

# TOWN OF WAPPINGER



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## OFFICE OF THE TOWN SUPERVISOR

Dear neighbors,

After many months of crafting and careful deliberation, we are pleased to present the Final Wappinger Town Budget for fiscal year 2025, a sound and balanced financial plan for the 150th year of the Town of Wappinger, that will be under the Tax Levy Cap with a Tax Rate decrease. As we reflect on our journey, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges we inherited, including the 2024 budget that was not fully funded for known annual expenses. The previous budget fell short in crucial areas, such as covering debt service in the Wildwood Sewer District, and salaries that were either drastically underfunded or improperly allocated. Additionally, we faced issues with utilities and insurance that were not fully accounted for.

As announced in the 2024 State of the Town Address, this administration has strengthened this Town's commitment to fiscal responsibility, as we undertook a comprehensive review of our financials, diligently drilling down to uncover true expenses and discrepancies. I am proud to report that the Town of Wappinger is in excellent overall financial shape, now doubled with the strong new internal policies and procedures that have been implemented throughout 2024 that allowed us to develop a realistic understanding of our expenses and revenues.

Our neighbors expect their Town government to be held to the same standard that they are held to each day. In doing so, on day one, we mandated that all town employees are to clock in and out of work for accountability and safety reasons. In recognizing the importance of fiscal prudence, we've cut back on excessive overtime on clerical work and transferred all department heads to being paid salary rather than hourly; all of which have optimized our resources without compromising on quality.

Furthermore, by bringing the preparation of Town Board meeting resolutions in-house, we've managed to save taxpayers a significant \$80,000.00 so far this year. The Town Board formally accepted and committed nearly \$3million of American Rescue Plan Funds, allocated to us by the Federal Government that were nearly lost had we not acted on it. Earlier this year, the Town Board utilized a portion of these American Rescue Funds toward the introduction of new Tyler Technologies software. Previously, Town departments used their own outdated software, not allowing any communication with each other. My goal has been to promote communication and by partnering our efforts to be unified in Town Hall, we have dismantled silos, fostering communication and collaboration across departments. In the coming months, we will be rolling out a new public-facing component that will allow residents to sign up for E-billing as well as being able to see real time municipal water usage, and so much more. The addition of this new

software has already eliminated the need for outsourcing payroll, printing of checks, and other personnel/finance functions that will save taxpayers over \$30,000.00 annually moving forward.

For the first time in a decade, we have instituted consistent bi-monthly department head meetings that have enhanced coordination and synergy among various departments and branches of our government. Scaling back on wasteful spending such as high attendance at various conferences and cutting back on dozens of employee cell phones have resulted in significant savings, demonstrating our commitment to prudent expenditure and our proactive approach to resource management. We have found that hundreds of thousands of dollars in outstanding bills were not paid, going back to 2021, and that the Town was operating without contracts with many of our professionals, which we have corrected. In putting professional services out to bid through a request for qualifications and appointing them based on merit, we uphold the principles of fairness and competence in Town appointments. In reviewing our strong finances, our Town is in an excellent financial position, we noticed that some of our smaller water and sewer districts were operating in the red due to non-balanced budgets and no increases for years. Drawing down any surpluses these districts had over that last three decades have been lost due to these practices. This is dangerous as many of these smaller districts operate with under 200 homes within them and any major repairs can easily shift a hefty burden onto the taxpayers. This budget makes our Mid-Point Park and Wildwood Sewer Districts whole and balanced again with as much mitigation to our residents as possible. It is crucial to have any kind of fund balance in general to ensure that you are not facing any serious bills or commitments on your end. We will continue to be fiscally responsible when it comes to these crucial infrastructure improvements through this tentative budget.

In being strong financial stewards, we looked at innovative strategic portfolio diversification. Through this we've begun generating an additional approximately \$60,000.00 per month in interest payments on town funds, ensuring optimal returns while safeguarding financial stability. This was money that was previously left on the table as a lost opportunity of \$4.4 million dollars from the last six years. Previously millions of dollars were deposited into a few low interest paying banks versus the strong diversification of these funds. Just this year alone, we anticipate generating \$600,000 in interest which will be allocated to alleviating the burden to taxpayers. In anticipation of lowering rates across the nation, we have once again diversified our funds and plan to lock in a CD with an interest rate of 3% to continue to maintain these aggressive interest earnings for 2025.

It is also important to note that we put an end to the two-year long arbitration between our CSEA members of the Highway Department and the Town government and officially approved two Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) ending 8 years of not having a CBA with our Highway Department employees. Ensuring that we are looking for the best interests of our employees and hold firm on contracts.

Through this careful planning, we have successfully crafted a Supervisor's Tentative Budget that reduces Town taxes through a tax rate decrease and staying under the NYS Tax Levy Cap at 1.86%. Following this, the Budget was presented to the Town Board with minor changes that have maintained the work of our Administration's team that taxpayers will find that the newly forecasted Town-Outside Village Homestead rate of \$1.59 per thousand of assessed value from \$1.70 per thousand of assessed value and the Village portion of the Homestead rate will be \$0.65 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Non-Homestead rates are \$2.94 per thousand of assessed value for Town-Outside and \$1.20 per thousand of assessed value for Town Inside Village. All forecasts are decreases in the tax rate. In being more realistic in our revenues, such as sales tax, interest, State aide, etc., this 2025 Final Budget alleviates a significant potential burden on taxpayers by only levying \$9,051,946 of our total \$20,725,588 budget on property taxpayers.

This budget not only meets all our contractual obligations and anticipated increases but also allows us to expand our Parks & Recreation Department programming to include two Summer Camps and expanded Senior Citizen enrichment services, increase our aggressive targeted traffic enforcement of the Wappinger Patrol, expanding our efforts when it comes to applying for grant funding, enhance our parks and facilities infrastructure, invest in significant capital improvements for our Town's water and sewer systems and reconstruct 8 miles of Town roadway infrastructure – the most in recent history. This is in addition to continuing our commitment to creating a safer work environment for our Buildings and Grounds Department, among many other initiatives.

Additionally, we are excited to allocate resources to celebrate our Town's sesquicentennial through the Wappinger150 initiative, that will highlight a year's worth of events and programs for families of all ages to enjoy!

My heartfelt thanks go out to our Town Comptroller Jessica Servidio, all our Department Heads, and our dedicated Town staff for working collaboratively to make this budget a reality. My thanks go out to my colleagues on the Town Board for their thorough deliberation and consideration of the needs of our residents and Town government. Together, we can build a stronger, more vibrant community for all our residents.

Respectfully submitted,



Joseph D. Cavaccini

Town Supervisor, Town of Wappinger