Caroga News Flash

Town Board Meeting Highlights

September 25, 2026

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This first 2027 budget work session began at 2:00 PM and lasted 138 minutes at Town Hall. The meeting focused on the Town's tentative budget, major spending increases, and areas needing further review. Officials will continue refining the budget, investigate financing options, and meet again on October 5.

In addition, a Fire District Open House will be held at the Fire Hall on September 26 at 11:00 AM at the Fire Hall, and the Town Board will meet with the Fire Company on September 30 at 6:00 PM at Town Hall.

NEW YORK STATE TOWN LAW BUDGET WORKFLOW STEPS

Under New York State Town Law §§ 106 and 109, the budget process is as follows:

(1) **Tentative Budget** is prepared by the budget director based on departmental estimates and submitted for Town Board review.
(2) If the Town Board expects to exceed the State's property tax levy limit (**2% tax cap**), then the Town Board must prepare and adopt a local law to override it, subject to statutory requirements including a public hearing and timely approval by at least 60% of the Town Board voting power.
(3) **Preliminary Budget** is created after the Town Board reviews the Tentative Budget and makes revisions, and it is then subject to a required public hearing.
(4) **Adopted Budget** is the final version (after the public hearing and any revisions) that the Town Board adopts with an official resolution, becoming the Town's Annual Budget.

SUMMARY OF THE 2027 BUDGET TAX RATE SCHEDULE (Draft #1 Tentative 9/25/2026)

F U N D	Appropriations Adopted 2027	Less Est. Revenues	Less Fund Balance & Approprited Reserves	Amount to be raised by tax	Taxable Assessed Value	2026 Tax rate per Thousand	2027 Tax Rate per Thousand
General Townwide	$2,202,377	$1,806,319	$144,039	$252,019	$164,718,429	$1.47	$1.53
Highway Townwide	$1,522,600	$288,000	$221,582	$1,013,018	$164,718,429	$5.62	$6.15
Fire Contract	$258,373	$0	$0	$259,062	$167,136,838	$1.02	$1.55
Fire Truck Purchase	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	0	0
TOTALS	$3,983,350	$2,094,319	$365,621	$1,524,099		$8.11	$9.23

Summary of Discussion Topics:

- Tax Cap: The draft budget is about $128,000 over the allowable tax-cap increase, in part due to the higher fire contract and reduced fund balance. The Budget Director and Town Board discussed the possibility that a local law to override the tax cap may be necessary, unless tentative cuts are made.

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The Fire Company and Highway Department face major challenges from skyrocketing equipment costs.

- Fire Contract: The proposed contract rises from about $229,000 to $258,000, increasing the tax rate. The core operating budget is modest and lean. Several aging vehicles need replacement, with needs to build reserves to fund increasing costs. Estimates show needs for roughly $1 million over the next eight years for fire truck and vehicle replacements, with about $200,000 currently in reserves
- Highway Fund: Officials discussed fund balance and reserves for equipment, bridges, and repairs.
- Highway Equipment & Trucks: The Highway Department expects to take possession of a new truck in January 2027, requiring a substantial down payment. The Board wants to build equipment reserves to prepare for future replacements to reduce the reliance on debt for equipment. Fulton County is considering hiring a consultant to review a proposal to collaborate and merge highway equipment.
- Highway Bridge Fund: A major concern was funding repairs to aging bridges. They aim to establish a bridge-maintenance reserve, using unspent funds from the current budget and adding annual funding. Members discussed setting aside money for upcoming projects and possibly investing funds temporarily so they earn interest rather than sitting idle.
- Cape Horn Bridge: New York State classifies the Town-owned Cape Horn Bridge over Caroga Creek as being in "Poor" condition and requiring urgent repairs. The school bus has been rerouted. Non-union bridge work is estimated at $150,000, with funding through property taxes, sales tax, and reserves. The Board debated whether to delay a bridge project for another 12 months versus funding it now. The concern is that postponement could lead to a more serious structural problem and much higher costs. Discussion noted long-term grant opportunities should be explored, changing estimated labor.
- Garbage Service: The board wants to investigate the cost of contracting out garbage collection versus continuing to operate its own truck, especially given the anticipated cost of replacing the truck.
- Sales Tax: One Council Member asked for clarification about why it is necessary to balance the accounts with the new proposal to allocate $75,000 of sales-tax revenue to the Highway Fund.

Notable points from the discussion about the 2027 General Townwide Budget are as follows:

- Town Salaries: The Board discussed increasing some compensation, pending further reviews.
- Code Enforcement/FEMA: Discussed a Code Officer salary increase, $11,700 clerk, + $10,000 FEMA.
- Tourism: Ms. Cronin discussed hiring social-media influencers for winter and summer promotion.
- Golf Course: Revenues are strong, with $375,600.65 to date (compared to $360,744.95 YTD 2025).
- Lakes Management: The existing roughly $68,000 DASH-Harvester Reserve could potentially be reclassified as a broader lake-management reserve, with future ProcellaCOR costs funded from it. Supervisor Glenn advocated to increase the Invasive Species Director salary without increasing duties.
- Buildings/Operations: Heating, repairs, IT, postage, insurance, and operating costs were reviewed.

Department heads will provide additional justifications, unresolved items will be revisited at the next budget meeting, and the Board will continue looking for ways to reduce the amount over the tax cap.

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The Fire Company provided the Town Board with detailed accounting numbers and this lean and essential proposed budget, requesting a contract of **$258,373** with the Town for Fire Protection in 2027.

	caroga assesed value	rate	caroga 77% assesed value	258,373 rate
	167,167,883	1.37	167,167,883	1.55
	2026		2027	
Budget Components	297,578		335,549	
increase from prev year	20.04%		12.76%	
Trucks (purchase/replacement)	78,470		111,261	
Pumpers		57,000		87,000
Rescue / Support		21,470		24,261
Equipment (purchase/replacement)	18,910		23,068	
Turnout Gear 10 sets every 5 years		10,000		13,000
Communications -- As needed		904		1,022
SCBA Total replacement every 16 years		1,356		1,532
Portable Equipment -- As needed		565		638
Hose		1,130		1,277
Defib 5 years		1,130		1,277
Jaws 20 years		2,825		3,192
Boat -- As needed		1,000		1,130
Maintenance	25,000		28,250	
Trucks		12,000		13,560
Building and Grounds		4,000		4,520
Sirens		500		565
Portable Equipment		3,000		3,390
SCBA		1,500		1,695
Jaws		1,000		1,130
Communications		3,000		3,390
Operating	175,380		172,969	
Fuel		3,500		3,955
Heat/Utilities		13,560		15,323
EMS Consumables		4,500		5,085
Physicals		4,000		4,520
Insurance		15,820		17,877
Dues & Subscriptions		1,000		1,130
Training/Travel Conferences		9,000		10,170
Office		5,000		5,650
District creation		25,000		15,000
Legal		2,000		2,260
Debt Maint		92,000		92,000

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