



The City of Poughkeepsie New York

Common Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 4, 2024

6:00 PM

I WELCOME:

Welcome to the scheduled Public Hearing of the City of Poughkeepsie Common Council. The date is Monday, November 4, 2024 and the time is 6:01 PM.

This Public Hearing is for the purpose of receiving comments on the 2025 Proposed City of Poughkeepsie Budget.

II ROLL CALL:

8 Present, 1 Absent (Councilmember Brown)

III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Five (5) minutes per person

Laurie Sandow - South Grand Ave*
Daniel Atonna - College Ave/For The Many
Maria Kelly - Suncrest Court

***Submitted written comments**

Laurie Sandow comments, City of Poughkeepsie Common Council Budget public hearing, November 4, 2024

Before I speak to the Budget, it's necessary to note that my comments from the October 15 Zoning public hearing continuation, as well as the October 15 Common Council meeting itself, were not included in the minutes for either meeting. Yes, I submitted the comments later than usual. But it's also true that, by law, minutes are drafts until they are approved by the Council, which gives this body time to require that they be properly updated. The Zoning public hearing minutes also fail to include at least one other person's submitted comments that were neither read into the record, nor included in the minutes. In addition, one or more of the PDFs posted indicates that it was revised after posting. I am forced to make this comment now because public comments at Council meetings are only heard after the Council approves minutes—whether Councilmembers have read the minutes or not, or realize and correct for missing contents.

Now to the presentation by Dr. Martinez that just took place—a flat out offense to the public. There was no announcement that we'd get a presentation here today. There was no presentation to the public prior to tonight's hearing. I understand that council members got a presentation from Dr. Martinez previously, but not the public. Instead, the public is left on their own to comb through and dissect a 300-page document, while not one Councilmember has put their own comments on the record. But this is the kind of hooey that goes on in the City of Poughkeepsie all the time.

In addition, as I walked into the meeting tonight, I saw signs posted in the elevator and on the doors and walls which say that water, sewer and sanitation bills can't be paid any more and are being levied to people's 2025 tax bills. Why can't they be paid? We still have two months left in 2024. Why can't people continue to pay their bills through the end of the year rather than getting them attached to 2025 when they'll also have to pay interest?

Plus, for the people watching at home who might be wondering about the audience here, there is no audience. The room is basically empty. Why? Because the public doesn't like the fact that they are saddled with commenting on a budget that no council member has the

brass, or the decency, or feels the responsibility to their constituents to talk about the budget prior to a public meeting and a public hearing.

As to what Council members have read or not, or communicated to their constituents or not, how is it that this Council was briefed on the Budget by Dr. Martinez, but the public was not? Why is the public expected to weed through this document without the benefit of a webcast of Dr. Martinez' Council briefing or a similar briefing held specifically for members of the public prior to this public comment period? How is it that not a single Councilmember, including Finance Committee members, has held a public meeting dedicated to informing the public about the budget and putting their own opinions and knowledge on the record and up for discussion and questioning?

Is five minutes really adequate for the public to dissect a 300-page document? Especially given the Council's and Administration's policy of not responding to public comments. When and how will questions raised at this public hearing be answered? Or will the public be treated to more gaslighting from the Mayor who waits for people to leave a meeting with rules that state that there'll be no back and forth conversation, yet then dismisses those same members of the public not only leaving the meeting, but dismisses them as being members of only a small demographic segment of the City's population.

Mayor Flowers should take another look at the vote totals from the 2023 election and show some respect for the so-called small demographic whose votes put her over the top in both the primary and general election. And Flowers and the other council members—rather than dismissing and denigrating the people who do show up—should take a good look at themselves and take responsibility for the fact that they are so distant from the residents of their wards that their own constituents are not showing up and speaking at Council meetings, but even fear retaliation and denigration if they do.

What timeline is being served by this public hearing? Does the City need this public hearing as a showpiece because—behind closed doors—they've secretly scheduled a date known to them but not yet released to the public? A soon-to-come future date where a budget resolution will be passed by this Council—via consent agenda, no doubt.

What, specifically, is the budget gap in dollars that's driving a 9% increase in overall property tax? Why does Mayor Flowers continue to circulate the mythology that the city has been (quote), "mired in deficits for far too long," when she and others know darn well that the so-called General Fund deficit was produced by John Tkazyik and Milo Bunyi illegally shifting money between city funds, a tangled mess created by these two characters that took years to untangle, while adding costs to the taxpayers by tanking the City's creditworthiness.

How is it that the public is now supposed to bear the burden of increased water, sewer, sanitation, and property tax rates in order to pay for the Cadillac health care plans of Councilmembers who rarely meet with or have any other kind of ongoing public disclosure or relationship with their constituents. And when I'm talking about bearing the burden of increased water, sewer, sanitation, and property tax rates, I'm not just talking about homeowners, but about tenants whose landlords will respond to this budget by hitting their tenants up with additional rent increases.

Where does this budget actually address settlement of the Police, Fire and CSEA contracts, other than in a line that reads, "the City will be or is in negotiations with the Police, Fire and CSEA unions in 2024/2025." Why is settlement of the MOU arrived between the Police Department and Marc Nelson still outstanding? How many police officers will choose to move on or retire in response to a City that continues to drag its feet on the matter?

Why does this budget contain or camouflage slush, pork barrel and favoritism spending for projects favored by Council and Administration members? How much from their own Ward funds have Councilmembers spent on projects that directly serve the constituents and enhance the conditions of their own wards?

I'll just leave it at that because I'm way too annoyed, except to add that what's happening here is the opposite of service to members of the public in this city. This Council has a 30-minute block set aside for public comments, but you're still going to cut people off rather than let them speak.

IV ADJOURNMENT:

At 6:32 pm a motion to adjourn the Public Hearing was made by 4th Ward Councilmember Shook and seconded by 7th Ward Councilmember Patterson Thompson.

MOTION TO ADJOURN THE PUBLIC HEARING- VOICE VOTE	
Yes/Aye:	Council Member- 1st Ward Henry, Councilmember - 2nd Ward Menist, Council Member- 5th Ward James, Councilmember- 6th Ward Grant, Councilmember- 8th Ward Deichler, Councilmember- 7th Ward Patterson Thompson, Councilmember- 4th Ward Shook, Councilmember At-Large Wilson
No/Nay:	None
Abstain:	None
Absent:	3rd Ward Councilmember Brown
Result:	Passed

Dated: November 7, 2024

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Common Council Public Hearing held on Monday, November 4, 2024.

**Respectfully submitted,
Donna M. DeLuca
Deputy City Chamberlain**

2025 BUDGET HEARING

NOVEMBER 4, 2024

Brian Martinez, PhD
Commissioner of Finance



Property Tax Cap Override

Increase Above the 2% Tax Cap	Increase in Revenue Due to Breaking the Tax Cap	Total Increase in Property Tax Revenue
7.1% Over	\$ 2,099,604	\$ 3,259,532

Total 9.1%

- New Homestead tax rate of \$10.83/ \$1,000 would increase annual costs to a homeowner with a \$300K valuation by \$218.37, or \$18.20 per month.
- New Non-Homestead tax rate \$13.93 / \$1,000
- ***Combined water, sewer, sanitation, and property tax increases would cost the median \$300K homeowner \$333/year, or \$28/month.***

Utility Rates

Utility	2021 Rate	2021 % Growth	2022 Rate	2022 % Growth	2023 Rate	2023 % Growth	2024 Rate	2024 % Growth
Water Rates	\$ 4.70	9.3%	\$ 4.86	3.4%	\$ 5.10	4.9%	\$ 5.65	10.8%
Sewer Rates	\$ 4.20	16.7%	\$ 4.34	3.3%	\$ 4.55	4.8%	\$ 4.65	2.2%
Sanitation Fees	\$ 120	25.0%	No Change	0%	No Change	0%	No Change	0%
Consumer Price Index (CPI)	-	4.7%	-	8.0%	-	4.1%	-	2.9%

2025 Water/Sewer

- Increase Water and Sewer rates by 4.9%
- New water rate \$ 5.94, and sewer \$4.88
- **Annual Increase** for Median Homeowner: **\$8.12 water + \$6.44 sewer**

2025 Sanitation

- Since last increase, CPI has risen by 21.1%

2025 Rate Increase	21%
Annual Increase for Median Homeowner	\$100.80

- Utility rates must keep up with inflationary costs to continue supporting operations and maintenance.
So... \$100.80 (sanitation) + \$14.56 (water/sewer) = \$115.36, or \$9.61/month for W/S/Sani increases.
- ***Combined water, sewer, sanitation, and property tax increases would cost the median \$300K homeowner \$333/year, or \$28/month.***

Must-Pay Increases/Benefits

Expense	2024 Budget	2025 Budget	Difference
Health Insurance	\$ 11,244,900	\$ 12,987,854	\$ 1,742,954 (15.5% increase)
ERS Retirement	\$ 1,622,774	\$ 1,800,380	\$ 177,606 (10.9% increase)
PFRS Retirement	\$ 5,103,102	\$ 5,747,461	\$ 644,359 (12.6% increase)
Workers' Comp.	\$ 954,156	\$ 1,118,242	\$ 164,086 (17.2% increase)
Salaries	\$32,876,426	\$34,545,858	\$1,669,432 (2.75% Est. increase)

Must-Pay increases put an additional **\$4.4M** strain on the 2025 budget.

Overall Fiscal Health

- Credit Ratings
 - Moody's (Baa3), S&P (BBB+) – Low Investment Grade
- NY Fiscal Stress Monitoring
 - 2 points to be removed from the Fiscal Stress Category
 - Removal from Environmental Stress Category
 - 2025 - Goal is to be removed from both Fiscal Stress Categories
- Fund Balance (Pre-Audit Results as of 12/31/2023)

General Fund	Water Fund	Sewer Fund	Sanitation Fund	Aggregate Fund Balances
\$2,446,383	\$400,474	\$3,213,144	(\$2,324,066)	\$3,735,935

 More work to do

Noteworthy Capital Improvement Project Funding

Project Name	Project Total Cost	Amount Funded by Grants	Percent Funded by Grants
Lead Service Line Replacement (LSL)	~45,000,000 to ~125,000,000	 BIL /NYS DOH Inventory \$2,000,000 Phase 2 & 3 - ~10,000,000	TBD
City Center Stormwater Improvement	\$6,000,000	EFC – CWSRF \$3,000,000	50%
Fallkill Creek trunk sewer rehab	\$6,200,000	-NYSDEC WQIP Grant \$3,566,800 -USEPA NYSEFC BIL Grant \$1,331,100	79%
South Ave. & Franklin St. Water Main	\$8,900,000	Congressional /HUD \$2,100,000	24%
Garden Street Bridge Replacement	\$4,300,000	DOT -\$4,094,000	95%
Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant	\$950,000	-HUD CNI Grant \$500,000 -Additional \$450,000 (Land Bank, Dyson Foundation, ARPA)	100%
Hooker Avenue Firehouse	\$1,500,000	- Congressionally Directed Spending Request \$750,000	50%

Offsetting Revenues / Summary

Offsetting Revenues

- State Sales Tax Revenue – Increase of 23% over the prior agreement with Dutchess County. \$2.6M more per year during 2023, and 2024.
 - In 2026 - 2029 share value grows from 5.41% to 5.63%. ~\$500K more during tranche two of three shared growth periods.
- Municipal Cooperation Agreement – offsets over \$800K in 2024.
- Delinquent Parking Violations – Collection Initiative - \$426K since October 2022.
- Joint Water IMA - working group between City and Town formed summer of 2024.
 - New/Improved revenues, efficiencies TBD.

Summary

- Potential 15% Tax Increase was offset by revenue initiatives and aggressive grant seeking.
- ***Combined water, sewer, sanitation, and property tax increases would cost the median \$300K homeowner \$333/year, or \$28/month.***