



2021 PROPOSED BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING TRANSCRIPT
(AS REQUIRED BY NYS GOVERNOR CUOMO'S EXECUTIVE ORDER 202.1)

October 20, 2020 - 7:30 p.m.

(INAUDIBLE, FEEDBACK)

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Okay, so there's one person who's still in the process of moving from the waiting room. Otherwise, I think we have everyone.

TREASURER JAMES PASSIKOFF: Waiting. I have nothing.

(INAUDIBLE, FEEDBACK)

UNKNOWN: Sir, am I still in the waiting room?

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Whoever that was, I heard his voice.
(INAUDIBLE, FEEDBACK) *(PAUSE)* Okay, everybody needs to mute that's... Alright? That's where the feedback is coming from. Anybody that's from the public who's attending the meeting, please mute. *(PAUSE)* Otherwise we will get feedback and nobody, nobody will be able to hear at all.

(PAUSE)

DIRECTOR OF EMS DAVID VIOLANTE: For those of you calling in by phone to mute yourself on the phone or unmute yourself it is star six.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: And everybody's on now?

TREASURER JAMES PASSIKOFF: Not me.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: No, we're still working on the..we are working on the Treasurer, but uh, if you want to start, I'll continue to work on getting him on board, uh, while you go through the opening parts of the meeting, if you'd like.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Okay. I'll start with that and hopefully we can get uh...So, I'd like to open the public hearing of the Arlington Fire District public hearing *(INAUDIBLE, FEEDBACK)* for the twenty twenty-one budget. Umm, I'll go into my comments and then, then hopefully we will, uh, go into the, umm, Treasurer's comments. But when we get to the public comments, umm, if you are not speaking, please mute yourself. Umm, you will be allowed up to five minutes. We will give you some, uh, tips along the way at what time it is, usually at a minute and thirty seconds.

Additionally, please identify yourself and I'll redo this again. Uh, talking past the time or interjecting comments when others are speaking will cause us to remove you from the meeting. So please be courteous of everybody who is speaking and umm, I'll begin my comments and hopefully by the time I'm finished, umm, the Treasurer will be able to go through his comments on the uh, budget. Uh, first, I'd like to note that any written comments that we received will be, uh, attached to the minutes, uh, for the record. Umm, this year, there, in my mind, three major areas that have caused the increase in the, uh, budget. Umm, one is in the salary line. As many of you may know we, we did sign a new contract with the Union. Umm, and we knew when we signed it, the uh, some of the expenses were going to be front loaded. Uh, with that in mind, we moved the two percent already agreed upon from the current contract raise for next year into the last years of the contract. Umm, and there will be zero's and that will be the only raise in the five year contract. Umm, so that we kind of assume might show up and it, it did. Umm, two, uh, last years budget was, what I would call a bare bones budget. Uh, it resulted in a four percent tax decrease which made it so tight that we actually may end up exceeding it this year, umm, which is very unfortunate. Umm, the overtime line was reduced by a couple hundred thousand. Umm, and COVID has hurt us in a couple ways. One is with overtime. People were not taking overtime in the Spring or not taking vacations in the Spring. Uh, and uh, Winter because that, of the fact that COVID was in place and umm, that pushed a lot of the time off in the last half of the year, causing more overtime than normal. Umm, and I suspect that'll happen again next year by the way things are going out there. Umm, so one thing we did do some negotiations with the union and had a couple, uh, umm, unfortunately, the only work for this year is to try and reduce some of the impact on this year's budget, however, that will not occur in next year's budget. Uh, and then thirdly, pension costs. Umm, escalated and then again, once again, mostly due to the COVID, umm, the timing of the pension costs and the State deciding exactly when and how much to charge everybody for the pension is, uh, determined on the last day of March. Umm, that also nearly coincides perfectly with the low of the stock market due to the COVID sell off. Uh, they use those projections to project what uh, contributions are going to be needed, and therefore their contribution, umm, has skyrocketed uh, basically from what we paid this year to what we expect to pay next year is about a half a million dollars more. So those are a few of the major increases, umm, that, that will hit the budget. Uh, if the Treasurer's there and hopefully he can get through, we will have him go through his portion then give you a little bit more detail on the budget in total.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: We're still working on getting the Treasurer into the meeting. He's having problems, uh, with technology on his end.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Now we can...can anybody else on the board wish to make any comments up front, rather than at the end? *(BRIEF PAUSE)* Well, um, we opted to do the ZOOM meeting because with consultation from the Open Government, umm and the fact that budget hearing has to be done tonight and cannot be done in any other night and everybody needs to be able to uh, speak we could not guarantee umm, social distancing required by the State in a room, any of our rooms. Umm, so we decided to go back to ZOOM which we have been doing for meetings in the past and had worked out fairly well until this point. Umm, so I'm hoping this continues to go well and we can get the Treasurer on here to show you his part of the presentation. *(BRIEF PAUSE)*

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Okay, Mr. Chairman, I've got the Treasurer on speaker phone. I think his voice will get picked up on my laptop. We have the ability to put his PowerPoint presentation up for everybody to see and uh, he's going to talk to his PowerPoint slides and see if we can make this work because we've run out of options to try and uh, get him into the ZOOM conference. I'm, I'm not sure what the problem is.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Okay. Let's go for it.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Alright, so, umm, so David go ahead and put, go ahead and put the presentation up. Alright, Jim whenever you're ready.

TREASURER JAMES PASSIKOFF: Okay, the first page that says the Arlington Fire District uh, proposed operating budget for fiscal year 2021.

The next page is the proposed budget and this is in a New York State format and we got the expenses, umm, at the top there. We got salaries, uh, contracted expenses, New York State Pension, Service Awards, payroll taxes, workers compensation, health insurance, life insurance. Uh, the to-total expense budget is, uh, nineteen million seven ninety six five fifty. Uh, we're projecting eight hundred and one thousand and six hundred dollars of income that brings down the tax levy to eighteen million nine ninety four nine fifty. It's going to be just under eight percent increase. Uh, the assessed valuation you see from the Town of Poughkeepsie that did not increase very much during the year. Uh, uh, the rate per thousand that we're guessing for January first is six dollars and forty cents. It's an increase of about forty four cents over last year and uh, the percentage increase of the middle is going out in January will be just about seven point four percent.

The next page shows uh, the, uh, the circle graph of the uh, budgeted income for twenty twenty-one. Umm, your real estate taxes are ninety five point nine percent of the budget. The PILOTS are two point eight percent of the budget. So that that means uh, the other items that we have are about little over one percent of the budget between insurance recoveries and other income. So the PILOTS are really a form of real estate taxes so uh, our income is really all coming, uh, from the taxpayers.

The next page is uh, a circle graph of the uh, expense budget. Uh, compensation and fringe benefits are ninety three point five percent, contracted expenses are about six percent and Service Awards are point five percent. Uh, we're as we've said in prior years, uh, we're labor intensive and ninety, as you can see, ninety-three and a half percent of our budget is salary and fringe benefits.

The next page is budgeted income where we compare twenty one to twenty. Interest is the same. Uh, insurance recoveries, uh, we dropped in twenty twenty-one, uh, fifty thousand dollars last year in order to balance the budget and it is less than two percent increase we had to increase the insurance recoveries. Uh, we will probably get to the two hundred thousand. But we're trying to be careful for twenty twenty-one that we don't overstate income. Uh, the miscellaneous is fifty-one thousand, a thousand of that is just general, general, stuff coming in and fifty thousand is that we expect to get a FEMA grant or in the COVID expenses that were incurred in twenty twenty. But we figured that the money will come in and twenty twenty-one so we put that in the budget there.

The next, uh, page is budgeted salaries and uh, the budget for total salaries for this year is ten million six hundred seventy seven thousand versus nine million (*inaudible*) ninety-five thousand last year. It's an eight hundred eighty one thousand dollar increase. Umm, uh, this has various pieces to it. And one of the major pieces of it is in the overtime that we brought the overtime up to what it was two years ago. Last year when we did the budget, we had to drop in order to make, the, umm, the tax cap. We had to drop it way too low. And this year, we, we take the hit on that to bring it back to what we need to have it at. Salaries, (*inaudible*) the firemen salaries have umm, the firefighter salaries have a half million dollar increase. Uh, we signed a new contract with the firemen umm, this year. Umm, so for twenty twenty-one there under the old contract, if there would have been a two percent increase that's equal to one hundred fifty thousand dollars that we saved on that. Uh, there are some items to go into salaries that came out of the contract. A portion of this increase in the salaries is setting up the, the, workforce so it's much safer for the people that are, are fighting fire uh, to be able to work and uh, with supervision and work flow. Umm, we'll talk more about the contract when we get down to fringe benefits.

The next page is contracted expenses and umm, there's, there's changes here and there within the contract. Uh, the biggest increase is in computer network, uh, that we, we have to uh, we're using the County (*Inaudible*) saved us money to provide our computer support. That saved us money in prior years. Uh, but now we have to put in more equipment and we need to pay that. Uh, shop repairs. What was money was taken out of the budget last year to balance the budgeted the tax cap, uh, we needed to put that money back in. Uh, we were just running too close and uh, it's, it's just the necessary expense to have. The other adjustments are relatively small uh, that we really don't have to uh, worry about. Uniforms are up, but that's because of uh, new people. You see there's some, uh, there's one decrease uh, in any other expenses to twenty five hundred dollars for the total increase in contracted expenses is a hundred three thousand four hundred.

Next page is benefit expense and uh, this is where we get clobbered. New York, New York State pension went up four hundred twenty six thousand nine hundred dollars, almost four hundred twenty seven thousand dollars. The New York pension uh, we have no control over it. New York gives us this Albany gives us the, the amount that we have to use, umm, the unfortunately for everybody in the State uh, this year, every municipality in the State this year. The retirement system year end is March thirty first. Uh, March thirty first of two thousand and twenty was the lowest period in the stock market during the year. All the losses in the market were have been made up by June or July. But State measures at March thirty-first so we're stuck with that and accordingly it really increased uh, uh the budget for uh, the New York State pension. Medical insurance doesn't show very big increase with twelve thousand five hundred dollar increase. Uh, the reason that the medical insurance stays pretty much the same is that in the new contract we won't be having, could've had thirteen or fourteen retirees in twenty twenty-one. Because with the new contract, we may only have five and that will save us paying double insurance. One for the new fireman and one for the retiree and when you add that all up, it's more than what the increase and the savings on insurances (*inaudible*) the increase that we had in firemen's salaries. The other thing to remember with medical insurance is that twice in the last ten years, maybe twelve years, uh, we've been, the

District has been able to negotiate with the Union uh, to get a different kind of health insurance both times. When they had the different kinds of health insurance, we ended up saving three quarters of a million dollars each time. *(inaudible)* of course, that's always forgotten. We really don't see the saving but we, this number could be a million and a half dollars higher than what it is and that's only because they, everybody *(inaudible)* on the insurance, uh, that we're able to keep this number at this level, this number could be as I said a hundred, million and a half dollars higher. The other items down below we're pretty much the same. Uh, this small changes that we, we see for that's, that's OK.

Uh, the next page is the twenty twenty-one proposed budget and we can see the expense budget increase one million four hundred seven thousand five hundred. Seven point six five percent increase over last year. Uh, that's the expenses. The tax levy increase one million four hundred six thousand five hundred and it's a seven point nine nine six seven percent increase over last year. Again, we said on the first page rate per thousand is six dollars and forty cents for tax bills going out at the beginning of twenty twenty-one and it's about seven point four percent increase over the prior years, uh, uh, tax levy and that's..the next page is the end of the uh, PowerPoint presentation. Bill?

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Okay. You hear me?

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Yes, we can hear you fine Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Okay. So that finishes uh, the Treasurer's Report. So we can move into public comments. Again, uh, please identify yourself and please uh, be courteous and do not interrupt or interject into other people's uh, conversations. Chief, if you want to try and coordinate the...

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Okay, so there are there are two ways that we can recognize people who would like to speak. Uh, you can either send me a chat or uh, you can use the reaction button uh and raise your hand and we will make sure that everybody gets a chance uh, to have their five minutes. Uh, we will be able to put up a five minute timer on the screen for you to look at, uh, during your comments uh, so that, so that you can keep track of your, of your time utilization as you go through your comments.

DIRECTOR OF EMS DAVID VIOLANTE: For those people on the phone, to raise your hand, you can press star nine and that will alert us on the system that you would like to speak. Uh, and if for any reason that doesn't work go ahead and unmute yourself and let us know uh, so that we can make sure that everybody has a moment to speak.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: So I, uh, the first one I see here with, with her hand up is, uh, Mrs. Charwat. So I'm going to unmute her and we will put the timer up and start her five minute clock.

THE FOLLOWING TRANSCRIPT OF COMMENTS MADE BY THE PUBLIC DURING THE BUDGET HEARING IS A COMPUTERIZED TRANSLATION PROVIDED BY ZOOM. THE FIRE DISTRICT DOES NOT GUARANTEE THE ACCURACY OF THIS TRANSCRIPTION. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO LISTEN TO THE COMMENTS MADE BY THE PUBLIC, THE AUDIO OF THE HEARING IS AVAILALE ON OUR WEBSITE, WWW.AFD.ORG.

Eleanor Charwat: Okay. Well, thank you for having me. My name is Eleanor Chara I've been a taxpaying resident of the town of Poughkeepsie, and the Arlington higher district for the past 45 years. I have no Carl with the service. The Fire District provides, but I do have a car with their fiscal oversight to ask for an 8% tax increase in this time of economics instability and the hardship is responsible and distressing. If the city of Poughkeepsie is proposed. Budget stays under the tax cap and the Duches County Government proposed 2021 budget reduces county spending with no property tax increase. Why can't they are Arlington higher district to the same. The fire Commissioners must come back to the voters with a budget, the falls below the state mandated 1.56% tax cap. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Thank you.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Uh, okay, there's one that is, Mr., Mr. Powers. You are unmuted.

Brian Powers: Thank you very much. Brian Powers. Brazil kind of kimchi back and kill district and also they can fire district. I mean I'd really like to see where I'd like to see this budget broken out and really look to see, I think before it goes to a vote. I'd like to see a little bit more detail. As to the salaries and the half a million dollar increase I agree with the previous person that was speaking and that this is a smack in the face and not not a fiscally responsible. Time even minus what's going on currently. Even as we come into before the sneaker we were looking at a, an increase in taxes, all the way around. Now it's gonna be even worse. So to ask to ask the citizens of this fire district to be able to you know, have to cover this. I would like to ask, I would like to see a few more questions answered a few more details given as to the contract with the Union and the negotiations that went on and also let's look at I want to see a little more detail on this budget, not just a larger view like we did tonight. Which was not appropriate for the increase that you're asking by any stretch of the imagination. So that would be what I would say my biggest request. This evening of the Board of Commissioners is to before you go to a vote please show us what is what are the details of the biggest numbers on your proposed budget. And that is, I get it. I mean, labor is one of the biggest costs for any business operate, but let's let's see it broken down and also incorporate the new contract and explain to the taxpayers and a little bit more detail why this is going on. You guys provide a great service and there's no doubt about that. But to make this jump and not to plan for this increase and to step it over the next couple of years is horrible. So like I said, I know I'm repeating myself, but I think before it goes to vote and I will definitely be talking to my neighbors and and other people in the district, we absolutely have to see a little bit more detail from the treasurer and the Board of Commissioners, thank you.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Okay. Is there anyone else? I don't have...I don't see anyone who has their hand raised.

(PAUSE)

JB: Chief is a gym Beretta I my screen doesn't have an option to raise your hand.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Okay. Jim, you are unmuted. So, go right ahead. We will start your timer.

JB: All right, first of all, I think this is taxpayer abuse and I'll tell you why. There was a new contract that was put in this year and I cannot say that it was negotiated based on everything that I saw. It was sold The board old proved it. I really don't believe the board knows what they gave away and just for the people on the call. Because I went through the contract page for page item for item there were six battalion chief positions created that have never been in the Arlington fire District before they're all at a higher pay scale. The there was an officer increase it went from 15 to 23 so now Arlington Fire District will have 23 we're officers and six of those will be battalion chiefs. The minimum staffing went up and that's going to give you eight more people and they're probably all going to be Lieutenant positions. So that's what you have all these officers. The educational incentive pay went up. You created a physical fitness fun which is small but there's still more money. Everybody's still getting free medical and dental for life, if they make it to 20 years And then where you took out the retirement incentive you added a longevity pay incentive, which is going to be for those people to qualify for that 25% of the cost of their medical benefits right. So that is the most ridiculous thing to create an incentive based on the cost of medical benefits did never do anything but go up. And basically the proof is in the pudding. When the when the budget came out and so what did we end up with a \$500,000 increase in salary line. Of \$300,000 increase in overtime and I know Commissioner Trento and the treasure, try to say that you know that the Retirement System went up in the market and also the kind of stuff. Well, you know what when you increase your salary line by \$800,000 you can expect that you're going to have higher higher Retirement System payment and and you should also be anticipating what the market is going to do. So here we are in the midst of a pandemic that started in March and you guys sign this contract when was it in June. And without any regard to what the market. Might do or what this might do to the taxpayers. So the taxpayers were really unrepresented. You know, the, you know, you were all kind of working together on this this this mission to to you know, create this empire. And everybody basically is enriching themselves here except for the taxpayers and you painted the district in the taxpayers into a corner. Where now you have these these these huge payments. So the board basically failed or fiduciary responsibility because they have a responsibility to watch out for the taxpayers and, you know, in terms of service. The Arlington Fire District services excellent right there was no need to do all this stuff. And one of the basic things you learned in the Commissioner training is that you basically you know, have to do what you need what you could, you know, versus what you want it and really you didn't need anything here you got all new equipment, you had enough people. The service was excellent and yet you put all this stuff in. And now the taxpayers are handed the bill. You can't deny it. Because, because we're seeing the budget. And in terms of the treasure are saying about the health insurance and whatnot. I was on that negotiating committee when we really negotiated the contract, we brought in the labor attorneys. And, and, you know, got to a very nice agreement with the Union which by the way the contract. Was still good for another 18 months. So you're short circuited that too. So we basically the taxpayers got hit with a perfect storm with a lot of people that want to spend money and nobody to you know, basically, you know, put a business his head to this and do the job you're supposed to do and control taxes. Right. Thank you.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: The next person that I see with their hand up is a Miss Stoller. Suzi Stoller.

suzi stoller: Can you

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Yes, go right ahead, you're unmuted.

suzi stoller: Thank you. I have to say I do agree with thumb is Charla and Mr Beretta and was going to bring up the same thing. Is Mr Beretta in terms of the contract with a year and a half left on the contract. And when you see that costs are going up and you're in the middle of a pandemic. And, you know, that the state puts a cap on any budget that they have any control over to go and raise the budget 8% is absolutely an abuse of the of the positions that you are in I feel as as a taxpayer. We can comment we can come to these meetings and we can say whatever we want to say but in the end, we are at your mercy. There are no checks and balances in the system as it exists and I just have to say that I think what you're doing is absolutely unconscionable. And I don't really know how you sleep at night. That's the end of my comment.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Is there anyone else? Uh, I don't see anyone with their with a hand raised and I have not received any text messages from...

George: I've been putting my hand up, George. I put it up on five times. Already. Hear me.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Uh, uh, I can hear you but I don't see that, I apologize.

George: Goes out

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: We'll start, we'll start the timer. Go right ahead.

George: Yeah, my name is George. Pop my question, and if it could be answered. How, how many salaried positions are there in the district. And how does that compare to other similar districts. I think that's a simple question to see because obviously the salaries are the bulk of the budget and you know how many, how many positions are we talking about in the district. And what's, what's this, you know, other districts in the state. How many positions that they have. Can anybody answer that question. That's my question. Are you able to hear that.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: We, we, yeah, we can hear it. But this is a comment section. Umm, we will, if we can, we will comment at the end from once everybody is done commenting. But I will, I'm not sure there's a easy comparison, but I will speak to that at the end.

Eleanor Charwat: Is his hand. Oh.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Uh, okay, I'm not, I'm sorry I'm not seeing that did your, your microphone is unmuted. Go right ahead.

Philip Van Itallie: Me. Can you hear me?

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Yes.

Philip Van Itallie: Yeah, my name is Philip Van Itallie. Live in the area of the corners firehouse I've been here for over 50 years and I'm really upset by this spectacular rewards increase, which doesn't match the rest of the world. We are trying to say. Something, much smaller than 8% and you're not even close. Seems to me that there's a fine balance and then says nothing has been applied from the fund balances doesn't say what the fund balances the city of Kingston was just able to use some of their fund balance to reduce their budget. I certainly think that violent and Fire District should do the same. I don't understand why they don't show the fine balance. They have rolled it over for years and years and I'm pretty sure it's not zero right now. So in addition the increase in salary for \$500,000 and overtime for \$300,000 does not match the 2% raise that you've negotiated, I have no idea how you're getting to these numbers, but it certainly is not clear, except that they're big, there's an item for \$50,000 never before in the budget. It says firehouse record management. In the past, you've had records. Aren't they manage the same old way that they used to be. It was a fire truck that came to our street actually three and they had DNS people on and it went to the wrong address. I don't understand why they were EMF people want, I can see people making mistake with address to go to but why do we have enough people on fire trucks. You stop doing that. Finally, the cross corners firehouse and maybe the Rochdale for our house. That are rented. It's unreasonable to spend money. Of the Fire District to improve the landlords property and then have the landlord increase the rate of rent for the property improvements. We just did. That's just incredible. So finally, because it's over the mistakes is you have to have a ballad. But I'd like to know what you're going to do. with the coven in order to receive Budget, very much.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: The, uh, next person that I see with their hand up is Margery Groten. Yes. Go right ahead Ma'am.

Margery Groten: I'm also a resident of the town of Poughkeepsie for almost 45 years, also in the Arlington Fire District for that length of time. I don't know the details of this budget in the way that others do, but I do know about the tax cap. And I know that if a town or a county needs to exceed it, they need to get permission from somebody. I don't know the mechanics of that, but I know there is a procedure for exceeding the text cap. I don't understand what the Arlington Fire District has to do in order to get the right to exceed the text cap. And I understand you're not answering questions, but it seems unreasonable to me that you have residents of this district that have questions and they will go on answer. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Okay, thank you.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Next is uh, Mr. Libolt. Mr. Libolt, are you there? How about uh, Bev Kawalkski? Uh..

DIRECTOR OF EMS DAVID VIOLANTE: Chief, are these folks on their telephones or are they..

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: I, I believe, so they don't show on my screen at all. Uh, Renee says that she can see them on her screen. I don't have them.

DISTRICT SECRETARY RENEE O'NEILL: No, those two people submitted comments online, as well as Mr. VanItallie. Sorry if I pronounced his name wrong.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Alright, is there, is there anyone else who would like to speak? Either raise your hand or uh, send me your name through the chat function, please.

DIRECTOR OF EMS DAVID VIOLANTE: And if you're on your phone, uh, go ahead and unmute with star six to make sure you're unmuted so that wen can hear you.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Is there anyone else looking to speak?

karen: Hi, my name is Karen clarity and I hope I'm not speaking out of turn I saw the little icons, but it wasn't clear how to raise my hand.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: No, you're fine. Go right ahead.

karen: Okay. And thank you again I'm like the number of the people before me, I'm a very long time resident of the town of Poughkeepsie, I've lived here all my life. I bought a house in the town and became a taxpayer in the town of about 30 years ago. And these meetings, you know, once a year, we come to a bucket hearing, but I really wonder if we've been paid attention to. I mean, yes, you're sitting there, seemingly hearing us but you know we just exceed the cap and such as somebody else question about how you can just exceed the cap and 8% is a big chunk compared to other municipality boards and such. And, you know, just from what I can meet around it's a big increase my tax assessment without making any improvements to my property without any additions or anything like the assessment went up by a third from 2017 to 2019. So my taxes are going up a lot and it's becoming untenable and now I was questioning why a new contract was signed in the pandemic. When the public really wouldn't be looking you know at that kind of thing, one and a half years early. And I'm wondering, you know, rather, many kind of gift backs in that somebody wanted your personnel mentioned about own insurance cutbacks. A couple years ago, you know, saving a million and a half. And I'm thinking, well it sounded like they were just shopping around for better coverage, you know, but were there any employee benefits reduced higher co pays, deductibles, that kind of thing. I don't see that the burden for the firehouse running the department is being shared at all by the firefighters. I'm sure they have to pay taxes to that they also they're purchasing pretty generous and I've never seen anything that dress like that, but an 8% tax increase is becoming untenable. Because in those years that I bought my house. I have sent too tired. And I'd like to be able to afford to continue living in my home. I don't live in an upscale area. LifeLock is between mainstream and the east and arterial it's not been gentrified in your house, my house, as I said, been true. But I'm going to be paying a lot more in taxes for fire services. In fact, I pay more for the fire service system. I do police in highway and all over town functions combined. So it's becoming untenable for us. And I really hope. That you realize that in a way that makes you more considerate of what is happening to us. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Thank you.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Is there anyone else, uh, who wishes to speak?

suzi stoller: I just have a short additional question. Stolen I have my hand up. I just I'm a little confused and perhaps when you address questions. This can be answered. It seems like there's a \$300,000 increase in overtime pay but eight more staff has been hired. So could you explain how it is that we now have more staff and more overtime, Thank you.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Are there other speakers waiting uh, to make comments? (PAUSE) I don't see anyone with their hand up. Is there anyone else looking to make comments during the public session? (PAUSE) Anyone else looking to make comments during the public session?

Brian Powers: I just had an additional question as well. Listen, Mr. Powers. I was just asking for a roll call Commissioners for the record, I put it in the comments as well just to see who was in attendance. Thanks, Ron zoom.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Yeah, all five Commissioners are in attendance tonight.

Brian Powers: Thank you.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Mr. Powers. I'm sorry. There's a delay with the system, your question just came up. My apologies.

Brian Powers: No worries. No worries. Thank you.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Is there anyone else to speak during the public comments?

Myrna Ross: Yes, I don't know how to raise my hand. Can you hear me.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Go right ahead Ma'am.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: We can hear you.

Myrna Ross: I would like to know if the Fire Department has any kind of an required audit every other organization and government departments. I know of is required to have an independent audit profitably yearly how do I get an answer to that question, since you're not answering questions.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: You can contact the business office, but we might answer it at the end when everyone's finished.

Myrna Ross: I don't understand that. I'm sorry, but there are people asking questions that you could answer tonight, and I see no reason that you would refuse to do that.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: This is not...this is a public hearing. It is not a meeting. So we are doing a public hearing based on the rules for a public hearing and that is comments to the budget from the residents. It's a required option under the law. Umm, and this is the time for the residents to give us their comments. Umm, so, that, that is basically what this is about. We do have a spot at the end to go over some things briefly that umm, but it is, if you want answers we have meetings twice a month at the first and uh, third month Monday night at Headquarters. Umm, you can also contact the business office directly and... (interrupted and inaudible)

Myrna Ross: I would like answers, excuse me, I would like answers to go out to everyone present tonight, I think they just respectfully need an answer to that question. I've been in a lot of organizations and corporations and government organizations and they were all required to do this and I've never been refused an yanswer to a question, even at a hearing or or anything else.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Is there anyone else?

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Anyone else looking to make comments during the public hearing?

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Either unmute yourself and speak or raise your hand on the messages. Either way, it'll work. (PAUSE) Okay. Hearing none, umm..

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: I do, Mr. Chairman, I do have one here. Regina Klein. Go ahead. You should be unmuted.

Gina (Regina) Klein: I would like to comment to the people who are attending this meeting and not to the Commissioners. If you're attending this meeting and you have an objection to what's happening in the Fire District. Let your voices be heard at the Fire District meetings. And go to the town board meetings and let your voice be heard the town board needs to hear how unhappy. We are they need to figure out how to do something to take the authority for fire protection away from the Arlington Fire District, it can be done. According to the state regulations. But the town board must do it. If the people at this meeting. Do not raise their voices, nothing will change. I'm finished.

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Anyone else with comments for the budget hearing? (PAUSE) Anyone else with comments for the budget hearing? (PAUSE) Anyone else like to be heard for the budget hearing please either raise your hand or speak up. I don't see anybody indicating uh, on the listing (PAUSE) Any, anyone else with comments for the budget hearing? (PAUSE) Uh, Mr. Chairman, I don't believe there's anybody else at this point and uh, for the people who maybe can't see the roster I'm not sure, there are fifty people in attendance according to what I see at the present time on the screen.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Okay. Thank you. Comments from the Board. Is there any other member of the Board that wishes to comment on anything? (PAUSE) Okay, I'll go over a few things if anybody else wants to join in, feel free. Umm, from the Board at this point (*inaudible*) if this is going through some of the questions that were, me going through some of the questions, that were brought up. As far as similar type district, the number of employees, it's very difficult because of the differences in size combination department and so a lot of departments do not have career staff at all and smaller areas. So having apples to apples comparisons are very difficult. We do have umm, what's our employee number?

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: Eighty.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: At somewhere about eighty. Yeah. And that really has stayed pretty stable over the last at least five years. Umm,

the higher generally are replacing retirement. Though, you're really not expanding the workforce much at all. Umm, fifty K for record management is due to the firehouse software we're using becoming obsolete and we have to purchase a new software management system. Umm, so that, that was the fifty thousand that somebody had asked about. (inaudible) elections? We do have an election vote in December. And we will make it as safe as possible. We're going to be watching the elections currently unfold in another couple weeks and see how that is working and what's done there to try and provide for a safe election vote in December. What is needed to exceed the tax cap for a Fire District? I, correct me if I'm wrong, but you need to have them already have the Commissioners approve a motion to exceed the tax cap. Umm, I have a feeling, most of the career departments in the area are going to see some fairly large tax increases. Umm, mainly because of the pension, uh, that is happening. Umm. hopefully that'll mitigate next year and actually might come to our favor next year. However, again, I don't know what the stock market is going to look like on March thirty first umm, twenty twenty-one. Umm, So we, we hope with the market has come back should it stay fairly even from now till then we should have a plus coming back. But there's no obviously guarantee of that. Umm, difference between umm, Fire Districts and other types of government are mainly the taxes that they receive. They don't receive any state funding; they don't receive any sales tax; they don't receive many grants. Umm, so most of the funding virtually ninety-nine percent of it is done simply through uh, real estate taxes. Umm, so that is the way the State has set it up and the way it works. We don't get much other than that. We don't get fees. We don't write tickets umm. You know to receive revenue. There's nothing there other than real estate taxes. More staff more overtime? There, as I just mentioned, there really isn't more staff and uh, the more overtime. The line item is really just bringing back what it shouldn't have been last year. Last year we had a four percent decrease in taxes and this year, we have a seven and a half, seven and three quarter percent increase. Umm, take the two subtract them out and you have about two percent a year. Unfortunately, those numbers last year were taken so far down further than they had to be taken down just to come back and bite us this year, uh, it's unfortunate. It would have been better if it were two and two, but it, it did not work out that way and umm, what but the worst part of it was the reversal of the uh, pension piece. And the fire department and what we got through with the State audit, maybe two years ago, umm, so the State Controllers Office actually came in and audited us and actually we had an excellent audit at the time. Umm, so we do get audited uh, by State Controllers office. Is there anything else that any other Commissioner and or the Chief would like to add before we adjourn the meeting or the public hearing?

CHIEF WILLIAM STEENBERGH: The Treasurer asked me to point out that we also have a third party independent audit uh, every year.

CHAIRMAN RALPH CHIUMENTO: Thank you. Yes. So yes, there are audits. And again, I encourage anybody if my answers didn't satisfy your question or if you have further questions, um, you can certainly email us. You can contact the business office. We'd be more than happy to provide you with information certainly by the way of the budget information that you're requesting and then hopefully answer any other questions you may have. (PAUSE) Anybody else wishing uh, to speak on the Board or the Chief staff? (PAUSE) Hearing none, then I will close the uh, public hearing for the uh, Arlington Board of Fire Commissioners for twenty twenty-one budget. Thank you all for attending and have a good evening and uh, be safe.

Cathy: Could you just tell us what the fund, fund by largest funders.

Transcribed and respectfully submitted by,

Renee O'Neill
District Secretary