



THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE NEW YORK

PUBLIC HEARING

Monday, September 18, 2023 6:00 pm

Common Council Chambers

Welcome to the scheduled meeting of the Public Hearing in the City of Poughkeepsie. The date is September 18, 2023, and the time is 6:00 pm.

THIS HEARING IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING COMMENTS ON THE proposed introductory Local Law entitled, “Local Law to Override the Tax Levy Limit established in General Municipal Law §3-c”.

Vice Chairman Shook called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

I. WELCOME

II. ROLL CALL: 5 present, 4 absent (Absent: Councilmembers Deichler, Johnson & Chairwoman Brown. Councilmember Grant arrived after roll call)

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Five (5) minutes per person public comment.

1. Marta Knapp – 10 S. Clinton St
2. Laura Forman – 66 Washington St
3. Naomi Brooks – S. Grand Ave*
4. Ken Stickle – 118 Catharine St
5. Laurie Sandow – S. Grand Ave*

* Submitted written comments

Poughkeepsie Public Hearing Tax Cap Override Sept 18, 2023

Naomi Brooks, S. Grand Avenue

Good evening. At your August 30 meeting, Councilmember Menist asked why would the council agree to a cap *before* a budget is presented and a specific cap amount requested? Common Council members often request additional financial analysis before moving forward with a vote on a resolution. The budget process and its tax cap should be no different. Concrete and specific data is needed before you can make your best decision.

The Mayor spoke at that meeting, saying a flat budget – a budget that maintains services - would *necessitate* a tax cap override of about 7%. His words were that 2% was just not doable – or else, as he stated “we will have to decide what has to be cut and there would be insufficient time to say exactly what those cuts are before the budget is due. It will be shocking.” He also states “we certainly can’t prepare two budgets”.

I don’t know about you, but for my personal budget I have spent countless hours in front of a computer doing exactly what the mayor says is shocking and his staff can’t do. I try to figure out how to bring in more money, how to spend less money, and use many “what if” scenarios to see if I can pay my bills and have a little emergency fund. Developing multiple budgets is a necessary step in this process.

A 7% increase on our 2023 budget’s property tax revenue of almost 29 million dollars comes out to 1.8 million dollars. A 2% increase would be \$517,000. That’s a difference of 1.3 million dollars.

Did you know that our 2023 budget had Industrial Development Agency tax breaks of almost 6 million dollars for 18 projects? Reduce the IDA tax break budget line by 30% and you have your 1.3 million dollars.

Or maybe make a few “small” adjustments instead? For example, in 2023, the *mayor* continued to collect a full \$173,650 salary as *city administrator* AND a partial 2023 mayoral salary at an additional cost of over \$100,000 in our budget. Cut a dozen of these extravagances for that 1.3 million dollars needed.

A 7% tax increase will be the straw that breaks the backs of many residents. Their budgets just won’t stretch to include that, plus the recent increases in water, sewer, and sanitation fees, not to mention crazy soaring utility bills and cost of just about every other item rising by 7% and more. If you think you’ve had zombie homes, homelessness, and crime before, just try saddling our residents with a 7% property tax increase. Property tax is a big percentage of my budget, and I know I will have some hard decisions to make if that bill increases significantly. Please proceed with extreme caution, and do not approve the override.

My comments for tonight's tax cap override public hearing will be brief.

But no matter how brief, they will still be longer and more detailed than any comment that any single Councilmember has put on the record about the upcoming Budget and Tax Cap Override. In fact, I could end my comments right here, and that would still be true.

But instead, I want to establish that in 2022, the budget was released to the public *IN ADVANCE* of the public hearing, and the hearing did not take place until December 5, 2022.

Are there words to describe the absurdity of staging a public hearing where the public is being asked to comment on a document that may not yet exist, certainly has not been released to the public, and a budget apparently not even written into pure thin air?

That the public is being asked to comment while, as usual, some Councilmembers are absent from this hearing, and all Councilmembers continue to withhold their knowledge and comments—assuming they have either—yet retain the right to burden the public with the outcome of their final vote.

Quoting Council Chairwoman Brown directly from the transcript of the September 5th Council meeting:

“There's several fiscal, um, what's the right way to put it? There's several finance issues right now that we have to determine where we're going to put where we're going to spend our money and are all conditional on each other so we can I can't put certain things on the agenda until we finish deciding if we're going to do this, If we're going to do that. And I can't say publicly what they are, but there are reasons why the agenda is very light right now.”

At that meeting, as well as in the transcript of the August 28th meeting, Council Chairwoman Brown clearly established—in two different places of the record—that some of her fellow councilmembers do not measure up in their knowledge and financial training.

Quoting just a tiny and cleaned up excerpt from those both places in the transcript:

—In statement One, Chairwoman Brown turned to Councilwoman Flowers and said: “Yeah, you have a finance background, you have an advantage, and I have a finance background, but some people ... have some serious questions and they have some concerns and since it's been on the agenda, ... I just want to make sure that we are equipped to understand.”

—In statement Two, Chairwoman Brown and Mayor Nelson have the following exchange: Mayor Nelson states:

“I and we did fully briefed the Finance Committee and I'm prepared to speak when at your pleasure whenever you'd like.

—Chairwoman Brown replies:

“Right. It's not just for me, it's for the entire council.

You know, one of the good things about being chair, you know, we meet in caucus is we developed a relationship now where individual council members do come to me with their individual concerns.

They come to me with their individual concerns, and I appreciate that.

So I'm speaking for a majority of members here that have some concerns and address them on Wednesday.”

As always, the public watches as the paid, elected members of the Council keep their silence and their power, while hiding their and decision-making behind closed doors and consent agendas. — Do not approve this tax cap override.

Common Council Meeting

August 28, 2023

From Transcript, Part 2:

<https://totalwebcasting.com/view/?func=VIEW&id=cop&date=2023-08-28&seq=1>

At approx. 16"10 on the webcast:

"I want to discuss we're going to presentation and communications, but I want to discuss with my colleagues.

There's a communication from Mayor Nelson about a tax cap override.

But I prefer also if Dr. Martinez was here.

So I want to move that to Wednesday, unless you all want to hear from the mayor now, I just think is better to have them both here.

Good.

Yeah. Is that okay? So we're going to move that to which.

Are you going to go to Wednesday? Yes.

Okay. Could you move the communication to Wednesday's interim, a timeline? If you're going to do.

That, the two days would not make a difference because then we haven't had a meeting the following week.

Right. But as a timeline, if you do a communication, then is a possibility of setting a public hearing.

Right. I understand that.

But from talking to my colleagues it's better. We move it to Wednesday because we don't have this point right now to do it anyway.

So it's not going to matter about that timeline is about trying to get the support and asking questions. Were all voices in around? So that they had the votes right now anyway? Well, that's because nobody had a conversation about it.

Now, but I'll talk to you off the line.

But right now, it's better if they're both here.

Yeah. I mean, it will be good.

I'm just talking about the time line.

I don't. I don't.

I don't foresee a day, two days making a difference.

I think we can still that a public hearing on Wednesday to because we can what we can do at the council is is satisfy We can set the public hearing on Wednesday as well for the next week and we have to get five days.

Yeah.

Yeah. You just have to have enough time now.

I just said yeah, but it's just so it's just several of us are more familiar with finance than others.

And so that's why I feel like it's better if more if the finance commissioner was here as well. Yeah, you have a finance background. So, you know, I mean, you have to be and I have a values background with some people want have some serious questions and they have some concerns and since it's been on the agenda, you know, probably wants to know what's going on. So I just want to make sure that we are equipped to understand. Okay.

So we're going to just move this to Donna. We're just going to move the communication to Wednesday.
Okay.”

And towards the end of August 28 meeting, at approx. 20”55 on the webcast, Chairwoman Brown engages in the following exchange with Mayor Nelson:

—**Chairwoman Brown:**

“Before I make a motion to adjourn.

Mayor Nelson, if you can get any correspondence to the council about the tax cap override before Wednesday so we can be prepared to take action if if we have the support to move forward.

I know there's a deadline to vote, so that's why I'm trying to work with you. I just want to make sure from discussions with my colleagues that we have

—**Mayor Nelson:**

totally understand. Chairwoman and thank you very much for that courtesy. We appreciate it.

In the agenda packet for Wednesday, there's already, I believe, a copy of the proposed local law that would need to be laid on the desk. And we appreciate your understanding of the need to set a public hearing.

I and we did fully briefed the Finance Committee and I'm prepared to speak when at your pleasure whenever you'd like.

—**Chairwoman Brown:**

Right. It's not just for me, it's for the entire council.

You know, one of the good things about being chair, you know, we meet in caucus is we developed a relationship now where individual council members do come to me with their individual concerns.

They come to me with their individual concerns, and I appreciate that.

So I'm speaking for a majority of members here that have some concerns and address them on Wednesday.

—**Mayor Nelson:**

Or I would just say if I'm here, they could email either Dr. Martinez, if anybody on the council has any particular questions or myself or both of us, we'd be happy to get those to you in writing before Wednesday.

—**Chairwoman Brown:**

May Maybe I'll talk to the majority leader and see if maybe we can caucus Wednesday before the meeting, maybe like 6:00 or something.

—**Mayor Nelson:**

I'll be here.

Tomorrow.

—**Chairwoman Brown:**

I'm not available tomorrow.

I'll be here.

Wednesday 6 p.m.

If anyone else wants to show up.

I'll be here.

Okay. Motion to adjourn.”

*Official Minutes of the Public Hearing of September 18, 2023 for the purpose of receiving comments
on the proposed Override to the Tax Levy Limit*

***A motion to adjourn the public hearing at 6:20 pm was made by Councilmember Long and
seconded by Councilmember Thompson***

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

Dated: September 21, 2023

I hereby certify that this true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Common Council Public Hearing held on September 18, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

**Donna M. DeLuca
Deputy City Chamberlain**