

Town of Austerlitz
Presentations/Town Board Meeting
September 19, 2019

Present: Robert Lagonia, Supervisor, Greg Vogler, Nansi Friedman, Jere Wrightsman and Christopher Schober, Town Board Members and Susan Haag, Town Clerk.

Robert Meehan, Highway Superintendent, was absent.

Columbia County Clerk, Holly Tanner, presented on NYS DVM Real ID, Enhanced or Standard? What To Do. Due to several laws passed at the Federal level and under the supervision of the Department of Homeland Security, NYS residents have until October 2020 to obtain either an EDL or RID if they plan on flying domestically and/or to cross the border at Canada or Mexico by land or sea.

Joyce Thompson, President of the Advisory Council to the Columbia County Office of the Aging presented on Successful Aging at Home.

Town Board Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Moment of Silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

A motion to accept the August 15, 2019 Town Board Meeting minutes was made by N. Friedman and seconded by J. Wrightsman.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

N. Friedman: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Auditing of Accounts and Claims

A motion to pay General Fund, #306-338, in the amount of \$24199.72, Highway Fund, #185-203, in the amount of \$29866.52, and the Capital Fund #110-113 in the amount of \$3102.82 was made by G. Vogler and seconded by C. Schober.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

N. Friedman: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Reports

Monthly Cash Disbursement and Supervisor Report

Monthly Cash Disbursement for the Month of August 2019 submitted. Supervisor Lagonia advised that the total in bank is \$1.557 Million. Everything is good.

Supervisor Lagonia spoke with Engineer for the Town, Ray Jurkowski, concerning the Strawberry Hill Bridge repair. Engineer Jurkowski advised that easements were needed in order for the bridge work to begin. A total bridge replacement is not needed, only need to sure up the walls. Design work will begin in the Spring.

The Town Hall parking lot needs sealing because there are some issues. Engineer Jurkowski will notify the contractor and have him come back and fix the issues.

Supervisor Lagonia noted that Engineer Jurkowski is working on drainage issues on Harvey Mountain Road.

Supervisor Lagonia and Town Board Member Friedman met with the Greenagers concerning the trails in Austerlitz. This project is not complete, but they are committed to finishing.

The new salt shed is complete. The blacktop portion of the project came in slightly under budget and the Attorney for the Town, Joseph Catalano, is working on the appropriate use of the excess funds.

Last month the Town Board discussed AirBnBs deciding only to deal with large events held in Town. Attorney for the Town, Joseph Catalano advised Supervisor Lagonia that there isn't much on the books for this. Supervisor Lagonia and Town Board Member Vogler will meet with Attorney Catalano and bring results back to the Town Board next month.

The Town has insured the new highway equipment and checked into insurance for the new hiking trails in Austerlitz. The Town is already covered for the hiking trails.

Supervisor Lagonia went to an award ceremony for Town Historian, Tom Moreland. T. Moreland was given the 2019 Association of Public Historians of New York State Edward Winslow Award. The Edward Winslow Award is given to an individual showing excellence in cooperation and promoting local history through research, writing and other related accomplishments. Historian Moreland was the primary author of **The Old Houses of Austerlitz**, published in 2018, as a cooperative project with members of the Austerlitz Historical Society.

There will be an Open House for the new Town Hall on October 13th, from 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Supervisor Lagonia met with Architect Wallace today discussing minor loose ends and what will be done at the old Town Hall. Once refurbished, the old Town Hall will house the Town Historian. There is roughly \$61000.00 left over for the new Town Hall building project. This was money saved because the Town purchased the materials receiving a discounted price. Some of this money still needs to be paid out. Although not totally sure in the beginning, it was hoped that this project would come in without spending any taxpayer dollars. This project has in fact,

come in that way. No tax payer dollars were used for the new Town Hall project. All the money was donated by the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation.

Supervisor Lagonia noted that the Enhanced Patrol has been out on the back roads and there really hasn't been much speeding. The fastest car was clocked at 45 miles per hour.

There is a request from Enhanced Patrol Resident Deputy. The Columbia County Sheriff is requesting that the Town help with the cost of a radar gun. The new type of radar guns is more efficient because it can point and shoot an individual car. Supervisor Lagonia noted that there is enough money in budget if the Town Board would like to purchase this for the Sheriff's Department. More money will come back to us because of the use on the Taconic Parkway. Town Board Member Schober noted that this is like being a contractor you hire and you also need to buy their tools so they can do the job. Supervisor Lagonia noted that unfortunately this is one of the ways the Town generates money. The consensus of the Town Board is to go ahead with this purchase because of the need for public safety and the increased revenue for the Town.

A motion to purchase a radar gun to be used by the Enhanced Patrol was made by R. Lagonia and seconded by G. Vogler.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

N. Friedman: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Highway Report

Highway Superintendent Meehan was not in attendance.

Town Clerk Report for the month of August 2019 submitted.

Planning Board Report for the month of August 2019 submitted

Comprehensive Plan Oversight Committee Report for the month of August 2019 submitted.

Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Report for the month of August 2019 submitted.

Justice Grubin Justice Court Report for the month of August 2019 submitted.

Justice Cassuto Justice Court Report for the month of August 2019 submitted.

Supervisor Lagonia advised that NYS Court Administration will be onsite tomorrow to make the computer shift from the old Town Hall to the new Town Hall. The first court night at the new Town Hall is September 25th.

No Dog Report for the month of August 2019 submitted.

Climate Smart

Town Board Member Vogler advised that the Climate Smart Committee met last night. The Town continues to wait on NYSERDA for grant approval and NYSEG to get back to us on the LED street lights. There was some minor discussion on other projects.

A motion to accept the monthly reports was made by G. Vogler and seconded by J. Wrightsman.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

N. Friedman: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Correspondence

Choose Columbia: Notice of Open House and Presentation-Boston and Albany Rail Trail Feasibility Study

NYS Dept of Ag and Markets: Dog Control Officer Inspection Report, rated as satisfactory.

Steve Somlo: Recreational Tourism Economic Development in the Town of Austerlitz. Supervisor Lagonia would like the Comprehensive Plan Oversight Committee to comment on this proposal. Much of what S. Somlo is looking for will be addressed. Town Board Member Vogler stated that a new Town Board will be in place as of January and at that time parameters can be set for what the Comprehensive Plan Oversight Committee addresses and maybe put together a strategic plan for the Town and how that plan would go forward. Town Board Member Wrightsman noted that the Town can also invite other stakeholders to the table.

S. Somlo stated that the Town Board needs to look at the charter of the Comprehensive Plan Oversight Committee as it is not designed to be forward looking and if the Town Board wants this to be a function, it might want to redesign the Committee's calling. S. Somlo speaks to the Berkshire's model for economic and tourism potential stating the Town of Austerlitz needs an affirmative plan for zoning. The Town of Austerlitz does not have big industry, but there are cultural resources. The new Town Hall is an anchor and gives the Town a sense of place. The Town has markings of something, more in line of what is happening in the Berkshires. Any plan needs to have a forward looking vision as to what the Town is going to look like. The Hamlet of Spencertown would probably look the same, but Austerlitz has a different potential. Let the Town be less reactionary, more affirmative looking to how we can promote the Town.

Unfinished Business

New Town Hall Update

Wallace Architecture submitted an updated construction budget versus cost sheet for review.

Austerlitz Woodland Park

Discussed

New Business

Radar Gun Purchase

Discussed

New Town Hall Usage

Supervisor Lagonia noted that the Town Board needs to make a decision as to who can use the new Town Hall and who can't. Questions to think about would be who lets users in and who locks up? What is the approval process? Only organizations in Town? What about celebration gatherings? Food or alcohol allowed? What about insurance? Cleaning? Damage? Supervisor Lagonia would like to have others use the Town Hall, but believes the Town needs to start slowly.

Town Board Member Wrightsman questioned how the Court will be dealing with handicap people. Supervisor Lagonia explained the flow of people, use of the lift, and placement of the Judge and Clerks.

Supervisor Lagonia believes that the Town Board should vet the applications. Town Board Member Vogler noted that the Town Board needs to work through these considerations and needs to work slowly. Only Town Organizations should be considered at first. The Democratic Party would like to use the new Town Hall on November 2nd. Member Vogler can be the responsible party for this. Food and beverages might be included. Member Vogler believes that for any event the organization should take their garbage out with them.

Town Board Member Schober asked if there would be a fee structure. Supervisor Lagonia stated that the Town Board needs to decide this, but the goal is not to gain revenue, but rather to cover expenses. Members Vogler and Freidman can see a fee structure and a security deposit for individual proposals.

Supervisor Lagonia noted there are other venues in Town that are currently used for personal proposals. The new Town Hall is a government building and there is a lot to consider for letting others use it. R. Lagonia would like to start with Town organizations. The Town Board can put a list together as to approved organizations to start.

Supervisor Lagonia is not thrilled with allowing food and beverages.

Member Schober questioned those wishing to give presentations. Member Vogler noted that these would be town functions so that is a bit different.

Member Friedman asked about whether or not voting would be happening here this fall. Supervisor Lagonia explained that the Columbia County Board of Elections has come out and down an analysis. The one area of concern is the lift. It has to be outfitted with brail and there has to be a 'sound' for when the lift hits each floor. The lift doesn't have the ability to 'ding' at each floor so it was suggested to have a person available to run the lift. The Board of Elections said no to this option.

The Town Board okayed the use of the new Town Hall by the Austerlitz' Democrats on November 2, 2019, from 10:00-12:00 pm with light food and beverages. Nothing will be put on the dais and the tables will be covered.

2020 Tentative Budget

Town Clerk Haag presented the 2020 Tentative Budget to the Town Board as prepared by Supervisor Lagonia, Budget Officer. Supervisor Lagonia advised that Town Board Member Vogler was a big help in preparing this budget and R. Lagonia really appreciates this.

Supervisor Lagonia noted that the 2020 budget is in real numbers, not fake ones. The Town of Austerlitz is in an amazing place. Bridges are done; the Town has a new salt shed and a new Town Hall and we have new highway equipment. All of this without having to increase the millage rate. In fact, it was reduced for 2020.

Supervisor Lagonia noted the following:

Property Taxes

- There is no increase in town property taxes for 2020
- Property tax cap increase allowed is 2%
- Given an overall increase in assessed value of taxable properties in Austerlitz, the mill rate decreased from \$1.555 per \$1,000 of assessed value to \$1.435.
- Town taxes on a \$200,000 home will decrease from \$310.95 in 2019 to \$286.97 in 2020, and on a \$500,000 home the taxes will decrease from \$777.38 to \$717.42
- Note: The impact on everyone's individual taxes from the reval is separate, meaning your town taxes may still go up if you had an increase in assessed value greater than the corresponding decrease in the millage rate, all else being equal. Net effect of reval will not increase or decrease the overall amount of taxes raised town wide.

Appropriations Overall

- Total General and Highway fund spending increased \$25,000 or 1.6% to \$1,571,861 from \$1,546,861 in 2019
- General Fund appropriations rose \$9,259 or 1.3%
- Highway Fund appropriations rose \$15,741 or 1.8%

Revenues

- As already noted, town property taxes remain flat from 2019, i.e. no increase
- The main source of additional revenue to cover the spending increase of \$25,000 is an increase of \$25,000 from sales tax which have been trending higher for several years now.

Spending Highlights:

- There are no pay increases for the Town Supervisor, Town Board, Town Justices, Registrar, Planning Board, ZBA or Mary Davis. CPOC does not get paid.
- There are 3% pay increases for:
 - Justice clerks
 - Assessor
 - Town Clerk
 - Dog Control
 - Code Enforcement Officer
 - Highway Superintendent

- Highway staff
- Accountant fee increased 1.5%.
- Health Insurance is up about 8% based on estimates provided by our insurance broker.
- In the General Fund, the budget is decreased about \$8,000 for the Assessor contractual account given the reval is completed.
- Historian's contractual account raised \$2,000 for his new office.
- Pension payments rose from \$57,500 in 2019 to \$64,000 for 2020.
- The summer recreation program remains flat with regards to revenue and expenses, losing approximately \$14,000.
- General Highway expenses remain essentially flat except for aforementioned pay raises, and increases for health insurance and retirement pensions.

Contingency

- We maintain a \$100,000 contingency budget that is offset by a \$100,000 unexpended balance. These numbers have no impact on taxes raised or the line items of any budget account.

Supervisor Lagonia noted that with the Summer Recreation Program losing quite a bit of money, the Town might look into combining with Ghent or other options. Bussing the campers to Fox Hill and swimming are the biggest expenses.

The Town is in great shape! Supervisor Lagonia is very proud of all the Town Board has accomplished.

The Town Board discussed a few of the figures and whether they wanted any changes.

A motion to adopt the 2020 Tentative Budget as the 2020 Preliminary budget without changes and to set the public hearing for October 17, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. was made by G. Vogler and seconded by N. Friedman.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

N. Friedman: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Public Comments

Charles Vander Weit asked if the dais/bench was bullet proof to which Supervisor Lagonia affirmed.

Maureen Wilson acknowledged what a beautiful building the new Town hall is and is glad it was restored.

Steve Somlo noted that Town Boards usually think about things they regulate and control, please try to think about things the Town wants to promote.

Constance Mondel thanks the Town Board for doing a great job and for discussing items that are important to the public.

Supervisor Lagonia tells the public that if there is a topic they would like information on or a speaker they wish to hear, let him know and he will arrange. The Speakers tonight were great and very informative.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by J. Wrightsman and seconded by C. Schober.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

N. Friedman: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0. Meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan A. Haag, Town Clerk