

**Finance Committee Meeting  
April 9, 2025**

Attendees

Committee: Art Merrill, Wayne Marshfield, Wayland Gladstone, George Haynes, Joe Cetta, Eric Wilson, John Kosier, Tina Molé

Staff: Beverly Shields, Amy Merklen, Penny Bishop

Guests: Village of Delhi Mayor Jeffrey Gearhart, Village of Sidney Mayor Ray Baker, Village of Walton Mayor Bjorn Eilertsen, Village of Margaretville Mayor John Hubbell, Village of Stamford Mayor Robert Schneider  
Village of Delhi Trustee Barbara Sturdevant

Mr. Merrill called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m.

On a motion by Mr. Gladstone, seconded by Mr. Wilson, the March 26 committee meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

The January 31 and February 28 Bank Balance reports were reviewed. The April 4 Sales Tax report was reviewed. The report indicates an 11.9839% increase relative to last year.

Treasurer's Office – Beverly Shields

Mr. Merrill referred to a report prepared by the Treasurer's Office with final details on eight foreclosure properties that were sold by Lambrecht Auction online. The properties were listed on the auction site on March 19 and the sale ended April 3. Mr. Marshfield gave additional information on the amount of county tax owed on each property and noted that three properties brought less than what was owed. In reply to Mr. Merrill, Ms. Merklen stated the next foreclosure sale would probably not be until October. Mrs. Shields confirmed the sale would be for 2019 foreclosure properties. Mr. Marshfield suggested that the county would need to double up the foreclosure sales to get back on track.

Mr. Merrill welcomed the Village Mayors and noted this meeting may be a bit premature since the committee has received budgets from only three villages. He asked if anyone had any suggestions other than sales tax that could help.

Mayor Gearhart said the Village Delhi is in the process of finishing their budget and wanted to make the committee aware that the village budget is set by the trustees. He introduced Delhi Village Trustee Barbara Sturdevant to answer any questions regarding their budget.

Mrs. Sturdevant expressed that they have worked diligently to keep under the tax cap. She noted that a 2% tax increase nets the village only \$23,000; however, employee benefits among other costs have increased by \$140,000. They have cut back and are at minimum staffing. She stated they have a barebones budget and that they are losing a potential half million dollars due to tax exempt property within the village. They have no cushion on estimated revenues. She said they applied for a NY Forward grant, but it was not approved as there is limited space in the

Village for large projects. Mr. Gearhart said an alternative is to have county assistance to reinforce the municipality's need for grants.

Mr. Merrill stated the committee would like to pursue other expenses that could be paid through shared services.

In reply to Mr. Marshfield if there is any movement from the college to get the quarter million dollar host benefit reinstated, Mr. Gearhart said that he is currently working in a group of seven members to ask lawmakers and to use the political clout that NYCOM has to request reimbursement of the funds. Mrs. Sturdevant expressed it's worth a try, but that money has to come from the state.

Mayor Hubbell stated the cost of health insurance for a small village like Margaretville is not competitive and asked if the cost would be more affordable if they joined a larger system. Ms. Molé stated the County has many employees and is experience based, so the price of health insurance is actually quite costly. Mr. Merrill stated that for his town, he is able to get health insurance for a better rate than the County.

Supervisor Cetta introduced Bjorn Eilertsen who was recently elected Mayor of the Village of Walton.

Mayor Baker stated the Village of Sidney will present their budget for adoption on April 14 and he would submit the budget to the committee. Mr. Merrill said the village budgets will give the committee an indication of where the village stands and what has the most impact on their budget. The committee would look to see if there may be some things they can pick up on.

Mayor Schneider stated there is only a finite ability to raise the funds that are needed and grants and windfalls are not always going to be available to cover increasing costs.

Mayor Baker said the Village of Sidney was able to balance their budget this year because they are selling land for \$100,000 and they also have logging money but this is only for the current year.

Joe Cetta said that he has advocated for the mayors who originally asked for 12% of what the county gets for sales tax but if they cannot meet that request, then he is asking what percent the committee could do? He noted these are ongoing discussions. Mr. Merrill stated that one of the concerns is if that would just be putting off an inevitable problem. He believes a more stable income would be needed, but they need to know how much consistent income would be meaningful.

Mr. Wilson asked if there was any progress on a cannabis dispensary in Delhi. He stated that the Town of Sidney budgeted \$40,000 but will receive closer to \$60,000 in revenues from the sales.

Mayor Gearhart said there are dispensary applicants, but they are also trying to see what other state funding is available. He said the Village of Delhi received \$31,000 of state municipal funds. Mr. Merrill explained that the AIM funding was taken away five or six years ago, and when it was reinstated it is now paid from sales tax.

Mr. Gladstone opined that even if the villages received sales tax, they could be worse off than they were before getting that revenue.

Mr. Merrill asked Mayor Gearhart if the Village considered disbanding their police force as Delhi has three other local police forces available which are the State Police, University Police, and the Sheriff's Office. Mr. Gearhart replied that the college police are allowed to provide service in the village only if requested. He said the village has a population of 3,200 but 10,000 to 15,000 people are in the village each day.

Mr. Marshfield questioned the \$256,000 sewer deficit in the Delhi Village budget. Mayor Gearhart said they raised the rates 5% and Mrs. Sturdevant said the rates are raised every year. Mr. Marshfield also noted a \$70,000 deficit for the water fund. Both accounts have more appropriation than revenue. Mrs. Sturdevant stated the unexpended fund balance covers the deficit. Mr. Marshfield said perhaps the rates could be increased to avoid the deficit.

Mayor Baker reported that last year, not only did they raise the village taxes by 11%, they also had to raise the sewer and water rates 5% plus charge a \$34 fee per quarter for the wells that needed to be installed.

In reply to Supervisor Wilson, Mr. Marshfield explained that the Village of Delhi does not have a court. All traffic diversion cases are handled through the Town of Delhi court. Mrs. Sturdevant said the village does receive a small amount of revenue for parking tickets.

Mr. Merrill noted that the global situation right now makes him very nervous and they have not yet started to see that effect on sales tax. The committee will continue these conversations and expect to meet in another month or two. He thanked the Mayors for attending.

Mr. Cetta made a motion to enter executive session for contract negotiations to purchase property. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kosier and unanimously carried.

Committee reconvened in regular session.

Travel, equipment, and fill vacancy requests were approved as presented.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.