

Town Of Austerlitz
Regular Town Board Meeting
May 21, 2020

The May 21, 2020 Town Board Meeting was held via Zoom in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order 202.1. Meeting instructions were legally noticed and on the Town website.

Present via Zoom: Robert Lagonia, Supervisor, Greg Vogler, Maureen Wilson, Jere Wrightsman, Chris Schober, Town Board Members and Susan Haag, Town Clerk.

Town Highway Superintendent Robert Meehan unavailable due to Zoom.

Town Board Meeting called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Moment of Silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

A motion to accept the April 23, 2020 Town Board Meeting minutes was made by G. Vogler and seconded by M. Wilson.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Auditing of Accounts and Claims

Supervisor Lagonia noted that the May abstracts were sent to the Town Board Members for review. If any of the Town Board Members would like to see and sign the actual vouchers, please make arrangements with Town Clerk Haag.

A motion to authorize payment of the May General Fund, #122-146, in the amount of \$41428.51 and May Highway Fund, #90-112, in the amount of \$9659.57 was made by C. Schober and seconded by M. Wilson.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Reports

Monthly Cash Disbursement and Supervisor Report

Monthly Cash Disbursement Report for the Month of April 2020 submitted. Supervisor Lagonia noted that the Town is now online with the Bank of Greene County. The accounts at Community Bank were left open during the transition, but they will be closed in due order. Most of the

Town's funds are at the Bank of Greene County. The Justice Court accounts and the Town Clerk and Tax Collector accounts are still at Community Bank. These accounts are under the jurisdiction of the Judges and Town Clerk.

Supervisor Lagonia advised that everything on a County level is about COVID-19. R. Lagonia is chairing the committee that is responsible for opening the County back up. Daily meetings are still taking place and R. Lagonia is dealing with the Federal and State Governments, the nursing homes, the public, etc. The Capital District is currently in Phase 1. There is a tremendous lack of guidance from the State and either no answers are given or everything is vague.

The County budget looks like it will see a \$15-20 million deficit. This will trickle down to Towns. For the Town of Austerlitz, the numbers are getting worse. Once things open up, Supervisor Lagonia hopes that numbers will get better. For now, looking at a 40% deficit. Mortgage tax income is decent because homes are selling. Sales tax will be down.

Whittier Rehab and Skilled Nursing Center in Ghent will be testing in mass this coming week. R. Lagonia advised that in Columbia County, the community spread of COVID is low, but the issues are in nursing homes, mainly Barnwell. The State has been in to investigate. Pine Haven has rallied and done a good job in stepping up safety procedures and protocols.

Supervisor Lagonia asked Highway Superintendent Meehan to open the courts up at the Town Park. These will be opened this weekend. Signage will be put up with rules. Playgrounds have not been opened up yet by the State so our Town will continue to be closed. R. Lagonia has a sense that schools will not be opened come September.

Supervisor Lagonia advised that the courts in the park will have to be shared, not groups, only 2 people at a time with social distancing. The courts will be monitored.

The County Offices will be closed until at least May 29th. The Austerlitz Town Hall is still closed. If no issues during Phase 1 opening, and the Capital District moves into Phase 2, the Town Hall will be opened up during this Phase.

Highway Report

Highway Superintendent Meehan was not in attendance because he does not have a computer. Supervisor Lagonia advised that he has met with the Highway Crew a couple of times. The department has been working on the roads, grading and putting gravel down. Road maintenance has to happen. The Town is waiting on Engineer Ray Jurkowski for the Strawberry Hill Bridge replacement. There was a possible grant that Engineer Jurkowski thought was a waste of time to try for. Still waiting on the Bryarcliffe culvert replacement. Engineer Jurkowski is looking into alternatives. Everyone in the State is waiting to hear about C.H.I.P.s funding. A lot depends on how much funding New York State gets from the Federal Government. New York State is devastated and if the Federal Government does not send money, there will be serious financial problems. The County is starting furloughs. It is scary what will be cut and there is not a lot of options. Even with cuts, the County will be \$8-10 million short in the end.

Town Board Member Chris Schober asked if the County will be hiring COVID contact tracers to which Supervisor Lagonia answered yes. Some of these positions will be held by current County employees, but eventually many will have to be transferred to the private sector. Masks, social distancing, contact tracers, etc will be the norm for a while, at least until there is a vaccine. This is an incredible challenge for everyone. Fortunately, the Town of Austerlitz does not have to lay off people like other Towns.

Town Board Member Wrightsman has been working with Broadband and since many have been working from home this is more of an issue. Supervisor Lagonia stepped in and the Town has put in another list for help. Still looking for answers. Some people are willing to pay for the installation because they need it, but how this is accomplished is still unanswered.

As of today, there is still no COVID cases in the Town of Austerlitz. There will be 3 testing sites in the County and a couple that will be walk in with no appointment.

The Town will need a plan in place before opening the Town Hall. Plexiglass will be put up at the Town Clerk window, cleaning procedures developed, signs and rules by the front door. The June Town Board meeting will probably still be via Zoom. Things in Town are running smoothly. Masks and hand sanitizer are still available. Supervisor Lagonia will distribute them.

Town Clerk Report for the month of April 2020 submitted.

Tax Collector Report for the month of April 2020 submitted. Town Clerk Haag noted that numbers are in line from last year. The books will be handed over to the County after June 1st.

No Planning Board Report for the month of April 2020 submitted. The Planning Board has not met.

No Comprehensive Plan Oversight Committee Report for the month of April 2020 submitted.

Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Report for the month of April 2020 submitted.

Justice Grubin Justice Court Report for the month of April 2020 submitted.

No Justice Cassuto Justice Court Report for the month of April 2020 submitted.

Supervisor Lagonia noted that there is a back log of tickets to be processed so he is not quite sure how short the Town will be in this area.

No Dog Report for the month of April 2020 submitted.

No Climate Smart Report for the month of April 2020 submitted. Town Board Member Greg Vogler reported that there was a meeting last night. Discussion center around the solar bid and that the task force has been meeting to decide on website content. The Town of Austerlitz' representative to the Columbia County Environmental Committee attended the meeting and reported that the Committee is working on a missions statement and list of priorities, expanded

polystyrene ban efforts are on hold, gave the nominees for the 2020 Columbia County Good Earth Keeping Awards, noted discussion on COVID from by Columbia County Department of Health, County Fair and Kids Camps may be cancelled this summer and 3 new testing clinics are opening. There is a webinar scheduled, Adopting a Xero-Waste Lifestyle.

Town Board Member Wilson wanted to try and see how to educate residents to help mitigate climate change and wondered about the Town having a FaceBook page. This would be just to supply information, not opinions etc. Supervisor Lagonia noted this could be a possibility, it is a good way to get information out. Board Member Wilson could take this project on, setting it up and then let the Town Board look before it went live. Another form of education could be a special Zoom meeting with women from Cornell. Supervisor Lagonia advised that this would have to be noticed, but go ahead and invite the speaker, it is a great way to get information out.

Supervisor Lagonia hopes that Towns will still be able to utilize Zoom after the COVID issue is done, but it depends on what the Governor dictates. Both Supervisor Lagonia and Town Board Member Vogler are in no hurry to get back to in person meetings.

A motion to accept the monthly reports was made by G. Vogler and seconded by M. Wilson.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Correspondence

No Correspondence

Unfinished Business

New Town Hall Update

No update.

Highway Form 284

2020 Highway Form 284 (As completed by Attorney Catalano)

This agreement is entered into by the Town of Austerlitz Highway Superintendent and the undersigned members of the Town Board of the Town of Austerlitz pursuant to section 284 of the Highway Law as set forth below and shall be effective for the fiscal year of 2020:

We hereby agree that the monies levied and collected for the repair and improvement of the Town highways, and those monies received from the State of New York for the repair and improvement of Town Highways, shall be as follows:

1. General Repairs: The sum not to exceed of \$100,000.00 may be expended for general repairs and maintenance upon 61.7 miles of Town highways including sluices, culverts, drainage ditches and bridges having a span of less than five feet and boardwalks or renewals thereof.
2. Improvements. The following sums shall be set aside for the improvement of Town highways as described below:

- a) Strawberry Hill Bridge: There shall be expended the sum, not to exceed, of \$118,000.00, provided that at least 100% of said amount is to be taken from the NYS CHIPS funding program and that the total amount available to the Town of Austerlitz from the NYS CHIPS funding program in 2020 is not less than \$218,000.00.
Type: Culvert Repair, C.H.I.P.s.
- b) Bryarcliffe: There shall be expended the sum, not to exceed, of \$100,000.00 provided that at least 100% of said amount is to be taken from the NYS CHIPS funding program and that the total amount available to the Town of Austerlitz from the NYS CHIPS funding program in 2020 is not less than \$218,000.00.
Type: Culvert, C.H.I.P.s.
- c) Partridge Lane: There shall be expended not over the sum of \$4200.00
Type: Oil and Stone, General
- d) West Hill Road: There shall be expended not over the sum of \$22,000.00
Type: Oil and Stone, General.

3. It is hereby acknowledged that the foregoing is best estimates based upon information of road conditions and pricing that the Highway Superintendent has at the time this agreement is executed. It is also hereby acknowledged that the foregoing is best estimates of revenue for the above projects based upon information that the Town Board has at the time this agreement is executed regarding revenues and expected NYS C.H.I.P.s funding that the Town of Austerlitz expects to receive in the fiscal year 2020. If there are changes in the scope of work, available materials, or pricing, and/or revenues or NYS C.H.I.P.s funding amounts, this agreement may be modified in writing by the parties hereto.

This agreement shall take effect when approved by the Town Board and executed by the Highway Superintendent and at least a majority of the members of the Town Board.

This agreement shall be effective from April 1, 2020 and shall remain in effect through December 31, 2020.

A motion to approve the revised version of the Highway Form 284 was made by C. Schober and seconded by G. Vogler.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Board of Assessment Review

Steve Lobel was interested in serving on the Board of Assessment Review, but was unable due to work constraints. Ken Kaplan expressed interest in serving.

Town Clerk Haag explained the open seats on the Board of Assessment Review. There currently are 2 vacant seats to be filled with expiration dates of 9/30/21 and 9/30/23. Because the 9/30/21 date is so close and will be filled next year, it was decided to leave this seat vacant. Scott Sylvester's seat is up 9/30/20 and he would like to sit for an additional term when the time comes to appoint.

A motion to appoint Ken Kaplan to member of the Board of Assessment Review to fill the unexpired term of Maureen Wilson ending 9/30/23 was made by R. Lagonia and seconded by G. Vogler.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

New Business

Highway Garage Solar Panel Project Bid

One bid was received:

PlugPV

Shane Nolan, Co-Founder and CFO

38 Yardboro Ave.

Albany, NY 12205

Base Bid: \$49770.00

#1: \$1875.00

Town Board Member Vogler noted that with a \$34000.00 grant and a \$9954.00 rebate from NYSERDA, the Town would be responsible for out of pocket costs of \$5816.00. This was slightly higher than expected but given a payback period of around three years, it was agreed that this was still a worthwhile investment especially taking advantage of the rebate and grant being available to the town.

Supervisor Lagonia believes the Town of Austerlitz is a leader in the County for Climate Smart issues and wants to push forward with this project. Town Board Member Maureen Wilson noted that although the Town only received one bid, the price was pretty good overall and the Town will save money on electric bills. Town Board Member Schober believes this is a good investment and a two-year payback is no time at all. Town Board Jere Wrightsman feels long term this is a wise choice and solar panels on the highway garage roof shows we are trying to make a difference in climate issues.

Supervisor Lagonia questioned if there were additional costs above this bid and how long before the Town would receive the grant funding. Town Board Member Vogler noted that Engineer for the Town, Ray Jurkowski, looked at the highway garage roof and advised that it will hold the weight of the solar panels without adding anything additional. The Town is responsible to pay for this project upfront and then NYSERDA will reimburse the Town for the amount of the grant

and rebate. NYSERDA does have to approve the invoice before it is paid by the Town and the project cannot begin until the Town secures their overall project approval.

Town Board Member Schober questioned the option for electric vehicle battery banks. Member Vogler advised this was not desired at this time.

A motion to accept the Highway Garage Solar Panel Project Bid from Plug PV for \$49770.00 and not alternate #1 was made by R. Lagonia and seconded by C. Schober.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Public Comments

Frances Green agrees with Zoom capabilities.

Erlyn Madonia likes zoom meetings. Thanks the Town Board and Supervisor Lagonia for all they are doing.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by J. Wrightsman and seconded by M. Wilson.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan A. Haag, Town Clerk