

Village of South Glens Falls
46 Saratoga Avenue, South Glens Falls, NY 12803
March 25, 2026
Budget Meeting @ 6:00 PM

Budget Meeting
MAYOR JOSEPH ORLOW PRESIDING
Minutes

Attendance:

Mayor Orlow

Trustee Baxter

Trustee Comstock

Trustee Middleton

Xavier DeRush

TJ Wade

JM

Clerk Treasurer Samantha Berg

Superintendent Alan Dubois

Heather Runnalls

Chris Rich

Harry Gutheil

Eavesdropping

Absent: Trustee Carota

The mayor opened the meeting at 6:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

Tentative Budget

Discussion: Mayor Orlow requested that Department Heads present and explain any budget lines reflecting an increase greater than 4% for Board review and discussion.

Harry Gutheil - 21 Spring Street: asked if there was a Public Forum. When told there was not, he stated that, in his opinion, the tentative budget does not comply with the required format provisions. As there was no formal public forum held at that time, he indicated he would present his comments and concerns at the upcoming Budget Public Hearing.

- 1. Chief Gifford - SGF Police Department:** reported that no projections were included for personal services at this time due to ongoing contract negotiations with the Police Department Association (PDA). He noted increases in overtime, attributed to the need for prisoner transport and evidence collection. Additionally, after reviewing staffing trends among comparable agencies, Chief Gifford increased the allocation for part-time hours to remain competitive and maintain

adequate staffing levels. He reported an increase in overtime due to a significant rise in prisoner transport and investigations. He explained that on a single day, multiple officers were required for felony prisoner transport and evidence retrieval, illustrating the ongoing staffing demands. The Board discussed the comparison between the current budget request and the amended 2025–2026 budget, noting a difference of approximately \$6,000. Clerk Treasurer Berg suggested that the prior year may have included a budget transfer into overtime. Chief Gifford indicated he believes the proposed amount will be sufficient for the upcoming year. Chief Gifford stated that he had nearly lost part-time officers to other agencies due to non-competitive wages. To address this, he proposed an increase in both wages and hours for part-time staff to remain competitive and support operational needs, particularly related to transport and investigations. The Board noted a decrease in the crossing guard line item of approximately \$7,000. It was clarified that the prior year's budget included a higher total amount (\$26,496), which reflected a wage increase to \$18.00 per hour. He proposed the purchase of two (2) AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators), with supporting documentation provided, and one (1) crime scene camera, estimated at \$500–\$550. Chief Gifford then indicated that building repairs represent a significant budget item and would require further discussion. He explained that the Police Department garage doors have required frequent repairs in recent years, including issues with the doors, rails, and openers. Due to ongoing maintenance concerns, he obtained quotes and proposed approximately \$19,000 for replacement. Chief Gifford included funding for two (2) sets of body armor for new hires or lateral transfers as part of standard safety equipment needs. The Board reviewed the total proposed Police Department budget, increasing from approximately \$799,507 in the 2025–2026 budget to \$825,935. This reflects an overall increase of approximately 3%. Trustee Middleton said a 3% increase was not considered excessive or unreasonable. Trustee Baxter discussed current crossing guard wages (\$17.00–\$18.00 per hour) and noted that the prior year's budget included funding for an additional crossing guard, contributing to the higher prior allocation. General discussion occurred regarding maintaining competitive wages across part-time, crossing guard, and full-time positions, particularly considering ongoing contract negotiations for full-time officers. The Board discussed a \$20,000 allocation toward a future police vehicle purchase. It was noted that this would allow the Village to accumulate sufficient funds over multiple years, as it has been approximately two years since the last vehicle purchase. With this allocation, the reserve is expected to reach approximately \$60,000, positioning the Village to purchase a vehicle in a future budget cycle. The Board discussed the importance of maintaining competitiveness in compensation and ensuring departments are adequately funded to provide



necessary services and equipment. It was also noted that budget planning should balance fiscal responsibility with the need to properly support Village services. The Board clarified that the current budget allocation is not for the immediate purchase of a police vehicle, but rather to continue building the reserve for a future purchase, anticipated in a subsequent budget cycle (2027–2028). The Board expressed consensus that they were comfortable with the Police Department budget as presented.

2. Superintendent Alan Dubois - Department of Public Works (DPW):

presented an increase in personal services to account for the addition of a new full-time employee, as previously discussed by the Board. A significant increase was proposed to replace the Department's two-way radios, which are approximately 19 years old, and are experiencing ongoing issues. The radios are considered critical for operational safety. An allocation of approximately \$8,500 was requested to install a fender kit on the grader. He explained that the absence of fenders creates visibility and safety concerns when operating in snow and slush conditions. An increase in equipment repair funding was requested to address necessary maintenance on the snow loader, specifically the replacement of belt guides. The belt itself is expected to remain serviceable. Superintendent Dubois reported an increase in the sand budget due to the loss of a previously free sand supply, requiring the Village to begin purchasing sand. Additionally, the salt budget was increased by approximately \$10,000 due to the current year's budget being fully expended, requiring a transfer of funds. He noted that winter conditions are unpredictable and difficult to budget precisely. The DPW reduced the number of seasonal summer employees from three (3) to two (2), anticipating the addition of a full-time employee. A proposed increase in the hourly wage for summer help to \$18.00 per hour was also included. The Board discussed whether maintaining a third seasonal employee may still be beneficial despite the addition of a full-time position. It was noted that the approximate cost of a seasonal employee is \$6,750 for 10 weeks at 25 hours per week, and additional seasonal staffing may improve efficiency and support ongoing maintenance needs. Some Board members expressed support for maintaining or reconsidering the third seasonal position, while acknowledging the need to balance budget constraints. The Board discussed the DPW building and maintenance reserve, noting that the fund currently contains a substantial balance (approximately \$500,000). Further discussion was initiated regarding prior reductions to this reserve and its intended use for future capital or major renovation projects. Trustee Middleton expressed concern regarding the current balance of approximately \$500,000 in the DPW building and maintenance reserve. It was noted that while the funds are earning interest, rising costs for



materials, fuel, and equipment may outpace those returns, effectively reducing purchasing power over time. Trustee Middleton discussed the importance of actively planning and utilizing reserve funds for needed capital improvements rather than allowing them to remain idle. Specific needs referenced included deterioration of the salt storage shed (noted structural concerns), potential DPW facility ("barn") renovations, need for additional storage space for equipment, and ongoing equipment and infrastructure upgrades. It was also noted that maintaining and utilizing reserves appropriately may strengthen the Village's position when applying for grants. Superintendent Dubois proposed replacing an existing 20+ year-old "Billy Goat" blower due to ongoing maintenance issues and safety concerns. Currently, the equipment requires one employee to operate the blower while positioned on the tailgate of a pickup truck, creating a safety risk. The proposed replacement is a one-person stand-up blower capable of rotating 180 degrees, improving both efficiency and safety. The estimated cost is \$11,000–\$13,000 through a cooperative purchasing contract. Board discussion emphasized improved operational efficiency, reduced labor requirements, and increased employee safety. The Board briefly discussed overall budget increases across funds, noting the General Fund reflects a moderate increase, and Water Sewer budgets show limited increases.

- 3. Superintendent Alan Dubois - Water Department:** proposed an increase in the training budget from \$1,500 to \$5,000 to support required certification and licensing for staff. Funding was included for the installation of a remote garage door opener at the water facility. The Board discussed current water usage and supply, noting that the Village has not relied on supplemental outside water sources in recent years, and water supply capacity is currently strong. The Board discussed the potential to sell excess water capacity to neighboring municipalities, including preliminary discussions with the Town of Moreau. It was noted that additional analysis would be required to determine appropriate water rates. Considerations include operational costs, infrastructure wear, long-term capital needs, and proper rate-setting could result in a net positive revenue stream for the Village. Further evaluation was recommended before any decisions are made. The Board continued discussion regarding the potential sale of excess water capacity to neighboring municipalities. It was noted that any potential agreement would require negotiation of rates and terms with the receiving municipality. Comparable municipalities, such as the Town of Queensbury, currently charge approximately \$2.00 per 1,000 gallons, and existing contracts between neighboring municipalities and the County may limit immediate opportunities, with some agreements extending several more years. Superintendent Dubois indicated the Village has sufficient capacity to supply



significant additional volume if an agreement were reached. The Board discussed alternative concepts, including bulk water sales (e.g., hauler fill-ups), but noted that revenue potential may be minimal and operational; liability, and infrastructure considerations may outweigh financial benefit. Further research was requested regarding existing contracts and potential future opportunities timelines. The Board discussed the \$5,000 budgeted for Town water usage and noted that the Village has not relied on this supply in recent years. Trustee Baxter suggested that the line item remain in the budget but be reduced to \$0. This would allow flexibility in the event of an emergency while reducing overall budget increases, and any necessary usage could be addressed through contingency funds if required. The Board also discussed adjusting the fund balance allocation accordingly to maintain a balanced budget. The Board discussed long-term budgeting goals, including reducing reliance on fund balance to achieve a more structurally balanced budget, balancing fiscal responsibility with the need to remain competitive in wages and services, and recognizing that gradual adjustments may be necessary to achieve these objectives. Superintendent Dubois indicated that this line item remained consistent with the prior year at approximately \$2,000, though there was some discussion as to whether it had been fully reflected in the submitted budget. Trustee Baxter asked about the cost of carbon media replacement, noting the anticipated cost is approximately \$60,000 per tank. A five-year contract is in place for supply, and due to a transition in materials, two replacement loads may be required in the current cycle. The Board reviewed whether the \$120,000 budgeted amount reflects one or two anticipated replacements and discussed aligning the budget with expected actual needs. It was clarified that this amount anticipated two (2) replacement loads; however, only one (1) load is expected to be necessary within the upcoming budget year. Based on updated pricing under contract, the estimated cost for a single replacement load is \$80,000–\$85,000. The Board discussed reducing the budgeted amount accordingly, resulting in potential savings of approximately \$35,000. It was further noted that testing thresholds (including PFAS levels) will determine the timing of replacement. The system includes a secondary (“lag”) vessel, allowing time to order replacement media without risk of distributing untreated water, and replacement will be scheduled based on testing results and operational need. These adjustments would reduce the overall increase in the Water Department budget and bring it closer to a minimal or neutral increase. The Board discussed long-term planning for the replacement of Water Department vehicles. Superintendent Dubois noted that the current water department truck is approximately four (4) years old with relatively low mileage, and no replacement was included in the current budget. Trustee Middleton proposed a potential strategy of purchasing vehicles under

state contract pricing and replacing them on a three-year rotation, then selling or trading vehicles while still under warranty and in good condition. It was suggested that this approach could reduce long-term maintenance costs, minimize downtime, repair expenses, and result in minimal depreciation loss due to favorable resale value. The Board acknowledged the concept and indicated it may be considered for future budget planning. Trustee Baxter discussed the potential reallocation of identified savings within the Water budget toward capital and engineering needs. It was suggested that savings could be used for engineering studies, grant preparation, capital improvement planning, vehicle replacement could be deferred and budgeted in a future year, and funds should be actively utilized for infrastructure and system improvements rather than remaining idle. The Board expressed general agreement that funds should be used strategically to benefit the system and community. The Board discussed a phased approach to vehicle replacement, including deferring immediate purchase and budgeting for replacement in the following year, utilizing contingency funds if necessary, and avoiding extended use of smaller trucks beyond approximately five (5) years, while larger equipment may have longer service life. The Board emphasized the importance of proactive planning rather than waiting for equipment failure. Mayor Orlow referenced prior auditor recommendations encouraging the Village to reinvest in infrastructure and community assets where appropriate, rather than allowing funds to remain unused. The Board generally agreed that strategic investment is preferable to holding excess reserves without a defined purpose, and future budgets will benefit from improved revenue data, particularly with the implementation of water meters.

4. **Superintendent Alan Dubois - Sewer Department:** reported minimal changes to the sewer budget, noting that increases were limited due to existing financial constraints within that fund. It was noted that major upgrades or improvements would likely require future planning beyond routine maintenance and emergency repairs. No significant changes were made to the Sewer budget aside from adjustments to personal services due to staffing. The Sewer fund remains in a deficit position despite recent rate increases. It was noted that a projected 30% increase in sewer billing was included for budgeting purposes, consistent with prior recommendations, and actual revenues and expenditures will be better understood after a full year of data is available. The Board discussed the impact of sewer rate increases on residents and the need to address existing debt obligations and avoid additional long-term debt where possible. It was noted that the Village has a limited timeframe to address certain funding obligations before potential conversion to long-term financing, and additional guidance is expected

following upcoming meetings with financial advisors. The Board asked if there were any further questions or comments, and Superintendent Dubois thanked the Board for their time and discussion.

5. **Clerk Treasurer Samantha Berg – Clerk’s Office:** Clerk Treasurer Berg reported an approximate 12% increase in payroll, attributable to the addition of a Deputy Clerk position. Additionally, a 4% increase in wages was included in the proposed budget. She reported an increase in overtime, primarily due to the scheduled court audit in July, which requires extended hours over multiple days. A request was made for the purchase of a large-format scanner (approximately \$2,800) to digitize maps and large documents currently stored in paper form. She explained that the office maintains a significant volume of maps and records that are difficult to manage physically. Digitization would improve organization, accessibility, long-term preservation, and eventual reduction of paper storage. Superintendent Dubois noted that the scanner would also be beneficial for departmental use, particularly for older maps that are deteriorating. The Board discussed the potential future need for a large-format printer/plotter, cost differences between a scanner-only unit and a combined scanner/plotter system, and the possibility of utilizing cooperative purchasing contracts for such equipment. General support was expressed for the scanner as a practical first step toward digitization. Funds were included for a computer to support scanning and document management. The Board discussed whether existing network capabilities may reduce or eliminate the need for additional hardware, noting that some scanners may be able to connect directly to a network drive. An increase of approximately 17% was included to cover training and professional development for Clerk’s Office staff, including required certification and continuing education. An increase was noted in postage due to rising postage costs and high utilization in the current year (approximately 94% of the prior budget already expended). No significant changes in office supplies; Telephone line item remains consistent with prior year levels. An approximate 9% increase was included to account for inflation and service cost increases. Clerk Treasurer Berg reported a reduction of approximately 43% in the miscellaneous budget line. This line item was reduced, with her noting that costs are variable and dependent on upcoming system changes, including software migrations. Funding was included for the implementation of an electronic records management system (Laserfiche) to support digitization and storage of documents, including scanned maps. Clerk Treasurer Berg explained that the long-term goal is to transition to a cloud-based system. This may reduce reliance on physical servers and associated costs, as current systems are outdated and no longer supported. The Board discussed the estimated upgrade and implementation costs (approximately \$13,000), along

with potential cost savings from reducing or eliminating server storage expenses, and the importance of secure, reliable digital recordkeeping. Concerns were raised regarding data migration and system reliability, with reference to issues experienced by other municipalities during similar transitions. The Board acknowledged that further evaluation may be warranted before final implementation decisions. The Board discussed potential risks associated with digital data migration, including the possibility of losing file organization and naming structures during system conversion. Examples from other municipalities were referenced, where document organization was lost during migration and could not be fully restored. Clerk Treasurer Berg noted that maintaining paper records during any transition would provide a safeguard against data loss. The Board acknowledged the importance of careful planning and backup procedures before implementing any new records management system. The Board reviewed Clerk Treasurer Berg's budget and noted that overall increases are largely attributable to payroll and new system implementations, and, outside of payroll, the budget remains relatively stable with reductions in several line items. The Board expressed general satisfaction with the proposed budget.

6. **Buildings and Codes Department:** The Board noted the absence of the Buildings and Codes Officer, John Pagano, and proceeded with questioning an increase in the mileage reimbursement line, noting that a Village vehicle is now available and mileage reimbursement should be minimal. It was noted that only limited reimbursement had been required in the past year. Clerk Treasurer Berg added he had asked for a 4-hour call-in, but CSEA has only a 2-hour call-in. The Board stated they would consider it at a future meeting. The Board discussed an approximate 60% increase in the Inspector Miscellaneous line item and noted that additional detail or supporting documentation would be needed. It was noted that annual software and codebook updates (approximately \$1,500) are included, along with other system-related costs such as storage and software services. The Board agreed that additional clarification would be requested from Buildings and Codes Officer Pagano at a future meeting.
7. **Legal Services:** Trustee Middleton presented a request from Attorney Nikas for an increase in the monthly retainer fee from \$3,000 to \$5,000. It was noted that the request reflects prevailing rates among comparable municipalities, and the retainer includes attendance at Board meetings and additional legal services such as court appearances and hearings. He commented that even the proposed increase may remain below market rates. The matter was presented for Board consideration.



8. Fire Department: Trustee Middleton noted that a representative from the Fire Department, Tim Pease, was present. Discussion included annual funding requirements for fire protection services, existing contractual obligations, and payment schedules. It was noted that a portion of the current year's payment has already been made, and remaining payments are typically funded through contingency rather than directly budgeted. The Board discussed whether future budgets should include a dedicated line item for these payments versus continuing the historical practice of using contingency funds. Further discussion is anticipated as contract negotiations with the Town progress. Elizabeth Bennett raised concerns regarding the absence of a line item in the tentative budget for fire protection services for the upcoming fiscal year. She questioned whether the Village was anticipating that the Town would assume responsibility for funding fire services, and how this would impact Town residents outside the Village. Clerk Treasurer Berg clarified that the Village is not relying on the Town to assume its financial responsibility for fire protection services. The current contract remains in effect through December 31, and the remaining payment (approximately \$41,000) is due by the end of June under the existing agreement. It was further explained that historically, certain fire protection payments have been funded through contingency rather than directly budgeted. If necessary, the budget may be amended during the fiscal year to account for additional expenses, and future obligations beyond the current contract term will require negotiation of a new agreement. The Board acknowledged that there will be a six-month period beyond the current contract term that must be addressed. Legislative developments and ongoing discussions with the Town may impact future arrangements. The Board emphasized that the Village remains responsible for ensuring continued fire protection services, and any future agreements or changes will be evaluated as more information becomes available. Ms. Bennett reiterated concerns regarding transparency in budgeting for fire protection services and the importance of clearly accounting for anticipated expenses within the fiscal year. The Board responded that adjustments can and will be made as needed through budget amendments, and the Village is committed to maintaining fire protection services and addressing contractual obligations appropriately. She also informed the Board that the Town does not intend to terminate its existing water contract with the County due to system design and operational considerations. This information was received and acknowledged by the Board. The Board noted that further discussions regarding fire protection services, water agreements, and related intermunicipal matters will continue as additional information becomes available.

- 9. Trustee Compensation:** Trustee Baxter briefly discussed the proposed increase in Trustee compensation. Several of the Board members stated that the increase was minimal and not necessary and indicated a preference to forgo the raise. No formal action was taken at this time.
- 10. Engineering Services (Contractual):** Trustee Baxter reviewed the engineering contractual line item, which was initially budgeted at approximately \$1,000. Discussion noted that this amount may be insufficient to cover anticipated engineering needs, including preliminary project planning, grant-related work, and ongoing consultation for capital improvements. The Board discussed increasing the allocation to a range of approximately \$3,500–\$5,000 to reflect expected usage better. Clerk Treasurer Berg suggested that funds could be reallocated from other accounts, including the auditor contractual line or contingency, and maintaining adequate contingency funding remains important. Consensus supported increasing the engineering contractual line item, with final adjustments to be determined during budget balancing.
- 11. Contingency Fund:** Trustee Baxter reviewed the contingency balance, noting it is approximately \$60,000 within a \$3.7 million budget. Discussion emphasized the importance of maintaining contingency funds for unforeseen expenses and the likelihood that budget amendments may be required during the fiscal year. The Board agreed to retain contingency funding at an appropriate level and adjust as needed throughout the year. Clerk Treasurer Berg discussed projected insurance costs, with an estimated increase of approximately 18% based on the prior years' experience. It was noted that while exact figures are not yet finalized, costs are expected to rise and should be budgeted conservatively. Trustee Baxter discussed increasing the contingency allocation to provide greater flexibility for unanticipated expenses. He suggested increasing the contingency to approximately \$250,000 and offsetting this adjustment through appropriated fund balance. The Board noted that utilizing contingency for unforeseen expenses provides a clearer budgeting approach than frequent direct use of fund balance throughout the year. Consensus supported increasing the contingency line item while adjusting the fund balance accordingly. The Board discussed the presentation of appropriated fund balance within the budget, noting that adjustments may improve the overall appearance and transparency of the budget, and the use of fund balance remains necessary to maintain a balanced budget. It was acknowledged that long-term goals include reducing reliance on fund balance over time. The Board discussed increasing the contingency allocation to provide greater flexibility for unanticipated expenses.



12. Revenue Review: The Board reviewed projected revenues and noted that estimates appear reasonable based on current information and additional data, particularly from water metering, will improve accuracy in future budgets.

13. Tax Levy / Tax Rate Discussion: Clerk Treasurer Berg reviewed the proposed tax levy and associated increase. It was noted that the proposed budget reflects approximately a 4% tax increase, with the use of prior year carryover (approximately \$23,000) assisting in maintaining compliance with tax levy limitations. An example was provided indicating that for an average tax bill, the increase would be approximately \$40–\$50 annually. The Board discussed the importance of gradual adjustments to avoid significant impacts on taxpayers while maintaining necessary services.

14. Reserve Funds: The Board reviewed reserve accounts, including:

- a. **DPW Equipment Reserve:** Superintendent Dubois noted that approximately \$40,000 is budgeted toward this reserve, and additional funding (approximately \$200,000) will be required to cover outstanding costs for large equipment purchases. The remaining balance is anticipated to be funded through appropriated fund balance.
- b. **Water Infrastructure / PFAs Reserve:** Trustee Baxter discussed adding approximately \$40,000 to the water infrastructure reserve, funded through available fund balance. Clerk Treasurer Berg noted that the Village currently maintains a significant unappropriated fund balance (approximately \$1.1 million, prior to year-end close), and ongoing obligations and future capital needs must be considered when allocating these funds. The Board discussed the Water Infrastructure (PFAS) Reserve Fund, noting a current balance of approximately \$1.1 million. It was reported that funds are currently invested and earning interest at approximately 3.5%–3.65%, and interest earnings remain within the reserve fund. The Board discussed long-term planning for these funds, including maintaining sufficient reserves to support the required local match (approximately 25%) for anticipated grant-funded projects, and considering how reserve balances may impact eligibility for future grant funding. It was noted that appropriation of reserve funds must be carefully structured, and excess reserves may affect grant competitiveness if not properly designated. The Board also discussed the potential use of funds for water treatment plant upgrades and repairs, and the need to align reserve fund designations with intended uses (e.g., treatment, filtration, or capital improvements). Interest earned on the reserve funds must remain within the reserve unless otherwise properly re-designated. Creation of

additional reserve categories may provide greater flexibility for future expenditures. The Board noted that additional settlement funds related to water system matters (including PFAS-related litigation) are anticipated, with potential future payments estimated at approximately \$325,000, along with additional pending cases.

15. Sewer Infrastructure / Capital Project: Superintendent Dubois discussed the sewer infrastructure issue near the bridge and associated funding considerations. It was noted that the Village has received a 0% interest loan (approximately \$2 million) designated specifically for sewer-related work, and those funds must be used exclusively for that purpose. The Board discussed options, including treating the work as a capital project and potential bonding requirements, as advised by financial oversight authorities (OSC). It was noted that exact project costs are still being determined, and preliminary estimates suggest costs may be high. Further guidance and financial planning will be required once final figures are known.

Conclusion of Budget Workshop: The Board completed its review of the tentative budget with the Department Heads. Consensus indicated that the budget is largely in line with expectations, and adjustments will continue to be made before adoption. No further changes were proposed at this time. Further discussion will occur at the upcoming Budget Public Hearing.

The Mayor and the Board thanked all Department Heads, staff, and attendees for their participation and contributions to the budget workshop.

Motion 032526-1 to adjourn at 7:30 pm: Trustee Middleton motioned, Trustee Baxter seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

