Town of St. Armand
Budget Work Session #1 – 5:30 pm
Wednesday, October 7, 2026

These Meeting Minutes were approved by the St. Armand Town Board on October 20, 2026.

A Budget Work Session of the Town of St. Armand was held on the above date and time via webinar and in person at the Town Hall, Bloomingdale, NY. The meeting was advertised and made available to the public.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Town Supervisor Davina Thurston, Deputy Supervisor Karl Law, Councilperson Donna Whitelaw, Councilperson JP O'Neil and Councilperson Joseph Fisher were present at the meeting.

A quorum of the Board was in attendance.

TOWN EMPLOYEES PRESENT: In person: Nancy Heath, Kate Lewis.

GUESTS FROM THE COMMUNITY: None

Supervisor Thurston opened the Special Board Meeting at 5:33 pm and asked everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Supervisor Davina Thurston presented a memorandum prepared by Highway Superintendent Doug and the Town's Vehicle Appropriation Schedule regarding the proposed replacement of the Town's Kubota tractor and brush hog attachment. Discussion ensued. The estimated replacement cost of the Kubota tractor is $125,000, with an additional $50,000 for the brush hog attachment, totaling $175,000. Supervisor Thurston explained that the larger tractor was originally purchased primarily to maintain Essex County roads. Following discussions with Jim Dougan of Essex County, an arrangement was reached whereby the County would provide equipment for the Town to continue mowing County roads, eliminating the need for the Town to purchase another large tractor and brush hog. Instead, the Highway Department recommended purchasing a skid steer at an estimated cost of $77,000. This equipment would better accommodate Town operations, including sidewalk plowing, sweeping, and general maintenance. It would also replace the Town's aging forklift and existing sidewalk equipment. The proposed purchase would result in significant savings compared with replacing the tractor and brush hog. The Town also anticipates receiving approximately $48,000 in trade-in value for the existing tractor and attachment. An additional $29,000 has already been appropriated toward equipment replacement.

Supervisor Thurston reviewed the Vehicle Appropriation Schedule, explaining that items highlighted in green are fully funded, while other equipment has only partial funding allocated. The skid steer is the only equipment proposed for purchase during the upcoming budget year. Board members discussed the skid steer's lifting capacity, attachments, and whether the equipment would have wheels or tracks. It was clarified that larger lifting operations, such as moving bleachers, would continue to be performed using the Town's existing loader. Supervisor Thurston explained that the estimated $48,000 trade-in value for the existing tractor and attachment had not yet been confirmed. The Town researched comparable equipment values through Auctions International and another auction service. Should the trade-in offer be insufficient, the Town may consider selling the equipment at auction. Previous Town equipment auctions have produced favorable results. Supervisor Thurston also explained that she and Highway Superintendent Doug had reviewed and updated the estimated replacement costs for all vehicles on the Town's equipment replacement schedule. Some estimates increased by as much as $50,000 to reflect current market prices. This review is conducted annually to maintain accurate equipment replacement projections. The skid steer is the only vehicle or equipment replacement proposed for 2027. Board members expressed agreement with proceeding in the direction of replacing the Kubota tractor with a skid steer as part of the 2027 equipment replacement plan. No formal resolution or vote was taken, and final purchase authorization remains pending.

Review of 2027 Tentative Budget – General B Fund

Supervisor Thurston presented the 2027 Tentative Budget for the General B Fund, comparing the proposed appropriations with the 2026 modified budget and actual expenditures through September 1, 2026.

She explained that the budget review would focus on funds that could be evaluated before finalizing employee salary increases and other outstanding budget items.

For the benefit of newer Board members, Supervisor Thurston reviewed the New York State Comptroller's municipal accounting codes, explaining that:

- Personal Services (.100): Employee salaries and wages.
- Equipment (.200): Equipment purchases and inventory items, generally exceeding $500 under the Town's procurement policy.
- Contractual Expenses (.400): Operating supplies, consumable materials, and other contractual expenditures.

Supervisor Thurston explained that the General B Fund covers services provided outside the Village of Saranac Lake. Residents of the Town who also reside within the Village receive certain services through the Village and are excluded from the corresponding Town General B tax levy.

The following General B Fund appropriations were reviewed:

Code Enforcement / Safety Inspections: A preliminary 4% salary increase was included in the tentative budget, consistent with previous budget discussions.

Town Health Officer: The Board discussed the importance of maintaining a Town Health Officer, particularly for public health matters involving code violations, rodent infestations, and property inspections. The Health Officer has assisted the Town with inspections and reporting when necessary.

Vital Statistics: The appropriation covers the administration of birth, death, and marriage records. Associated fees generally offset the related expenditures.

Sidewalk Maintenance and Replacement: Supervisor Thurston explained that sidewalk expenses are included in the General B Fund. A separate sidewalk replacement schedule has been prepared but was not distributed at this meeting.

Employee Benefits and Social Security: Related appropriations were included in the tentative budget review.

Supervisor Thurston indicated that the sidewalk replacement schedule and Town road replacement schedule would be presented for further review at a subsequent budget meeting.

General B Fund – Revenue and Funding

Supervisor Thurston explained that the General B Fund is self-sustaining and does not require a property tax levy. Revenues are generated primarily through sales tax distributions, building permit fees, interest earnings, and vital statistics fees.

The Board was given an opportunity to ask questions or provide comments. No additional concerns were raised.

Highway Outside Fund (DB) – 2027 Tentative Budget

Supervisor Thurston presented the Highway Outside Fund (DB) tentative budget, explaining that this fund is primarily responsible for paving and improvements to Town roads.

The Town maintains a road paving schedule, which has been updated for the upcoming budget year.

Revenues for the DB Fund consist primarily of sales tax distributions and New York State highway funding, including the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS), Extreme Winter Recovery (EWR), PAVE-NY, and other state highway assistance programs.

Supervisor Thurston explained that state highway funding allocations are determined by the State using established formulas, including road mileage, rather than through individual Town funding requests.

The Board was informed that the Town recently received CHIPS reimbursements that had been delayed by the State.

Supervisor Thurston emphasized that the Highway Outside Fund is self-sustaining and does not require a property tax levy.

No questions or concerns were raised regarding the proposed DB Fund budget.

Bloomingdale Water District – 2027 Tentative Budget

Supervisor Thurston presented the proposed 2027 Bloomingdale Water District budget, which includes a preliminary 4% increase in personnel costs.

The Board reviewed anticipated operating expenditures, with particular attention to increasing costs associated with electricity, transmission and distribution, chemicals, materials, and supplies.

Supervisor Thurston explained that additional funding was included in the transmission and distribution contractual expense account to accommodate rising costs for materials necessary to operate and maintain the water system, including valves, piping, fittings, tools, and other equipment. The Board discussed the substantial increases in electricity and chemical costs, noting the limited ability of the Town to control these expenses. The proposed annual operating budget for the Water District was discussed at approximately $108,000, reflecting continued efforts to operate the system economically.

Water District Debt Service

Supervisor Thurston reviewed the Town's existing long-term debt schedule and explained that two new financing obligations were added during 2026 relating to the PFOA project and the purchase of the water well field. It was clarified that the two projects were combined into one financing arrangement, with a five-year term discussed.

Water District Revenues and Unpaid Accounts

Councilperson Fisher questioned the difference between the 2026 budgeted revenues and actual revenues received as of September 1, 2026. Supervisor Thurston explained that the fourth quarter includes the annual relevy process for unpaid water and sewer accounts. Customers who fail to pay their outstanding balances by the established November deadline have those amounts added to their property tax bills through Essex County. Following the relevy process, the County reimburses the Town for the outstanding amounts, generally after January 1. Supervisor Thurston further explained that revenues currently exceeded expenditures by approximately $20,000. Any remaining funds stay within the Water District to help cover future operating expenses, unexpected water main breaks, emergency repairs, and other system needs.

Executive Session

Supervisor Thurston stated we need an Executive Session to review applications for the Code Enforcement Officer Position. Rodger Tompkins had resigned on September 30th. Motion to enter Executive Session made by Councilperson O'Neil at 6:01 pm, seconded by Deputy Supervisor Karl Law, all approved, motion carried.

Motion made to come out of Executive Session made by Councilperson O'Neil at 6:10 pm, seconded by Councilperson Fisher, all approved, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Zachary Pelletier as our Code Enforcement Officer made by Councilperson Whitelaw, seconded by Councilperson Fisher and adopted by Roll Call Vote as follows:

Supervisor Davina Thurston	AYE
Deputy Supervisor Karl Law	AYE
Councilperson Donna Whitelaw	AYE
Councilperson JP O'Neil	AYE
Councilperson Joseph Fisher	AYE

Dated: October 7, 2026

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Barbara J. Darrah
St. Armand Town Clerk

Supervisor Thurston stated we need another Executive Session to discuss Union negotiations.

Motion to enter Executive Session made by Deputy Supervisor Karl Law at 6:14 pm, seconded by Councilperson Donna Whitelaw, all in favor, motion approved.

Motion made by Deputy Supervisor Karl Law to enter back into Budget Work Session at 7:04 pm, seconded by Councilperson O'Neil, all approved, motion carried.

Adjournment

At 7:05 p.m., a motion was made by Councilperson Whitelaw to adjourn the Special Town Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Fisher. All in favor, meeting adjourned.

At 7:30 p.m., Supervisor Thurston stated that an Executive Session was necessary to discuss union and personnel matters.

I, Barbara J. Darrah, Town Clerk for the Town of St. Armand, do hereby certify that the above is a true and correct transcript of the Budget Work Session held on the above-referenced date.

_____ Dated: October 7, 2026

Barbara J. Darrah
St. Armand Town Clerk