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"From the Supervisor" column
Submitted by Pittsford Town Supervisor Bill Smith

Supervisor Smith's 2019 Town Budget Cuts Taxes for Residents

My proposed Town budget for 2019 cuts the Town tax rate by 6.6% and reduces the overall Town tax levy. The tax cut keeps more money in the pockets of Pittsford taxpayers without detriment to the high standard of our municipal services.

Financial benefits of planning ahead

Pittsford taxpayers continue to benefit from the forward-thinking orientation of the Town administration and its predecessors. The Finger-Lakes Municipal Health Insurance Trust – a statewide model for shared services, initiated by the Town of Pittsford – continues to deliver material and substantial savings every year and will do so again in 2019. Incorporating the Senior Center in the renovated Spiegel Pittsford Community Center now saves the Town approximately \$100,000 per year in rent payments we were making for the previous Senior Center facility. Maintaining the Town's credit rating – the highest possible, and Pittsford the only town in upstate New York to have earned it – saves on interest the Town pays on bonding for the renovated Community Center and the athletic field improvements, and for all other borrowing. Moreover, the Greenprint Plan, which I supported in 1996 as a Town Councilman, continues to benefit taxpayers. Preventing development on the tracts of land protected by the Greenprint avoids altogether the pressure for additional Town and School services, and their costs, that would have been created if the land were developed.

Lower tax rate, maintained & improved services

Town tax remains proportionally low. **Town** tax in 2019 will continue to comprise less than \$0.09 of every dollar in property taxes paid by Pittsford residents.

In absolute terms, of the 18 towns in Monroe County, Pittsford has the 7th lowest town tax rate. If you exclude from the comparison those towns that receive revenues from landfills, and those that have commercial areas much more extensive and intensive than Pittsford's, we're the 5th lowest. And Pittsford provides municipal services that not all of the other lower-taxed towns do, such as leaf pick up, yard debris pick up, a recreation program and a Town-financed library.

While cutting the Town tax rate, my proposed budget for 2019 maintains and improves the services that contribute to the quality of life we all enjoy in Pittsford. It reinforces my commitment to building stronger neighborhoods, to continual improvement in Town services and infrastructure and to matters of importance to youth and seniors. The budget builds upon a longstanding fiscal record that protects taxpayers and reaffirms the Town's commitment to responsible budgetary practices. In a year when many municipalities are forced to override the New York State Property Tax Cap, the Town's fiscal discipline gives Pittsford a budget in full compliance with the tax cap. The Town has only ever exceeded the cap in years for which Pittsford residents themselves voted to approve spending that would put us over, for the Athletic Fields Project and the renovations of the Community Center.

Commitment to resident services

The demand for Town services is greater now than at any time in recent years. Pittsford is prepared to meet it. The proposed 2019 budget allocates additional resources to meet the growing demand. I have budgeted funding for two new positions in the Highway Department, specifically dedicated to response to requests by residents. An additional \$337,000 in road repair funds will allow us to become more aggressive in our schedule of road resurfacing and maintenance. Working directly with residents and neighborhood groups is an essential part of the Town's service model. To that end, we have budgeted an additional \$75,000 for community and resident services.

Supporting youth and seniors

The proposed budget for 2019 calls for increased funding to support services for youth and seniors. The budget funds Pittsford Youth Services (PYS) at \$53,540 – a 48% increase over the last two years, and fully funds PYS's budget request for next year. PYS in turn provides social services to Pittsford families, including solution-focused individual, family, and group counseling, home visits, crisis intervention, referral to other service providers, parenting support, education and information.

The Town's long-standing commitment to the quality of life for our senior citizens is reflected in the proposed budget as well. Anticipating greater demand for programs and services over time, the 2019 budget increases funding for senior programs by 8.48% over last year. Funds support our Tuesday Lunch Program, the Nutrition Program and the recreational activities designed for and offered specifically to our seniors.

Meeting wage & maintenance requirements

The proposed budget accommodates the increase in personnel costs imposed by the State increase in the Minimum Wage Rate. The Minimum Wage increases by another 70 cents/hour on 12/31/18. As part of a plan adopted in 2016 to deal with this, over the past two years the Town has phased in a restructuring of our wage scales to mitigate the cascading effects of the State-imposed Minimum Wage hikes on wages and benefits.

It is hard to believe that our Pittsford Community Library is now 13 years old. As such, it requires ongoing maintenance. The proposed budget provides \$87,500 for necessary maintenance over the year to come, including painting, carpeting and a new HVAC unit.

A team effort

As in past years, I am deeply indebted to our Town Department Heads for their hard work in their planning and in providing me with the data and analysis that have come together in the proposed budget for 2019. With their knowledge, skill and work, and with the continuing support of our community, Pittsford continues to pave the way toward improving services and infrastructure of Pittsford in the year ahead and protecting our taxpayers.

Should you have any comments about this or any other topic, as always you may reach me directly by phone at 248-6220 or by email at bsmith@townofpittsford.org.