

STATE OF THE TOWN
by Supervisor Joshua Patchett

The foundation for Hague's success was, is and will always be dependent on protecting Lake George. Water quality and land conservation need to be at the heart of our focus indefinitely. Protecting the integrity of our community while simultaneously preserving our affordable housing stock I also view as non-negotiable priority items for the town. The town is changing and evolving at an alarming rate with a lot of moving pieces involved that require a delicate balanced approach to achieve our goals. I ask myself often what a successful administration looks like? The answer is subjective, however there are certain things we must we do with excellence including fiscal responsibility, staff development and maintaining strong infrastructure.

Fiscal Responsibility

In January of 2024, when I took office as your town supervisor, I also became the Chief Fiscal Officer for the town. One of my first actions was to develop an investment strategy, as I realized that we were missing out on approximately \$200,000 in interest annually, based on interest rates at the time for our \$5,000,000 of investable funds. I set up a meeting with our bank and was able to negotiate a \$55,000 retroactive interest credit. Although this was a small amount relative to what we had missed out on, it was a step in the right direction. I then put almost all our investable funds into high-yield MMDA (money market deposit accounts), and we are now actively depositing funds in CDs. Our annual yield now is around **\$200,000** based on current rates. I have consulted with qualified financial advisors to ensure our strategy is sound.

Zero Town Tax Commitment

Maintaining our long-standing tradition of no town tax requires strategic fund management. My budget analysis confirms that continued creative investment of our fund balance is essential. I encourage residents to hold me and future supervisors accountable for maintaining sound fiscal policies to sustain this commitment.

Key Achievements

- Restructured staff responsibilities and hired skilled personnel.
- Implemented a cost-saving health insurance plan benefiting employees and the town.
- Passed a short-term rental law to protect affordable housing and community character.
- Secured \$40,000 in grant funding.
- Earned the designation of a certified pro-housing community, enhancing future grant opportunities.
- Revamped the town food pantry with generous community support.
- Partnered with the Lake George Association to address sediment issues in the Hague Brook delta.
- Engaged the Warren County Planning Department to assist in securing funding for a new salt shed.

- Initiated updates to the Comprehensive Plan and planning for the new Community/Visitors Center, with a spring presentation scheduled.

Grants: Successes and Future Pursuits

While we secured \$40,000 in grants, three applications were unsuccessful. We are actively refining our approach to increase future success rates.

School Advocacy

I actively support the Hague School Advisory Committee (SAC) and its mission to advocate for quality education in Hague, Ticonderoga, and Putnam. I believe the Ticonderoga Central School District (TCSD) Board of Education (BoE) should live-stream meetings for accessibility and hold periodic sessions in Hague, given our 56% financial contribution to the district. Additionally, the superintendent should present the annual budget in Hague, and the BoE must ensure fair school tax apportionment, where they have both the discretion and authority to make limited adjustments.

Hague Volunteer Fire Department and EMS

The Hague Volunteer Fire Department (HVFD) and EMS face financial and membership challenges. My analysis confirms that HVFD is underfunded compared to similar towns. Some municipalities offer volunteer incentives like the Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) to aid recruitment and retention. I encourage residents to attend the HVFD-hosted meeting on April 2 at 5:30 pm at the community center to learn more.

Infrastructure Priorities

The Hague Town Board must ensure financial responsibility while addressing infrastructure needs, including:

- **Highway Department Building:** Upgrades needed as a priority.
- **Community/Visitors Center:** Necessary improvements must be planned with funding considerations.

Closing Thoughts

Our progress is only possible through teamwork. I appreciate my fellow board members, town employees, and the many dedicated residents of Hague. The key to success is not just the task itself, it is working together effectively and building lasting, respectful relationships.

**Sincerely,
Joshua Patchett
Town Supervisor**