

## 2025 BUDGET MESSAGE – INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE



My fellow residents,

As your Town Supervisor, I am proud to present the 2025 Tentative Budget, a fiscally responsible plan that addresses our community's immediate needs while laying the groundwork for a prosperous future. This budget reflects our shared values of safety, sustainability, and strong community services.

The annual Town Budget includes both the Operating and Capital Budgets. The Operating Budget provides funding for the expenses required to run the Town for the coming year. This includes salaries for our employees and each department such as police, public safety, highway, parks and beaches. It keeps our roads and other critical Town infrastructure safe and secure. It supports important Town programs such as our senior and youth services programs and maintains our vital IT infrastructure. The Capital Budget funds long term projects such as infrastructure maintenance, facilities enhancements, parks and recreation, and certain large periodic equipment acquisitions.

As supervisor, it is my responsibility to create and to publish a Tentative Budget for the public and my colleagues on the Board to review and to recommend changes before the Final Budget is adopted on November 20th.

The Town of Southampton's 2025 Budget includes several key initiatives aimed at addressing both immediate and long-term needs and reflects the Town's commitment to sustainable growth and improved public services.

## 2025 BUDGET MESSAGE - INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE



### OVERVIEW OF THE BUDGET

#### Prioritizing Public Safety

- The Budget strengthens our police force by adding four new officers and funding two sergeant promotions, thereby enhancing patrol supervision and enabling us to respond effectively to the increasing demands for service, traffic enforcement, and sector coverage.
- Recognizing that code enforcement is integral to public safety, the Budget allocates funds for an additional Ordinance Inspector and Town Investigator. This increases our on-the-ground presence and allows for expanded coverage, including extended hours.
- The Budget provides for investment in Town wide communication upgrades, allocating \$700,000 to improve coordination across Public Safety, Parks and Highway departments. Additionally, \$840,000 has been earmarked to upgrade radios for police personnel and their vehicles, ensuring seamless and reliable communication.

#### Sustaining and Expanding Essential Services

- Our community's growth necessitates that our programs and services evolve to meet new demands. The 2025 Budget prioritizes the completion of ongoing projects and the repair of existing infrastructure, ensuring the longevity and efficacy of our Town's assets.
- The Budget makes strategic investments in our Parks Department, including playground improvements at East Quogue Village Green, design planning for the Hampton West Park enhancements, field expansion at Iron Point Park, structural repairs and parking expansion at Poxabogue Golf Center, and a renovated skate park at Red Creek Park.

## 2025 BUDGET MESSAGE – INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE



- The Budget addresses vital infrastructure needs, with funding allocated for the Baycrest Bulkhead replacement, the first phase of Noyack Road paving, and upgrades to the Noyac storage barn.
- Recognizing the importance of our senior community, the Budget allocates funds for a Senior Citizen Nutrition Center Manager and provides funding for the Westhampton Senior and Community Center, ensuring our seniors have access to important services and recreational opportunities.
- The Budget adds positions in crucial departments such as Highway, Housing, Engineering and Waste Management, ensuring we have the personnel to maintain and improve our Town's operations and services.

### Smart Fiscal Planning for a Secure Future

- The 2025 Budget reflects a commitment to responsible, long-term fiscal planning. By funding recurring operational expenses through the Operating Budget rather than solely relying on borrowing, we are reducing future debt and interest payments, saving taxpayer dollars in the long run.
- This Budget prioritizes attracting and retaining qualified Town employees, offering competitive salaries and benefits packages. This ensures we can continue to provide high quality services to our residents.
- The Town is commencing a Comprehensive Plan Update, a crucial roadmap for our Town's future. This updated plan will address the myriad issues facing our Town and the need for smart, balanced growth, allowing for an evenhanded approach to land preservation and affordable housing, ensuring that Southampton remains a vibrant and desirable place to live for generations to come.

## 2025 BUDGET MESSAGE – INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE



### Financial Stability

- While we are committed to providing essential services, we also understand the importance of responsible taxation. The 2025 Tentative Budget sets the tax rate at 1.5305, an increase of \$140.00 for a home assessed at \$1,000,000. This increase allows us to keep pace with rising costs, particularly in employee health insurance and pension obligations, while maintaining the high level of service our residents deserve.
- Southampton has once again earned the highest credit rating (AAA) from Standard & Poors as set forth in its investor report dated September 19, 2024. This is a testament to the Town's strong financial management, ample reserves, manageable debt, and conservative budgeting practices.

### A MORE DETAILED LOOK

Budgets for entities as sizable as the Town of Southampton are intricate and comprehensive, detailing all sources of revenue and expenditures. Some of these specifics have been broadly referenced above. The subsequent sections of this Budget Message will furnish further details.

### Prioritizing Public Safety

The 2025 Tentative Operating Budget adds four (4) new police officers and funds two promotions to the rank of sergeant. This will allow for increased patrol supervision, a vital component of effective policing. These additions will further allow the Police Chief to address the increasing demands in calls for service, increased traffic enforcement and additional sector coverage.

## 2025 BUDGET MESSAGE – INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE



The Operating Budget also adds one (1) additional Ordinance Inspector and one (1) additional Town Investigator in the Code Enforcement Division. These additions will allow the Town Code Compliance and Emergency Management Administrator to locate staff members in Town Hall to create an additional presence on the east end, and will add to the existing 7 day/week coverage and allow for some extended hours.

Providing for public safety, of course, is not limited to the Police and Code Enforcement departments. Highway, Lifeguards, Fire Marshals, Animal Control and other Town departments contribute to the effort to provide public safety. These departments must coordinate their efforts and be able to rely on effective communications.

The 2025 Capital Budget provides funding to improve communications technology by including \$700,000 to fund a Town wide communication upgrade across Public Safety, Parks and Highway, and \$840,000 to fund the upgrade of radios for police personnel and their vehicles. These measures will improve coordination and ensure seamless and reliable communication.

### Sustaining and Expanding Essential Services

As the Town's needs continue to grow, it is imperative that the Town's programs, services and facilities meet those new demands. Rather than undertake new projects, this Capital Budget provides funds to complete ongoing projects and to repair existing infrastructure. To that end, the Budget includes funding for the following projects:

- For the Parks Department: To improve the playground at the East Quogue Village Green, to create a design for improvements at the Hampton West Park, to expand the existing field at Iron Point Park to accommodate additional uses, to repair the structural foundation at the Poxabogue Golf Center and expand the parking area, and to replace the skate park at Red Creek Park.



## 2025 BUDGET MESSAGE – INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

- For the Municipal Works/Facilities Management Department: To replace the columns at the Bridgehampton Community House, to move forward with the Noyac Road Pedestrian Enhancement project, to create additional space for the Town Trustees at their 240 West Montauk Highway location, to partially fund the Westhampton Community Center, to create additional parking adjacent to the Hampton Bays post office, to install adult exercise equipment at Good Ground Park, to evaluate upgrades to the Police Department Rifle Range, to install outdoor improvements at the Flanders Community Center, and to purchase vending machines for the green bags at each transfer station.
- For the Highway Department: To replace the Baycrest Avenue Bulkhead, to complete Phase 1 of the Noyack Road paving, and to complete needed upgrades to the Noyac storage barn.
- For the Hampton Bays Water District: To replace water meters.

To sustain the necessary levels of services, programs and facilities in our communities, the 2025 Tentative Budget adds positions for various departments including: a new Director of Traffic Safety in the Engineering Department whose responsibilities will include evaluating community concerns, conducting traffic studies and overseeing fleet management; one (1) Senior Citizen Nutrition Center Manager; one (1) Senior Park Attendant and one (1) Maintenance Mechanic I in the Parks Department; one (1) Office Assistant in the Housing and Community Services Department; two (2) Heavy Equipment Operators in the Highway Department; and one (1) Heavy Equipment Operator and one (1) Sanitation Helper in Waste Management.

The Budget further provides salary increases to address the challenge of retaining current employees and hiring new employees. This ensures that the Town will be able to continue to provide high quality services to our residents.

## 2025 BUDGET MESSAGE – INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE



### Smart Fiscal Planning for a Secure Future

Rather than bonding for certain recurring operational expenses each year to be repaid with interest, this Budget reflects annual funding within the Operating Budget to pay for such recurring expenses. For example, the annual purchase of police vehicles will be paid from the Operating Budget. Equipment needing to be replaced annually in the Municipal Works department is now included in the Operating Budget. And for the Highway Department, the annual costs for Town wide drainage and culvert repairs, certain equipment purchases, and \$1 million of the \$2 million needed for road paving will now be funded by the Operating Budget. This approach reduces future borrowing needs.

The Budget contains funding for a Comprehensive Plan Update. The Comprehensive Plan is a roadmap for the Town's future growth. We must begin the process of updating the 1999 Comprehensive Plan to address the need for smart, balanced growth and an evenhanded approach to land preservation and affordable housing. This Budget provides funding for such an updated Plan. Throughout the process, the Board will evaluate and address all matters critical to protecting our community including aquifer protection, transportation, sustainable energy solutions with electrical grid resiliency, wastewater treatment, solid waste management, housing, and land preservation. Together as a community we will update this foundational document that reflects our shared vision for our Town.

### Financial Stability

While we are committed to providing essential services, we also understand the importance of responsible taxation. The 2025 Tentative Budget sets the tax rate at 1.5305, an increase of \$140.00 for a home assessed at \$1,000,000. This increase allows us to keep pace with rising costs, particularly in employee health insurance and pension obligations, while maintaining the high level of service our residents deserve.

## 2025 BUDGET MESSAGE – INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE



Certain increases in the Budget were necessary to meet the rising costs of employee health insurance, pension obligations, and workers compensation insurance as set forth below.

- Health insurance increase - 6%
- Workers Compensation insurance increase - 10%
- Increase in retirement contribution - 6%

Southampton has once again earned the highest credit rating (AAA) from Standard & Poors in its investor report dated September 19, 2024. This is a testament to the Town's strong financial management, ample reserves, manageable debt, and conservative budgeting practices. The rating not only affirms the budgeting strategies utilized by the Town but also allows the Town to borrow at a very low interest and to develop strategies for retiring debt. All factors beneficial to the taxpayer.

Standard and Poor's report reaffirmed the Town of Southampton's AAA rating, the highest rating issued by the investment service, and specifically noted particularly the Town's:

- Very large and stable tax base which continues to grow
- Ample reserves and liquidity
- Manageable debt burden
- Strong fiscal management and conservative budgeting

The S&P report went on to comment that, "The stable outlook reflects S&P Global Ratings' view of Southampton's resilient and growing local economy, coupled with a conservatively managed budget, supported by a robust slate of policies".

## 2025 BUDGET MESSAGE – INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE



### NEXT STEPS IN THE PROCESS

This Budget Message is an overview highlighting the core elements of the 2025 Budget, which is a very detailed and complex document. The entire Tentative Budget is available online for public review. The Tentative Budget will be converted to a Preliminary Budget at a special meeting on October 3rd. Public hearings have been scheduled for October 22nd and on November 12th. The Final Budget must be adopted by the Board on or before November 20th.

The 2025 Budget is the result of a collaborative effort, incorporating input from the Comptroller's office, Town staff, department heads, and my colleagues on the Town Board. It is an honor to work alongside these dedicated men and women as we serve our community. And thank you to you, the residents of Southampton. Your voices matter, and I encourage you to review the detailed Tentative Budget document available online and participate in the upcoming public hearings. Together, we can ensure that Southampton continues to be a thriving community for all.

Sincerely,

Maria Moore  
Supervisor, Town of Southampton  
Dated: September 30, 2024