

Town Of Austerlitz
Regular Town Board Meeting
October 15, 2020

The October 15, 2020 Public Hearing and regular Town Board Meeting was held via Zoom in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order 202.1. Meeting instructions were on the Town website.

Public Hearing for the 2021 Preliminary Budget called to order at 6:30 pm.

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

Town Board Member Maureen Wilson was not in attendance.

Town Clerk advised the Public Hearing was duly published.

No public attended.

Town Board Member Jere Wrightsman had a question about the previous versus the current and 2019 years budgeted town property tax revenue. Town Board Member Vogler explained that the totals to be raised are the same, i.e. no increase in town property taxes raised from one year to the next. The allocation between the General and Highway fund may differ dependent upon on the appropriations for each fund. The totals for town property taxes to be raised for both funds are unchanged.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by G. Vogler seconded by J. Wrightsman.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: absent

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 4:1. Public Hearing Closed at 6:35 p.m.

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

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

Moment of Silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

A motion to accept the September 17, 2020 Town Board Meeting minutes was made by J. Wrightsman and seconded by G. Vogler.

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 October 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.

Town Board Member Vogler questioned the invoices from Albany Elevator. Supervisor Lagonia noted that the lift in the new Town Hall is no longer under warranty and the Town has no service contract. R. Lagonia did call Albany Elevator about the invoices and advised the Town Board that this company is a union shop and will not come out unless they charge for the service. After Custodian Linda Mesick was locked in the lift, Albany Elevator came down and fixed the door and unfortunately, they had to come out again 4 days later to fix it again. A coil might have to be replaced, but not sure yet. There is no other company out there for this kind of service so the Town is stuck using them. Supervisor Lagonia did ask to see a service contract.

Town Board Member Wilson noted that the General Election will be coming up soon and wondered if the lift would be good for that. Supervisor Lagonia advised that the lift is working so it should be okay. If there is an issue prior to the election, it will get corrected.

A motion to authorize payment of the October General Fund, #261-289, in the amount of \$19135.95 and Highway Fund, #196-215, in the amount of \$60797.97 was made by C. Schober and seconded by J. Wrightsman.

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 September 2020 submitted. Supervisor Lagonia advised he was pleasantly surprised at the County sales tax numbers for the 3rd quarter. Not sure what they will come in at for the 4th quarter, but the 3rd is better than what was anticipated.

The 2021-2022 school taxes will be high and the County taxes for 2021 will be slightly higher. Supervisor Lagonia made sure that the 2021 Town Budget did not have an increase. Town Board Member Wrightsman questioned if the school districts had to adhere to the tax cap and R. Lagonia advised that yes, they do. Supervisor Lagonia noted that time will tell, but he believes that both the school districts and the County will go over the cap. There are certain County

services that are vital and the County can not make cuts in these areas. So far, on a County level, there have been no layoffs, only a freeze on hiring. Some positions that became vacant must be filled though. The County is looking at deficits unfortunately. R. Lagonia does not want to cut people or services on a County level. The Supervisors are working great together and working hard doing the best they can.

Member Vogler hopes that the Federal Government will come through.

Member Wilson questioned who funds the contact tracers. Supervisor Lagonia advised that the funding comes through State grants. The Columbia County Health Department is doing great with COVID issues. There is not a lot of community spread here by those who live in the County. The virus seems to be coming in from outside the County. People need to wear masks, use hand sanitizer and social distance. Thankfully Columbia County has not seen hardly anything in the schools and there has only been one death since June.

Member Wrightsman asked about the push back from local businesses. Supervisor Lagonia advised that businesses are hurting and very frustrated, especially restaurants. They are struggling.

Many people in the County are getting the flu shot. The senior flu shot is not currently available because businesses in the County ran out of shots. More have been ordered.

Highway Report

Highway Superintendent Meehan advised that he talked to those who are working on the County Route 21 bridge replacement project. The paving will be done next week and the bridge will be opened back up the week after. School House Road will need some work and material due to the heavy traffic that was rerouted due to the bridge closure. R. Meehan will take care of that before Winter.

There are some troublesome trees on the Town Roads that need to come down. Superintendent Meehan will rent a lift and have these down before Winter. R. Meehan is seeing storm damage all over the Town and the high winds took down about 15 trees.

The Highway Crew has been grading roads and blowing leaves off the main driving area. R. Meehan has been hearing many complaints concerning the work done by NYSEG. Complaints center around the trees being taken down and the mess that is left. Supervisor Lagonia noted he is happy to reach out to the NYSEG representative. Highway Superintendent Meehan asked that R. Lagonia take a ride up Punsit Road to look at the mess. R. Lagonia asked where other problem spots were.

Member Wilson noted she received a letter from NYSEG concerning how they would be handling the tree cutting and what they would leave behind.

Highway Superintendent Meehan continued his report noting that the Highway Crew is hauling in sand and there are a couple of culverts that need to be changed out before winter. NYSEG is moving some power lines on Pratt Hill Road bringing them closer to the road. Trees will be cut

down and this is actually going to be good because the sun will hit that part of the road melting the snow in the winter.

Highway Superintendent Meehan advised that the trench for the solar was dug today.

There have been no complaints concerning the paving of Beale Road. Town Board Member Vogler thought that all the work done was fantastic. Supervisor Lagonia agreed that the Highway Crew did a great job. R. Meehan noted that one guardrail still needed to be replaced.

Supervisor Lagonia advised that he did reach out concerning the speed limit reduction on County Route 7. R. Lagonia noted that a request for a reduced speed limit on a County Road goes through the same process as that for a Town road. The Town Board would pass a formal resolution requesting NYSDOT to perform a study on the specific road or section of it. The Town Clerk would fill out and sign a TE-9a, speed limit reduction request form and send both in for consideration. A copy of these two forms would also go the Columbia County Traffic Safety Board. The NYSDOT would process the request getting the County Highway Superintendent to sign the TE-9a form, work up a location map and existing highway conditions form and all of this would then be forwarded to the NYSDOT's Region 8 Traffic and Safety Group in Poughkeepsie for review, study and eventual decision.

Town Board Member Schober questioned who pays for the study to be done and Supervisor Lagonia noted he did not think there was cost for that. Supervisor Lagonia would like to continue to discuss this speed reduction because it may be something to pursue. R. Lagonia will discuss with Attorney Catalano. Highway Superintendent Meehan advised that the Town Board needed to remember that traffic was being diverted on this section of highway because of the bridge replacement project.

Supervisor Lagonia advised that one of the trees in front of the Spencertown Academy needs to come down. This is the Town's responsibility according to the lease in place. R. Lagonia will contact someone to take this tree down. This will be a joint project with the Academy and they will share the cost with the Town.

Supervisor Lagonia advised that Highway Superintendent Meehan, the Highway Crew and Town Clerk Haag cleaned out the back room of the old Town hall. Custodian Linda Mesick will clean the old Town Hall and Historian Tom Moreland will begin to set up the office.

The new Town Hall windows need to be cleaned. Supervisor Lagonia advised that he is getting a quote.

Town Clerk Report for the month of September 2020 submitted.

No Planning Board Report for the month of September 2020 submitted.

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

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

Justice Cassuto Justice Court Report for the month of September 2020 submitted.

No Justice Grubin Justice Court Report for the month of September 2020 submitted.

Climate Smart Report

Town Board Member Vogler reported that there was no October Climate Smart Committee meeting. G. Vogler met with a resident in Town who is an IT guy who has volunteered to work on the Climate Smart website. The cost for EdmundsGovTech to do the work is \$5000.00 and this gentleman will do the work for free. Website hosting will be about \$25.00 a month. Member Vogler discussed this with Attorney for the Town. Joe Catalano, who advised there was no problem with someone taking this on for free. This will be a very simplistic website, just content, no databases. Control will be overseen by the Town once the website is set up and complete.

Town Board Member Vogler advised that Lifeboat, a.k.a. “Boatbuilders“, a component of the New World Foundation, is developing a pilot program called “Local Champions: Support for NY State’s Climate Smart Communities Coordinators.” This project, with financial and programmatic support from Lifeboat, will assist the Town of Austerlitz Climate Smart Community Task Force, enabling them to organize their municipality’s filing for Bronze Certification. The Town of Austerlitz is looking in the fourth quarter of 2020 to apply for a grant of \$8,000 from Lifeboat to wholly fund the compensation for a six-month internship for a coordinator for this project. If the town obtains the grant, the internship will start in the first quarter of 2021 and will continue through the third quarter of 2021.

The Town Board discussed employment parameters for this position.

A motion to accept the monthly reports was made by J. Wrightsman and seconded by C. Schober.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Correspondence

Eric Spiegel: Safety threat of oversize load trucks passing through the Spencertown Hamlet on State Route 203.

Unfinished Business

2021 Preliminary Budget

Resolution 35-2020, Adoption of the 2021 Final Budget

A motion to adopt Resolution 35-2021, Adoption of the 2021 Final Budget was made by G. Vogler and seconded by J. Wrightsman.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

WHEREAS, the Supervisor of the Town of Austerlitz prepared a Tentative Budget for the Town's fiscal year 2021 and presented that Tentative Budget at a regular meeting of the Town Board held on September 17, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the Town Board reviewed the Tentative Budget and discussed and analyzed it with the Town Supervisor, and

WHEREAS, the Town Board adopted the Tentative Budget without changes made by the Town Board during the course of discussions regarding same as the Preliminary Budget and scheduled a public hearing on the Preliminary Budget for October 15, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the public hearing on the Preliminary Budget has been duly noticed and held;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Austerlitz hereby adopts the Preliminary Budget for 2021, without any changes made by the Town Board, as the Final Budget for the fiscal year of 2021 of the Town of Austerlitz; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Board hereby directs the Town Clerk to file the Final Budget as required by law.

New Business

Resolution # 36-2020, Support of the Road Stream Crossing Survey Evaluation and Prioritization Project Provided by Trout Unlimited

Town Board Member Vogler noted that this project has been in the progress and the NYSDEC has completed the inventory. This inventory will position the Town for future opportunities. The Resolution needs to be formally passed in order to receive funding to pay for the work that has been completed. The Town has received the inventory, but no reports or plans for culverts yet.

A motion to adopt Resolution # 36-2020, Support of the Road Stream Crossing Survey Evaluation and Prioritization Project Provided by Trout Unlimited 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

WHEREAS, Trout Unlimited has been working with the Town of Austerlitz to develop a Road Stream Crossing Management Plan for the Town of Austerlitz that is designed to help improve community and ecosystem resiliency by identifying high priority road stream crossing replacement projects that reconnect high quality aquatic habitat and improve community flood resiliency and road infrastructure condition within the Town; and

WHEREAS, the scope of the project included an inventory of all state, county, town and private road stream crossing, aquatic passage and hydraulic modeling of the data, prioritization of results using multiple objectives and the development of conceptual and shovel ready designs and cost estimates for highest priority projects, and

WHEREAS, the Town will utilize this survey evaluation and prioritization for the following main purposes: first, to have shovel ready plans for priority culvert replacements; second, to have the inventory data available for future culvert replacement planning; and additional benefits will include having the inventory available for potential grant opportunities related to culvert replacements and for environmental considerations, and

WHEREAS, the Town desires to incorporate this survey evaluation and prioritization in any long-term road maintenance plans and in considering standards for new roads and driveways and to also provide a resource for the Highway Superintendent and Town Board with identifying and prioritizing future projects and annual budgets; and

WHEREAS, the Town Board intends to make the Road Stream Crossing Management Plan available on the Town's official Website as well as to incorporate the Plan in future updates of other Town plans and policies including the Town's Comprehensive Plan as the Town Board deems appropriate;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Austerlitz fully supports and approves the project performed by Trout Unlimited and will make use of the results of the project in the form of a Road Stream Crossing Management Plan as stated aforesaid.

Subdivision Regulations

Town Board Member Vogler, Comprehensive Plan Oversight Committee Chair Tim Stalker and Member Barbara Smith have been working to update the Town's subdivision regulations for quite some time. The revisions have been reviewed and Attorney for the Town, Joseph Catalano now has them and is working on an update to the Town's code. Town Board Member Schober questioned the ridgeline protection section. G. Vogler answered that the revisions worked on some specifics without being really demanding. The goal was to match the look and feel of the Town with consideration. Member Vogler noted that there is already an overlay in place.

Member Schober will read through what is already in the code and see if there are any areas he would like to see tightened up.

Executive Session

A motion to enter Executive Session for a personal matter was made by M. Wilson and seconded by R. Lagonia.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0. Executive Session entered at 8:01 p.m.

A motion to exit Executive Session was made by J. Wrightsman and seconded by C. Schober.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0. Executive Session exited at 8:16 p.m.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by M. Wilson and seconded by G. Vogler.

R. Lagonia: yes

G. Vogler: yes

C. Schober: yes

M. Wilson: yes

J. Wrightsman: yes

Motion carried 5:0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan A. Haag, Town Clerk