

Marcellus Town Board
Workshop Meeting
Wednesday, July 15, 2026
6:30 PM

A Workshop Meeting of the Town of Marcellus, County of Onondaga, State of New York was held on Wednesday, July 15, 2026, in the Town Hall, 22 East Main Street, Marcellus, New York.

Present: Jane Attley	Supervisor
Jeff Berwald	Councilor
Percy Clarke	Councilor
Terry Hoey	Councilor
Karen Pollard	Councilor

Also Present: Mike Ossit, Highway Superintendent; Don MacLachlan, Park and Recreation Director; Linda Wilcox, Town Historian; Dave Card, Fire Department; Bobby Mayers, Fire Department; Joel McNally, Fire Department; Tom Lathrop, Bill Southern, Art and Nancy Hudson, Jim Rossiter, Marty Piper, Connor Haney, Chuck Paul, Chad Clarke, Village Mayor; Harry Lathrop, Tim Chase, William Gomez, Suzanne Tobin, Deputy Town Clerk; Rosemary Tozzi, Town Clerk.

Abstract of Audited Vouchers: The Abstract of Audited Vouchers was given to the Board Members as submitted by the Town Clerk. Abstract #7 for July 15, 2026. Claim #'s 159771-159809.

	Expense
General Fund	\$35,118.22
Part Town General	667.10
Townwide Highway	9,751.67
Part Town Highway	2,840.21
Total	\$48,377.20

Abstract of Audited Vouchers: The Abstract of Audited Vouchers was given to the Board Members as submitted by the Town Clerk. Abstract #7 for July 16, 2026. Claim #'s 159810-159819.

	Expense
General Fund	\$9,392.41
Part Town General	121.65
Total	\$9,514.06

Councilor Berwald made a motion seconded by Councilor Hoey to approve the Abstract of Audited Vouchers and pay the bills for July 15, 2026, and July 16, 2026.

Ayes –Attley, Berwald, Clarke, Hoey and Pollard

Carried

New Business:

Parks and Recreation: The Park Department is understaffed by three employees. Suzanne Tobin is working five Sundays to help with the temporary employee shortage. Don MacLachlan, Park and Recreation Director, asked for approval from the Town Board to hire Joe Barry as another temporary part-time park employee for the duration of three weeks.

Councilor Pollard made a motion seconded by Councilor Berwald to approve the appointment of Joe Barry for a three-week part-time position at the park.

Ayes –Attley, Berwald, Clarke, Hoey and Pollard

Carried

Fire Department Discussion: Dave Card thanked the Board for taking the time to discuss the topics he provided to the Board regarding the Fire Department.

Worker's Compensation Insurance Status: The Town currently provides compensation insurance for the Fire Department under its policy through Comp Alliance at a cost of \$37,580 per year. The Fire Department requested permission from the Town Board to change insurance companies if they found a less expensive policy. A quote was provided by McNeil & Company, INC, for a total cost of \$29,750, that would be a savings of \$7,830 per year. NY volunteer firefighters' insurance is statutory insurance, requiring all companies to provide the same coverage. This topic was discussed and tabled during the May 20, 2026, Workshop meeting.

Dave Card "I brought you a savings for the worker's compensation insurance back a couple months ago. The Board decided to table it until budgetary talks. I just didn't know if you guys have had any discussions, any thoughts on how you'd like to move forward with the compensation insurance for the Fire Department"

Councilor Pollard "I don't think we've decided that yet. We're still thinking"

Supervisor Attley "Yeah, it had been discussed at one of the meetings. I don't think you were here at that particular meeting."

Dave Card "Do you guys ever meet and talk about stuff besides just coming to these meetings?"

Supervisor Attley "No"

Supervisor Attley "It had come up in one of the meetings that it wouldn't be good to change in the middle of the year. We thought it would be better to save it until budget time, and during the budget talks we could make those decisions if it was good to change the insurance or stick with what you're currently using, and what's best for the town."

Town and Village Parcel Difference between MAVES and the Fire Department: There are 9 parcels on the Town's Assessment roll that currently are being assessed for MAVES services but are not being fully assessed for Fire Department services. This discrepancy amounts to 23 million in assessed value. Councilor Pollard and Dave Card discussed this matter with Mr. Lowe, the Town Assessor, and Mr. Lowe is currently looking into the issue. It was not clear to Mr. Lowe how this could have happened, and he suggested that it would take some time for him to do historical research regarding the subject properties.

Contractual Budget: Dave presented the Town Board with the proposed 2027 Fire Department budget. The budget will be discussed during the 2027 budget meetings. Those dates will be set during the August meetings; all meetings are open to the public.

Dave Card informed the Board that this is the same budget that he has presented to the Board for the last 2 years. However, this one looks a little different than 2025's budget because we moved some stuff around. We took a portion of money and put it back into the truck reserve. He asked if the Town Board

will have a problem with the Fire Department transferring money to a reserve account at the end of the year if they have a good year with funds remaining?

Councilor Clarke stated that, he for one, would not have a problem with an end of the year transfer under those circumstances.

Dave Card asked if the Board felt that over the last few years the Fire Department has met its goals or met your goals with documentation, audits, and all the reporting that goes along with our budgetary money.

Councilor Clarke said that as far as monthly, you're turning in with your financials every month to the Town Clerk, that's been good.

Councilor Berwald mentioned that the audit is not as detailed as it has been in past years. It lacks details and the breakdown of expenses. He questioned why the building was being listed as a depreciable asset in the audit for the Fire Department, seeing as the Town owns the building.

Tax Rate for the Fire Department: The Marcellus Fire Department's current tax rate is \$0.86 per thousand. The Fire Department is going to request an increase in the tax rate to an even dollar per thousand. The average tax rate across all of Onondaga County is \$2.35. The range of rates is \$0.49 per thousand to \$4.71 per thousand. That would generate an additional \$75,000 in funding that the Fire Department wants to earmark for the Equipment and Apparatus fund.

Councilor Hoey explained that that would require the Town Board to change how we budget. We don't start with a tax rate; we end up with a tax rate. And it's driven by the budget and the tax base. So, we start with the tax rate that comes from the budget as it's applied to the tax base. We never start with what the rate is, we end up with the rate. So that would be asking us to switch how we budget.

Equipment and Apparatus Fund: **Dave Card**, The Fire Department is requesting an increase in the equipment and apparatus fund from \$85,000 a year to \$160,000 a year. That's an increase of \$75,000. The difference would come from the increase in the tax rate from \$0.86 per thousand to \$1.00 per thousand.

Fire trucks have gone up by 65% since 2020 and every year, they're going up by 3 to 6%. When we talk about apparatus in our community and what our needs are, it all comes back to talking about technology and safety factors. Safety factors for the firefighters, and safety factors for our community and residents. Using an aerial truck in this community for a second story or roof, using it on a dairy farm on silos, bins, and manure pits. I don't know if people think about this, but that truck can go 100 feet in the air, but it can also go 100 feet downhill. It has the capability to stretch across a manure pit, or pond, and be used in an ice situation where we can get to someone safely with that. It can be a lifesaving tool in many situations.

This is why the Fire Department is looking to increase the tax rate and move forward with a replacement program to upgrade equipment and apparatus. If the tax rate was increased from \$0.86 to \$1.00 it would cost the taxpayer about \$22.50 per year based on the average home cost in Marcellus of \$150,000. We all need to come to a common ground on getting financial support. Any way you look at it, the \$75,000 the Fire Department is requesting is not going to cover a \$1.8 or \$1.9 million aerial truck.

Supervisor Attley, "A fire department out of Albany recently purchased an engine that was going to cost \$1.7 million, but they found it for a million. The truck was originally built for a Canadian fire department

that then could not afford it because of the tariffs. So, this fire department ended up getting approved for \$1.2 million and were able to get the vehicle outfitted with extra seats, the colors, and radios. They saved a lot of money. Is this something that could be investigated?"

Dave Card said that there is a lot of fire apparatus equipment that comes out of Canada and into the United States due to the steel manufacturing plants in Canada. There are multiple ways that our department could save money. We presented a vehicle to you guys that was in the process of being built, and that was a savings. It was coming off the line as a demo.

Councilor Clarke, "Is leasing an option?"

Dave Card, when you talk about leasing, leasing comes with finance charges. I try not to finance anything in business. I don't think it's good practice. I don't think it's good practice when you're dealing with the community's money. The Fire Department would have to secure a 5-year loan on this piece of equipment, and it would be completely paid for and payment free for the next 20 to 25 years. The Fire Department needs support from the Town to move forward with a program. The Fire Department has talked about reducing our fleet of trucks in Marcellus. If we were to look at reducing our fleet from 4 custom pieces of apparatus to 3 custom pieces of apparatus, and you would bring a commercial application in because there's needs to the fire service and it really comes back to water. There's still places in our fire district that don't have any hydrants. We need to bring the water to them. We're trying to blend our equipment in and have the resources that we need. We want to reduce our tax load to the community in the future.

Councilor Berwald, "You were just talking about financing a truck for 5 years and making payments on it. Where does that money come from?"

Dave Card, "It would be coming out of our reserve fund."

Councilor Berwald, "If you keep pulling from the truck reserve, it's never going to grow."

Dave Card, "We got to this point because of the lack of funding. That is why we're requesting \$160,000 from the Town of Marcellus. We also have a contract with the Town of Skaneateles for Shepherd Settlement. So, we would be putting \$180,000 a year into the truck reserve, if our contract gets approved. A 5-year loan on \$500,000 because we will be short, between \$500,000 to \$700,000 to take possession of the aerial truck. Interest on \$500,000 is around 5.79%. The payment would be \$118,000 a year for 5 years. We would still have the remainder of that funding to go towards future purchases. When the Fire Department gets a commitment from the Town to move forward with purchasing a replacement aerial truck the Fire Department will put the current aerial truck on the market. The Fire Department will also investigate grants and fundraising to help offset the cost. It would be a two-year period between the purchase and receiving the truck. "

Miscellaneous Discussion: **Dave Card** asked if the Board had any questions regarding the topics discussed so far or regarding the corporation account, the use of donation funds and/or income from the land across the street

Councilor Hoey, "Is there something you want to talk about?"

Dave Card stated that he was only asking because he hears that it is a topic that is being discussed. He wants to address any concerns directly and he is prepared to share any related financial details the Board may have.

Councilor Berwald asked why the audit doesn't show any corporate funds or related account balances.

Dave Card, "Do you want to know the current balances?"

Councilor Berwald said no but mentioned that it should be listed in the yearly audit.

Dave Card agreed that it should be included in the audit. There is an Agway account for the land across the street. Any donations that the Fire Department receives go directly to whatever cause it is designated for. The Fire Department has a breakdown of all donations that can be provided to the Town Board if they would like it. Our end goal is to have adequate equipment and maintain a serviceability level for this community.

Councilor Clarke offered that as the liaison for the Fire Department, Dave and I have discussed these topics in the past. Dave's phone is always on so you can reach him to discuss any concerns.

Councilor Hoey gave an example of how budget matters are being handled. He related that Rose Tozzi, the Town Clerk and I have investigated updating the Town's website but due to the cost have put that project on hold. The Town Board has a sense of being responsible with the budget. In terms of Dave's first question regarding transferring remaining money into a reserve account at the end of the year it's a balance. The Town wants to do that too but fundamentally if the Town is constantly doing that it means that we are overtaxing the community. It's just a piece to the overall puzzle.

Dave Card said that the Fire Department is trying to work with the community. We have raised money that is being put back into the Town's building, A generator was installed and recently new tables and chairs were purchased.

Councilor Clarke mentioned that there is a difference between wants and needs. The Town needs to make sure that all departments have what they need to do their job. We need to make sure the Fire Department has what it needs to maintain the safety of its members and our community and do their job to the best of their ability.

Supervisor Attley asked if any audience members had any questions for Dave or the Fire Department.

Camillus Resident, Nancy Hudson, stated that having a plan is the best thing for the community.

Adjournment: Councilor Clarke made a motion seconded Councilor Berwald to adjourn the Meeting at 7:20 PM.

Ayes –Attley, Berwald, Clarke, Hoey and Pollard

Carried

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary Tozzi
Town Clerk