



**THOMAS P. DiNAPOLI**  
COMPTROLLER

STATE OF NEW YORK  
**OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER**  
110 STATE STREET  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12236

**ELLIOTT AUERBACH**  
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER  
DIVISION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
AND SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY  
Tel: (518) 474-4037 Fax: (518) 486-6479

May 2021

Ms. Judi Bosworth, Supervisor  
Members of the Town Board  
Town of North Hempstead  
220 Plandome Road  
Manhasset, NY 11030

Report Number: S9-21-12

Dear Supervisor Bosworth and Members of the Town Board:

The COVID-19 pandemic (pandemic) has had various levels of impact on the financial operations of local governments across New York State. Some local governments have seen little to no impact on their financial operations, while others have seen more significant impacts due to reductions and/or increases to their revenues and/or expenditures. This has led to some local governments having to reduce or eliminate some services and temporarily or permanently reduce staff positions. In addition, some local officials have decided to delay capital projects, which could result in future delays to other projects to maintain and improve local government infrastructures.

The pandemic has also created a difficult environment for officials to develop annual budgets given the unknowns of future financial impacts. The pandemic increases the need for local officials to more closely monitor their budgeted estimates for revenues and expenditures against actual results and modify their budgetary estimates accordingly, when warranted, during the course of their fiscal year.

To assess whether local officials adequately considered the impact of the pandemic on their financial operations while developing their 2021 fiscal year budgets, our office conducted reviews of 20 adopted budgets of various counties, cities, towns and villages across the State. The Town of North Hempstead (Town) is one of the local governments included in our review.

The objective of the review was to provide an independent evaluation of certain aspects of the adopted budget. Our review addressed the following question related to the Town's adopted budget for the 2021 fiscal year:

- Did officials adequately assess the impact of the pandemic on financial operations while developing estimates for significant revenues and expenditures in the 2021 adopted budget?

## **Summary of Findings**

Our review found that officials adequately assessed the impact of the pandemic on financial operations while developing estimates for significant revenues and expenditures in the 2021 adopted budget.

However, in consideration of the continually new and evolving impacts caused by the pandemic, Town officials should carefully monitor their budgeted to actual revenues and expenditures and make amendments to the budget as needed throughout the year.

## **Methodology**

To accomplish our objective in this review, we requested your adopted budget and other pertinent information. We interviewed officials and reviewed the adopted budget to gain an understanding of the budget development process and to determine whether any estimates in the adopted budget were adjusted by officials due to the potential impact the pandemic could have on financial operations. We identified and examined for reasonableness significant estimated revenues and expenditures<sup>1</sup> and estimated revenues and expenditures below our established threshold that could more likely be impacted by the pandemic. We also identified any significant new revenue or expenditure estimates, made appropriate inquiries and reviewed supporting documentation to assess whether the estimates were realistic and reasonable. In addition, we evaluated the amount of fund balance and/or reserves appropriated in the adopted budget to be used as a financing source and determined whether these amounts were available and sufficient for that purpose.

The scope of our review does not constitute an audit under generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS). We do not offer comments or make specific recommendations on public policy decisions, such as the type and level of services under consideration to be provided.

## **Background**

The Town is located in Nassau County. An elected seven-member Town Board (Board), composed of the Town Supervisor (Supervisor) and six Board members, is responsible for the general oversight of the Town's operations and finances. As the budget officer for the Town, the Supervisor requests estimates from department heads to use in the preparation of the tentative budget. Once the Supervisor prepares the tentative budget, it is presented to the Board. The Board makes any necessary revisions to the tentative budget and prepares the preliminary budget. The Town holds a public hearing on the preliminary budget and then makes any necessary final revisions prior to adopting the budget.

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<sup>1</sup> For this review, we established significant estimated revenues and expenditures to be those consisting of 5 percent or more of a fund's total budget estimates.

The Town’s operating funds consist of a town-wide general fund, part-town general fund, part-town highway fund and 20 Town-operated special districts. The special districts consist of a water district, a lighting district, a parking district, a sidewalk district, four park districts, five refuse and garbage districts and seven fire protection districts. The Town provides various services to its residents, including maintaining and improving Town roads, snow removal, public improvements, planning and zoning, recreation and cultural activities, garbage collection and general governmental support. The Town’s operations are predominately financed by real property taxes, sales tax, mortgage tax and charges for services.

Following are the 2021 adopted budget figures, broken down by funds, along with the 2020 adopted budget total for all funds for comparative purposes.

<b>Figure 1: 2021 Adopted Budget</b>				
<b>Fund</b>	<b>Appropriations and Provisions for Other Uses</b>	<b>Financing Sources</b>		
		<b>Estimated Revenues</b>	<b>Appropriated Fund Balance</b>	<b>Real Property Taxes</b>
Town-Wide General	\$71,117,284	\$41,414,145	\$3,655,839	\$26,047,300
Part-Town General	12,892,513	6,561,753	267,115	6,063,645
Part-Town Highway	26,374,872	4,152,675	937,622	21,284,575
Water	63,706	7,687	1,500	54,519
Lighting	2,445,705	214,596	0	2,231,109
Parking	1,258,050	919,305	0	338,745
Sidewalk	3,183,129	353,466	0	2,829,663
Park (4)	3,450,566	482,533	25,000	2,943,033
Refuse and Garbage (5)	9,695,639	193,665	27,500	9,474,474
Fire Protection (7)	7,608,642	723,449	70,000	6,815,193
<b>Total for 2021</b>	<b>\$138,090,106</b>	<b>\$55,023,274</b>	<b>\$4,984,576</b>	<b>\$78,082,256</b>
<b>Total for 2020</b>	<b>\$135,522,662</b>	<b>\$58,655,690</b>	<b>\$274,825</b>	<b>\$76,592,147</b>

Our review found that while developing 2021 budgetary estimates for significant revenues and expenditures, Town officials adequately considered the pandemic’s impact on financial operations. If you have any questions on the scope of our work, please feel free to contact Julie Landcastle, Chief Examiner of the Statewide and Regional Projects Unit, at (607) 721-8306.

Sincerely,

Elliott Auerbach  
Deputy Comptroller

cc: Tania Orenstein, CPA, Town Comptroller  
Wayne H. Wink, Jr., Town Clerk  
Ira McCracken, Regional Chief Examiner