

## Town of Venice Board Meeting May 11, 2023

The regular scheduled board meeting was called to order on May 11, 2023, at 7:00 pm by Town Supervisor, Stefan McGonagle. All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll call found the following present: Supervisor Stefan McGonagle; Councilors Cynthia Whitten and Ed Denton; Highway Superintendent Stephen Fedrizzi, and Town Clerk Andrew Simkin. Councilor Terri Denman participated via videoconference.

**Guests in Attendance:** Colleen Rejman, Nancy Abbott, Richard Signor, Isaac Phillips, Jeffrey Nemeth.

### **Resolution 39-2023 ~ Approval of Minutes from April 13, 2023:**

The draft minutes had been distributed electronically to the board and posted publicly on the Town website earlier. Clerk had made one minor addition suggested by one of the board members. Printed copies incorporating the addition were distributed to the board and made available for guests in attendance. Motion made by Councilor Denton and seconded by Councilor Whitten to dispense with the reading and approve the minutes from April 13, 2023. Voted: All in favor.

Supervisor McGonagle opened the meeting for input from the guests in attendance. Isaac Phillips and Jeffrey Nemeth, both representing the ConnectGen company, offered an update on the company's solar energy project in the Town of Venice. They indicated that the project aimed for 200 megawatts of production capacity, with a rule of thumb of 10 acres per megawatt, including land for buffer strips and other uses other than placement of solar panels. Solar arrays on separate land parcels will be linked via underground connections. In response to a question about what happens to the panels at the end of their 25 year expected lifespan, they indicated that panels would likely be recycled, and noted that as part of the permitting process, the company would prepare a decommissioning plan, funded in advance. In response to a question about whether trees would be cut, Mr. Phillips said that the area of the project is not heavily wooded, and that most woods coincide with wet areas that would not be used. He said that some 50-foot strips might be cleared for access. Mr. Phillips said that his company is focused on leasing land, but would purchase some land, depending on the landowner's preference. Mr. Nemeth stated that there would be an electric substation next to the power line, for converting the electric power to 115 kilovolts and delivering it to the power line. ConnectGen intends to hold public meetings as the plan develops further, to provide additional information about the project.

Supervisor next opened the scheduled public hearing on the draft Local Law entitled "Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Workers Exemption," which had been introduced by a resolution approved at the March 9, 2023 board meeting, and had been modified in two places based on further discussion at the April 13, 2023 board meeting. There was a brief additional discussion, including one question from a member of the public, followed by a motion made by Councilor Denton and seconded by Councilor Whitten to close the public hearing. All voted in favor.

### **Resolution 40-2023 ~ To enact the local law providing a property tax exemption for volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers.**

Motion made by Councilor Whitten and seconded by Councilor Denton. In a roll call vote recorded by Clerk, the resolution was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

Supervisor next opened the scheduled public hearing on the draft Local Law authorizing the use of videoconferencing within the Town of Venice, which had been introduced by a resolution approved at the

April 13, 2023 board meeting. There was a brief additional discussion, with no public comments, followed by a motion made by Councilor Denton and seconded by Councilor Whitten to close the public hearing. All voted in favor.

**Resolution 41-2023 ~ To enact the local law authorizing the use of videoconferencing within the Town of Venice.**

Motion made by Councilor Denton and seconded by Councilor Whitten. In a roll call vote recorded by Clerk, the resolution was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

**Report(s) of Town Officials:**

Clerk/Collector's report: Clerk circulated a written report showing the following services performed during the month of April:

7 dog licenses issued

One handicapped parking permit

Six no-fee notarial services

One certificate of residence for a community college student

Two death certificates for a recent Town of Venice death

Final 2023 tax collections of \$34,069.42 paid to Cayuga County Treasurer. Clerk went to Treasurer's office and completed balance-out process. Payment stubs and printouts of detailed reports left with County for storage.

Total fee revenue collected: \$940.00, of which \$931.00 paid to Supervisor for general fund, and \$9.00 paid to NYS Ag and Markets.

Other activity since April board meeting:

Tax collection: Final payment of tax revenue in the amount of \$1,114.01 paid to TOV Supervisor, constituting the total of 1% and 2% penalty payments for the tax season. That brings the balance in the Town of Venice Tax Collector bank account down to zero.

Posted draft local laws on web site and placed public notice with Auburn Citizen.

Posted tentative assessment roll and Assessor's notice of completion of tentative assessment roll on web site.

Correspondence:

Email from Kevin Swab, Cayuga County Veteran Services, proposing an outreach/services visit to TOV offices around end of May or beginning of June. Message also enclosed a flyer on Citizen Preparedness training on June 1. Answered with a welcoming message, and posted flyer on bulletin board.

Invitation to Supervisor and Highway Superintendent from CLNB to attend breakfast at Dugans 5/23/2023, 8:00AM

NYMIR notice of policy renewal, Municipal Package Policy. Current policy expires 7/8/23. New policy will not renew the "Network Security Loss and Liability Insurance Policy Coverage (MCY 100 04 21)."

Notice of Cayuga County Town Supervisors Association meeting Thursday, May 18 at 6:00 PM.

Received hand-delivered copies of Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council's annual report on inspection and protection.

Email from County granting formal extension for BAR member Amy Elser for training requirement.

Clerk also reported on a problem in determining the enumeration of local laws. The Town numbers them according to the date of enactment, but the NY Dept. of State numbers them according to the date filed with that office. Clerk will follow up.

Code Officer's Report: copied to board members shows two building permits issued for April 2023. Code officer performed routing inspections and held office hours on Monday mornings and by appointment.

Justice's report: April report shows receipt numbers 3895-3902 issued for court fees and fines totaling \$1,428, which sum has been paid over to the Town of Venice.

Assessor's Report: N/A

Highway Superintendent: Superintendent Fedrizzi reported that he had procured a load of fuel on the County contract for \$2.377/gallon. He is getting prices for upgrading the town's gas/fuel system. The total amount of funding for Town roads from NYS under the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) for 2023 will be \$265,241.22. Superintendent and Supervisor will be giving a joint presentation at the upcoming Cornell Local Roads School. Superintendent also reported that he had picked up some nice used chairs for free from an Auburn hotel, for use in the Town's meeting room. In response to a question from a member of the public, Superintendent indicated that in the Town of Venice there are 47 miles of Town roads, 29 miles of County roads, and 13 miles of State roads.

### **Supervisor's Report**

Supervisor McGonagle reported that the audit team from the NYS Comptroller's office had finished its field work in the Town offices. The audit report is expected to focus on the Town's financial recordkeeping, which had become disorganized during the recent period of multiple changes in the supervisor, bookkeeper, and clerk positions. The auditors indicated that there is no impropriety, but that the records needed to be straightened out. Supervisor noted that there has been considerable improvement, and that he and Finance Director Stevens had had a good introductory meeting with Richard Blafield, a retired NYS employee with 50 years of audit experience. Supervisor would like to hire Mr. Blafield as a consultant to help him and the Finance Director get the Town's accounts properly recorded.

**Resolution 42-2023 ~ To authorize hiring Richard Blafield as a consultant at \$50 per hour on an as-needed basis.** Motion made by Councilor Denton and seconded by Councilor Whitten. Voted: All in favor.

Supervisor reported that he had discussed with the Assessor her voucher for mileage submitted prior to the April board meeting (included in the bills being reviewed by Councilors) and recommended approval. He noted also that the federal ARPA (American Recovery Plan Act) funds received by the Town would be classified as replacement funds for lost revenue, per applicable guidelines. Supervisor further reported that after reviewing quotes from two providers of VOIP (voice over internet) telephone service for the Town, he recommends approval of the proposal received from Verizon. A third provider did not offer a proposal. The Verizon proposal will include new telephone equipment, enhanced capabilities, and substantial savings

in monthly expenses.

**Resolution 43-2023 ~ To approve a VOIP agreement with Verizon.**

Motion made by Councilor Whitten and seconded by Councilor Denton. Voted: All in favor.

Clerk Simkin will coordinate with Verizon and town personnel to make the transition of telephone service.

Supervisor also reported that Finance Director had made some updates in HR procedures. Supervisor, Councilor Sheils, and Superintendent Fedrizzi had met with representatives of the Bluebird Renewable energy company, and received an update on construction of their biogas processing facility. The construction is going well. The project is now slated to process biogas from one dairy farm in the Town of Venice. The proposed pipeline from another farm in the Town of Ledyard is no longer expected to be built at this time.

Supervisor reported that the Scipio-Venice-Ledyard fire district is making progress in its work on a comprehensive plan. They are holding public work sessions on alternate Wednesday evenings at the Town of Venice offices.

Supervisor reported that the Town's Information Technology consultant, Xorca company, had completed an initial assessment of the Town computers and is working on a plan for backing up data. The Clerk's computer and monitor are outdated and will need to be replaced.

The next topic addressed was the audit of claims.

**Resolution 44-2023 ~ Audit of Claims**

Motion made by Councilor Whitten and seconded by Councilor Denton to accept General vouchers 80-95, in the amount of \$3,679.55, and Highway vouchers 67-77 in the amount of \$15,135.09. Voted: All in favor.

**Resolution 45-2023 ~ Review of bank statements.**

Motion made by Councilor Denton and seconded by Councilor Whitten to accept the bank statements as reviewed. Voted: All in favor.

Councilor Denton moved to adjourn and hold the next regular board meeting June 8, 2023, at 7:00 pm at 2479 State Route 34 in Venice Center. The motion was approved by general acclamation. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew T. Simkin, Town Clerk