

August 10, 2020

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: Supervisor; Randy Watson, Council members; Gene Bennati, Myron Thurston, Steve Adamkowski and John Peters. Also present: Codes Officer; Reay Walker, County Legislator; Keith Schiebel, Gates & Cole Representative; Leslie Grogan, Barton & Loguidice Representative; Jesse Semanchik, NYSERDA Representative; Ian Latimer, and 3 citizens.

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 June 22, 2020 meeting. There being none, a motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Thurston, seconded by Adamkowski. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

Supervisor Watson asked the council members if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the July 13, 2020 meeting.

Watson noted the Town Clerks changes as underlined below:

A motion to approve returning the codes contracts for the Village of Oneida Castle and Village of Vernon to last year's price of \$29.25 per hour due to financial impacts of COVID was made by Thurston, seconded by Peters. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried

Watson and Adamkowski requested that the underlined below be added:

The Town Clerk requested approval to have office hours reduced from Monday thru Thursday 9am-4pm to Monday thru Thursday 9am-2pm and be available by appointment from 2pm -4pm through the end of August as currently there is very little to no patrons utilizing these hours. Thurston mentioned that the Town Clerk position is an elected position and they cannot tell the Clerk what hours to be open. There was concern that the community may be upset with the change. It was agreed that the Board would notify the Town Clerk if there were any concerns from the community expressed to them due to this change. Supervisor Watson did not support shortening the clerk's hours. Adamkowski wanted to know if the change would result in problems with civil service classification for full time employment and eligibility for health insurance.

Bennati and Thurston asked that the Town Clerk be more detailed in the minutes. Thurston also noted that the minutes are digitally recorded and on file in the Clerk's office.

A motion to accept the minutes as corrected was made by Thurston, seconded by Adamkowski. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

PUBLIC CONCERNS:

Doug Lockwood asked if there were any updates on the Vernon Center Water District. Peters advised that Rural Development gave us a one million dollar grant for emergency water fund. They also funded us with a \$1.7 million dollar grant. Last week they had met with Rural Development and met all the requirements to get a low interest loan for 38 years at 1.5% interest. Supervisor Watson signed off on that for \$5.72 million. The next hurdle is for a WIIA (Water Infrastructure Improvement Act) grant in the amount of \$3 million dollars. Jesse Semanchik states that this is the final piece of the puzzle which is through New York State. Due to Covid-19 the 2020 round of applications has not yet been announced by the state. Following tonight's meeting the town will be 100% set to apply once it has been announced. Rose Lockwood asked when the Town would make an official announcement to everyone. Peters advised that would probably not happen until the end of September or when the fourth step has been complete. Semanchik believes the \$3 million dollar grant will be awarded and that it will cut the loan down from the \$5.72 million. Normally, with this application they are due in September and the awards are given in November or December. Once this is complete, then the town to go back to Rural Development who is the main funding agency who will give the green light to begin with surveying and design, etc. Watson said Rural Development was impressed with the paperwork when they came as the Town Bookkeeper had done research and gotten ahead of it. Bennati said they had never had a town so prepared. Peters said there are 5 steps and they almost have 4 of them done. Semanchik suggested they

draft a letter to EFC (Environmental Facility Corporation) advocating for the town for the state to move forward to announce this round of grants and move forward with the program as it is critical in so many of these projects. Watson asked for Semanchik to email him something to go off from. Peters suggested a preliminary letter. Watson stated that this is very exciting as they have worked very hard on this and John Peters has taken the lead. Lockwood asked if any gold metal person helped them get this going. The board members advised that there were quite a few of them, such as John Salka, Anthony Brindisi, and Joe Griffo all assisted.

Jason Calcara was present to inquire about information on the proposed solar array on Sholtz Rd. He presented Bennati with some paperwork showing the term "power plant" being used for solar power systems as this term was previously brought up at a meeting and Bennati had never heard of it called such. Calcara stated that it is just different terminology. Clacara asked where we stand with the power plant and if it is official. Watson asked Codes Officer Walker if they had a permit yet and he advised that they do not. Watson advised that they had previously had public hearings to discuss solar and not many had showed up so they went ahead and established Codes along with the 2 other Boards. Walker stated they have applied for a permit but no meeting had been scheduled with either the Planning Board or the ZBA as of yet, but it is in the works. Thurston advised that when it is set there will be a notification in the Rome Sentinel. Adamkowski advised that the properties surrounding the proposed site would receive a letter in the mail to notify them. Calcara stated that he did not know about the meetings that the Board previously had and that he didn't know anyone in the neighborhood that knew about them either. He asked if the future meetings will be private or if the public can sit in on them as well? He was told by Adamkowski that the Planning Board and Zoning Board are both public meetings. Lockwood asked what the power generated was used for? The Board members advised that it goes back into the grid however there is no way to trace it once it has gone back into the lines. Thurston says he has been in green energy and solar power for a long time. Our Governor is pushing it because of pollution. The main power grid has not had anything done to it in over 50 years. There are multi billion dollars that will need to be spent if they don't get these smaller solar farms built around the state. He would like all to be open minded about solar and look at the facts as to what it does to our environment and the advantages it brings back to our community, including tax dollars that would come back to our town. He acknowledged that it is change and he understands many of us don't like change. Calcara expressed he does not want a power plant in his back yard. Thurston advised that the town does not have things set up within the town for one person to make decisions. We have a code book and then something like this would also have to go through ZBA and Planning. This was meant to protect people. Adamkowski advised that they previously had nothing in our books in regards to solar and that left the town open to a free for all. When the town did enact it, limits were places and requirements were set and the town went stricter than a lot of the other municipalities after looking at their laws. The town put effort into making these laws beneficial for the town while limiting where they would be going in. They wanted to walk both sides of the line when the laws were decided on. Ian Latimer was present from NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority). He stated that the aging infrastructure in the State also does not allow development anywhere there is vacant land because the grid doesn't have the capacity to do that. One thing nice to know is that you can't just have blanket solar farms anywhere as the infrastructure can't take it.

Watson asked Ian Latimer to go ahead with his solar presentation at this time. The Board was provided with a packet that went over a brief introduction to solar and introduction to some of the resources NYSERDA has to offer.

REPORTS:

The following reports were presented: Town Clerk, Codes Enforcement, Supervisor's, Highway, Education and Libraries; Bennati advised that he has requested monthly reports from the Vernon Librarian and they haven't gotten any. He also stated he has gone past there, time and time again they are closed and the Vernon Library is wondering where the money is that the town was going to give them to help operate the library. His feeling is "No" as you can't come out of nowhere for all those months and ask for money. Intergovernmental Relations; Adamkowski agreed with Bennati that if they aren't getting anything from the library, he will not vote to give them money. Operations and Intergovernmental Relations; Thurston took a motorcycle ride on the newly paved roads and was very pleased. SWOCO; Watson noted that the lease was renewed for another 5 years to the same person, as he has done a very nice job taking care of the land over the past 5 years. County Legislator Schiebel reported he is working with the Village of Vernon on the issues they are facing as Vernon Downs has

not been given authority by the Governor to open due to COVID. He asked that from a town standpoint they might be interested in getting behind the Village of Vernon on this matter. There was a local municipals leader meeting and 4 out of the 5 town of Vernon boards members attended. He appreciated that. As a follow up, one of the issues the County Executive has put out back in July was reformulation of shared sales tax with villages and towns. After that meeting the Chairman of the Legislators met with the County Executive and said that they didn't have enough votes to support a change at this time. Reformulating that sales tax should not happen in this year's budget. A letter was sent to the Oneida County Executive by Legislators in regards to OIN (Oneida Indian Nation) money. Last week there was a committee meeting and one of the issues was providing security officers for schools in the county. Many feel that there will be financial cuts as schools are going to a hybrid system of learning.

There were no reports from the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Assessors, Historian and Economic Development.

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

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

BUSINESS:

Gates-Cole Insurance presented the Board members with a 2020 renewal policy. Bennati asked if there were any areas that they felt the Town was weak in with Leslie from Gates-Cole responding "Absolutely not", she felt everything was up to date as the town is excellent with notifying them of changes. Thurston mentioned that Gates-Cole has been historically a great group to work with. Leslie thanked the town for their business. A motion to accept the policy as written was made by Thurston, seconded by Bennati. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to accept the final order for the establishment of Vernon Center Water District was made by Adamkowski, seconded by Peters. Ayes 5. Nays 0. No discussion. Motion Carried.

A motion to approve the Bond Resolution of the Town of Vernon, Oneida County, New York, adopted 10, 2020, authorizing the acquisition, construction and equipping of certain water improvements in and for Vernon Center Water District at an estimated cost of \$8,671,000, appropriating said amount therefor, and authorizing the issuance of up to \$8,671,000 bond anticipation notes and serial bonds of the Town to pay the cost of the project was made by Bennati, seconded by Peters. Ayes 5. Nays 0. No discussion. Motion carried.

USDA Rural Development approved Town of Vernon for a grant in the amount of \$2,550,000.00 for the Vernon Center Water District.

A motion to approve the loan resolution authorizing and providing for the incurrence of indebtedness for the purpose of providing a portion of the cost of acquiring, constructing, enlarging, improving, and/or extending its drinking water facility to serve an area lawfully within its jurisdiction to serve; Whereas, it is necessary for the Town of Vernon to raise a portion of the cost of such undertaking by issuance of its bonds in the principal amount of \$5,971,000.00 was made by Bennati, seconded by Peters. Ayes 5. Nays 0. No discussion. Motion carried.

OCIDA (Oneida County Industrial Development Agency) issued a notice of public hearing for change to their Uniform Tax Exemption Policy.

Oneida County Deputy Commissioner of Personnel informed all municipalities, effective immediately the part time rule for all positions part-time must adhere to working under half-time. No more than 20 hours per week and that they will require quarterly payroll reports to monitor. If it is found that anyone is working over half-time, the position will be made competitive and an appointment will have to be made from the eligible list for that position.

A motion to approve Court Clerk request for the Town to contract Village Police for Bailiff at \$18.00 per hour to take temperatures and questionnaires for Town Court due to COVID-19 requirements was made by Thurston, seconded by Bennati. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Watson advised there is already one

bailiff inside to monitor the court. They need another one to do COVID screenings outside of the courtroom before people are allowed to enter. This will be needed until COVID is over. Motion carried.

Village of Vernon would like to change the Court Clerk contract to 3 days a week from 2 days a week for the Town and 2 days a week from 3 days a week for the Village. Watson stated he doesn't know if they can afford to pay her. He was told the Town Court is busier than the Village Court. He stated that we would need to redo the whole contract. Adamkowski stated that we weren't busier 6 months ago and the court has been closed for 6 months and they are still getting paid. He said they can have discussion with the Village Mayor, but they have looked at the budget and with the laws, bail reform and driving law changes and he doesn't know how much more business will be needed.

Vernon Town/Village Court submitted and received approval July 14, 2020 for In-person Court Appearances with the 5th Judicial District for COVID-19 requirements.

A motion to approve Computers with a Heart to dispose of all out dated computers following cyber protocol was made by Thurston, seconded by Adamkowski. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

The 2nd installment for 1st quarter sales tax received in the amount of \$77,673.22.

Black Stallion Restaurant, 4351 Churton Rd, Vernon, NY 13476 will renew liquor license.

GOOD OF THE ORDER:

Doug Lockwood requested the Town Board to reduce the speed limit on Youngs Rd. as the Havener Farm is no longer and is now owned by the Amish and concerned about an accident. Highway Superintendent advised that it is a State road and the Town has no control over it. Thurston advised they would need to go to State DOT.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss personnel at 8:40p.m. was made by Thurston. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

Supervisor Watson announced that no further business would be conducted.

Council returned from Executive Session at 9:10p.m. A motion to adjourn at 9:12p.m. was made by Adamkowski, seconded by Peters. 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