Town of St. Armand
Budget Work Session #2 – 5:30 pm
Thursday, October 15th, 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 Davina Thurston opened the public hearing at 5:30 pm and asked everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Notice of Public Hearing was read aloud. The notice had been published in the Adirondack Daily Enterprise, and the meeting was also made available for online participation.

Supervisor Thurston explained that although the Town does not anticipate exceeding the tax levy limit for the 2027 budget, the Town Board considers this local law annually as a precautionary measure.

Supervisor Thurston invited questions, comments, or concerns from those present regarding the proposed local law.

There were no questions or comments.

Adjournment of Public Hearing: At 5:32 p.m., Councilperson J.P. O'Neill made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Councilperson Joseph Fisher.

Motion carried unanimously.

Opening of Special Town Board Meeting

At 5:33 p.m., Councilperson Joseph Fisher made a motion to open the Special Town Board Meeting, seconded by Deputy Supervisor Karl Law.

Motion carried unanimously

**********INSERT Resolution – Introduction of Proposed Local Law No. 6 of 2026

A Local Law to Override the Tax Levy Limit Established in General Municipal Law

**********INSERT Resolution No. 74 – Lead Agency Designation for Flood Damage Prevention Local Law

Resolution Declaring the Town of St. Armand Town Board's Intent to Serve as Lead Agency for the Coordinated Environmental Review of the Proposed Local Law for Flood Damage Prevention

Supervisor Thurston explained that the Town must repeat the environmental review process for the proposed Flood Damage Prevention Local Law due to an error made by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

The updated review is necessary to satisfy FEMA requirements.

Motion made by Deputy Supervisor Karl Law and seconded by Councilperson Joseph Fisher.

A roll call vote was conducted. Deputy Supervisor Karl Law's affirmative vote is audible in the transcript; the remaining votes require verification.

**********INSERT Resolution No. 75 – SEQR Determination for Youth Field Playground Improvement Project

Resolution Determining that the Youth Field Playground Improvement Project Constitutes a Type II Action Under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR)

Supervisor Thurston explained that the Youth Field Playground Improvement Project involves the removal and replacement of existing playground equipment and construction of a new open-air pavilion.

The pavilion will be constructed on an existing lawn area between the Youth Building and playground at 15 Roosevelt Lane, Bloomingdale.

The project does not involve the removal of trees or substantial disturbance of the existing grounds.

Based on the scope of the proposed improvements, the project was determined to qualify as a Type II Action under SEQR.

Motion made by Councilperson Joseph Fisher and seconded by Councilperson J.P. O'Neill.

A roll call vote was conducted. Affirmative votes from Deputy Supervisor Karl Law and Councilperson J.P. O'Neill are recorded in the transcript. The remaining votes require verification.

Supervisor Thurston presented updated 2027 budget materials following completion of union negotiations, which included a 4% wage increase. She explained that substantial reductions were necessary to bring the proposed budget within the New York State tax levy limit.

Highway Equipment and Capital Reserves: Supervisor Thurston reviewed the Highway Vehicle Appropriation Spreadsheet and long-term debt schedule. Equipment replacement savings were reduced temporarily, as most major highway equipment is relatively new. The highway garage debt, currently costing approximately $65,000–$67,000 annually, will be retired in 2029, allowing those funds to be redirected toward future equipment purchases.

Water and Wastewater Employee Compensation: Supervisor Thurston discussed proposed compensation adjustments for Jonathan Nielsen and Josh Woodruff to recognize their responsibilities and encourage employee retention. Regular salary appropriations include the negotiated 4% increase, with an additional longevity step for Woodruff. Additional compensation would be distributed among the districts benefiting from their services.

Fire Hydrant Agreements and Payroll Allocations: Proposed agreements for the Bloomingdale and Rockledge districts would establish appropriate charges for hydrant maintenance and repairs. Supervisor Thurston explained that Rockledge historically had not contributed toward employee labor expenses, despite receiving maintenance services. The proposed budget includes new Personal Services (.1) appropriations to distribute these costs more fairly. Supervisor Thurston confirmed that the proposed accounting procedures were reviewed with the New York State Office of the State Comptroller.

Rockledge Water and Sewer Districts: Supervisor Thurston clarified that the Village of Saranac Lake provides water and sewer services to Rockledge residents, while the Town maintains the district infrastructure. She also discussed the proposed establishment of a Rockledge Sewer District, which would provide funding for infrastructure maintenance and allow the Village's sewer rate to decrease from three times to twice its standard rate, similar to the previously negotiated water rate reduction.

Justice Court Salaries: Supervisor Thurston explained that the Town Justice requested a Court Clerk beginning January 1, 2027. The proposed budget would divide the existing salary appropriation, including the 4% increase, with 75% allocated to the Court Clerk and 25% to the Town Justice, without additional salary expenditures.

Budget Classifications: Supervisor Thurston clarified that (.2) appropriations are generally designated for equipment purchases, while (.4) appropriations cover contractual expenses, supplies, and services.

Supervisor Thurston encouraged Board members to review the revised appropriations, payroll allocations, capital savings, and supporting financial documents and to identify any concerns before finalizing the 2027 budget.

Buildings and Grounds: Supervisor Thurston explained that capital appropriations were reduced because no major improvement projects are planned for 2027. The reductions were necessary to remain within the tax levy limit.

Departmental Spending: Supervisor Thurston advised that she would meet with department heads to emphasize careful spending and limit expenditures to necessary supplies, materials, and services.

General Fund Revenues: A typographical error in the Moody Pond parking ticket revenue description was identified for correction. Supervisor Thurston also clarified that cellular tower lease revenue continues to increase annually, while cable television franchise fee revenue is declining due to changes in consumer viewing habits.

Recreation Staffing: Supervisor Thurston explained that increases in the Summer Recreation and Ice Rink Attendant salary appropriations primarily reflect additional budgeted work hours rather than higher hourly wages. Additional staffing will support expanded recreational activities, particularly following the planned Youth Field improvements.

Longevity Increases: Supervisor Thurston confirmed that applicable employee longevity step increases are identified separately in the budget worksheets to distinguish them from regular wage increases and additional staffing hours.

Potential Hydroelectric Project: The possibility of small-scale hydroelectric generation on Sumner Brook, near the recently acquired Town well field property, was briefly discussed. No action was taken.

Proposed Trudeau Property Community Solar Project

Supervisor Thurston discussed scheduling a follow-up meeting with representatives of Our Generation Solar to address concerns raised during the previous public informational meeting.

The Board agreed that Supervisor Thurston and Deputy Supervisor Karl Law should meet with the developer to discuss setbacks, visual impacts, accuracy of project photographs, and protections to be included in any future agreement.

The Board emphasized the importance of Town Attorney review, particularly regarding enforceability of project conditions and potential transfer of ownership. It was noted that the Town's solar moratorium remains in effect.

A meeting was tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, October 20, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., subject to confirmation with the developer.

Essex County Sales Tax Revenue: Supervisor Thurston reported that sales tax revenue received from Essex County had increased by approximately 15%, providing additional revenue for the Town.

Miscellaneous Unclassified Revenue: Supervisor Thurston explained that no revenue was projected for this category in 2027 because it consists of unpredictable, nonrecurring receipts, including equipment sales, donations, and miscellaneous government payments. Previous receipts included approximately $29,999.90 associated with a capital project bond and $41,807 from the Essex County EMS Stabilization Plan.

Highway Townwide Fund – Personnel Services: Supervisor Thurston clarified that apparent increases in Motor Equipment Operator (MEO) and Laborer appropriations primarily resulted from reallocating employee salaries among highway functions rather than actual wage increases.

Annual salaries were calculated using 2,080 hours for full-time employees and applicable annual hours for part-time employees, then distributed among Town road maintenance, County road maintenance, snow removal, and machinery appropriations based on estimated work assignments.

Supervisor Thurston reviewed examples, including Christopher Willette’s annual salary of $59,114, allocated 59% to County snow removal, 10% to machinery, 17% to Town snow removal, and 14% to summer Town road maintenance. Doug Snickles’ annual salary of $30,347, based on 1,040 hours, was allocated 60% to summer Town road maintenance, 20% to County roads, 10% to machinery, and 10% to winter Town road maintenance.

Robert Stephenson’s salary was similarly distributed among the appropriate highway accounts.

Supervisor Thurston emphasized that these allocations provide a more accurate distribution of personnel expenses and that increases shown in individual budget lines do not necessarily represent increases in employee compensation.

Highway Personnel Allocations: Supervisor Thurston explained that the Motor Equipment Operator (MEO) personnel appropriations combine the salaries of Christopher Willette, Robert Stephenson, and Doug Snickles, distributed according to their estimated work assignments. Highway Laborer Devin Snickle' 6500.00s annual salary of $45,490 is allocated equally (25% each) among summer Town road maintenance, winter Town road maintenance, County road maintenance, and brush and weed control.

Supervisor Thurston reported that the Essex County highway maintenance contract increased by 10% to $77,405.90. She emphasized that payroll allocations are estimates based on anticipated duties and that percentage increases in individual budget lines do not necessarily reflect actual employee raises.

Water and Wastewater Employee Compensation: Supervisor Thurston reviewed proposed compensation adjustments for Jonathan Nielsen and Josh Woodruff, targeting approximately $65,000 annually for each employee. The proposed allocations recognize their responsibilities across multiple districts while distributing payroll expenses among the funds benefiting from their services.

Nielsen's proposed compensation totals $6500.00, consisting of $27,851 from General Fund A, his Bloomingdale Water District salary 27,861.00 with a 4% increase, $3,000 from Rockledge Water District, and $3,149 from Bloomingdale Fire Protection fund, and 3149.00 from the SL Fire Protection Fund.

Woodruff's proposed compensation totals $65,227, consisting of $56,929 from Bloomingdale Wastewater District, $3,149 each from the Bloomingdale and Saranac Lake Fire Protection Districts, and $2,000 from Rockledge Water District. His regular salary includes the negotiated 4% increase and an applicable longevity step.

Supervisor Thurston also noted an adjustment to Woodruff's health insurance contribution in the Wastewater District budget.

Water and Wastewater Department: Supervisor Thurston explained that Jonathan Nielsen and Josh Woodruff regularly assist one another with water and wastewater maintenance and emergency repairs. The proposed payroll allocations would distribute compensation more fairly among the districts receiving services, particularly Rockledge, which historically had not contributed toward employee labor expenses. Board members expressed support for the proposed arrangement.

Fire Protection Fund: Supervisor Thurston explained that the Bloomingdale and Saranac Lake Fire Protection appropriations were combined for 2027 to align with Essex County's assessment codes and tax billing system. Both areas are taxed at the same rate. The revised budget includes Personal Services (.1) appropriations for hydrant maintenance and associated Social Security and New York State Retirement contributions, as required by applicable accounting procedures.

Essex County EMS Funding: The Board reviewed revenue account 2770.101, totaling approximately $45,904, which included $25,000 in Essex County funding associated with Advanced Life Support (ALS) services and an amount representing 50% of the applicable contract.

Highway Overtime: Supervisor Thurston explained that proposed overtime appropriations were estimated using actual 2026 expenditures, recognizing that weather conditions and emergency repairs can affect overtime needs.

Teamsters HRA Negotiations: Supervisor Thurston updated the Board on continuing negotiations with the Teamsters Union regarding contractual protections for employees' existing Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) balances. She requested language ensuring that previously accumulated funds remain available to employees following the transition.

Wastewater District: Supervisor Thurston explained that the wastewater facilities have substantial electrical expenses due to the continuous operation of treatment equipment at both the treatment plant and pretreatment building. Two solar installations help offset these costs. She also reviewed the new wastewater treatment plant's approximately $2.79 million debt obligation, financed over 30 years at 0% interest.

Debt Service: Supervisor Thurston advised that an Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) invoice had been forwarded to the Town Clerk for payment. The Board also discussed a $1,584.38 interest payment associated with a separate financing obligation and confirmed that a previously listed debt had been fully paid.

2026 Highway Paving Projects: The Board reviewed paving completed in Rockledge, on Poplar and Whiteface Streets, at a parking lot, and on a portion of Oregon Plains Road. Rockledge paving had been deferred from the previous year. Drainage improvements associated with roadway elevation changes were also discussed.

Supervisor Thurston reviewed the overall budget summary, noting that property reassessment had affected tax rates and that significant reductions were necessary to remain within the New York State tax levy limit.

Capital savings for the proposed salt storage building and highway equipment replacement were reduced. However, the 2027 budget still includes $31,129 for future vehicle and equipment purchases. Supervisor Thurston explained that the highway garage debt will be retired in 2029, freeing approximately $65,000 annually beginning in 2030 for future equipment replacement.

The Board discussed the Town's approximate ten-year highway vehicle replacement schedule and noted that most major plow trucks are relatively new, providing some flexibility in capital planning.

Supervisor Thurston advised that budget-related resolutions would be presented at an upcoming meeting, potentially during the 2027 budget public hearing. The preliminary budget would proceed toward adoption following any necessary adjustments.

Youth Field Playground and Pavilion Improvements

Supervisor Thurston reviewed plans for the Youth Field improvements, including replacement playground equipment, construction of a new pavilion, and proposed stairway access.

The anticipated construction schedule is April 1 through June 30, 2027.

Supervisor Thurston explained that AEDA, represented by Jim Abdullah, was selected through the procurement process to provide engineering and design services, which have already been completed and paid for.

Following an unsuccessful NY BRICKS grant application, the Town received funding through the NY PLAYS program, utilizing the previously completed engineering and project documentation.

Minor pavilion design adjustments may still be considered, but the principal engineering and design work is complete.

The Board discussed establishing a memorial at the Youth Field honoring the late Chad Oliver for his contributions to youth skating and hockey. Suggestions included displaying hockey memorabilia, subject to his family's approval.

Supervisor Thurston also proposed a memorial walkway incorporating engraved pavers extending from Roosevelt Lane toward the Youth Building. The walkway would improve pedestrian access while recognizing community members and loved ones.

The Board agreed to refer the concept to the St. Armand Youth Task Force for further consideration and potential fundraising coordination. Entrance modifications, walkway durability, and restrictions on skating or skateboarding were also discussed. No formal action was taken.

Youth Field Project – Grant Financing

Supervisor Thurston explained that the approximately $276,000 NY PLAYS grant is reimbursement-based, requiring the Town to pay eligible project expenses before requesting reimbursement.

The Board discussed temporarily using available General Fund resources rather than short-term borrowing to avoid financing costs. The availability of sufficient funds would be verified before determining the financing method.

Supervisor Thurston agreed to provide Board members with the engineering plans and project cost estimates prepared by AEDA. No formal financing action was taken.

Youth Field – Proposed Stairway Improvements

Deputy Supervisor Karl Law raised safety concerns regarding spectators and children using the steep embankment to access the upper ballfields. The Board discussed installing a professionally designed stairway with appropriate handrails, fencing, and directional signage.

Preliminary estimates included approximately $1,400 for construction materials and $2,000 for engineering services, subject to formal quotations. Supervisor Thurston recommended obtaining stamped engineering plans to address safety and liability concerns.

Motion: Councilman J.P. O'Neill moved to authorize Supervisor Thurston to obtain three written quotations for professional engineering and design services for the proposed Youth Field stairway. Deputy Supervisor Karl Law seconded the motion.

Motion carried unanimously.

The Board will review the quotations before selecting an engineering firm or authorizing expenditures.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Joseph Fisher and seconded by Councilman J.P. O'Neill.

Motion carried unanimously.

The Special Town Board Meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:53 p.m.

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 Public Hearing and Regular Board Meeting held on the above-referenced date.

_____ Dated: October 15, 2026

Barbara J. Darrah
St. Armand Town Clerk