

April 12, 2021

The regular meeting of the Town Board of Vernon was held at the Town Office Building on the above date with the following persons present: Randy Watson, Supervisor; Gene Bennati, Steve Adamkowski, John Peters and Myron Thurston, Council members. Also present: County Legislator, Keith Schiebel; Bookkeeper, Wendy Coston; Assessor, Duane Munger; Codes Officers, Jody Thieme & Reay Walker; Historian, Janice Buneo; Planning/Zoning Board Chairman, Brian Dam and Ken Knutsen from Barton and Loguidice.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, there was a moment of silence. The meeting was called to order by Supervisor Watson at 7:00 p.m.

Supervisor Watson asked the council members if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the March 8, 2021 meeting. There being none, a motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Thurston, seconded by Bennati. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

#### PUBLIC CONCERNS:

None

#### REPORTS:

The following reports were presented: Town Clerk, Codes Enforcement, Supervisors, Assessors: Duane Munger reported on the Level of Assessment and explained to the Board Members how the percentage is calculated by taking the last 12 months of sales and compare against the assessed value on those properties. He showed the trend on graphs and how the rate percentage has decreased over the years due to the housing market going up. The higher sale price makes a bigger gap between the sale price and the assessed value. The town's Level of Assessment equalization rate is at 61% for the year 2021 which is down from 64.5% in 2020. He showed the comparison to the neighboring towns. This does not mean that the Town collects less taxes. The same value of taxes are collected, as the market value goes up, the level of assessment goes down. Education and Libraries, Bennati stated that right now the Vernon Library is pretty much nonexistent even though it is physically there. Most people throughout the Town are using the Sherrill Library. He would like to discuss helping the Sherrill Library at budget time. Highway Superintendent submitted a written report. The newly leased dump truck was parked behind the office for anyone to view that wanted. Thurston noted that this is the first truck we have ever leased and that this is their experiment to see if it is as economical as it looks. We will own it after 7 years; Historian: Janice Buneo noted that in 2013 she was appointed Historian and the first request she had was to get the collection of boxes out of the conference room. She has sorted through them and worked on separating the Historical Society from the Historian as they are separate entities. She has old books and records that were in those boxes that belong to the Historian and the Historians Office which Buneo stated should be located at the Town Office Building. When someone calls her asking questions, she would like to be able to schedule an appointment to meet at the Town Office to go over the records to find what is being looked for. Right now, she has many mismatched binders and archived books but does not have a place to put them. Being a Historian working from her home office using a computer that belongs to the Historical Society, Buneo stated it is time to move that stuff to the Town Offices. Buneo proposed a solution would be a Vernon History Room. She requested adding one or two bookcases with sliding doors and locking devices be added to the conference room. The request was also for 3 binders and 3 book boxes. Buneo also would like a page on the Town of Vernon website. Supervisor Watson advised that anything she wanted added to the website would need to be submitted to the Supervisors Secretary, Wendy, and it would be added to the website for her. County Legislator: Schiebel reported some good news from the Covid front. Roughly 62,000 people have received vaccines in the county. 33% is estimated being fully vaccinated and 45% having at least 1 vaccine. There will be a POD at the Vernon Fire Department this Friday, April 16, 2021 from 9am thru noon for a shot. Media night at Vernon Downs is Tuesday, April 13, 2021 with racing to be scheduled to start on Friday night. State passed budget with a

few items that could affect the community. One being sports betting and it's effect on the Oneida Indian Nation. This has been on the news. The other being the states' stance on marijuana. This will impact the City's, Towns and Villages down the road. Counties do not have a say in the local decision making when it comes to opting out of local sales. That will be a decision made by City's, Towns and Villages. The bill as it is written is that counties are not able to opt out of the legalization of marijuana, just that whether there is a dispensary or sales. There has been quite a bit of dialog on how the monies and taxes are shared between the state, counties and municipals. AIM money was restored. At the last meeting 2 new Commissioners have been appointed to the Board of Elections. The counties' Attorney put forth a docket that realigned expenses for legal fees on the 2020 congressional election to defend the Board of Elections and all the legal precedent at the tune of \$102,000.00. Schiebel would like to request from Pubic Works on how they are tracking what County roads as you see some of the ditches filled that should have some attention to them. How does the Town report that or do they get any attention at all? County has voted to back the Bonds for getting the Nexus project back on track in the amount of 63 million dollars. A docket to obtain some lands through eminent domain for the parking garage is scheduled for this Wednesday.

There were no reports from Zoning Board, Planning Board, Intergovernmental Relations, Economic Development, Operations and SWOCO.

A motion to accept above reports was made by Bennati, seconded by Thurston. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to pay bills was made by Peters, seconded by Adamkowski. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

#### BUSINESS:

Matt Nichols from Seaboard Solar was present through Zoom. Seaboard Solar has recently discovered a property in Vernon where they are interested in putting in 4 megawatts solar across from the Town Hall. This will take up 22 acres of land on the 58.5 acres. The projected finish date is late 2021 to early 2022. This will consist of 13,312 panels on single access trackers that will follow the sun. This is enough to power 2,600 homes a year. There will be 6 acres near the road that they are looking into using for Senior Living as the Town has expressed a need for in our area. Bennati asked how this will impact our residence electric rates. Nichols did not have that data yet.

There was a discussion on increasing planning fees to cover the cost of solar projects. Brian Dam gave a spreadsheet to Board members showing what he thought the fees would cost. He stated that money was lost on the first 2 solar projects as the permit fee was only \$100 and it cost the town nearly \$20,000.00 by the time they finished. Dam would like to stream line a process for tier 3 solar that would make sure to utilize everyone's time efficiently by making sure all required information has been submitted electronically before proceeding. Attorney Vincent Rossi advised that the only legal constraint is that the fee has to be represented by what our actual costs are. Codes Officer Jody Thieme estimated this cost around \$20,000.00 Thurston asked Rossi if the idea of having an escrow set up requiring \$20,000 - \$30,000 and take the cost out of there. Whatever is not used will go back to the customer. Rossi stated "yes". Watson had called the Association of Towns and was advised that we should be within 10% of the actual cost to the town. Thurston asked if there was anything the Board could do to increase the fees by working within the current Local Law. Rossi stated that the Local Law already says "If the Town's cost to review the project exceeds the amount placed in escrow, the developer will be asked to pay those costs prior to issue of any permits". We already have the mechanism to do what we want.

A motion to approve resolution requiring applicants for Tier 3 Solar to be required to obtain \$20,000 in escrow along with application fee, which is to be refunded, to the extent not used was made by Thurston, seconded by Bennati. Adamkowski wanted to be sure this covers Planning, Zoning, Legal fees and Codes Department fees. Rossi said the way the Local Law is written, it states "The Town's cost". Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to approve having a public hearing if needed at the next meeting to make further changes to Solar Tier 3 was made by Thurston, seconded by Adamkowski. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A letter was signed to be sent to Congresswoman Claudia Tenney requesting for 2022 assistance with Vernon Center Water District. The WIA grant that was postponed due to Covid has not opened and word is that it may not open back up for applying. In the meantime, the town has applied for a Northern Regional Grant.

A motion to approve request for Mobile Mammography to use the parking lot at the Town Office building on September 13, 2021 and February 10, 2022 for screenings was made by Bennati, seconded by Thurston. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

NYS Association of Town Superintendents of Highways sent email advising Legislature increased NYSDOT 2021-2022 CHIPS funding by 32.5%. Murphy stated that for the 2021 season most municipalities received 80% so they are going to make it whole and be ahead 17% in the end.

A motion to approve agreement to spend Highway funds for paving \$244,118.75 was made by Peters, seconded by Bennati. Peters asked what roads were included in this. Murphy stated Norton Rd. (starting at Houck Rd. going toward Arquint Rd), Houck Rd. and Simmons Rd. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to approve transfer of \$40,000.00 from DB5148.1 Services for other Governments Personal Services to DB1111.4 Resurfacing was made by Thurston, seconded by Bennati. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to approve Oneida County Inter-municipal Agreement for Automotive Repair Services with Madison-Oneida BOCES was made by Thurston, seconded by Adamkowski. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to approve Oneida County request to use Town Office Building for Poll site was made by Adamkowski, seconded by Thurston. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to approve Vernon Verona Sherrill School District request to use Town Office Building for poll site was made by Adamkowski, seconded by Thurston. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

Board members discussed the Town Historians request for Town to purchase book cases to be placed in conference room. Watson said he does not want the bookcases in the conference room and would like to find a different spot for them. Thurston believes they need to do some measuring to see what will work. Bennati would like to walk the building to see all of the possibilities for a location. Thurston asked Buneo how many bookcases she would like. Buneo stated that she would like 1 or 2 bookcases. Watson would like to discuss further in executive session. Buneo stated the records she has included Military listings, family biography's, genealogy records, census records, generic index for census for research, indexes for scrapbooks with articles about local history, published histories about clubs covering the history, listings for the cemetery, lists of soldiers and lists of residents and businesses from Vernon. These all belong to the Town and not located in a home office, Buneo stated. Watson asked if the Historian was responsible for genealogy with Buneo answering "No". Buneo asked the Town to research what the Historian is doing and whether or not they need a Historian. If they do not need a Historian then all she has can go to the Historical Society. Oneida County Historical Society is at max capacity for space. The Town Clerk has the original copies of all legal paperwork. Thurston suggested bringing this discussion to executive session.

GOOD OF THE ORDER:

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A motion to enter into Executive Session at 8:16 p.m. to discuss a Historian's request for bookcases at was made by Peters, seconded by Adamkowski. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

Board members returned from Executive Session at 9:30 p.m.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn at 9:30 p.m. was made by Peters, seconded by Adamkowski. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Additions to minutes on file  
in Town Clerk's Office.

Jennifer Champney  
Town Clerk

This meeting was digitally recorded and is on file in the Town Clerk's office.

COMMUNICATIONS:

None