

Town of Canton
April 8, 2020
Board Meeting 6:00pm
Minutes

Present

Supervisor Mary Ann Ashley, Council Members Bob Washo, James Smith, and Martha Foley Smith

Also in Attendance

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Karin Blackburn, Assessor Cindy Brand, Code Enforcement Officer Miranda Corbine, Highway Superintendent Calvin Rose, Historian Linda Casserly, Attorney Eric Gustafson, Angela Gray

Members of the Public: Adam Atkinson, Dan Fay, Ellis Giacomelli, Jim Gibson, Toby Irven, Kathryn Liscum, Dave Nelson, Carol Smith Pynchon, Heidi Smith, Jody Wenzel

A. Call to Order

- Mary Ann Ashley opened the Special Meeting at 6:01 p.m.
- Agenda changes:
 - Under Old Business: Final 2014 Grant Synopsis LWRP Grass River Corridor Project – Pyrites Boat Launch – Tabled
 - Under New Business: Discuss and Appoint Town Board Member until 12/31/21 – Tabled
- Jody Wentzel, Risk Manager, Worker’s Comp Representative with the County Attorney’s Office introduced himself and explained he is available for questions and any help to implement training.

B. Public Comment

- No public comment.

C. County Legislature Representative(s) Updates

- **Dan Fay**
 - At the meeting this week, the Legislators recognized six people from the Dispatcher’s Office, two State Troopers, and two firemen from Pierrepont for their work during the tragic fire in Pierrepont. Tragic fire, but great service by the people. Important to recognize their service.
 - Public Hearing on multi-use recreation trails. Right now, they are listening to the

people. Most of the comments are around the fees, which will be used to maintain the trails. Hopefully used for more than ATVs, like family sport outings and bicycles. Hopefully, the trails will generate interest in the County and sales tax dollars.

- New Community Development projects – getting awarded \$600,000. Will help people with low-income housing. Good benefit for members of this County.
- Consolidated the Department of Social Services unit with the County Attorney. Hopefully, that will help in areas of social services.
- He may stand to be corrected, but one the objectives as legislators it to preserve prime farmland. Everyone knows that solar panels and wind turbines are starting to take place. His understanding at the present time, solar panels and wind turbines cannot store power, or very little power. He has been told, if power is generated from wind turbines and solar panels, the Power Authority is going to open up gates and release water instead of generating power from the turbines. This power is being generated to be purchased at a higher rate. He is all for green power, but he is not for green power at the expense of hydro power. He would like everyone to be conscious about this and to think about what is being done with the green power.

Bob Washo: what is the County strategy with that regard?

Dan Fay: the strategy right now is to decide what can the County do, and the Governor has decided that is the route to take.

Bob Washo: with regard to prime soils, is there going to be action at the County level to get the other communities on board to protect that?

Dan Fay: Canton has home rule, and all the County can do is advise, but the County doesn't like solar panels going on prime farmland. All the County is doing is advising Towns.

Bob Washo: with regard to prime soils, Canton has already addressed it through local law.

Martha Foley Smith: she isn't sure about the pricing for power and whether it's possible to figure out what NYPA's plans would be, it's complicated. There's a supposed free market for power and the companies bid in for a day ahead price. Her family is involved in hydro. Not on behalf of NYPA, but because of the balance of alternative energy sources. She thinks it's possible to figure it out and get some solid information from sources that Dan could tell the Board about.

Dan Fay: he believes contracts are being signed for solar power at a fixed price that is higher than what the Power Authority is selling it for.

Martha Foley Smith: she agrees, but she doesn't know if they will be passing water as Dan suggests.

Bob Washo: the passing of water has more to do with grid capabilities than need of energy. Most of the solar companies aren't pressing towns because the grid isn't capable of what is to come. Until the grid is capable, the Town is in a standby until it is seen what the capacity is.

Dan Fay: when the Power Authority built the dams, they made four towns responsible: Massena, Louisville, Lisbon, and Waddington. Power Authority is getting an excess of money and part of it should be coming back to those communities. If they aren't selling their power, money isn't coming back.

Bob Washo: NYPA has 13 miles of transmission line, and the Town of Canton gets nothing out of that.

D. Approval of Minutes

- Special Board Meeting 3/3/21
Regular Board Meeting 3/11/21
Special Board Meeting 3/24/21
Special Board Meeting 3/31/21

Motion to approve minutes made by Bob Washo, 2nd by Jim Smith. All in favor.
Motion carried.

E. Supervisor Report

- 2020 NYS Annual Update Document
Filed with NYS Comptroller's Office. Filed timely without extension. This process has allowed for a lookback at where the Town has been. Great efforts have been made between Gray and Gray and the Town of Canton to get work done and create efficiencies. Angela thanked Mary Ann and Susan Huntley, and the staff in her office, for this. Where things were three years ago to where things are now, great strides have been made.
- Angela Gray read over the March 2021 monthly report which was sent to the Town Council prior to the monthly meeting.

Mary Ann thanked Gray and Gray, the legal team, Susan Huntley, and the Board. Everyone has worked hard the last three years to turn things around. The AUD process has been streamlined substantially over the last three years. The fiscal stress score for the Town for the last three years went down from 15.5% to 3.3%. She is looking for the score for 2020 to be even lower.

F. Correspondence

- None to report this month.

G. Audit Committee

Approval of Expenditures

- A Fund: \$70,358.84
- B Fund: \$2,396.87
- DA Fund: \$29,144.16
- DB Fund: \$18,129.57
- SF Fund: \$62,400.00
- SL Fund: \$7,403.91

- TA Fund: \$18,053.20

Motion to approve the expenditures made by Jim Smith, 2nd by Martha Foley Smith. All in favor. Motion carried.

H. Acceptance of Department Reports

Miranda Corbine, Code Enforcement Officer:

- Mary Ann welcomed Miranda. Starting full-time on Monday, April 12th. This is Miranda's first meeting.
- Born and raised in Canton. Housing and Building Inspector for the last 10 years in Boston. Happy to be back in Canton.
- Mary Ann gave a verbal update from Russell Lawrence IV who has been Interim Code Enforcement Officer: processed about 10 building permits, done inspections on McDonald's, processed certificates of occupancy.

Karin Blackburn, Town Clerk:

- Working with Town Supervisor to establish a Training Compliance Plan for Board Members and Staff.
- Working to enhance records management by establishing a new Records Management Plan.
- Continued work with the Assessor – now working on creating a sales book which helps her identify the changes to properties and the current state of properties.
- Tax Collection: collected over \$4.5 million, roughly \$585,000 left to collect. 2nd Notices going out next week.

Linda Casserly, Historian:

- Check out the Historian's Office with the Court Office furniture. She loves the way her office is set up now.
- Started ancestry work for those wanting to learn how to do ancestry.
- Ruth Doyle got a hold of Linda and others to do another tour of the Matron Sherriff house and the jail cells. Trying to create the location as a touring spot for the County. Check out Jim Thorpe Jail in Jim Thorpe, PA for more information.
- She wants to check with Public Health. She'd like to add to a sign on her door that masks and vaccinations are required because of the elderly that come to her office. Mary Ann stated there is a Safety Plan for the building and that it can be brought to the Committee. Miranda Corbine, coming from Public Health, said you have to be careful what you post. You have to stick with the CDC guidelines.

Cindy Brand, Assessor:

- All the assessment changes and exemptions are entered and checked by the County. Good to go there.
- Special franchises, telecommunications, and railroads were entered and checked out. Good to go there.
- The State is issuing reports now that are affecting the exemptions. The State will be running them one by one, and they will be taken care of through the Final Assessment Roll. Cindy reviewed a few examples and the process.
- Cindy emailed Bob Blewett about the Grievance hearing. The informal meeting beforehand will likely be by Zoom.
- Tomorrow Cindy has an online class: Reading and Understanding Deeds, all day class by Zoom by the NYS Assessor's Association.
- Bob Washo: he and Cindy have had a few conversations about this and maybe Eric can comment. When an entity has been sold as part of a bundle on the corporate level, how does that sales transaction come through at the County and at the Town level, and how is the sale handled.

Eric Gustafson: each time a property is sold there's a couple of documents that go with it that cover the tax assessment and the purchase price, RP5217 and TP584, filed with every deed.

Bob and Eric had some conversation about the process and timelines for documents to be filed.

Calvin Rose, Highway:

- March started out pretty rough with snowstorms. He hopes that winter is over.
- Patching up and creating dirt for roads and cleaning up in Rensselaer Falls.
- Mary Ann shared that the additional funds CHIPS paperwork was done within two days of the notice.

Motion to accept Department Reports made by Bob Washo, 2nd by Jim Smith. All in favor. Motion carried.

I. Committee Reports

Highway Committee, Bob Washo & Jim Smith:

- Bob: the Highway Committee met this week to start coming up with a preliminary list of roads for summer construction season. Still don't have the County bid information yet, but at least have some roads to start off with. Should be in good shape there. The Village of Rensselaer Falls has requested to help with some projects. Calvin is working to get some estimates for those projects that will need

to be approved by their Board. An MOU will need to be created between the Town and the Village of Rensselaer Falls for any costs that the Town might incur.

- Bob: National Grid is moving forward with the pole movement on the Miner Street safety connector. Had Axlon as a subcontractor come in to do some tree and brush clean up under the wires. That is wrapped up. Next will be National Grid bringing in the new poles.

Communication & Technology, Bob Washo & Martha Foley Smith:

- Bob: the Committee met today. The plan was to meet in the Court room to test the owl for the second round, but there was Jury Trial going on in there. Committee met in the Board room instead. Feeling good about being in the situation of streaming meetings out when everyone is back in person. In good shape technology wise. Mentioned months ago, the need to purchase some TV screens for the court room for meetings and use by the Court. Had verbal approval. \$1,000 budget shared by the Town and Village that includes installation potentially. The Village has someone coming in to look at the bandwidth and the hardware required in the Court Room. Bob asked if everyone is still on the same page with that. Yes.

Shared Services, Martha Foley Smith:

- The committee met this morning to review six shared services agreements that needed to be looked at. The Recreation Shared Services agreement was tabled so that a fresh start could be had with the Recreation department.
- Mary Ann shared for the record that she sat in on the meeting since the Town is down one Board member. The prior Committee worked hard to get the language correct in the agreements and get them updated.

Recreation Committee, Martha Foley Smith:

- Down one Board member.
- She sent around the draft proposal to restructure staffing. Work in progress. Carol Pynchon with the Village is working on a rough budget. Will have something more final for the joint meeting in April. This is a culmination of a lot of work of Village and Town Board members and 25 members from the public.

Economic Development, Martha Foley Smith

- Cares ACT Money – Leigh said in her report a fair assessment on that. The Town can recoup some money spent over the last year. A lot of categories and opportunities. See her report. Awards will be made on a rolling basis through August.

- BOA process – currently in step three. The company that they are working with is doing an implementation project matrix. The company thinks they will have the application document by mid-summer. Two virtual public meetings in late spring. There are some big properties that are included in the Brownfield Area.
- The Economic Development Consortium is working on writing MOUs with all of the contributors because the amount of contributions isn't clear or how they are made.

J. Old Business

- Discussion of the Library Account

Mary Ann stated that this has been talked about before. The Town has two CDs at North Country Savings Bank in the name of Hepburn Library. The Town collects the interest and then the interest is given to the Library. The 2 CDs: \$15,068.18 and \$18,458.48, total \$33,526.66. Every time a maturity notice is received, she is convinced more than ever that the money should be put into the hands of the Library. She talked a little bit to Eric and believes that some help will need to come from the State Legislature, but she is seeking the Board's input on this. Should the Town continue to collect the interest on this every year, or should the Town pursue getting this money to the Library?

Bob Washo: the Hepburn family entrusted the Town with that money to invest the best way it knows how. Other than writing a check once a year he doesn't see an inconvenience with honoring their request. He would like to see something in the Hepburn family saying they were signing off on that before the Town unilaterally makes that decision. The family gave it to the Town to manage for a reason. It's not broke, why try to fix it?

Jim Smith: he believes it's going to end up in a court somewhere to determine if the Town can do that. The family left it to the Town to supply the money to the Library. This was discussed a few times when he was Supervisor and it seemed to be a whole lot more bother to change it than to continue to get the money to the Library. Eric may know better, but when a trust has been set up like that it usually takes the action of the court to do away with that trust.

Eric believes it will be a difficult task to undo that. Maybe not impossible, but difficult.

Jim Smith: it was put there for a reason, let's leave it there.

Bob Washo: is the language restrictive of what the Town can do with the money? Can the Town put the money into a checking or savings account and create a revolving loan fund for the Library that makes the money more liquid, but making them responsible for maintaining the balance? The Town could be creative in helping them use the money on a more regular basis and still maintain the integrity of the trust.

Bob and Jim continued conversation about the Trust and Eric offered to look at the language and see if there's anything creative that can be done. The Board agreed. Eric will bring something back to the Board next month.

K. New Business

- **Housing Account Activity**
Mary Ann reported funds of \$46,916.00. January 1, 2013 \$46,576.61 was deposited. No activity since the deposit. She has met with the Housing Council Director and Leigh to see if there is any record of this money. She has asked Leigh and Karin to research their records to see where this money generated from. Here is another account that she believes that the Town should be helping families with somehow. The Board will need to decide which way to go with this. As of right now the records shows no activity this money. It's sitting there collecting interest.
- **2021 Budget Amendment Code Enforcement Salary**
Clerk Blackburn shared the resolution on the screen and read it for meeting participants.
Motion to pass this resolution made by Mary Ann Ashley, 2nd by Jim Smith. All in favor. Motion carried. (See attached)
- **Approve Highway Ford F 350 Truck Purchase**
Motion to approve this purchase made by Jim Smith, 2nd by Bob Washo.
Bob Washo: this truck is being purchased on state contract.
Mary Ann Ashley: this truck is an approved budget item.
All in favor. Motion carried.

L. Public Comment

- No public comment.

M. Executive Session

Upon majority vote upon a motion that identifies the subject to be considered, the Council will conduct an executive session to discuss any of the issues identified as proper by Public Officers Law 105 (1) (F) matters leading to an appointment and (H) the proposed acquisition of property.

1. Motion to go into Executive Session at 7:16 pm made by Jim Smith, 2nd by Bob Washo. All in favor. Motion carried.
2. Motion to come out of Executive Session at 7:53 pm made by Jim Smith, 2nd by Mary Ann Ashley. All in favor. Motion carried.
3. Additional New Business

Motion to appoint Paul Mitchell to the Canton Capital Resource Corporation Board of Directors was made by Bob Washo, 2nd by Martha Foley Smith. All in favor. Motion carried.

Motion to appoint Elisha Hurlbut to the Zone Board of Appeals was made by Bob Washo, 2nd by Jim Smith. All in favor. Motion carried.

4. Motion to adjourn at 7:54 pm made by Bob Washo, 2nd by Jim Smith. All in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Karin Blackburn".

Karin Blackburn
Town Clerk

**TOWN OF CANTON
RESOLUTION _____**

**APRIL 8, 2021
2021 BUDGET AMENDMENT
CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER SALARY ADJUSTMENT**

WHEREAS, for several years the Town and Village of Canton have equally contributed to the Code Enforcement Office to provide CEO services to both the Town and Village; and

WHEREAS, both boards decided to change the Code Enforcement Office from a jointly funded position to a position that serves each municipality separately; and

WHEREAS, a budget amendment resolution is required to change the salary of the Town CEO position by approval of the Town Board;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Canton Town Board hereby approves the budget amendment transferring \$10,000 from B fund balance to the Code Enforcement Officer Personal Services Line B-3600-3620-1 position for a total of \$53,375.

Date

Canton Town Clerk