



An annual budget is the financial and operational roadmap for any organization. As such, it requires thoughtful analysis, careful planning and more than a little bit of forecasting the future. In the 2021 Budget that forecasting was complicated by the unknowns surrounding the Covid pandemic. Now, one year later, those unknowns are no more certain. Although Southampton has a very high vaccination rate (over 80%) and stores, restaurants and other businesses are operational, the rise of Covid variants brings a new set of challenges to answering the question, “How best to budget for 2022.”

However, one certainty has emerged – population growth. According to the 2010 Census, the population in the Town of Southampton was 56,769. The 2020 Census recorded a population in the Town of 69,036, a nearly 22% overall population increase with some hamlets within the Town experiencing over a 100% population growth. This unprecedented growth will require increased Town services in all areas, especially public safety. Also, it places greater demand on the Town’s facilities, specifically our beaches and parks. The 2022 Budget addresses that reality

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by judiciously investing in improvements to facilities and modernization, seeking operational efficiencies and right sizing of staff. Although there

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are staffing increases proposed in the 2022 Budget, those increase represent only a 2% growth over 2021 staffing. The Town’s ongoing efforts to reorganize, to streamline processes and to implement labor saving technologies play a very important role in creating a budget that meets the needs of the community while protecting the taxpayer. As a result, the 2022 Budget supports those staffing increases as well as providing significant investment in Town facilities while reducing the tax rate in the General Fund by 1% .

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With an emphasis on public safety, the 2022 Budget proposes the addition of two (2) police officers, two (2) E911 dispatchers and the upgrade of one part-time public safety officer to full time. Although this additional staffing is modest, it brings much needed assistance to both the police department and the public safety department. Other changes, such as consolidating the public safety department in Hampton Bays within the Hampton Bays Community Center, completed in August of 2021, bring a greater degree of operational efficiency to the work of the code officers, fire marshals and the animal control officers. Likewise, a proposed expansion of the police department facility, reflected in the 2022 Capital Budget, to enhance evidence storage and facilitate evidentiary investigation procedures, will bring greater efficiency to a labor intensive but vital police operation. In these cases, departmental consolidation and facilities enhancements serve to complement the staffing increases.

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The police department will also be adding the position of crime analyst. Modern policing methodologies rely heavily on data collection and data analysis. In a report published in 2005, the Justice Research and Statistics Association, Washington D.C., forecasted the need for Law enforcement agencies to use crime statistics analysis tools to improve both their daily functions and for planning future initiatives. The crime analyst position proposed in this budget will bring this now common practice among police departments in the U.S. to a higher level in the Southampton P.D., providing the statistical foundation for efficient and effective daily police operations and future initiatives.

The nearly 22% increase in population places a very heavy burden on some of the Town's most fragile resources – our parks and beaches. The men and women of our Parks Department do an outstanding job of maintaining and protecting these resources. However, the increased number of residents accessing these resources has burdened the department. To assist the Parks Department, the 2022 Budget includes two proposals. First, the Budget adds one parks maintenance mechanic. Second, and of greater potential impact, is the proposed automation of the

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beach permit issuance and monitoring processes. Taking a page out of the EZ Pass playbook, the budget provides the first phase of funding for an electronic system that would automate the purchase of electronic beach parking permits, the issuance of those permits and the monitoring of their use at the Town's beaches. Thousands of beach permits are issued each season. The tasks of processing permit applications, collecting fees, issuing permits by mail and at beach locations, and the monitoring of the appropriate use of the permits at the required locations is extremely labor intensive. The electronic beach permitting process would require less staff, a cost savings for the Town, and allow for the redeployment of some staff to maintain and protect our beaches and parks while providing residents with an efficient and accessible way to acquire and utilize their beach parking permits. Currently, the plan is to implement this new system by the summer of 2023.

Another service area stressed by the increase in population is waste management operation. The huge increases in bulk debris, yard waste material, cardboard, household refuse, glass, cans and plastics, and the management of all of these materials place an enormous burden on the waste management facilities and operations. Earlier in 2021, the Town Board authorized the purchase of a new tub grinder, at a cost of \$800,000, used to process yard waste into usable mulch. Age and continuous use literally burned out the older piece of equipment that was replaced. As helpful as this new piece of equipment is, staffing needs to be increased as well. The 2022 Budget adds two new waste management positions to the Municipal Works Department. In addition, the Town is also reviewing waste management operations with an eye to greater efficiencies and cost effectiveness. It is important to note that the collapse of the recyclables market has altered the economics of waste management operations. In the next several months, the Town will be hiring a new Town engineer to head the Municipal Works department. A new hire in this critical department creates an opportunity to review departmental operations and the fundamental mission of the department with an eye toward improving services for the community and becoming more cost effective and efficient.

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Including the addition of a Community Preservation environmental analysts position also proposed in this budget, the 2022 Budget adds a total of 9 new positions to Town staff, a larger than usual year to year staffing increase. Though, with a nearly 22% increase in population, an even larger increase might be justified. Increasing staffing is not the only solution to addressing the need for increased Town services. Since the staffing highs of a decade ago, the Town has relied on reorganization, operational efficiencies and modern technologies to right size staffing needs. Those staffing principles are applied in the 2022 Budget.

The 2022 Capital Budget continues investment in Town infrastructure. The capital budget includes funding for improvements to the Tiana Beach Activity Center in Hampton Bays, Iron Point Park in Flanders and Elliston Park in North Sea. Also included in the 2022 Capital Budget are funds to complete the renovations of the building purchased by the Town to serve at the Westhampton Beach Community Center. The goal is for the new community center to begin providing youth and senior services for residents in the western part of Town by 2023.

Other facilities projects begun in 2021 are receiving additional funds in order to continue to progress these projects toward completion. They include expansion of the Head Start facility in Riverside to create additional space for the Children’s Museum of the East End in the same facility and the continued renovations and modernizations to the over 100 year old Town Hall facility. The budget funds the planning process for the replacement of the Justice Court facility, whose current temporary facility is not meeting the court’s needs, and the expansion of the Town Police facility. Capital funds have been allocated to build a new Town marina at the former Lobster Inn location on property, Community Preservation Fund acquisition. And, the Town continues to invest in its 10 year plan to modernization of the Hampton Bays Water District

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The impacts of Covid and such a drastic increase in population are yet to be fully realized. However, I am confident that this budget funds the most critical Town projects and provides the staffing support needed to maintain the services important to the community and vital to Town operations. The fact that the Town continues to maintain a strong financial position allows it to remain responsive to the needs of the community while being fiscally conservative. As is always the case, the crafting of budget for the Town is the work of many hands. The comptroller's office and the department heads and their staffs are invaluable to the process. The Town also values the feedback received from the tens of thousands of residents who use the Town facilities, participates in Town programs and interact with Town staff. Your input on what is working well and what areas are in need of improvement is a very important part of the budget equation.

Thank you.



Jay Schneiderman, Supervisor
September, 2022

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