

- 5. Public Hearing:** To fix and determine the rates, rentals, fees or other charges for the use or availability of facilities and services of Rockland Green for the year 2024

Phillips: Mr. Director of Finance, would you like to give a brief presentation?

Goldstein: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The proposed 2024 budget that is on today's agenda for your consideration that was presented to the Budget Committee on October 11, includes an approximate \$5.35 increase per household over the 2023 budget which amounts to 1.6%.

Phillips: A total of \$5.35 per household. That is good.

Goldstein: On the user fees the green waste unit charge increases from \$43.21 in last year's budget to \$44.03. The same tonnage is assumed we just have contractual pricing increases. The household hazardous waste unit charge is decreasing from \$12.70 to \$12.65 in this year's budget, as we see lower activity post Covid. Some of the HHW activity has come down. The transfer station unit charge is decreasing from \$23.63 in last year's budget to \$17.13 in the 2024 budget and this is a result of the increase to municipal tip fee that we have been alerting the municipalities for about five years or so. The municipal tip fee is going from \$76 a ton to \$99 a ton. Without this increase the user fee would have gone up to \$45.27 which would have been a 91% increase over last year's budget. The materials recovery facility unit charge is increasing from \$37.86 in the 2023 budget to \$41.90 in the 2024 budget as we see the new operator SIMS at our new state-of-the-art recycling facility in Hillburn. The cocomposting unit charge is increasing from \$18.97 last year to \$19.87 in the 2024 budget. This is just contractual pricing increases. The animal management unit charge is decreasing from \$19.23 on the tax bill last year to \$19.05 in the 2024 budget. On the ad valorem some of the increases are the debt service payments as some series had some balloon payments. Credit card charges have increased as we see more activity at the scales. Insurance premiums have come up and legal expenses are forecasted to increase as well.

Phillips: We are doing a very good job, and we are very lean for 2024. I want to thank all the Commissioners, the staff, the Executive Director and Director of Finance, Jeremy for doing a great job as usual and keeping the budget nice and tight and lean.

Phillips: Is there anyone in the public that would like to bring anything before the Board regarding the budget: Since there is no public comment, do we have a motion to close the public hearing?

Kenny: Moved

Yeger: Seconded

Damiani: Just one. Not to exceed the purchase price of \$132,193.40.

10. **Introduced by: Foley/Kohut**

Unan.

November 2, 2023

**RESOLUTION NO. 72 OF 2023
AUTHORIZING APPROVAL OF A-TECH
CHANGE ORDER NO. 1 (RFP 2023-01)
FOR LEACHATE COLLECTION IMPROVEMENTS
AT THE HAVERSTRAW TRANSFER STATION**

Damiani: As the Commissioners are aware, A-Tech was selected and approved by the Board to do the leachate improvements at the Haverstraw facility. Coincidentally, the annual tip floor inspection report was completed at the same time as required by special conditions found in the Haverstraw NYSDEC operating permit. It made sense to request a price quote from A-Tech and they did provide pricing to repair the deficiencies of the tip floor in the amount of \$30,850.

Phillips: It is always important. Leachate if anybody knows if the DEC finds rainwater or any type of water in the garbage, it then becomes leachate. We have to ensure that it is collected and put into the wastewater treatment plant and then disbursed.

11. Tabled

12. **New Business**

Phillips: Mr. Executive Director, do we have any new business?

Damiani: Selection of senior management underwriter.

Goldstein: We are going to bring on, with the Board's approval, Bank of America as an underwriter for some bonding we are hoping to do in the near future for our future shelter in Haverstraw.

Phillips: It is a proforma resolution that you need any time you may be bonding any money.

Goldstein: Yes. We worked with Bank of America as the underwriter on our Materials Recovery Facility deal. They know our structure and essentially how financially stable and sound we are. They made a good presentation to us and we are going to be bringing them back on for the next offering.

Introduced By: Monaghan/Specht

Unan.

November 2, 2023

**RESOLUTION NO. 73 OF 2023
SELECTION OF SENIOR MANAGING UNDERWRITER**

Damiani: The next resolution is seeking to cancel the November 16, 2023 Board meeting.

Introduced: Kohut/Soskin

Unan.

November 2, 2023

**RESOLUTION NO. 74 OF 2023
CANCELATION OF NOVEMBER 16, 2023 MEETING**

Phillips: Is there anything else to bring before the Board?

Damiani: An update to the Board we completed our third feral trap neuter vaccinate and release event today. We have had three of them so far for 2023 and the last event is December 27, 2023. To date we have trapped neutered and vaccinated over 203 feral cats.

Phillips: That is excellent. You are doing a great job. We are doing these events at our facility on Ecology Lane in the Town of Haverstraw. It really demonstrates our aggressiveness going out there and trying to really overcome this feral cat population. When we do this, not only are we vaccinating we are putting a marking to detect that they were vaccinated.

Damiani: They get a unique tattoo, and they also get their ear clipped.

13. Commissioner's Comment

No Comments offered

14. Public Comment

Phillips: is there anyone from the public that would like to bring anything before the Board?

Rick Tannenbaum: I am from Valley Cottage. As you know I am not the Executive Director of Hi-Tor anymore, but I still have inside information. I have been getting information that I am finding a little disturbing and I thought I would come to the source and see if you can verify it. I have recently been told that I understand the shelter is at capacity for dogs and that a couple of the dogs have been listed for possible euthanization to create space or because of their behavior, Carlo, Hudson and Honey. I thought that wasn't going to be the policy for the shelter. I was a bit taken aback and surprised by that and I just want to clarify and get your assurance that Rockland County is not converting back to this for space.

Phillips: Not that I am aware, Jerry?

Damiani: No. We are looking to follow the same guidelines from Best Friends Animal Society which recently had awarded Hi-Tor an award and posted it on their social media page in 2022 as a no-kill shelter.

Phillips: Now that you asked that question, who is telling you this?

Rick Tannenbaum: I'd rather not share that with you. What I also heard is that cats have been taken to veterinarians to be euthanized.

Phillips: You are saying cats are being taken to veterinarians to be euthanized?

Rick Tannenbaum: Yes, that is what I heard.

Damiani: Not that I am aware of. If it is a healthy cat, it is not euthanized.

Phillips: No healthy cats are being euthanized. All we ever did were those that were severely sick and in pain.

Rick Tannenbaum: I have seen postings asking for plastic bins, food and donations and I know when Hi-Tor was operating they only used half the money that was allocated for Hi-Tor's operations. I was just wondering \$1.4 million was allocated originally, why are they looking for donations and supplies from the public when there should be lots of money left over.

Phillips: It would be my own personal belief that if people want to donate and we don't have to use taxpayer money I am way in favor of that. I am sure we are looking at donations and making sure they are appropriate. But I would encourage anybody that would like to donate anything. People that are moving donate supplies.

Rick Tannenbaum: I am talking about the solicitation of the donations.

Phillips: Isn't that a good thing if we don't have to go to the taxpayer all the time?

Rick Tannenbaum: I pay my taxes to outfit the shelter.

Phillips: We have about \$160,000 that we think is outstanding that we still have to get back from Hi-Tor that money belongs to the taxpayer and that money has to come back. We are running an excellent operation. The operation is going extremely well. At the same time, we are aggressively going after the feral cat population. I was thinking you were going to come up here tonight and compliment us on what we have been doing.

Rick Tannenbaum: I wish I could do that, but I have also heard employees are walking out and employees are being fired.

Phillips: That is not true.

Arlene Kahn: I am the administrator of the Rockland County Cat Parents page and former administrator of the Town of Ramapo Community page. I have said my peace. I said it is the most horrible location. I said that the money situation does not add up and I know what I have said is not going to change things. The present shelter location could be a marvelous and wonderful location for the shelter, and it has been for a very long time. That being said there is some confusion in the public and I am pretty adapted to public relations. In the past the 501C3 named Hi-Tor was also named the animal shelter they were one in the same. Now things are a little different, we have Rockland Green CARES that is being run by a 501C3 Four Legs Good. There is a bit of confusion in the public and I would like you to consider a couple of things to clear that up. If you would consider two things, make a Rockland Green CARES logo for the shelter.

Phillips: That is exactly what we are doing.

Damiani: We have the signs made.

Phillips: They will be up shortly.

Arlene Kahn: I think you guys would really benefit from a Rockland Green Facebook page.

Phillips: We are working on that.

Arlene Kahn: So, people know the shelter is Rockland Green CARES being run by Four Legs Good.

Nixie Gueits: I am from New City. I do want to thank Rockland Green for their faith and confidence in Four Legs Good to move forward in operating the shelter. It has been seamless in all our programs. We had a massive cleanup that we were faced with. We are looking at other programs, but the building is certainly still being completely disinfected. We are almost done with everything and then we can start working with the community which is something we are really looking forward to. I do want to respond to Rick Tannenbaum's comments. He was talking about euthanasia. One of the dogs that you listed, Hudson, just went to a local rescue. He has a bite history. It is a very reputable rescue, and we are very confident that that dog will be properly cared for the rest of his life and not placed in a cage. There are a lot of misconceptions out there about sanctuaries and rescues. I know personally that some rescues are a fate worse than death for a lot

of these animals. Some of these places take a high sanctuary fee and the animal is just thrown into a cage and that is where it lives for the rest of its life. I have seen these places, and it is not a kind place. I can tell you that this one dog Hudson just went to a rescue, and he is safe, and he is fine.

Phillips: Where do you think they are getting their false information?

Nixie Gueits: Mr. Tannenbaum was correct in one of his statements. An employee was fired. They were a Hi-Tor employee, and it is very possible that this person that was fired a few days ago is the person and was a dog person. Very possible that person is feeding him information.

Phillips: When they were fired, were they fired for good reasons?

Nixie Gueits: Yes. This is a new work ethic. Everybody has to be cross-trained; everybody needs to know a lot of jobs. There was a lot of smoking going on. It is County property, and you are not allowed to smoke on County property. That wouldn't stop and a lot of breaks to smoke. It was a behavior that was not changing. We also have to work as a team. If you can't be part of a team, you can't work there.

Kohut: My understanding of local shelters is that there are times when it is appropriate and necessary to put an animal down for their own good or public safety.

Nixie Gueits: Absolutely. I have been to Best Friends shelter conferences myself and Michael. Some of the people currently working at the shelter now have also gone. They absolutely do allow for euthanasia in the event that a dog is deemed to be a dangerous dog.

Phillips: I want to make it clear that we haven't done that with any cats or dogs.

Nixie Gueits: The only cats that were euthanized were the cats stricken with panleukopenia which is the disease we walked into on the first day. We recognized immediately that these animals were sick. A total of ten of them passed away. A few were euthanized and some died on their own. We do have a very generous budget thanks to Rockland Green. However, there are some instances where we would like to spend possibly a little bit more money on an animal. For example, Marge just gave us a number of donations that she has solicited herself. There was a cat that was living on shelter property that had an injured paw where the bone was exposed. No one bothered to trap it. The trappers on the shelter property now trapped it and we brought it in. These are the cases where we would ask for donations even though we have a generous budget.

Phillips: I don't think any of the Commissioners see anything wrong with people donating. It is a wonderful thing.

Nixie Gueits: People are always asking, what can we do. Rick was right, the budget for the food is very generous and we were hoping to be able to go forward and say well if we need a little bit more for medical, we can take it from the food side. That is why we do ask for donations.

Phillips: I find it amazing that somebody would come here and question us when we had your organization take over, we literally had food stolen, records displaced, supplies taken, and dogs and cats went missing. No records have been given to us and we are still waiting for I believe

approximately \$160,000. I don't understand why anybody is coming here asking us these really outrageous questions and not taking a look at what was going on. It is hard to look in the mirror I understand that, but sometimes that is what you have to do.

Nixie Gueits: One more thing, we're having an issue with backyard breeders. We were told that New York State is no longer going to allow the selling of rabbits and New York City and now we have this influx of small animals coming into the shelter. Sixteen rabbits were just surrendered a few days ago and it is going to get worse. I would like everyone to give thought to their own specific towns and consider a ban on breeding these animals because we will ultimately be carrying that burden.

Damiani: I just want to clarify, Rockland Green never solicited for any donations.

Hoehmann: I want to thank the staff for doing a great job with our food scrap recycling program. It kicked off less than two weeks ago. Guy, Izzy, and Suzanne and did a great kickoff. There were 340 bins distributed in less than two weeks. We only had 500 bins to start we will be out of them pretty quickly.

Damiani: I have another 1,000 being delivered next week.

Hoehmann: Hopefully, we can go county-wide, and we had really great support from Jerry and the entire team.

Marge Hook: I would like to know who allowed somebody from Hi-Tor to go on the property and take inventory and things they stole from the shelter.

Damiani: We did allow the co-president of Hi-Tor to visit the shelter to do an inventory because they claimed that they had over \$205,000 worth of equipment on site.

Phillips: Did they take any of the equipment that they claimed was theirs?

Damiani: Nothing was taken.

Marge Hook: They already had taken stuff. As far as the Executive Director is concerned, he should be arrested. He stole time and he is working at a real estate company in Rye Brook. You should get his time sheets from that company and make him pay back to the shelter every dime that he stole. The woman they call the dirty cop was paid \$40 an hour and took a dog to either North Carolina or Georgia to a no-kill shelter, supposedly, where the South is sending dogs other places because of the overload. The Executive Director, former thank God, just talked about how well the animals were taken care of. What about the cats where the doors were open, and they were let out of their cages. They are still running around up there and thank God for Michael; he's bringing them back in one by one and taking care of them.

Phillips: Don't forget the air quality in some of those containers those cats were in.

Marge Hook: The 501C3 cannot be taken away from them. That is something we should look into and have them no longer be a 501C3. They came back and stole signs and also where are the

dogs and the cats that they took from the shelter. Where are they being housed? I really think that the Executive Director has to return all the money that he got as pay when he was never at the shelter. That has been verified by former employees that he was never there. Hi-Tor under Don and Ken was very well run with a very small budget.

Phillips: Here's the good news, that is in the past. As I said before, we are on the bus now and we are heading down the road and you are on the bus with us, and we want more people to get on the bus with us because we are going to build the best animal shelter that Rockland County has ever seen. I think people are going to be extremely pleased and very happy and they are going to know they can go there and adopt a kitten, cat or dog and not have to worry about it. We have staff and professionalism that are overseeing everything, and we will run a shelter that Rockland County has never seen before, and the people will be very pleased.

Marge Hook: You have to take care of the problem with Hi-Tor. They should not be able to carry that name forward.

Phillips: Is there anyone else in the public that would like to speak? Since there are no other public comments, do we have a motion to adjourn?

Yeger: Moved

Jobson: Seconded

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Haggerty