

# Gloves Off in Battle for Budget Debate in Putnam Sheriff's Office Southeast Heats Up

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-where he was later found innocent--that left him sitting in jail for a year.

Smith also came under fire last week after a LoHud investigation revealed that Smith, over several months, sent letters to the FBI, U.S. Attorney's Office, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, state Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and Gov. Andrew Cuomo pleading they investigate and arrest Levy for unethical behavior and harboring an illegal immigrant.

"These letters were all based on what Smith now admits were lies," Langley said. "As a West Point Cadet, Smith swore an oath that he would not 'lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do'; Smith has violated that oath, over, and over, and over again."

He argued that Smith, who is running for re-election, has grotesquely abused his power as Sheriff.

"If Smith is willing to lie to arrest a sitting district attorney, he is willing to lie to arrest you or me," Langley said.

When reached for comment, Smith didn't back down. He said his focus has remained on keeping the county safe.

"This is a manufactured effort to create a controversy where none exists. My opponent, without first hand knowledge, can make assumptions, conclusions, and innuendos that are plain and simple just not true and he doesn't have to make corrections to his statements," Smith said in a statement. "Each and every day I strive to provide the truth and if I later learn new information, I make the correction. My opponent wants to divert attention from the fact that I have provided leadership that has helped keep Putnam, the county with the lowest crime rate in New York State, for the past several years."

Residents, who surrounded Langley with signs saying, "Smith is a criminal,"



DAVID PROPPER PHOTO

Sheriff Don Smith.

and, "Langley returning integrity," expressed their anger with Smith's conduct stating that it's time for a change.

Cold Spring resident Candace Cole said she is outraged that taxpayers are paying for the unethical actions of an elected official, stating that he should dip into his retirement fund to cover his own legal fees. Mahopac resident Baila Lemonik even referred to Smith as a "felon" even though Smith has never been charged or convicted of anything.

"It makes me nervous to have a sheriff who was not telling the truth and would lie under oath," Lemonik alleged.

While several criticized Smith's actions, supporters praised the retired county sheriff's investigator for the integrity he will bring to department if elected.

"I believe that he believes in the spirit of the law and ethics," said Cold Spring resident Eileen Caulfield, who applauded Langley on the work he's done combating the opioid crisis. "I think that with so many dirty politicians, he's a breath of fresh air."

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said.

But town board members said the tax increase being sought was excessive. Councilwoman Elizabeth Hudak said the town budget for 2018 must stay within the tax cap. Hudak said there are various areas in the budget that have not been spent this year, but the supervisor is seeking to fund those lines in 2018 regardless.

"We don't have to bust the tax cap," Hudak said.

Hudak questioned if the town needed the \$1.9 million in the fund balance while Hay is proposing a significant tax increase. If the 2018 budget is not changed, "I will vote against it," she said.

Hay defended his budget, arguing it would be unwise to cut many budget lines because the funding may be needed in the future and if those funds were not available that would lead to higher taxes.

Hay also said the state comptroller's office advises municipalities to maintain a fund balance of at least

10 percent of its annual budget. The current fund balance is \$100,000 above that 10 percent mark, he said.

Hudak was not impressed with Hay's comments.

"We have to tighten our belt," she said.

Councilman Robert Cullen also said the board needed to look for spending reductions in next year's budget. For example, not sending out a town flyer could save between \$6,000 and \$7,000.

"We just have to look at every line," Cullen said.

Hay said it would not be easy to meet the tax cap next year. To meet the cap, spending would need to be cut by \$550,000 from what he is proposing, Hay said.

Councilwoman Lynne Eckardt also said the board needed to examine the proposed budget and seek reductions to hold taxes down.

The town board agreed to meet with heads of town government departments in an effort to seek ways to reduce spending.

The deadline to approve the 2018 budget is Nov. 20.

## Supervisors, Odell at Odds Over Shared Services Plan

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existent," Hay said, and it's "not even close to being true" that the towns didn't have interest in shared services.

He said town leadership would continue to meet and work toward possibly three shared services goals by the 2018 deadline.

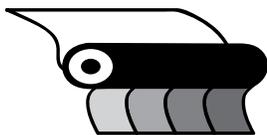
"Don't blame the supervisors why it's not moving forward," Hay said. "We're

going to do our job and hopefully the county will do theirs."

Odell said she believes politics is at play with some criticism directed at her from some supervisors.

"They sent us a letter at that time telling us they weren't prepared," Odell said. "At no time am I blocking this (shared services) concept."

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