

# Town of Hague School Tax Advisory Committee Meeting

## July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023

The Town of Hague School Tax Advisory (STAC) Meeting was held on Friday, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023. This meeting was held in the Town of Hague Community Center, at 9793 Graphite Mountain Road, Hague, New York.

Members Present: Jack Bast (Chairman), Kathe Allen, Rolly Allen, Beth Barton-Navitsky, Peter Carney, Susan Delarm-Sandman, Linda Fusco, Amanda Peterson, Sandy Smith, and Sally Thurston.

Absent: none

Jack Bast opened the meeting at 10:00 am, followed by the pledge of allegiance.

**Introductions:** Jack noted that the selected Committee Members had been approved by the Town Board from a significant list of applicants. Jack thanked all the Members on behalf of the Board and the citizens of the Town for their willingness to serve in this important and challenging task of considering improvements to the existing Hague school tax situation.

Each Committee Member introduced themselves, sharing their background and interest in improving the school tax situation in Hague.

**Purpose and Organization:** The Committee clarified its purpose, which is to investigate and advise the Town Board on ways to improve Hague's existing school tax situation, while considering what is best for the education of the children and working in full cooperation with the Town of Ticonderoga.

### **Discussion:**

During the School Tax Advisory Committee meeting, the members engaged in a productive brainstorming session to explore potential strategies and solutions for the school tax issue. The Committee's central focus is on finding approaches that would benefit both the residents and the education of children in the community.

**Assessment Averaging:** Assessment Averaging would help avoid burdening the community with a single substantial tax increase. Instead, the tax increase could be spread out over a period of 3 or 5 years, making it more feasible for residents to handle. Peter Carney initially identified the concept which has broad Hague support and which is currently being considered by Ticonderoga. The need to emphasize Hague's support was stressed in light of implementing it in the 2023-2044 tax levy which will be set by the end of August.

**Budget for Legal Counsel:** The Committee recognized the need to explore the possibility of securing legal counsel to assist with the investigation and decision-making process. Jack Bast proposed considering local consultants to provide legal guidance.

**Data Collection:** Education Department and New York State Law: The Committee emphasized the importance of gathering data on New York State laws related to education and exploring potential strategies to lower school taxes.

**Strategies to Lower School Taxes:** The Committee brainstormed various strategies and solutions to address the high school tax issue, focusing on what is best for the residents and the education of children. Sally Smith mentioned we reach out to the League of Municipalities for guidance.

**Assessment Averaging Resolution to Hague Town Board:** Sally Thurston will draft a resolution to be presented at the Hague Town Board meeting on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Jack Bast will coordinate with the Supervisor and the Town Board. An advance copy will be provided to Ticonderoga CSD and the School Board the week of July 31<sup>st</sup> so as to stress its consideration.

**Letter to Entities :** Jack Bast shared the draft of a letter addressed to various entities that need to know about STAC, including BOCES and NYS legislators, informing them about the School Tax Advisory Committee and encouraging their support.

**Mission Statement:** The Committee finalized the Mission Statement to guide its efforts in improving the school tax situation in Hague. It reads as follows: *“The mission of the Hague School Tax Advisory Committee is to investigate and advise the Board on ways to improve Hague’s existing school tax situation. Such ways shall be based on what’s best for the education of our children and in full cooperative with the town of Ticonderoga.”* It’s recognized that the Mission Statement is subject to change as the project matures.

**Next Steps:**

- The Committee will continue to explore assessment averaging and its potential implications.
- The Committee members will conduct thorough research on school taxes and explore legal options with local consultants.
- Sally Thurston will draft the assessment averaging resolution to be presented to the Hague Town Board. Jack Bast will coordinate presentation, including advance notification to Ti CSD and the School Board.
- Jack Bast will communicate with the community and urge their attendance at the August 22nd School Board meeting.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 10 am at The Town of Hague Community Center.

**Meeting Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 11:34 am.

**Respectfully submitted by:**

Amanda Peterson, Recording Secretary