

**Brighton-Pittsford Post** – “From the Supervisor” column – submitted for November 24, 2016 issue  
**Submitted by Pittsford Town Supervisor Bill Smith**

## **A Healthy Fiscal Picture for Pittsford**

This year Moody’s Investor Services reaffirmed the Town of Pittsford’s Triple-A credit rating. That’s the highest credit rating there is. Being prepared to meet its financial obligations in good times or bad is how Pittsford maintains its top credit rating.

This benefits Pittsford taxpayers directly, reducing the cost of doing business by getting us the most favorable interest rates on borrowing. We build on this strength by budgeting conservatively, doing our best to forecast all necessary expenses for the year ahead. And we consider critically, even skeptically, anticipated sources of revenue – as revenue, including shared sales tax received from Monroe County and Town mortgage tax revenue, is driven by the economy and can fluctuate from year to year. Neglecting to account in our budget planning for fluctuation in items of revenue would amount to municipal malpractice.

Better for all of us that Pittsford budget realistically, hoping for the best but prepared for the worst.

The town budget for 2017 conforms to this principle. At our meeting on November 15, following a public budget hearing on November 1, the Town Board and I approved a budget for Town operations for the year to come.

Operations are budgeted at \$18.6 million for 2017. This compares to \$17.1 million in 2016. The difference consists nearly entirely due to:

- Voter-approved borrowing and expenditure for renovation of the Spiegel Community Center;
- higher personnel costs driven by the State’s increase in the minimum wage and wage-scale adjustments consequent to it; and
- increased mandatory contributions to social security and workers compensation insurances.

The Town has kept wages and benefits for its employees sufficiently modest that the rise in minimum wage affects our budget significantly.

The voter-approved borrowing and expenditure for the community center is included in the proposed 2017 tax rate, as are the additional costs driven by the State’s increase in the minimum wage. These costs bring the Town tax rate to \$3.41 per thousand dollars of assessed value, as compared to \$2.98 per thousand in 2016. This means that the budget for 2017 would add \$119 to the tax bill of the owner of a house of average assessed value (\$276,338). If your house were assessed at \$500,000, the additional tax would be \$215; if assessed at \$140,000 it would be \$60.

Notwithstanding the operating cost increases for 2017, the budget we've adopted holds Town taxes, for yet another consecutive year, at less than 8 cents out of every dollar that Pittsford residents pay in property tax.

The proposed 2017 budget honors the Town Board's commitment to keep intact the full scope and quality of public services in Pittsford. These includes our Pittsford Community Library, the 900 recreation programs we offer each year, our public festivals such as Paddle & Pour and the Food Truck and Music Fest, the Summer Canalside Concerts, and our many events for families and children. It includes leaf pickup, weekly yard debris removal, snowplowing, maintaining more than 100 miles of Town roads, tending and keeping up over 1,300 acres of parkland and open space and over 27 miles of recreational trails and access ways, operating a Senior Citizens Center that offers meaningful programs to seniors every weekday. It covers all of the other Town services on which we depend.

The budget provides as well for continued improvement of our Town facilities. I've mentioned already the voter-approved community center renovation. The 2017 budget provides also for completing the upgrade of our athletic fields, improvements to our trails and the proposed canalside nature preserve.

External pressures continue to make it a challenge to restrain spending while maintaining all services and their quality. These pressures include increases in State-imposed Workers' Compensation premiums; increases in medical coverage for employees, the State's scheduled annual increases to the minimum wage for the next few years, and decreasing revenues from cable franchise as more and more people cut the cable.

As we have in the past, we will continue to pay close attention to these trends and to plan accordingly. The Town Board and I are committed to maintaining Pittsford's path of fiscal integrity.

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