Caroga News Flash

Town Board Meeting Highlights

October 5, 2026

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This budget work session began at 10:00 AM and lasted 112 minutes at Town Hall. The meeting was led by Supervisor Jack Glenn with assistance from Budget Director Joanne Young. Council Members Rick Sturgess, Matt Cooper, Kim Walker, and Greta Cronin were present, along with Town Clerk Linda Gilbert, Highway Superintendent Roy Stock, and three members of the public.

The Town Board held its second 2027 budget meeting to review and revise the tentative budget, with particular attention to the 2% tax-cap calculation, highway department funding, bike trail program, fire protection contract, capital engineering expenses, and town salary increases.

The Board approved the amended Tentative Budget as the Preliminary Budget — choosing to make cuts and to stay within the 2% tax cap — by incorporating multiple changes discussed and noting that additional changes may be needed before passing a resolution to adopt the final 2027 Town Budget.

The Preliminary Budget will be presented for the annual public hearing on Monday, October 19, 2026 at 6:00 PM (see https://townofcaroga.com/finances/2027-10-05_2027preliminary.pdf).

SUMMARY OF THE 2027 BUDGET TAX RATE SCHEDULE (Preliminary 10/5/2026)

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	$2,232,658	$1,844,519	$167,417	$220,722	$164,718,429	$1.47	$1.34
Highway Townwide	$1,447,600	$288,000	$220,705	$938,895	$164,718,429	$5.62	$5.70
Fire Contract	$235,662	$0	$0	$235,662	$167,136,838	$1.02	$1.41
Fire Truck Purchase	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	0	0
TOTALS	$3,915,920	$2,132,519	$388,122	$1,395,279		$8.11	$8.45

The Fire Company proposed a lean 2027 budget of $258,373. The Town proposed $22,711 below this.

Points of Discussion:

- Property Tax Cap & Tax Rate:
  - The Budget Director and Town Board discussed the 2% statutory tax-cap limit and the possibility of adopting a local law to override the tax cap, ultimately deciding to stay within the tax cap limit.
  - Discussion included tradeoffs between maintaining adequate reserves and reducing the tax levy.
  - Multiple selected cuts and updated figures reduced the draft projected 2027 tax-rate calculations.
  - Major cuts involved substantially reducing the fire contract and/or capital engineering funding.
  - Notable increases involved accepting options to expand the code enforcement office funding.

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- Fire Protection Contract
  - The Board noted their anticipated creation of a separate Fire District, with its own independent budget and taxing authority fully in place for 2028. For 2027, a $258,373 contract was proposed.
  - The Board debated the proposed 2027 increase, insisting they want to stay within the 2% tax cap.
  - They proposed to severely limit the 2027 Fire Contract to roughly $235,000 (2% increase from 2026).
  - Another option was to add $22,711 to the Fire Contract at the October 19 Budget Hearing (e.g., by creating an Engineering Reserve Fund in 2026 from A1440.4 and then reducing that line for 2027).
- Highway Department & Cape Horn Bridge Repair
  - The Board reduced the proposed Highway Bridges Contractual Expense (DA5120.4) from $150,000 to $75,000, proposing to spend the 2026 $87,500 to buy the steel materials (and/or allocate the unspent balance to a Bridge Reserve Fund) and cut the 2027 line to $75,000 for labor.
  - Council Member Sturgess questioned the new budget practice to allocate $75,000 of sales-tax revenue directly to Highway DA1120 (and the remaining $781,929.45 to General Fund Revenue A1120). This gives the highway account a more reliable cash-flow source (to prevent extra costs of emergency short-term borrowing), particularly because NYS CHIPS funds arrive late in the year.
- Wheelerville Trails Program
  - With a change request to implement the new Recreational Trail Program (RTP) NY Parks grant contract, discussion centered on grants revenues, town/county match funds, and program salaries, resulting in only $12,500 from the Town as a grant match. The Trail Manager essentially volunteers to write and manage grants. As funded by the grant, the Manager will increase workload to build and expand trails by 60% by next year. The contract includes a salary increase for his extra time.
- Code Office Expansions
  - For 2027, the Code Officer proposed increasing his salary from $61,787 to $71,787 while reducing his workload by adding a new code clerk for $11,700 plus a new FEMA compliance officer for $10,000. (Note that in 2020, salaries were $35,500 for the Code Officer and $17,220 for the clerk. He agreed to do both, but now he is asking not to do the required code clerk and FEMA duties.)
  - The Board kept the code officer salary at $61,787 and added $11,700 total to hire a new code clerk and FEMA compliance officer (with $2,500 specifically for FEMA compliance if not one person).
- Town Clerk Salary Increase & Other Elected Officials' Salaries
  - For 2027, the Town Clerk (with +30 years) proposed increasing her salary from $51,417 to $65,000.
  - $65,000 would be more than a 100% increase from the Town Clerk salary of $32,000 in 2018.
  - The Board opted to accept a 3% Town Clerk raise ($1,542.51 increase from 2026 to 2027).
  - They also noted possible future notice to post a Town Clerk salary of $41,000 when she retires.
  - 2027 Salaries: Highway Superintendent $70,200; Town Clerk $52,959; Town Justice $24,000; Supervisor: $18,000, Four Town Board Members $7,500 each

Resolutions:

1. **Amended Preliminary Budget Public Hearing** — (5-0 votes)
   - The Board approved the amended 2027 Tentative Budget to become the Preliminary Budget.
   - The Board set the **2027 Budget Public Hearing for Monday, October 19, 2026 at 6:00 PM**.

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