels out of 3,000 parcels isn't a good practice; where are the hordes of people claiming the flawed data from last time; I will not support the \$91,000 to go out for this re-val; do we have solid confidence in the data that has been collected up to this point? Mr. Heid – I personally did not find the data flawed; Ms. Bowers – to Mr. Steven's point – if the data is flawed why are we using it? Supervisor Bea – had a conversation with Ms. Williams today – she is quite comfortable using this company and spending the money on the re-val; my wife and I met with her, first time we'd been through this; about 20 people went to her very angry and hostile; Mr. Williams – a lot of emotion and anger from previous re-val; I'm looking at it from a problem solving aspect; we're at 78% of our fair market value – we're missing out on \$198,000 a year, plus state land and occ tax; being at 100% helps improve our bond rating; I spoke with the individual from KLV today; what is inventory verification – another option for \$120,000 – improved properties from public roadways and overhead imagery; I expressed the concern of the data; previous conversation with Ms. Williams – how many homes were built without permits – she indicated none; how many structures (decks, garages, etc.) – 25-30 structures up in that time; the gain in income from those structures compared to redoing a full re-val – not even close; the concern that I have is that people might feel that their data is wrong, is there a mechanism for people to correct it – residential data verification mailer – mail out what we have on record, correct and verify; there might have been mistakes with the previous data collected, they could meet with the Assessor, go to grievance, and another step further; data collected has already been changed through these processes; if they chose to not partake in the verification; the Town set the assessor up for failure last time, it had not been done in a very long time; this is setting her up for success; she's clearly stated she wants to sit this one out; we can let it slide and it's another 50 years before it's done again; Ms. Bowers – approximately 20 people came to her, but she wants to sit this out, it doesn't add up; Ms. Bowers – Mr. Williams you were comfortable with your assessment? Mr. Williams – I went to an informal meeting with the Assessor; there's a short

window to do this work, next year it would be \$380,000 not the \$91,000 this year; Mr. Stevens – we're at 78% to bring it to 100% - what is that percentage? Why do we pay someone \$91,000; Mr. Williams – they'll base it off of recent sales, house class, compare, crunch numbers, minus vacant land; Ms. Bowers – based on previous data? Candace Lomax – I think BAR they did a wonderful job with honesty and integrity and upheld State law; 3,572 parcels within the Town of Johnsbury, we had 88 grievances; 97% of people approved their; 9 people went to SCAR – 6 were ruled in the Town's favor; 1 thrown out; NYS Sanctioned the Assessors role – have to be between 95-100% accurate, that happened during that time; 100% in 2022 now at 78.6%; we are falling back, be prepared, this is not a one shot deal, this is something that needs to be kept up; follow-through was never done; when is Letitia's contract up? Supervisor Bean – not sure; she works for three other Towns; Ms. Bowers – it's common for Assessors to work in multiple towns; Deana Wood – sending letters to property owners, it happened last time – will it happen again? Mr. Williams – that's an option we will take; Deana Wood – can you just raise taxes to get us at 100%? Supervisor Bean - no it doesn't work that way; Chris Heidrich – I also sat on the BAR, there were real attacks done, false laws, lawsuits that were going to happen; ask NYS to come in and audit us; you're talking fiscal responsibility; you don't know what you're going to get; Candace Lomax – do we still have a data collector? Supervisor Bean – no we do not; Patrick Hughes – I read the prospectus, they have the data, they have tables that generate the fees – have we seen the tables? They're experts in the tax system; need to know what fields are required and/or information; I would like to meet the firm and have them do a demo; Chris Heidrich– NYS uses the same tables; Arthur Webb – what is the role of the assessor at the end of the process? Supervisor Bean – sign off on this; Ms. Bowers – she has to sign off on it and go through it all; Arthur Webb – she'll still have to answer questions; impact on taxpayers to get to 100%, a huge vacuum of information that is disturbing; verification or validation – two very different things? Mr. Williams – verification. Arthur Webb – variations were not predictable; what I don't know with the new consultant, how deep are they going to go? Supervisor Bean – I asked them to take 20 random properties; Mr. Williams -they'll go to my data information, they'll compare it to a similar house, then my neighbors; there will be a reflection from different areas; Supervisor Bean – they are not cookie cutter homes no matter where you are; Bruce Ashline – assessor was set up to fail, Adirondacks are different; we hadn't had a re-val in many years; utterly ludicrous to put her in that position; I live in a modular, she stated no you don't – paper indicated it was a manufactured house, not a confidence booster; those that were undervalued didn't complain; I have a dirt floor barn - \$189,000 is what she valued it at; went around the neighborhood to several properties, none were even similar; I know the information was not correct; I got \$106,000 taken off, it's better; I would not be happy with 20 properties; Amy Sabattis – what happens if the properties that are picked the Assessor doesn't agree with the data? Kelly Nettle– I take issue with Mr. Ashline saying she was a failure; Bruce Ashline– I said she was set up for failure; Mr. Williams – we can pay \$91,000 to get over \$250,000; Chris Heidrich – have Assessor do it? Mr. Williams – she doesn't want to do it; Patrick Hughes – can we ask the firm to look at our data – and see what they can do? State land went down and all homeowners picked up the difference; fix Section 7; Arthur Webb – Gore was brought down as well? Patrick Hughes– it was fixed; Bruce Ashline – we're in a rock and a hard spot now; Supervisor Bean – I want to move forward; Mr. Williams – Warrensburg just completed a re-val, tax rate dropped in different budget lines; Bruce Ashline – do 30-40 properties; proceed ahead; Supervisor Bean – if we're losing \$198,000 in sales tax alone; Candace Lomax – it would need to go to the BAR; Amy Sabattis – I don't like going to the firing squad and that's what I felt like; Chris Heidrich – some didn't come because they didn't understand, there are people that can help them; the Town needs to point that out for folks, they can get help; Kelly Nettle – perhaps it would be wise to look at second option, not the cheapest route, a

little more comprehensive and responsive to questions asked here; Mr. Williams – inventory verification of all properties for \$120,000, visit to each property from the road, aerial photography as well; Candace Lomax – verify mailing, confirming that the homeowner is telling the truth; Supervisor Bean - \$91,000 will get us to 100% and all the benefits with it; Bruce Ashline– how do we keep it current? Supervisor Bean – every two years; Ms. Bowers – the assessor would do it; Bruce Ashline – she just doesn't want to do it; Counties are done differently from Warren to Essex; Bruce Ashline– to that point, two years from now, if the assessor doesn't want to do it, we're paying another \$91,000 or more; Deanna Wood – she would get paid more? Ms. Bowers – no, she's required to do a project during her tenure; which is what she did; Candace Lomax– she did have a data collector, but we don't have one now. Supervisor Bean – do you want to move forward with the resolution as is? \$91,000 + \$3,000 for mailing; 2 no, 2 yes; \$120,000 – yes or no? Ms. Bower – no, I have more questions; Mr. Williams – either one, we need to get it moving ROLL CALL – Mr. Heid – yes on the \$94,000; Ms. Bowers – no, Supervisor Bean – yes, Williams – yes; Stevens – no; Supervisor Bean - thank you all for your input and patience.

RESOLUTION # 184 – 24

Mr. Heid made a Motion to approve using KLV for the Re-val and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Williams (via Roll Call); With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 3 (Bean, Heid, Williams) Nays – 2 (Bowers, Stevens).

9. Resolution for Budget Line Transfers – Supervisor Bean – any conversations?

RESOLUTION # 185 – 24

Mr. Stevens made a Motion to approve the Budget Line Transfer and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Ms. Bowers. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.

10. Resolution for Authorization to Proceed with Paving for New Salt Shed – Mr. Comstock - we have a new salt shed, paving to keep from digging in the dirt; have the 3 quotes that are required; this is all CHIPS money refunded to the Town. Mr. Heid – good to do to protect the environment; Mr. Williams – binder with no topcoat; Mr. Comstock – yes.

RESOLUTION # 186 – 24

Mr. Heid made a Motion to approve the paving for the new salt shed and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Stevens. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.

11. Resolution for Authorization to Proceed with the Purchase of a New Tow Behind Blower — Mr. Heid – pleased to see what is happening with ditching this year, good tool for potential washout; common in other parts of the county; save money and time in the future; Mr. Williams – committee talked about this? Mr. Heid – it will save us money in the long run, it was discussed and feel it's a good purchase; good investment; Mr. Williams – can it be used for anything else; Mr. Comstock – we rake 74 miles of roads and that's what it will be used for; Ms. Bowers – 2 – 4 week lead-time? Mr. Comstock – yes; Bruce Ashline – I saw one being used in Hamilton County, working on a graded road was much easier, quick, think it's a good idea; Mr. Comstock – Chestertown and Bolton have one on their tractor, this one hooks up to a truck. Mr. Williams – why would you not want one on the tractor? Mr. Comstock – don't want to put the hours on the tractor for that purpose, if the tractor breaks down doing this, we're down a tractor and a blower.

RESOLUTION # 187 – 24

Ms. Bowers made a Motion to approve the Authorization to Proceed with the Purchase of the tow behind mower and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Heid. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.

12. Resolution to Set Date for Public Hearing for Preliminary Budget – November 7, 2024 prior to Town Board Meeting 6:30PM. Ms. Bowers – is ½ enough time? Arthur Webb– will the Preliminary Budget be put up on Website, yes tomorrow.

RESOLUTION # 188 – 24

Mr. Williams made a Motion to approve setting the Public Hearing for the Preliminary Budget for November 7, 2024 at 6:30 at Tannery Pond and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Ms. Bowers. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.

Supervisor Bean - Occ Tax – we have \$24,000 we can use for specific projects – Ms. Bowers – it doesn't need to be spent by the end of the year; in addition to Lights On; separate from the Committee; Mr. Williams – my preference is to promote the area, doling out in little doses here and there is great; authentic Johnsbury winter carnival at the new lodge at Gore; races down the slope, get a group together to work on this with occ tax money set aside, a larger event, hold it in reserve; Ms. Bowers – the Marketing Committee has had that conversation as well; having done events, I would only commit to the money if it was very well planned; need to be strategic in the planning; bigger event, more people; needs to be well structured; Mr. Heid – reach out to the community to get their ideas; Amy Sabattis– Marketing Committee has a lot of ideas; Kelly Nettle– Mr. Williams must have read my mind, a big event; Supervisor Bean – we don't need a lake to freeze and we can make snow; Kelly Nettle– maybe two events a year – Race the Train event for \$ for Scholars; non-profits need money, have them help; one to start, two would be our ultimate goal; Mr. Stevens – follow suit with other towns, some welcoming signs compared to other Towns ours are a little weak; Ms. Bowers - \$12,000 for signs at entrance and exit; we have ARPA money for that too; Supervisor Bean – we've had this conversation, we could use something like this; Arthur Webb – I love the idea and one way to do it, set aside \$5,000 for now projects, signs, etc. to use right now; leave a good chunk for a larger event; what are we anticipating for next year occ tax? Ms. Bowers – a little more for next year; Supervisor Bean – looking at Jan/Feb 2026; Arthur Webb – sounds like an exciting project; Community Day that Tannery had, was a good event; Amy Sabattis – the lodge would be completed by then? Supervisor Bean – yes; Amy Sabattis – having summer/falls/winter activities available during the event; Beth Maher – the event at Tannery Pond was great; Bruce Ashline– can occ tax be used on ice skating? Supervisor Bean – it gets a little sticky; needs to be a tourism based thing; Bruce Ashline – our occ tax is not well spent, I can't hear the bells from North Creek; Mr. Williams – occ tax committee has done a lot of different/better things this year; Kelly Nettle – spending money the skating rink is the Town spending money, not occ tax.

13. Library Report – in packet.

14. Supervisor's Report –

RESOLUTION # 189 – 24

Ms. Bowers made a Motion to approve the Supervisor's Report and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Heid. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.

15. Warrants

RESOLUTION # 190 – 24

Mr. Heid made a Motion to approve the Warrants and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Ms. Bowers. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.

GENERAL FUND	\$ 45,040.56
HIGHWAY FUND	\$ 26,132.87
WATER IMPROVEMENT PROJECT	\$ 8,822.50
SEWER DISTRICT PROJECT	\$ 1,875.00
SKI BOWL MITIGATION PROJECT	\$ 2,500.00
LIBRARY FUND	\$ 2,281.76
EMS	\$198,765.75
WATER DISTRICT	\$ 8,269.71
TRUST & AGENCY	\$ 876.52
TOTAL	\$294,564.67

16. Resolution to change from Tentative to Preliminary Budget – changes to tentative, preliminary budget JW/PH; Ms. Bowers – against fire fund would like the 2% increase; EMS fund to 2%; 3% for Town Clerk and Highway Superintendent; 3% to Judge; \$80,000 pit closure has been moved for 5 years; Supervisor Bean – November 13, 2024 – one final Budget Workshop, people can weigh in before the Final Budget is adopted.

RESOLUTION # 191 - 24

Mr. Williams made a Motion to approve the changes from the Tentative to Preliminary Budget and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Heid. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 4 (Bean, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 1 (Bowers).

17. Committee Reports –

Paul Heid

- Highway – met to hash out budget; putting it in a format for all to see, inventory, equipment needs, etc. time cycle is important; purchase a truck every few years; wish-list for years to come is being done as well; very productive meeting, pleased with how it all turned out.

Anna Bowers

- Occ tax – scoring now, recommendations for next Board Meeting; looking at language, maybe refresh it; only 6 applications this time, two big ones.

Jim Williams

- Parks – met with bike promoter 9/9/25 bike race; 150 racers; roughed out a course; will be firmed up.
- Sewer – it's out to bid; 10/17 – Q&A/walk through; bids due by 10/29/24; Ms. Bowers – any concerns about bids coming in higher than anticipated with the time that has passed? Any conversations with ORDA or State? Supervisor Bean – according to Mr. Konis – some are bidding on smaller projects; I spoke with Governor's rep, for potential help if things come in higher; Mr. Williams – conversations with Brian – Engineer – 15 companies picked up plans; bid broken up into 5 parts, making sure we get competitive bids.

Arnold Stevens

- Met with Kevin, Danae and Cedarwood concerning water rate schedules – on going project;
- Preliminary discussions for options for seniors with Supervisor Bean; form a committee in the near future.

18. Resolution to move to Executive Session at 8:45PM

RESOLUTION # 192 – 24

Ms. Bowers made a Motion to Move to Executive Session and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Heid. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.

19. Resolution to Adjourn Executive Session at 9:04PM

RESOLUTION # 193 – 24

Ms. Bowers made a Motion to Adjourn the Executive Session and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Williams. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.

20. Resolution to appoint Zoning Board Members (discussed in the Executive Session).

RESOLUTION # 194 – 24

Erwin Morris – Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams); Nays – 0
Rick Bennett – Ayes – 3 (Bean, Heid, Willaims); Nays – 0; Recuse – 2 (Bowers, Stevens)

21. Resolution to Return to the Regular Board Meeting

RESOLUTION # 195 – 24

Ms. Bowers made a Motion to return to the Regular Board Meeting and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Heid. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.

22. Privilege of the Floor

- Kelly Nettle – budget hearing I missed; suggest to make more accessible to the public – move meetings into smaller rooms, easier to hear; buy a speaker system, body mic, hand held mics to pass around; equipment is not that expensive; Clerk/Highway – 3% raise, not opposed; 2% increase for EMS - \$8,600 increase; 2% increase – 1-1/2 cents per community member; need our EMT's; need to retain EMT's; 50 years no headway for EMT's; board members scared to raise taxes; taxes need to be raised with wise decisions; undermines the viability of a local service;
- Mr. Webb – thank you to the Town Board for holding a workshop and being as open as possible; no overview of what this budget really does; how does the community benefit from this budget; JES delivers quality services, supported us in 2024; over 600 calls; I am a board member; impressed with effectiveness; lucky for the members; frustrated and disappointed by the recent discussions; all left the meeting in August confirming 2% increase was confirmed by Town Supervisor; issues should have been discussed and addressed prior to workshop; \$8,600?!?!?! No further discussion or questions since the August meeting; broader communication; Mr. Williams – I hope in a budget workshop that questions/answers are in no way showing a lack of support; I want no one other Joe Connelly coming to my door in case of a 911 call; I need to see justification for raises; I did not see a 2025 budget for JES; same with fire protection – 2 companies haven't given us certificates of insurance naming the town for an additional insured; need justification for increases; Joe – no idea until that night; Supervisor Bean – I'm one vote; Joe Connelly – no contact with me; Supervisor Bean – I could not find the 2025 budget; Ms. Bowers – Mr.

Hughes talking over Mr. Webb, a non-elected official yelling at another ; Mr. Webb – breakdown of communication quite honestly; everything has been provided to the Town Board; we got squeezed against the wall due to the timeframe; Supervisor Bean – knowing what I know now, I would have done things differently; Arthur Webb – I support questions, that’s how we learn.

- Kelly Nettle – weird not to plan to build budget with increase of inflation; Supervisor Bean – happy we’re at tax cap, better shape than I thought we were in from e-mail from Danae.
- Jean Comstock – have been a volunteer for almost 30 years, I’m concerned with no increase for fire departments; to take State mandated training, gear has to be in compliance (within a certain number of years) to take training; right now \$3,000-\$5,000 per person for turnout gear; the EMS/Fire Committee should have reached out to discuss the contract and/or the Town Board; Ms. Bowers did reach out and met at a Town Chief’s Meeting to listen to the concerns. Bruce Dunkley – I reached out to a chief on two separate occasions; Supervisor Bean – I had spoke to a couple of the chiefs about setting up a meeting as well; Mr. Heid – we need to reach out and set a meeting.
- Beth Maher – volunteer for emergency readiness; hoping to get support from the Town; Ms. Bowers – you can use NC Business Alliance Account for a Zoom meeting.
- Bruce Ashline – I agree with Kelly, can’t hear very well.
- Michael Wilson – youtube is new to Town, bugs need to be worked out; Zoom is not supported only for business, not politics; we’ll work through it.
- Deanna Wood – can we order a proper stand for the flag.

23. Motion to Adjourn

RESOLUTION # 196 - 24

Ms. Bowers made a Motion to adjourn the Town Board Meeting at 9:32PM and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Heid. With the following Members voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried Ayes – 5 (Bean, Bowers, Heid, Stevens, Williams) Nays – 0.

Prepared by:

Jean M. Comstock

Jean M. Comstock
Town Clerk

THERE WILL BE A PUBLIC HEARING ON NOVEMBER 7, 2024 AT 6:30PM FOR THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET. THE TOWN BOARD MEETING WILL FOLLOW AT 7:00PM – AT TANNERY POND AND VIA YOUTUBE.

THERE WILL BE A BUDGET WORKSHOP ON NOVEMBER 13, 2024 AT 6:30PM AT TANNERY POND

I have two comments to make that concern the budget hearing last week which I unfortunately was not in town to attend.

1. I would like to suggest that this town board find away to make the town board meetings more accessible to all the community. These meetings are not able to be heard either in person or afterwards on YouTube. I am not sure if people listening remotely can hear or not, but I would think probably not. Here are two separate suggestions:

#1 Move the meetings back into the smaller room where they used to be held. That room will hold up to 35-45 people. Now that the uproar over the last reval seems to have died down, at most meetings the in person attendance has dwindled considerably. That room is small enough so people can be heard by all those in attendance and on-line. I imagine that translates well on You Tube also.

#2. Buy a speaker system or components that are worthy of us all. Each one of the board members should wear a body mike so the audience can hear their comments. Furthermore, buy several separate handheld mikes that can be passed to those in the audience who have something to say and want to be heard.

Right now, the meetings are a joke by totally ignoring the needs of all the people who take the time to actually come to Tannery Pond—and not meeting the needs of people who try to catch up via YOU TUBE and probably not meeting the needs of those who try to meet

remotely. The sooner you do this the better off this community will be.

My second comment:

I was interested to hear that the discussion about raising salaries for the clerk and the highway department supervisor. The suggestion I heard was a 3% raise. Let me assure you I am not opposed to paying our town officials more money as I think all have been grossly underpaid for decades. But, I was very surprised to learn, that there was quite a number of questions raised about a 2% increase in the contract between the Town and the Johnsburg EMS. I understand that the 2% increase amounts to \$8,600, an amount which covers a 24 cent increase in pay to our EMTs who earn \$19/hour to do the emergency medical work for our residents and visitors in town. How many of you realize that to raise \$8,600 will cost each taxpayer \$.015 /thousand. In my case, it will cost me \$4.50 total to raise the salary of the trained EMTs who serve the community. Without EMTS we do not have the drivers of the ambulances. Without EMTs we do not have the extra, off-duty personnel to transport patients from GFH back to Elderwood or out to Syracuse for special care there. Without EMTs we do not have the extra set of knowledgeable hands that assist the paramedics in life-saving situations. Does this community really want to make it hard for us to retain EMTs when they can go work their 36-hour shifts in North Warren or in Lake George or in Hadley-Luzerne for a mere penny and a half per 1000? Does that make sense? I do not think so.

I have watched this community not make headway for fifty years because the town boards were too timid to raise taxes. Scared to death the community would rise up and run them out of town—of course, it took a reval and a lot of hot heads to make that happen—but the sad thing is that NO community makes headway and keeps itself afloat

without raising taxes. The board's job is to make wise and responsible choices that advance the town not drag it backward. Cutting out raises that are UNDER the inflation rate not only undermines the affected workers' local spending, it also undermines the viability of a very necessary local service. Seems to me that budget committee members who nickel and dime every budget decision are not acting wisely and responsibly.

To: Town of Johnsborg Board

From: Arthur Webb (Home Owner & Board member of JES)

Re: Proposed TOJ Budget 2025

I appreciate the opportunity to present comments on the proposed Budget for 2025. The recent Budget Workshop was very helpful. The Board gets an endurance recognition for keeping the workshop open for almost three hours.

From the workshop session, I am better informed on the cost and allocation structure of the Town budget, and how Town revenues are used to balance the budget. It appears that the proposed budget is providing resources for many Town priorities.

It would have been and is still relevant that the TOJ Board provide the following:

- Overview of the what the Board is trying to do with the 2025 budget including goals and priorities.
- How will the community benefit from this Budget?
- How will this budget help the Town position itself for 2026 and 2027 in terms of potential increasing costs and revenue growth, property assessments, support for Gore, etc.?
- It would have been helpful to have a summary of the budget changes over the last five years, and
- A more timely and open budget development process.

In these following comments, I am only speaking as one board member of JES.

The goal of JES is to provide professional EMS services to this community, which it does every day. I think that we can agree that JES does deliver quality and responsive services. This should be our starting point. The Town invested in JES to help professionalize its services, which has previously been reported to the Board on JES successes.

Indeed, if we look at the close to 600 calls JES responds to, we will see how JES responds to life threatening and life protecting emergencies.

I am a recently appointed board member in early 2024. Based on my years in health care on the delivery and policy sides including overseeing EMS services, I am very impressed with the effectiveness and efficiency of JES as a business which is a nonprofit entity. This community is fortunate to have persons like Joe Connelly and Kevin Fusco in leadership and service roles.

However, I remain quit frustrated and disappointed by the discussion on EMS at the recent workshop on the proposed budget. Despite the extensive sharing of information over the last several months plus the lengthy meeting and deep dive into its finances on August 23, there was questioning at the workshop on the very topics on the EMS budget that were thoroughly discussed at the August meeting.

Indeed, at the August 23 meeting, we all left with the understanding that a 2% increase would be recommended, which was later confirmed by the Town Supervisor in an email to Joe Connelly that the 2% would be included in the Town proposed 2025 budget.

If there were issues, these should have been raised and dealt with prior to the workshop. The budget process was pushed to last minute reviews. Lots of numbers were thrown around with no verification or confirmation. There were comments that the Town appointed budget committee did not get enough information, and they still have many questions. This is disingenuous.

What is the point of all this? Is the discussion just about \$8600 increase? The \$8600 increase that we requested would go right to payroll. It translates into a 1.28% increase for our EMTs and Paramedics. For the EMTs making \$19 an hour that's an increase of 24 cents. It may not seem much, but it shows we, the Town and JES Board, care and respect their important work.

If the questioning was not about the increase, then I would have to believe there is some other motive not related to professionalizing EMS services or its finances. It seems that the credibility of JES information was being questioned.

Unfortunately, Joe was called away from the budget workshop to go to a vehicle accident. Otherwise he would have answered any lingering questions.

As Joe stated in an email on October 8, he couldn't believe it when he heard about the budget workshop that some of the Town Board members and appointed budget committee were asking the same questions they asked at our meeting- the same questions that the Budget Committee nodded their heads in agreement when we answered them on August 23

We have not received any questions since the August 23 meeting except a recent email from the Supervisor requesting another meeting just days before the workshop.

Of course, the TOJ Board has the right ask any and all questions to better understand what our taxes are covering. We respect that. On the other hand when questioning seems to be not grounded on facts, it leaves a negative impression with the public. This is not helpful to building support for the Town budget.

We stand ready to engage in thoughtful discussion. It is important that our Town citizens become more aware of the work of JES. The Town budget process in one way but we sense there is a need for a broader communication with our community.