

**TOWN OF WESTFORD**

**TOWN BOARD MEETING**

**April 11, 2022**

At 7:01 p.m., the Westford Town Board meeting was called to order.

Town Board members present: Supervisor Walter Heinrich, Councilman James Feil, Councilman Ralph Ritton, Councilman Robert Huntington, Councilman Steve Zerby.

Other Town Officials present: Highway Superintendent Jason Ritton, Assessor Pamela Dyn-Gohde, Judge Michael Fay, Town Clerk Eileen Ten Eyck

Sign-in sheet on file at Town Clerk Office.

Pledge of Alliance was recited.

Corrections (typo's) were made to March 2022 minutes.

Motion by Councilman Huntington to accept minutes as amended, seconded by Councilman Ritton. Unanimous ayes.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

1). Supervisor Heinrich met with Mr. Johnson (OEC) regarding the company's tax amount dispute. OEC's contention is they are paying too much, Town Assessor, Pam Dyn-Gohde, went over again the amount of reduction she offered and why. This will be discussed later in the meeting.

2). Supervisor Heinrich composed a new Dog Law that has been discussed in previous meetings and will become Local Law #2 if signed by the Board who received an electronic copy prior to the meeting.

3). Highway Superintendent Ritton submitted a bill in the amount of \$108,422.32 for the 2022 John Deere backhoe delivered the first week in April. Funds are being covered by CHIP, Highway Improvement and Pave NY money. Supervisor Heinrich will make the payment.

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

1). Susquehanna SPCA is looking for a donation from the town. We pay them a contractual amount and with the budget being tight, no additional funds will be given.

2). Comptroller's Office- No income/no return for Justice Fay for the month of February 2022.

3). Comptroller's Officer- \$475.00 was taken in by Justice Fay in March 2022 and the State is looking for \$245.00, the rest will go to the Town.

4). US Census Bureau- Westford needed to update our census paperwork. Supervisor Heinrich had to provide incomes for all elected officials and employees and has submitted this to the Census Bureau.

5). Certification from the Associations of Towns that Westford is officially registered as a town and we have complied with all the requirements they needed.

6). There is a two day financial school in Albany in May 2022 if any Board members are interested in attending. There is a \$300 fee to attend.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

1). Pam Dyn-Gohde provided information to the Board from Milford, Worcester, Cherry Valley and Schenevus School Districts for fiber optics payments for a comparison regarding OEC tax payment breakdowns. OEC pays tax amounts to the school districts in the amounts of \$679 Worcester, \$608 Milford \$159 Cherry Valley and \$4,816 Schenevus. The differences in amounts occur based on the amount of fiber optics in each area. This issue is going to litigation. The tax amounts are set and provided by New York State Telecommunications, the negotiations of reductions are done with the Town's Assessor who offered a 40% reduction. OEC is requesting a reduction to 0% and the Town's Assessor explained the reduction she offered and why she felt this was fair. As a counter-point a community member offered that the services offered by OEC were not offered by any other company and was a welcomed service by those who received it and maybe a further reduction would be warranted.

Motion by Supervisor Heinrich to table this issue until the issue comes before Tax Grievance Day and put it on the agenda for the June 2022 meeting, seconded by Councilman Zerby. Unanimous ayes.

2). Town Historical meeting will be on April 25, 2022 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Meetings are held the fourth Monday of April, June, August and October. This will be the first meeting in two years due to the pandemic.

3). Otsego County Worker's Compensation report was completed - \$48,682.00 worth of salaries have been paid in the first 3 months of the year.

4). Transfer Station- options for the transfer station have been discussed at previous meetings. Supervisor Heinrich submitted the following options which included keeping the Transfer Station as is (with the understanding that equipment is failing and will eventually cease to operate), leasing a compactor (\$350 per month for rental and \$250 for every trip they dump) and two days of service, leasing a compactor with one day of service. Supervisor Heinrich is recommending that a bid is put out for a year with an options of a six month extension. ARPA funds could be used to upgrade the electrical service. The current garbage truck would be put up for sale to absorb some of the additional costs that will be incurred. All Board Members were in favor of putting this out for bid and all chose Option 2 which is a lease with two days of service.

Motion by Supervisor Heinrich that the Town put out a bid for a one-year lease with the option of a six month extension for a 35 yard compactor to be put in the Daily Star, seconded by Councilman Zerby. Unanimous ayes.

5. The complaints regarding the resident failing to clean up after his dog continue to come in and there is now a proposal for Local Law #2 for the Town of Westford that says in sum and substance that dog owners will be held responsible for their dogs including seizure, poor behavior, failure to curb etc. and owners may be fined. Fines will begin at \$25 for the initial offense and \$50 for subsequent offences.

Motion by Supervisor Heinrich proposed Law #2 of 2022 for the regulation and dog control in the Town of Westford as amended with section V penalty amended, seconded by Councilman Huntington. Unanimous ayes.

Motion by Supervisor Heinrich to change the penalty amount to read \$25.00 for first violation with a max of \$250.00 for subsequent violations, seconded by Councilman Feil. Unanimous ayes.

6). ARPA Funding- \$44,000 of this has been received by the Town and a second check is expected this year. The Salt Shed project and Gopher Field improvements have been approved by the State. Supervisor Heinrich and Councilman Zerby have met with an engineer for the Salt Shed. Supervisor Heinrich provided his proposal which will appear on the Town's website. This includes estimates for all aspects of each project.

Motion by Supervisor Heinrich that the Town of Westford file the 18-page report regarding ARPA projects for approval by the State, seconded by Councilman Feil. Unanimous ayes.

Motion by Supervisor Heinrich to surplus the old backhoe, seconded by Councilman Zerby. Unanimous ayes.

Motion by Councilman Huntington to surplus the 1996 truck, seconded by Councilman Ritton. Unanimous ayes.

GALLERY: A resident raised concerns about the speed that may be created by the wedding venue off of Badeau Hill and requested signage to reduce speeds of those accessing the venue. Supervisor Heinrich agreed to look into speed limit signs which will require State and/or County surveys or cautionary signs that the Town has the authority to implement.

Jocelyn Harris stated that she was interested in pursuing Judge Fay's position once he decides to vacate it. She will contact the Board of Elections to get her name on the ballot, but could be a candidate to be appointed should the Judge decides leave prior to the end of his term.

**BUDGET MEETING:**

General: #44 - #54 - \$6,271.52

Highway: #35 - #39 - \$8,621.02