

Town of Canton
October 14, 2021
Public Hearing 5:45 pm
Regular Board Meeting 6:00pm
Minutes
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

Present

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

Also in Attendance

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Karin Blackburn, Confidential Secretary/Bookkeeper Dylan Barringer, Assessor Cindy Brand, Historian Linda Casserly, Economic Development Director Leigh Rodriguez, Recreation Director Meghan Richardson, Highway Superintendent Calvin Rose, John Gray, CPA, Attorney Eric Gustafson

Members of the Public: Paul Baxter, John Casserly, Thomas Graser, Michael Hammond, Susan Huntley, Toby Irven, Karen McAuliffe, Paul Mitchell, Dave Pearson, Bob Santamoor, Heidi Smith, Dan Soulia, Lyne Soulia, John Taillon

Public Hearing

- Supervisor Mary Ann Ashley opened the Public Hearing at 5:47 pm and asked Clerk Blackburn to share and read the Tax Levy General Municipal Law 3-c Public Hearing Notice.
- Supervisor Ashley turned it over to Attorney Eric Gustafson to speak to this law.
- Eric Gustafson: this is the standard local law required by municipalities that intend to override the tax cap law according to General Municipal Law 3-c. That section of the law states that if you're going to override the tax cap it needs to be with local law by super majority. That is what is being done here at this public hearing.
- Supervisor Ashley opened it up for public comment.
- Bob Washo concurred with Supervisor Ashley that this is a tool to put in our toolbox in case we want to use it.
- Supervisor Ashley asked the Board if this law should be passed after the Public Hearing or during the regular Board meeting. Bob recommended that the vote happen tonight. Martha agreed.
- Motion to close Public Hearing at 5:53 pm made by Jim Smith, 2nd by Martha Foley Smith. All in favor. Motion carried.

Regular Board Meeting

A. Call to Order

- Supervisor Ashley opened the Board meeting at 6:00 p.m.
- Agenda modifications:
 - Old Business #3: Proposal for Plastics Resolution from the Sustainability Committee
 - New Business #7: Discuss and possibly approved handicap accessible entrance in the lobby of the Municipal Building
- Tax Levy General Municipal Law 3-c
Motion to pass this local law made by Bob Washo, 2nd by Jim Smith.
Comment by Jim Smith: even though we've never used it, we may have to. With requests, increased staff, and required mandates, we may need to use it. \$407,000 in the budget just for employee benefits.
All in favor. Motion carried.

B. Public Comment

- David Pearson
Post Commander, Canton VFW
Regarding flags and marker reimbursement for Veteran's graves.
VFW distributes 1,728 flags
Received reimbursement from the Town of Canton in the amount of \$2,200 for the last 20 years. In November 2020, the VFW was notified that the reimbursement would be the last one. These flags and grave markers are for local Veterans.
1,728 flags = less than \$1 per flag. Request for continued support for these flags and grave markers.
- Lyne Soulia, Canton, NY
She thanks David Pearson for his service and thank you for bringing the issue to her attention.
Department Heads who submit reports, she spoke to Mary Ann about making those made public. It's hard for the public to understand what the verbal Department Head reports are about – some are thorough, some aren't. She has requested these reports from Department Heads. These should be put on the Town website. She asks that the Town continues to work towards putting these on the website.
- Linda Casserly, Canton, NY
Regarding David Pearson's comments. She understands where he is coming from. She has family who has served. It means a lot to family members to have those

markers. She thanked David for his remarks.

C. County Legislature Representative(s) Update(s)

None.

D. Approval of Minutes

Special Board Meeting 9/2/21, 9/7/21

Regular Board Meeting 9/9/21

Special Board Meeting 9/30/21

Motion to approve these minutes made by Dave Nelson, 2nd by Jim Smith. All in favor.
Motion carried.

E. Supervisor Report

- John Gray read over the highlights of the September 2021 monthly report which was sent to the Town Council prior to the monthly meeting.
- Mary Ann added \$500,000 is not part of the Town's operating money.

F. Town Clerk Report

- John Gray stated that all the data input and data reconciliations have been completed for the last 21 months, but no formal report is ready for tonight. There is a meeting in the morning with the Town Clerk regarding a few questions for clarification and once that is completed, the final report will be presented at the next Board meeting.

G. Correspondence

- Fiscal Stress Score Report from NYS Comptroller's Office – the score is now at 0 for 2020. In 2017 it was 15.8, in 2018 it was 9.6, in 2019 it was 3.3, and now in 2020 it is at 0. She commends Gray & Gray, the Town legal team, and the Town Board for making this happen. This is a team effort.
- The Town received a request from the Volunteer Transportation Center for assistance in funding for operations for 2022. \$2,106 was the total request.
- Canton Chamber of Commerce Newsletter
- Letter from Department of Public Service regarding a Comprehensive Broadband Connectivity Act enacted in May of 2021, amended the Public Service Law to add a new section 224-c. The Department of Public Service has hired ECC Technologies to gather the necessary data to develop the detailed internet access map and to produce the report of findings and recommendations related to the availability, reliability, and cost of high-speed internet and broadband services in New York state.

They will be putting out an on-line survey for this. Forwarding this to the committee.

- Oswegatchie Waterfront Revitalization Plan is done, and the report is out. C & S did an excellent job. Copies will be sent to the municipalities that participated: Town of DeKalb, Village of Heuvelton, Village of Rensselaer Falls, Village of Richville, and the Town of Oswegatchie. This was a Phase 1 to gather data. If communities wanted a Phase 2, they would have to apply. Some really good stuff came out of this.
- Canton Step 2 Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination Study – the Town was also part of this. The Village took the lead. Leigh Rodriguez and the Economic Development Steering Committee worked hard on this.

H. Audit Committee

- Approval of Expenditures
 - A Fund: \$26,339.03
 - B Fund: \$3,936.34
 - DA Fund: \$41,692.82
 - DB Fund: \$16,347.59
 - SF Fund: \$274.69
 - SL Fund: \$3,750.00
 - TA Fund: \$16,471.21

Questions from Bob so he understands the process:

- When solar professional services are being paid for, those are being paid for out of A and then being reimbursed to A from the escrow account. Mary Ann confirmed that is correct. There are three separate books for solar where this is recorded.
- Bills from the Village for the Court Constables to go to firing range and four hours of the Village Police Officer at time and a half. This is news to him. The Court Committee will be meeting next week, and he will be asking about this. This is a new expense that the Town has never had before. Mary Ann confirmed there is an agreement for the Constables. This is a new expense, and it is in the agreement that the Town can question and meet about this at any time.

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

I. Acceptance of Department Reports

- **Linda Casserly, Historian**
 - Thank you to the Building Committee, Bob Washo, the Mayor, and Carol for the upgrades to the kiosk out front. One half will be for Historian Office use.
 - Working with Kendall Taylor has been a dream.
 - Meghan Richardson is doing a wonderful job and has requested to put photos up in the Community Room.

- Meeting with someone on Monday regarding the Taylor Family.
- **Meghan Richardson, Recreation**
 - Getting ready for ice season. Ice opening pushed back by a week.
 - The Pavilion is coming together. The rubber flooring in the lobby looks great. AW Collins delivered vending machines with credit card readers.
 - Repairs done in the mechanical room.
 - Elevator service company came in on Tuesday. First inspection and full load test passed. Service company reported that the elevator is in good shape.
 - Learned that the electric Zamboni wouldn't start. Village Electrician came over to troubleshoot with no luck. Efforts were put into the backup Olympia. No backup for Pavilion and no backup for SUNY Canton or St. Lawrence because that is the role that the Olympia plays.
 - Historical photo project in the Community Room.
- **Leigh Rodriguez, Economic Development**
 - Downtown Revitalization Initiative – presentation was made to the selection committee on October 8th. \$10 million contest. Decision being made by the end of the month or early November.
 - Continued work on the New York Main Street project.
 - Moving forward on the Waterfront Grant that includes Miner Street and Willow Island.
 - Finished up the Brownfield Opportunity Step Two document – wrapped up at the end of September.
 - Couple of Tree Grants in progress. Contractors engaged for that.
 - Getting back to the CARES Act application - \$500,000 for small business assistance.
 - Putting together a Housing Taskforce to create a strategic plan for housing in the Town of Canton.
- **Cindy Brand, Assessor**
 - Cindy thanked Mary Ann for the camera that was purchased. Better picture taking from the road in the field.
 - Equalization rate: preliminary numbers – the rate will be going from 90 to 80. The sales are still coming in over and above the assessments.
 - Next month she will show how the tax bill is affected by the equalization rate and that the exemptions are dropping as well.
 - She can tell everyone what their Exemption and STAR Exemption will be.
 - Jim Smith asked if the equalization rate is going to affect the whole county? Not just the Town of Canton. Cindy agrees.
- **Calvin Rose, Highway**
 - He would like to acknowledge and recognize two employees who helped a community member out last Thursday. Sean LaValley was working on the Potter Road. Found someone sitting on the road next to her vehicle. He called Mark Rood to come assist. She had been out there for two days.

- 35 yards of concrete
- Asking for permission to sell 2004 Chevrolet ¾ ton two-wheel drive truck.
- **Karin Blackburn, Town Clerk**
 - September was a busy month.
 - Out with COVID. There was a lot of concern in the community about taxes and the lack of business coming through the office. Happy to report that even though the office had to close for two weeks, the office worked like a well-oiled machine. Staff saw about 200 people for hunting and fishing licenses, 75 people for other business in the office. Sold roughly \$8,700 worth of hunting and fishing license, and about 87% collected on the Canton Central School tax collection, about \$8.2 million.
 - Thank you to everyone in the building and the Town for their patience while the office was closed. For those who were too busy worrying about the business in the office, the work still got done.
 - Shout out to Jeni Reed and Dylan Barringer. Everyone pulled together.

Motion to accept Department Reports made by Martha Foley Smith, 2nd by Dave Nelson. All in favor. Motion carried.

J. Committee Report

- **Martha Foley Smith, Communication & Technology**
 - Making Department Head reports available on the Canton website is number one on the Committee's agenda next week. The issue is some items in the reports are for the public eye, some aren't, but the Committee is working to make that happen.
 - Website training scheduled for website creation and the creation password protected pages.
 - Discussing cybersecurity and monitoring social media.
- **Bob Washo, Complete Streets**
 - The Committee met this week for a number of updates.
 - Miner Street Project – Verizon showed up last week. On site now but called off regularly to put out fires elsewhere in the County.
 - Formalizing a more thoughtful process about how ideas can make it to the Village and Town Boards.
- **Jim Smith, Solar Committee**
 - Committee met with Bill Buchan, the Town appointed Solar Attorney. There is an agenda item for this meeting under New Business.
- **Dave Nelson, Sustainability Committee**
 - Committee met last week to discuss the Single Use Plastics Ban resolution and an education campaign. The campaign may be more effective than the ban. There's a lot of energy for a grassroots education campaign.

- **Jim Smith, Negotiations Committee**
 - Committee met with the CSEA representative and the membership. Very close to approving a new contract. Meeting again in the middle of November to finalize that and have a new contract by January 1.
- **Martha Foley Smith, Recreation Committee**
 - Committee meeting on Monday. Meghan gave a large download during her department report.
 - Martha appreciates that she is very active on social media, getting the word out to the public every step of the way.
 - Happy to see the backup Zamboni going.

K. Old Business

- **Discuss and consider action on Charter Communications Agreement**
 - Currently have a ten-year agreement that has expired.
 - Original proposal Charter Communications came back with was a fifteen-year agreement, but it was agreed that a ten-year agreement was enough.
 - Mary Ann recommends having a public hearing at the next Board meeting.
 - Eric Gustafson reached out to some folks in the industry and doesn't have any expertise with these agreements, but heavily governed by the Public Service Commission. The information that was provided to the Town is that changing those agreements is very difficult and the Town will run into issues with the Public Service Agreement.
 - Mary Ann reminded everyone that there is a franchise tax that comes back to the Town which is part of the operating budget.
- **Set Public Hearing for Cable Franchise Renewal Agreement of Spectrum Northeast, LLC**
 - Setting public hearing for the November meeting. The Board agrees.
- **Proposal for Plastics Resolution from the Sustainability Committee**
 - Resolution proposal for the Town and Village encouraging restaurants and other establishments that provide beverages to make plastic straws available by requests only and to stop providing stirrers made of plastic.
 - Mary Ann recommends putting this on the agenda for the Joint Town and Village meeting on October 27th.

L. New Business

- **Planning Board Resignation of Alternate Nicole Hayes and Board of Assessment Review Appointment**
 - Mary Ann read the letter from Nicole Hayes
 - Motion acknowledging resignation and approving her appointment to the Board of Assessment Review made by Bob Washo, 2nd by Martha Foley Smith. All in favor.

Motion carried.

- **Planning Board Appointment Bill Meyers**

- Motion to appoint Bill Meyers to the Planning Board made by Bob Washo, 2nd by Martha Foley Smith. All in favor. Motion carried.

- **Approve Escrow Agreement with EDF Renewables and Authorize Supervisor to set up an escrow account**

- Mary Ann asked Clerk Blackburn to bring up the Resolution to establish an escrow account and an escrow agreement between the parties.
- Motion to pass this resolution made by Jim Smith, 2nd by Bob Washo.
Bob Washo clarified that this \$20,000 is outside of the intervener funds that will be available down the road for impacted parties. The Town is under advisement from Bill Buchan to move on this.
Jim Smith commented this is the larger project, the 1,500-acre project. Regulated by a whole lot different than the two smaller projects, different set of guidelines.
More to come on this one.
All in favor. Motion carried.

- **Highway Superintendent Request to Sell 2004 Chevrolet ¾ Ton Truck**

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

- **Set Public Hearing on 2022 Budget**

- Another budget meeting needs to be scheduled to discuss the budget, then a public hearing needs to be scheduled. The next budget work session is scheduled Tuesday, October 19th at 6pm.

- **Discuss and possibly approve handicap accessible entrance in the lobby of the Municipal Building**

- Village already discussed this. There were some community concerns about the ease of coming into the building.
- Quote: \$5,814.66 from Barkley's to install this system.
- The Building Committee discussed this as well and is in full support of moving forward as soon as possible.
- Motion to pay for half the bill of the installation made by Bob Washo, 2nd by Martha Foley Smith. All in favor. Motion carried.

M. Public Comment

- **Paul Mitchell**

- North Country This Week**

Can the Board comment on Dave Pearson's letter please?

Mary Ann appreciates Dave Pearson's feedback. There was a payment made in December of 2020 and the full funding for the flags has been put back into the 2022 budget.

Bob Washo added that during the beginning of the pandemic there was so much uncertainty around income and revenues, the Board had to identify what hadn't been paid out yet in order to meet payroll and other mandates obligations. Once it was found that the Town was through the worst of things, the money was distributed and re-entered into the next year's budget. This was all COVID, and cash flow related, no other intention otherwise.

N. 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) (E) collective negotiations pursuant to Article 14 of the Civil Service Law 1 and (H) the proposed acquisition of land.

1. Motion to go into Executive Session at 7:25 pm made by Dave Nelson, 2nd by Martha Foley Smith. All in favor. Motion carried.
2. Motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:11 pm made by Mary Ann Ashley, 2nd by Jim Smith. All in favor. Motion carried.

Motion made by Bob Washo to retain professional services of Duncan Weinberg Genzer Pembroke for legal services performed related to the Pyrites Hydro relicensing project, 2nd by Jim Smith.

3. Motion to adjourn at 8:12 pm made by Martha Foley Smith, 2nd by Bob Washo. All in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Karin
Blackburn
Town Clerk