

Town of Canaan, New York
Town Board Regular Meeting Minutes:
April 10, 2023

6:00 PM Health Insurance Workshop *(in person)*

7:00 Regular Meeting *(hybrid: in person & on Zoom)*

Present

Supervisor Brenda Adams
Councilperson Alan Miller
Councilperson Ginny Nightingale
Councilperson David Patzwahl
Councilperson William Powers

Also in Attendance:

Town Clerk Joshua Weisbuch
Town Highway Department Superintendent Stephen Van Tassel

Audience: 4

Zoom: 3

MOMENT OF SILENCE AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVALS

MINUTES:

February 13, March 13, March 22 minutes have not yet been submitted from Town Clerk; Clerk noted he would get them done in a week and a half.

March Bills

Supervisor asked a question about a “UniFirst” invoice/credit; requested approval of bills be subject to clarification of that credit. 5 AYES- Motion carried.

Supervisor Brenda Adams – yes;
Councilperson Alan Miller – yes;
Councilperson Ginny Nightingale – yes;
Councilperson David Patzwahl – yes;
Councilperson William Powers – yes.

SUPERVISOR MONTHLY REPORT: Read by Town Clerk

TOWN CLERK REVENUES	\$ 151.00
HIGHWAY FUND	\$ 607,921.21
HIGHWAY FUND CAPITAL	\$ 32,331.73
LIGHTING DISTRICTS	\$ 3,3640.61

FIRE DISTRICTS	\$ 300.00
BUILDING INSPECTOR	\$
PLANNING BOARD	300.00
RECREATION	\$ 3,498.37
COURT REVENUES	\$ 3,628.00
ZONING BOARD OF	\$
APPEALS	
TAX COLLECTOR	\$

Board questions and discussion about financials:

- Dog licensing fees are still not broken out in financials. It was noted that the Town Clerk’s January & February checks had been submitted but not in time to be reflected on the April financials; March is open. The board noted that these reports are due by the fifteenth of the month and need to be caught up and current.
- The Supervisor noted that the liability and property insurance invoices came in over budget and she is working with the agency to understand the difference between the numbers provided for the budget and invoicing. She will report back next month.

PROCLAMATION

A proclamation was read honoring and thanking the Canaan Protective Fire Company for their response and extraordinary service during the recent snow emergency in March.

RESOLUTIONS & MOTIONS

Resolution #64 Cemetery Mowing Services

Councilperson Patzwahl noted that one of the two approved vendors for cemetery mowing was unable to provide services this year due to labor shortages. The remaining approved vendor had provided bids for all five cemeteries and is now the next lowest bid for the cemeteries mown by the vendor with labor issues. Councilperson Patzwahl proposed having a single provider for all cemeteries this season, Lagerwall Lawn Care. Councilperson Nightingale moved to approve. 5 AYES- Motion carried.

- Supervisor Brenda Adams – yes;
- Councilperson Alan Miller – yes;
- Councilperson Ginny Nightingale – yes;
- Councilperson David Patzwahl – yes; and
- Councilperson William Powers – yes.

Resolution #65 Speed Reduction Request State Route 295 (east & west of SR22 intersection)

Councilperson Patzwahl explained the process to request lowering the speed limit to 45 which could include a traffic study and possibly relocating signage. Supervisor Adams moved to request lowering the speed limit east and west of State Route 22 on State Route 295, with the understanding that this will formalize a request for a speed study. Councilperson Nightingale seconded it. 5 AYES- Motion carried.

- Supervisor Brenda Adams – yes;
- Councilperson Alan Miller – yes;
- Councilperson Ginny Nightingale – yes;
- Councilperson David Patzwahl – yes; and
- Councilperson William Powers – yes.

REPORT FROM COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS / Supervisor Adams

Covid update: The County is no longer providing monthly covid updates; the CC DOH reports that hospitalizations and cases continue to decline with the caveat that most cases are no longer reported.

Climate Town Hall at Columbia Green Community College

A town hall at CGCC sponsored by local community groups was informative and included a discussion of the potential roles of towns in zoning for commercial solar plants.

OLD BUSINESS

Review ongoing virtual or hybrid meeting considerations and mask policy

No changes; the board agreed to continue with hybrid meetings and to continue a “recommended” mask policy.

BOARD DISCUSSION

AUD filed / NYS response from NYS Comptroller’s Office

Supervisor Adams reported Canaan was advised it had done well on its audit; there were no issues of substance. An account code was revised for the Retirement Liability account, a code the town had used for many years without comment. When queried about the change, the Comptroller’s Office indicated they do not do a full review of each audit every year but provided a full review this year; with the full review the item was picked up.

Status of 2022 Town Clerk Audit

Councilperson Patzwahl reported a list of items to be cured had been created and a timeline to complete those tasks had been identified in the post-audit meeting with the Town Clerk on March 9th. The Town Clerk committed to a May 1st deadline for providing 2022 financial reports and bank reconciliations with interim deadlines for the first four months of 2023 for those same items. Delays and missing documentation etc. were discussed. There does not appear to be any cash missing; the issue continues to be timely reports, bank reconciliations, and payments to the town and other agencies. Various interim deadlines have not been met. The aim is to get 2023 current and to close 2022.

The above does not include tax collection as the Deputy Clerk historically has and continues to take responsibility for tax collection. As tax collection is substantially complete for the year it was suggested that beginning April 1, and until further notice, the Deputy Clerk take over the Town Clerk’s data entry, financial reports, bank reconciliations and payments until the backlog can be cleared up. The Town Clerk agreed with the suggestion.

Low Income Senior, Firefighter Exemptions Review Coming After NYS

Recommendations for these exemptions are tied to eligibility standards proposed in the NYS budget; once the budget is approved, and the eligibility defined, the discussion will begin locally.

Broadband Grant Update

There have been two communications from Consolidated Communications. Fees for engineering studies etc will be covered by the USDA grant and a USDA request for a letter from the town certifying that these installations will not encroach on Native American land. Things are moving slowly, but progressing.

Planning / ZBA report / Ginny Nightingale

Things are on hold; no new business.

Climate Smart Task Force / Will Powers

There will be an Earth Day celebration on April 23 with a Stoddard Park clean-up and an acknowledgment of the town's certification as a "Bronze Certified Climate Smart Community", a significant achievement for the Task Force.

Public Safety Committee / David Patzwahl

At the March 23rd meeting, Councilman Patzwahl learned the speed limit has been changed to 45 MPH on County Route 9 on the section of road in Canaan south of the New Lebanon line. This change results in a consistent 45 MPH speed limit from Route 295 to the New Lebanon line. He also reported there are expected to be increases in 2023 funding for infrastructure including bike paths and pot hole money. The committee is looking at changes in who will be responsible for closing roads in emergencies. Councilperson Nightingale asked when the town would next be eligible for a traffic study with the reminder that County Route 24 is next in the queue.

Transfer Station / David Patzwahl

Volume this month was a total of 43 tons of MSW & C&D waste compared to 48.41 tons for the same month in 2022. Reduction this month will offset heavier use in first quarter of this year. Councilperson Patzwahl has been compiling the data from monthly invoices; with staff changes the monthly reports have lagged. Supervisor Adams indicated she will follow up with the vendor re: the reports.

CLC mini grant

For a second year the Columbia Land Conservancy has awarded a grant to the town to support improvements to Stoddard Park.

Website survey

Supervisor Adams requested town board members respond to a draft survey in preparation for the re-design of the website. Once finalized, the survey will be sent to staff and committees to better understand needs and aspirations for the new website. A Google platform will be used. Supervisor Adams made a motion to establish Google email address for the new site. Councilperson Nightingale seconded. 5 AYES- Motion carried.

Supervisor Brenda Adams – yes;
Councilperson Alan Miller – yes;
Councilperson Ginny Nightingale – yes;
Councilperson David Patzwahl – yes;
Councilperson William Powers – yes.

Town and Highway Facebook Page

Supervisor Adams revisited the request as a supplementary way to communicate when other lines of communication are down such as phones and internet. She will gather preliminary Social Media policy information for the board to consider. The Town Highway Clerk has agreed to manage the page, the goal is get the page up and running in the next couple of months.

Tobacco Free Policy / Town Buildings & Park

Correspondence requested that the town amend its Tobacco Free Policy to prohibit additional smoking practices such as cannabis use and vaping in Stoddard Park and around town buildings. The board wanted to review its earlier policy, if any, before making a further decision. The Supervisor agreed to locate any earlier legislation and distribute it prior to the next meeting. Motion to table the discussion until the May meeting made by Councilperson Miller and seconded by Councilperson Patzwahl. 5 AYES- Motion carried.

Supervisor Brenda Adams – yes;
Councilperson Alan Miller – yes;
Councilperson Ginny Nightingale – yes;
Councilperson David Patzwahl – yes;
Councilperson William Powers – yes.

Red Rock monument

A preliminary inquiry has been made as to whether the town would consider accepting a private donation of land that houses the Red Rock monument. The town is being asked to consider holding the title; another option might be for the Historical Society to hold the title. More information will be needed as to maintenance, insurance, liability issues before the request can be considered.

Health and dental insurance renewals

These decisions must be made at the May meeting to meet the June 1st renewal date. The discussion centered around rising premium costs, whether the town's prior decision to pay 100% deductibles and co-pays should continue and HRA rollover costs. The issue of employee HSA contributions was raised as was the town's contributions as employees' changeover/retire discussed.

Questions to Confirm:

- The renewal plan accepts HSA accounts.
- The mechanism for employee contribution to an HSA through the payroll deductions.
- Impact on costs to the town and the employee if both an HRA and HSA were in place.

ASSESSORS REPORT

A written report was submitted; there were no questions.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT REPORT by Stephen Van Tassel: see attached

Supervisor stated that during the winter storm the Highway department crew worked very well, "above and beyond". She gave the clearing of cell tower road as an example. Highway Superintendent read through and presented his report. Work is ongoing on roads. Need for radios and better communication, and other expenses and needs, such as a new tractor presented. Summer hours discussed. Stated the need for quotes for generator for the garage, would then not need the tractor for electricity generation. It is believed that FEMA money can be used for generators. Annual training for workers needed for annual certification. Question, will insurance go down when all crew have been certified?

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Route 22 safety question

Wendy Dwyer expressed concern about the passing zone travelling north on State Route 22 south of the 295 intersection. Councilperson Patzwahl stated that he is currently working with NYS on the 295 speed and safety issues approaching Route 22 (per tonight's Resolution 65).

Medical Benefit Question. Joshua Weisbuch, a town employee, asked whether medical benefits are an incentive for people applying for jobs with the town.

Supervisor asked for further public comments and if none, she requested the board enter Executive Session.

MOTION: Enter Executive Session at 8:36 pm

Councilperson Nightingale made a motion, seconded by Councilperson Miller to enter into Executive Session. Supervisor Adams read a statement regarding the reason for the Executive Session, a personnel matter leading to the employment of an individual for the benefit of the Town of Canaan.

5 AYES - Motion carried.

Supervisor Brenda Adams – yes;
Councilperson Alan Miller – yes;
Councilperson Ginny Nightingale – yes;
Councilperson David Patzwahl – yes;
Councilperson William Powers – yes.

Video and audio were paused and muted for the Executive Session. Video and audio were restarted at the end of the Executive Session.

MOTION: Leave Executive Session and reopen public meeting at 9:20PM

Councilperson Nightingale made a motion, seconded by Councilperson Miller, to close the executive session and to reopen the public meeting. 5 AYES - Motion carried.

Supervisor Brenda Adams – yes;
Councilperson Alan Miller – yes;
Councilperson Ginny Nightingale – yes;
Councilperson David Patzwahl – yes;
Councilperson William Powers – yes.

There were no decisions made in the Executive Session.

The board began a discussion to establish and fund a Deputy Clerk II position for the sole purpose of preparing the Town Board minutes. The discussion was a result of multiple conversations with the Town Clerk about consistently late or un-submitted minutes, the town's intent to comply with NYS laws, and the Town Clerk's request to hire someone for this purpose.

MOTION: to Adopt the Deputy Clerk II Job Description.

Councilperson Powers made the motion. Councilperson Nightingale seconded it. 5 AYES- Motion carried.

Supervisor Brenda Adams – yes;
Councilperson Alan Miller – yes;
Councilperson Ginny Nightingale – yes;

Councilperson David Patzwahl – yes;
Councilperson William Powers – yes.

Resolution # 66 to establish and fund a Deputy Clerk II position (amended):

The Resolution was amended to add 10 (ten) additional hours for a total budget of \$1125 with the understanding that Deputy Clerk II would provide any and all outstanding minutes at time of hire . As funds were not budgeted for this duty, they will come from contingency account and moved to a new account Deputy Clerk 2. Councilperson Nightingale made the motion seconded by Councilperson Powers. 5 AYES- Motion carried.

Supervisor Brenda Adams – yes;
Councilperson Alan Miller – yes;
Councilperson Ginny Nightingale – yes;
Councilperson David Patzwahl – yes;
Councilperson William Powers – yes.

Reminders:

Earth Day Park Clean-up April 23 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
NARCAN Training at the Fire Company on April 25th

MOTION to Adjourn at 9:24 PM

Brenda Adams made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilperson Will Powers to adjourn the meeting. 5 AYES- Motion carried.

Supervisor Brenda Adams – yes;
Councilperson Alan Miller – yes;
Councilperson Ginny Nightingale – yes;
Councilperson David Patzwahl – yes; and
Councilperson William Powers – yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Nebesar,
Deputy Town Clerk 2