

Town of Venice Board Meeting June 8, 2023

The regular scheduled board meeting was called to order on June 8, 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 Brian Sheils, Cynthia Whitten, Terri Denman and Ed Denton; Highway Superintendent Stephen Fedrizzi, and Town Clerk Andrew Simkin.

Guests in Attendance: Colleen Rejman, Meg Lee, Juliana Heffern

Resolution 46-2023 ~ Approval of Minutes from May 11, 2023:

The draft minutes had been distributed electronically to the board and posted publicly on the Town website earlier. Printed copies were distributed to the board and made available for guests in attendance. Motion made by Councilor Whitten and seconded by Councilor Denton to dispense with the reading and approve the minutes from May 11, 2023. Voted: All in favor.

Supervisor McGonagle opened the meeting for input from the guests in attendance. Meg Lee and Juliana Heffern, both representing the Liberty Wind company, offered an update on the company's wind energy project in the Towns of Venice and Scipio. They indicated that the project now counts 4,500 acres of "land control", which will be reduced as the project design is developed to focus on final turbine sites. Crews have been out to inspect the local roads to check for any areas, such as where culverts cross under roads, that might require reinforcement for heavy trucks carrying wind turbine components. The crews have found that the roads in the Town of Venice are generally good, compared to other sites. Other personnel have been out surveying breeding bird populations, cultural sites, wetlands, and property boundaries. The company expects to file its application for a permit for the project in Summer, 2024. Initial studies related to aviation impact have been conducted, and a formal filing with the FAA will come later. Following up on a question posed at a prior Town Board meeting, Ms. Heffern reported that the Town would be eligible to apply for "intervenor funding", (up to approximately \$1,000 per Megawatt of project capacity) for Town expenses related to the project. This funding would supersede the Town's local law concerning reimbursement for professional fees. In response to a question about how heavy the trucks carrying turbine components would be, Ms. Lee indicated that she would check and respond later.

After providing the update, the Liberty Wind representatives left the meeting. A member of the public then asked the Board about how many property owners had brought appeals of their assessments to the Board of Assessment Review meeting on May 31. Supervisor McGonagle said that the number was similar to prior years.

Report(s) of Town Officials:

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

1 dog license issued

5 handicapped parking permits

One certified copy of a marriage certificate for a 1973 marriage

Total fee revenue collected: \$170.00, of which \$169.00 paid to Supervisor for general fund, and \$1.00 paid to NYS Ag and Markets.

Other activity since May board meeting:

Phone service: Coordinated with Verizon, their partner Masters Telecom, and town officials to plan implementation of VOIP service. Installed new Cat. 6 data wires with Steff McGonagle. Now awaiting delivery of equipment.

Attended training for NY Citizen Emergency Preparedness Corps in Auburn on June 1.

Attended Venice Pavilion meeting on May 18

Virtual meeting on May 30 with textmygov company after receiving sales call from their rep. Exploring this and other new ways to get information out to Town residents. Supervisor noted that the Town's email domain service includes an option for creating an e-mail distribution list for members of the public. Clerk will work on this further.

Checked Cayuga County tax foreclosure auction site. Both TOV properties that had been on the list have been redeemed and removed from the auction, which starts June 13.

Posted revised office hours for court on website. Mondays and Thursdays, 3:30-6:00PM.

Received invitation from CNYRDB on May 18 to join in their grant proposal for funding from USDOT for electric vehicle charger installation. Short-notice deadline of May 24. Discussed with Supervisor McGonagle. Decided to forego the opportunity after learning that grant terms would require installing a minimum of four chargers.

County Veteran's office outreach, reported at May meeting, was conducted at TOV on May 31 by Assessor Heather Garner, who works part time at County Veterans Service office.

Correspondence:

Letter dated May 10 from Councilman Eugene Cook, Town of Huntington NY, inviting other towns to join them in pushing for state legislation on voter identification.

Notice from Excellus notifying TOV of proposed 8.1% health insurance premium increase. Individual notifications distributed to TOV personnel enrolled in plan.

NYMIR letter dated May 31 notifying of new standard practice that heavy trucks and equipment install and use Master Battery Disconnect (MBD) switches. Highway Superintendent Fedrizzi had already equipped TOV fleet with MBDs.

Letter from Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization inviting TOV to join and pay dues of \$629 by June 30.

Letter from Eastern Shore insurance providing insurance binders for one month, 7/8/23-8/7/23. Renewal pricing is pending. Vehicle insurance ID cards also received and passed to Steve.

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

Justice's report: May report shows receipt numbers 3903-3920 issued for court fees and fines totaling \$2,826, which sum has been paid over to the Town of Venice.

Assessor's Report: N/A

Highway Superintendent: Superintendent Fedrizzi reported that the highway department had resurfaced W. Corey and King roads using millings. He had received quotes for replacing the town's gasoline tank with a new 2,000 gallon tank and upgrading the pump systems for both gasoline and diesel fuel. He is exploring possible funding under the Shared Services program, as the pump systems would allow separate billing and support the fuel needs for the local fire departments and ambulance service. Paving for Kenyon and Baildon roads is scheduled for the coming week. Superintendent and Supervisor made a joint presentation at the Cornell University Local Roads School training program, as a model of effective cooperation. Superintendent consulted with Cayuga County regarding signage for the intersection of Poplar Ridge and Indian Field roads, following a recent accident involving an SCCS school bus hit by a driver who failed to stop at the stop sign. The County has agreed to his plan to install a "Stop Ahead" sign north of the intersection, and add orange flags to make the stop sign more conspicuous. Superintendent also brought up the topic of celebrating the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Town of Venice. The Board had earlier decided to wait for summer. After discussion, it was agreed that the celebration would be held on Saturday, August 19th. Further details will be worked out later.

Supervisor's Report

Supervisor McGonagle reported that he had ordered a new laser printer for general office use and an upgrade to the Clerk computer, as well as external hard drives to implement a secure method of backing up data. He has developed new cybersecurity measures in coordination with the Town's IT consultant and insurance carrier. The insurance company is requiring these measures as a condition for providing continued coverage against cybersecurity risks. Supervisor had circulated two draft policies: one on password management for town personnel, and one on procedure for handling Information Technology (IT) incidents.

Resolution 47-2023 ~ To approve Password Management policy for Town personnel.

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

Resolution 48-2023 ~ To approve IT Escalation policy.

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

Supervisor reported that Finance Director Barb Stevens, working with the Williamson Law books company, has finished the cleanup and reconciliation of 2021 financial data through August 2021, and has pre-reconciled all the 2022 data. Supervisor expects to be able to file the final 2021 report by the end of August

2023. He had circulated to Councilors a report showing 2023 year-to-date spending by category, compared to budgeted spending. Overall spending is in line with the budget, but some funds will need to be reallocated between budget categories later in the year.

Supervisor reported further on feedback from the Town's recent assessment revaluation process and Board of Assessment Review. Further work is needed to ensure that the Town's assessment functions meet the Town Board's expectations.

Supervisor brought up the need to line up a new provider of dog control services, as the current provider will cease operations at the end of 2023. Clerk will check on whether the current contract can be shared with potential providers.

Supervisor reported on the Scipio-Venice-Ledyard fire district's comprehensive planning exercise. More public involvement and assistance in this exercise would be welcomed.

Supervisor had received a letter from the Nature Conservancy, a not-for-profit organization, that is making plans to purchase 72 acres of wetlands in the Town of Venice to preserve natural features that help to protect the water quality in Owasco Lake. Provisions in the funding for this purchase, through the NYS DEC's Water Quality Improvement Project, require notice to the Town, which can register an objection. Supervisor had consulted the Town Attorney and spoke with the Nature Conservancy representative, who confirmed that the group, as a not-for-profit organization, would be exempt from property tax on the parcel. After discussion, Councilors determined that the TOV would not issue an objection to the proposed purchase.

There was further discussion of the letter reported by Clerk from the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization. The TOV had in previous years declined to become a member, and Councilors decided to decline again.

Supervisor asked Superintendent Fedrizzi for an update about two of the highway trucks. Superintendent reported that both experienced similar problems involving their boxes. One truck is being repaired, and he is looking for a used replacement box for the other.

The next topic addressed was the audit of claims.

Resolution 49-2023 ~ Audit of Claims

Motion made by Councilor Denman and seconded by Councilor Whitten to accept General vouchers 96-106, in the amount of \$4,556.13, Highway vouchers 78-92, in the amount of \$54,298.88, and Poplar Ridge Lighting District voucher 4, in the amount of \$47.77. Voted: All in favor.

Resolution 50-2023 ~ 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 July 13, 2023, at 7:00 pm at 2479 State Route 34 in Venice Center. The motion was seconded by Councilor Denman. The meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew T. Simkin, Town Clerk