

NEW LISBON TOWN BOARD---JANUARY 12, 2016---7:30 PM
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING---TOWN HALL, GARRATTSVILLE

Present: Supervisor Timothy Miller, Councilmen Robert Eklund, Joseph Gregory & John Pegg, Councilwoman Flo Loomis, Hwy. Supt. Bill Whitaker, Clerk Charlene Wells, Co. Rep. Meg Kennedy, Residents: Edward George, Lenny Melillo, James & Andrea Denekamp, Barry Braunius , Edward Lentz, Melissa Doyle, Tom Riso, Sue Smith.

Supervisor Timothy Miller opened the regular monthly meeting at 7:30 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance. A motion was made by Councilwoman Flo Loomis, seconded by Councilman Robert Eklund and carried 5/0 to accept the minutes for the December 29, 2015 special meeting as written. Supervisor Miller requested that the January 6, 2016 minutes delete the reference to him concerning meeting in the large meeting room. A motion was made by Councilman Joseph Gregory seconded by Councilman Robert Eklund and carried 5/0 to accept the amended minutes for the January 6, 2016 Public Hearing and Organizational meeting.

Hwy. Supt. Bill Whitaker was grateful for the mild winter which has helped save money in his budget. He noted that the roller has a rear main seal leaking and has some electrical issues. The machine does not have many hours on it. He got an estimate of \$9400.00 from Vantage Equipment to fix the seal. (They would have to pull the motor). After talking with other hwy. departments, Supt. Whitaker advised the Board that he thinks that they can pull the motor and change the seal themselves and hopefully they can also look into the wiring issues themselves. The truck box for the 2009 Freightliner has been delivered to T & T, but not installed yet. The CHIPS money & winter recovery money that Supt. Whitaker filed for has been received. He noted that he has to file for reimbursement of the sealing cost and shoulder work before February.

Councilman Robert Eklund asked if Vantage was the only dealer who could fix the roller. Supt. Bill Whitaker advised him that the Town of Burlington sent theirs to Utica and only spent about \$5000.00. Councilman Eklund noted that if they cannot get it fixed themselves, Supt. Whitaker should have several repair estimates available so we can get the best deal on the repair costs. Councilman Robert Eklund asked how many overtime hours there were in December 2015. Supt. Bill Whitaker responded that the guys each had between 3-5 hours. He further noted that he has done work himself instead of calling in the crew. Councilman Eklund asked why both loader tires needed to be fixed. Supt. Whitaker advised that after using the loader to push the sand pile, sand got in the front tire rims which caused the tires to start leaking.

The floor was opened for public comment. Edward George thought that the tables should be set up a bit differently. He asked if any pressure was being put on T& T to finish the new truck. Supt. Bill Whitaker responded that he doesn't like to make a nuisance of himself by being pushy and he doesn't want any problems with the work because they are rushing to get it finished.

Andrea Denekamp stated that she felt that there was a lack of communication between the Town Board and Highway Department. She suggested that maybe requests should be written down and state where they come from. She condemned the hasty action taken at the November 2015 meeting to eliminate a highway position just to save money. She felt that it was irresponsible to eliminate a position without knowing what the implications and consequences were. She submitted some information on how much the new employee has saved over the previous one who retired and some questions that should be considered before looking for part-timers. She noted that not many people can afford to only work part-time and deal with a variable schedule. Councilman Robert Eklund responded that the Board needs more information on highway items from Supt. Whitaker. He noted that the Board voted to eliminate the funding for a highway position, which could have been any one of the employees, since we don't have a union. He felt that we are probably going to have to raise taxes if we want to keep the same level of service that we now provide. Andrea Denekamp added that the roads need to be maintained all year at a certain level. She suggested that the Board come up with a plan/proposal with the facts about what it would do to the hwy. dept. if a full time position was eliminated and let the public have a chance to review and comment on it.

Edward Lentz stated that he agreed with Andrea Denekamp; that we need to get all the facts and make a fact-based decision on the possibility of eliminating a full-time highway position. He also had some ideas to get more residents involved by providing the agenda to the public ahead of time, putting the draft minutes on the website instead of waiting for them to be approved, make more copies of things like the Supervisor's monthly report available at the meetings, and expand the Facebook page for the Town that he had started. Clerk Charlene Wells noted that most of the time she makes extra copies of things for the public and has them available at the meeting. Her office budget would probably have to increase if she had to make an unknown number of copies of everything that she gives to the Board for every meeting.

Lenny Melillo added that he liked Andrea Denekamp's statement. Issues need to be studied and decisions made on facts, not emotions. Lenny also suggested that we get an electronic sign to advertise meetings, activities and for emergency announcements to place at the end of the town hall driveway. We don't have electricity at the end of the driveway, but it can run on solar or battery. Councilwoman Flo Loomis commented that she doesn't like electronic signs, but adding lights to the Town Hall sign would be nice. Councilman Robert Eklund noted that not everyone would go by the sign. Lenny added that he thought other towns paid about \$8,000.00 for their signs. Lenny will gather some information on the signs for the Board.

Sue Smith commented that the majority of the Town residents do not come to Garrattsville on a regular basis and therefore the majority of residents would not see the sign to warrant the expense.

Melissa Doyle commented that she liked the new meeting set up and the direction the Board is taking to try to get more people involved. She volunteered to help with a Facebook page for the Town. It would be another way for people to get news and gather public comments. Councilman Robert Eklund added that if we had an official Facebook page there would have to be parameters and guidelines set by the Board.

Tom Riso stated that he felt the Town website has all the information that town residents need. He suggested that we establish an email list that can be utilized for updates, notices or emergency situations.

James Denekamp added that he thought it would be good to advertise ahead of time for hot topics that were going to be on the Board's agenda.

Supervisor Timothy Miller noted that Historian Virginia Schoradt had submitted her annual report for the Board to review. Justice Bruce Moskos has received a grant from the Justice Court Assistance Program for \$800.00 towards a new desk and \$3,252.50 for adding additional security cameras. Supervisor Miller noted that the Town of New Lisbon sign on St. Hwy. 51 on the town line has been vandalized and he would like to see it fixed or replaced.

The Upper Susquehanna Coalition has sent information on doing a study of the watershed area of the upper Butternut Valley. It would involve looking at bridges and culverts. They would provide training for the highway department and suggested if we participated in the project we might be eligible for more grant money. Councilwoman Flo Loomis commented that there would be no negative reason for us not to be a part of the study. Councilman Robert Eklund noted that the BVA was also approached about the project, and responded that they were interested in participating, but they have not heard back from the Upper Susquehanna Coalition.

The Otsego County Code Office completed a fire and safety inspection of the Town Hall today. They noted that our fire extinguishers were about to expire. Payne's Fire Extinguisher Sale & Services always comes annually to take care of this. They requested information that our alarm system has been tested. Tara of Fargo Alarms will provide them with this information. We need to get a pressure relief valve on the water system so Stan Leonard has been contacted to handle this. The Code Officer was not sure if it was allowable for the fuel tank to be placed where it was, but we have not received a call back saying it would be a problem. They want a burn test on all of the emergency lights. They noted that the small conference room has an occupancy limit of 22. They will send us new occupancy limit signs.

There is a FEMA Floodplain meeting on Wednesday. They are still working on revising the flood insurance maps. The Supervisor will be in Albany and unable to attend.

A motion was made by Councilman Robert Eklund, seconded by Councilman John Pegg and carried 5/0 to clean, fix or replace any Town signs that need it around the entire Town.

A motion was made by Supervisor Timothy Miller, seconded by Councilwoman Flo Loomis and carried 5/0 to participate in the Upper Susquehanna Coalition study on the Butternut Valley watershed.

Morris Central School Nurse Chris Brooks has agreed to accept the position of Health Officer. A motion was made by Councilman Joseph Gregory, seconded by Councilman Robert Eklund and carried 5/0 to appoint Chris Brooks, RN as our Health Officer for a four year term.

Supervisor Timothy Miller announced that he has selected Steven Child to serve as Deputy Supervisor and that he has been sworn in. A motion was made by Councilman Joseph Gregory, seconded by Councilwoman Flo Loomis and carried 5/0 to authorize the Deputy Supervisor to sign all checks, transfer funds and make bank deposits while serving for the Supervisor.

Otsego County Representative Meg Kennedy was present. She can be reached by email at Kennedym@otsegocounty.com or by phone in the evenings at 607-293-8829. She advised the Board that she is serving on the Solid Waste/Environmental Concerns, Intergovernmental Affairs and Human Services committees. She noted that there will be an Emergency Stream Intervention Workshop in May, which if we had our hwy. dept. attend would be helpful in getting permits. Soil & Water will be sponsoring their annual tree sale. They are still collecting agricultural plastics for recycling. Books and cds are now accepted as recyclables. The FEMA Floodplain meeting will be held tomorrow. She noted that the maps are going to be revised, but the changes haven't been accepted yet. Tom Riso asked if she knew anything about reverse 911 which he had enrolled in but has never got a message from the County. Co. Rep. Kennedy replied that she did not know anything about it. Edward Lentz noted that he knew it had worked on one occasion. James Denekamp added that if people would join the fire department they get a pager to hear about emergencies.

Land Use Officer Tom Riso reported that the rat problem reported by the Brett's on St. Hwy. 51 has been resolved with the accumulation of garbage that was most likely the cause being removed.

The Board met prior to the meeting to review the bills. A motion was made by Councilman Joseph Gregory, seconded by Councilman John Pegg and carried 5/0 to pay General Fund bills #3 through #22 for a total of \$5,491.19 and Highway Fund bills #1 through #23 for a total of \$26,843.72. Supervisor Miller paid General Fund bills #1 & #2 for a total of \$300.00 with prior Board approval. The Supervisor's monthly report was submitted to the Board.

Councilwoman Flo Loomis questioned if the water at the highway garage was unsafe since we are buying drinking water for the men. It was tested a few years ago and was okay. Councilman Eklund didn't feel it was extravagant to buy them drinking water. Councilwoman Flo Loomis asked if the hwy. dept. could take their own garbage to Oneonta and cut the cost of the \$105.00 per month we are now paying for pick up. Lenny Melillo suggested we look into Casella, who is a certified hauler. He also noted that Barney & Sons tests the firehouse water annually, which we should have done at the Town Hall & Hwy. Garage.

Councilman Joseph Gregory was assigned to audit the Supervisor's office, Councilman Robert Eklund will audit the Justice's office and Councilwoman Flo Loomis will audit the Town Clerk/Collector's office.

Planning Board member Robert Taylor will be attending the February 2016 Association of Towns Conference in NYC where he is due to take over as President. A motion was made by Councilman Robert Eklund, seconded by Councilwoman Flo Loomis and carried 4/1 (Councilman Joseph Gregory against) to reimburse Robert Taylor for the cost of his attendance at the February 2016 Association of Towns Conference. A motion was made by Councilman Robert Eklund, seconded by Councilman John Pegg and carried 5/0 to authorize Robert Taylor to be our voting delegate at the February 2016 Association of Towns Conference in NYC.

Supervisor Timothy Miller noted that he still hadn't talked to Attorney Martin Tillapaugh. Councilman Robert Eklund advised that he has another attorney in mind if Attorney Tillapaugh doesn't want to continue.

A motion was made by Supervisor Timothy Miller and seconded by Councilman Joseph Gregory to add an opening prayer to any meeting as long as it is respectful and open to any faith. Discussion followed. Councilman Robert Eklund felt that an opening prayer was a conflict of the separation of church and state. He thought we could have a problem with different faiths wanting equal time. He questioned if it would send a message that people have to be religious to get a fair deal from the Board. Councilwoman Flo Loomis stated that she is opposed to having a prayer before a Board meeting. She felt that we've never needed a prayer before and Board meetings are not the place for prayer. She felt that if people wanted to pray they can do that on their own. She added that the Supervisor's occupation as a minister is outside of Town business and maybe the public should be asked for their input. Supervisor Timothy Miller noted that the Supreme Court has said respectful prayer is allowable as long as it does not advertise for a certain type of faith. Councilman John Pegg stated he had no problem with it. Supervisor Timothy Miller, Councilman Joseph Gregory and Councilman John Pegg voted in favor and Councilman Robert Eklund and Councilwoman Flo Loomis voted against, so the motion passed 3/2 to allow a respectful opening prayer.

The Board had no objection to setting the Town Hall up with a Wi-Fi Hotspot, which is a free service through Time Warner Cable. Instead of being able to pick up on our network, there will be a separate one for the public to be able to access and ours will have a password for more security.

The floor was reopened to the public. Lenny Melillo commented that he felt that the public should have been allowed to comment on the opening prayer issue before the Board voted on it. He noted that at the fire dept. meetings they have a moment of silence which allows everyone to reflect in their own way. He thinks that the Board has opened a "box of worms" by allowing any religious group to say an opening prayer. Supervisor Timothy Miller noted there would be time limit on the prayer.

James Denekamp added that he doesn't have a problem with a prayer or moment of silence. The Pledge of Allegiance says "under God". Tom Riso noted that the Congress opens with a prayer, but the separation of church and state comes from the Constitution. He added that either a prayer or moment of silence is okay.

Edward George stated that prayer is okay for those who want to participate. He suggested that Mr. Gregory set up his camera to get all of the Board, not just part of it.

Melissa Doyle asked if the Board wanted to get the public's opinion on the prayer issue like Councilwoman Flo Loomis had suggested. Councilman Robert Eklund responded that he still welcomed public comment but that the vote was already taken so the only way to change the vote was to vote people out of office.

With no further business, a motion was made by Councilwoman Flo Loomis, seconded by Councilman Robert Eklund and carried 5/0 to adjourn at 9:20 PM.

Charlene R. Wells, New Lisbon Town Clerk

