

State of New York
County of Fulton
Town of Caroga

Minutes of a Caroga Town Board 2026 budget public hearing meeting held on October 22, 2025 at 6:00pm at Caroga Town Hall with the following board members in attendance.

Supervisor Ralph Palcovic – Present
Councilmember John Glenn - Here
Councilmember Barbara DeLuca - Here
Councilmember Richard Sturgess - Here
Councilmember Matthew Cooper - Here

Also in attendance were Joanne Young – Budget Director, Roy Stock – Deputy Highway Superintendent, Caroga Lake Volunteer Fire Company members Robert Sullivan, Brian McIntosh, John Delesky and two members of the public.

The budget officer passed out copies of the Preliminary Budget.

RESOLUTION #2025-112 to Set Trick or Treat in the Town of Caroga was offered by Supervisor Palcovic at a 2026 budget public hearing meeting held on October 22, 2025.

WHEREAS, the Wheelerville Union Free School has been in contact with the Town in regards to setting the day and time for Trick or Treat in the Town of Caroga, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Caroga Town Board does hereby move to set Trick or Treat in the Town of Caroga to be held on Friday October 31, 2025 from 6 – 8 pm.

Seconded by Councilmember Glenn

Adopted by a vote of five (5) Ayes: Palcovic, Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Cooper

The public hearing on the 2026 budget was opened at this time.

Mr. McIntosh stated he was very disappointed in the Town Board's attitude. The fire contract was opened in good faith and the board did not accept it. Mr. McIntosh provided the Fulton County equalized tax rate for fire for Caroga for 2026, 2027, 2028.

Mr. McIntosh stated they were looking for a contract in the amount of approximately \$220,000.00 for 2026. He reviewed the expenses of the fire company namely the \$92,000.00 mortgage, and insurance - \$15,000.00. If they purchase a fire truck in the next 10 years they will have to have a million dollars. They put \$80,000.00 away each year for this anticipated purchase. Other expenses are fuel, heat, gear, training of the member, to replace equipment, and maintenance of the trucks.

Mr. Sullivan noted the trucks can't break down. They are tested at their maximum full out capacity.

Supervisor Palcovic interjected that the board understands the expenses. The Attorney and Comptroller are involved. The grant is not on the revenue side of this budget, but there is an expenditure that will be covered by the grant. Mr. McIntosh stated the money was taken from the truck fund to pay for the gear. They have to put the money back into the truck fund. The purchase of the rescue truck was pushed off.

Supervisor Palcovic noted the budget that was presented (by law) to this board had an established line item and it can't just be zeroed out, and put on another line item.

Mr. McIntosh stated that may be true for the town but that is not true for a private corporation. They don't do fund accounting.

Councilmember Cooper stated if we have 27 out of 30 sets of equipment that are overdue there is a fiscal irresponsibility or (has been) bad planning for the last 10 years. Now we are trying to right it here. He was glad they got the grant. He wanted to have a life cycle established.

A discussion on the fire company's fiscal process ensued.

Earlier in the budget process the fire company was asked how long would it be until their money runs dry. The response was 2027. They won't be, they are going to continue to provide services.

Councilmember Sturgess asked if there was movement on the budget presented to the town board? Particularly Councilmember Sturgess asked about the personal protection line. He wanted to get past this. The last thing Councilmember Sturgess wants is a battle between two organizations that should be working together. The Town Board's job is to protect the tax payers, and your job is to save them. We need to work together.

Mr. McIntosh and Mr. Sullivan discussed the status of vehicles used by the fire company and the need to replace them.

Councilmember Cooper again stated you have to have a plan to lifecycle vehicles. The plan has to go out 10 – 15 years depending on the vehicle. Those funds have to be protected. Mr. McIntosh took exception that they don't plan. He gave the example of the new fire house which was planned 15 years in advance. The budget was increased with the town and they saved a million dollars to put toward the building. They took out a 1.2-million-dollar loan. In 2018 the money was there to buy the new firetruck but then the price went up \$110,000.00. They try to plan. Councilmember Sturgess thought it looked like they were trying to plan for it all in one year. Over the course of 4 years, it is a 54% increase. Mr. McIntosh and Councilmember Sturgess disagreed on how the district would be funded while being created according to the law.

Mr. McIntosh then noted the company was going for a grant to fund the equipment for the rescue vehicle. A truck purchase won't happen before 2027 or 2028. Those funds will still be used for the equipment even if a district is created. Another used vehicle (suburban) would be purchased. Rescue tools such as a jaw of life and a generator/air compressor. Councilmember DeLuca knows there was planning she was once the chief. In 2003 a grant was obtained for 24 sets of bunker

gear. So, it was known that in 2013 the gear would have to be replaced again. In 2009 the plan was to replace two sets per year. Yet almost none of the gear was replaced. To Councilmember Coopers point that is fiscal irresponsibility. The most valuable asset in the volunteer fire company is its members. That should have been a priority.

The current equipment on the rescue vehicle works but needs to be upgraded and replaced.

Mr. McIntosh doesn't like to take out loans, he noted borrowing money costs the taxpayers more money.

Mr. Delesky stated it sounds like the board thinks they are not doing well in spending their money. He noted the 6.5-million-dollar price of the new Northville Fire Department building and the fact that they borrowed all the money for it. They are a district it was noted. He also compared the town borrowing a garbage truck when ours broke down. He indicated they couldn't do that. Supervisor Palcovic noted the insurance company has that obligation. The Supervisor noted the Sacandaga Fire District operating budget was in the \$240,000.00 range prior to becoming a joint district. In becoming a district, the tax base grew without growing the rate. It was noted as a district you can bond.

Supervisor Palcovic reviewed the projected 3-year budget proposed by the fire company. Mr. McIntosh noted the budget was put forth in this way because of the pushback by the board. They have already spent money on an attorney but it is his understanding that certain costs to create the district can be charged back to the district once it is created. Councilmember Sturgess noted if they become a district the whole budget is moot.

Supervisor Palcovic stated there was a lack of information to the board members. The supervisor also noted the board was only given 24 hours' notice to put this on the agenda. Now there is a better understating of the process. Mr. McIntosh apologized he was under the impression that the two board members (who are fire company members) were giving information to the other board members. Supervisor Palcovic, in being in his elected position, had distanced himself from the process. He urged the Fire Company to move forward with the district.

The assessed value of those areas of the proposed fire district was discussed. Not all were included. The budget officer Joanne Young stated it was about 1.6 million.

It was noted that the town board also voted unanimously to contract with the fire company for one year. Mr. McIntosh did not object to that and will notify the membership on this.

The training line item was discussed. Mr. McIntosh noted the district commissioners have to be trained. He was not sure of the cost. The 990 and 501C3 reports were sent to the board but some members stated they didn't receive the information. Mr. McIntosh could not remember the amount in the fund balance.

Councilmember Glenn misunderstood the shifting of the \$80,000.00 of funds for the truck. Mr. McIntosh noted as a fire company they can do that. If they become a fire district they can't.

Supervisor Palcovic suggested checking with the comptroller on that. He didn't get that same information in speaking with the comptroller's office. Mr. McIntosh bookkeeping system is the money is in a bank account and used when needed and then replaced. They don't do fund accounting. The fund balance of the company will be turned over to the fire district when created.

It was noted that Arietta has been contacted about the proposed district. Mr. McIntosh stated they protect 3900 parcels not counting Arietta. Just Caroga and Bleecker. The only district with more is Mayfield with about 4000.

Supervisor Palcovic asked for any other speakers on the budget.

Resident Linda Gilbert asked about the changes on cover page of the tentative budget from the 10/7/25 to the 10/8/2025 version. It was stated this was based on the changes the board agreed upon.

As a taxpayer Ms. Gilbert did not see the need for a 30% increase in the highway superintendent salary line item. The board wouldn't support a 30% increase in the fire contract. Since the union came into existence the duties of the Highway Superintendent have changed. No longer can the superintendent pick up a shovel or put down a plow. He cannot take work away from the union employees. The Highway Superintendent's job is very flexible – he has no set hours. An example of this is on Monday October 6th he spent his work day putting out political signs all day. That is his option. I gave the board the research I did of the other salaries paid by other towns in the county. No one is being paid \$60,000.00 or \$70,000.00 except the largest town (the town of Johnstown) In my opinion as a taxpayer, a 30% increase is not warranted for the job of Caroga Highway Superintendent based on the duties and miles of roads.

Supervisor Palcovic replied, "Thank you."

At 6:45 pm the public hearing on the proposed 2026 was closed. Supervisor Palcovic exits the room, and returned a few minutes later.

The budget officer announced the fund balance for the fire protection line is \$59,101.98.

Councilmember Glenn asked for an update on the golf course revenues. The latest figures were given at the last meeting. The income didn't significantly change.

Councilmember DeLuca asked if at the lakes association meeting last night was it talked about to close the boat wash station after Labor Day. Councilmember Glenn stated he mentioned it to Marcus Harazin. It is covered under the grant. The budget officer noted nothing has been submitted for reimbursement on the grant but that it will cover all of the payroll from Labor Day to Columbus Day. This is the last year for that funding. Supervisor Palcovic stated regardless of the grant, it is tax dollars and it is the functionality. The attendance post Labor Day at the boat wash station is 2 or 3 in ten days. This is not cost effective. They are still on the town payroll with other expenses such as workers compensation.

It was noted that Lake Placid, and Durrant Lake wash stations all close before Labor Day. And they are supported by Adirondack Water Institute (AWI). Again, it was noted that this is all taxpayer money. Councilmember Glenn asked if anyone ever saw the boatwash station on the Northway open.

Councilmember Sturgess stated there are two options. If this become a district it will be such a massive hit to the taxpayers. They will be shell shocked and there will be negativity. The check from the fire company, the budget director explained, is about \$58,000.00. We are only spending \$992.00 out of it. Next year if there is a budget we would still have money left to offset. The way the budget is we are under the tax cap. If we used more of the fund balance it would reduce the tax rate. We are under the cap by \$332.00. Councilmember Sturgess suggested zeroing out the (fire) fund balance. There was only about \$1,000.00 in there. Councilmember Sturgess stated if they go to a district the account will be eliminated anyways.

Councilmember Sturgess asked Mr. McIntosh when they expect to move forward with the district. They hope to be ready the first of the year the district has to be pulled together by August to have time to put together a budget. A discussion on the necessary steps ensued.

Councilmember Sturgess wanted to use all of the fund balance and have a one-year contract. The budget officer asked what the number was for the contract. Councilmember Sturgess replied whatever is in the fund balance add it to whatever is in the current budget. If the board agreed. It would be less then what the fire company proposed by \$26,000.00. Add the fund balance of \$992.00 to the fund balance reserve give it to them in addition to the 171,375.00.

Councilmember Cooper wanted to be more conservative. He suggested using 75% of the fund balance. He wanted an emergency plan. Councilmember Glenn offered 50/50. Save 50% for next year. It was noted that Caroga has a contract with the Piseco Fire Company we are subcontracted to them. Currently Caroga covers up to the steel bridge. Mr. McIntosh has not spoken to them about the proposed district.

The Budget Officer came up with a figure of \$229,433.00 for the fire contract. That is using \$59,050.00 pretty much all of it. This will not affect the tax rate. We are under the tax rate. This will be a one-year contract. The budget officer noted the need to move the budget forward because the next town monthly meeting is too late to adopt the budget.

Councilmember DeLuca noted we have to stay on top of this. We can't wait until the 11th hour.

Mr. Sullivan noted they had a change in the attorney.

Councilmember Sturgess asked if the town will need additional funds in the attorney line item for 2026 due to the anticipated district. The line at the top of page 3 was examined. No changes were made.

RESOLUTION #2025-113 to move the 2026 Preliminary Budget to the 2026 Adopted Budget was offered by Supervisor Palcovic at the budget public hearing meeting of the Caroga Town Board held on October 22, 2025.

WHEREAS, Budget Officer, Town Supervisor and Town Board members have put in numerous hours of work to create the 2026 budget, and

WHEREAS, at this October 22, 2025 meeting the fire contract was set at \$229,433.00 using \$59,050.00 of fund balance, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Caroga Town Board does hereby move the 2026 Preliminary Budget to the 2026 Adopted Budget, with the changes made this evening.

Seconded by Councilmember Glenn

Adopted by a vote of Five (5) Ayes: Palcovic, Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Cooper

Mr. McIntosh noted the need to have a public hearing on the 2026 fire contract.

RESOLUTION #2025-114 to hold a public hearing on the 2026 Fire Contract with the Caroga Lake Volunteer Fire Company Inc. was offered by Supervisor Palcovic at the budget public hearing meeting of the Caroga Town Board held on October 22, 2025.

WHEREAS, the Town of Caroga and the Caroga Lake Volunteer Fire Company Inc. both agreed to cancel the previously set three-year contract which was to end on December 31, 2028, and

WHEREAS, resolution #2025-098 established a one-year contract with the Caroga Lake Volunteer Fire Company, and

WHEREAS, much time and discussion have gone into figuring out and agree upon the amount of the 2026 Caroga Lake Volunteer Fire Company Inc. contract, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Caroga Town board will hold a public hearing on the 2026 fire contract with the Caroga Lake Volunteer Fire Company Inc. in the amount of \$229,433.00 on Wednesday November 12, 2025 at 7:00 pm at Caroga Town Hall.

Seconded by Councilmember DeLuca

Adopted by a vote of Five (5) Ayes: Palcovic, Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Cooper

At 7:14 pm Supervisor Palcovic made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Cooper. All Board members were in favor of the motion; Palcovic, Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Cooper.

Submitted by Caroga Town Clerk

Linda Gilbert RMC, CMC