

June 10, 2019

A special meeting of the Town Board of Vernon was held at 6:45 p.m. on the above date at the Town Office Building for the purpose of a public hearing for the Town of Vernon Board in the Matter of a Local Law to Change the Position of Highway Superintendent from Elected to Appointed. Council members present: Randy Watson, Supervisor; Gene Bennati, Mick McDonough, Steve Adamkowski and John Peters. Also present: 12 citizens. The meeting was called to order by Supervisor Watson at 6:45 p.m.

Supervisor Watson asked if there were any questions regarding this matter. Myron Thurston, a citizen, asked the Board members to each explain why they feel the Board members can do a better job appointing a Highway Supervisor vs. the Town of Vernon Citizens electing for this position. Bennati stated he did not feel they could do a better job. McDonough said ultimately the Budget internal is a responsibility of the Town Board. If the Highways are not done properly and the proper guy is not in the position of Highway Superintendent, the Town Board Members pay the price. Thurston replied to this statement that it could be resolved with a PO system and before any spending took place, the Town Board would have to approve it ahead of time. McDonough believes that ultimately the voters will decide what they feel is the right way for this job to be filled. Watson stated that the Board went into a quick vote at the last meeting and he doesn't know if he is for this. Watson likes the way Art Freemire handles everything now. Peters was in favor of the change. He believes Freemire is doing an awesome job. It has to do with accountability. Ultimately the Town Board needs to keep the Town happy and he feels with the elected position the Town Board has no power over the elected position. This is about accountability and controllability over the next person that has this job and that scares the Town Board. Peters does not want to see this as a major shakeup as we are a tight nit community and we try to take care of our neighbors. The Board is scared of what could happen and not having control of the budget, and the budget can hurt the people in the Town of Vernon. Thurston stated that the Highway Superintendent has to work within the Town Boards budget. Wendy Coston stated that there are 932 towns and villages within New York State. In 2008, 90 of them were appointed Highway Superintendents, however, as of today only 59 on them remain as appointed positions. There seems be a reason why towns and villages are going back to the position as elected. There are a few things that need to be looked at, the Town Board would have to appoint someone to meet with the HS on a regular basis to do reviews of performance and then there would have to be reprimands put into place. Then, after the person has been within the job for 5 years they would be protected by civil service and if a problem would arise it would be an "act of congress" to get them out. With the job being elected and if the residents of Vernon did not like the way the HS was doing their job they could vote find someone else to run for the job and vote them out within 2 years. Bennati stated he does not feel the Board is sending a good message to the residents by taking away their right to elect. Adamkowski stated he thinks along the same line of Peters as looking at the future and accountability. As far as accountability goes, you as the voters can vote off the Board members and vote on new members if you feel they are not supporting the Highway Superintendent. As far as fighting over the budget, only hurts the members of the Town. If you don't like how the superintendent is doing the roads you can vote him out, but it is the same for the Town Board. Adamkowski is more concerned after Freemire retires. And if you look in our current elections where you have people going through the Republican Party and getting nominated other people want to do the primary. This could happen with the Highway department and you could end up with someone you really don't care for. Mary Dam said she thinks the Town Board is forgetting it is the residents that elected the Highway Superintendents that have worked out for Vernon. John Seelman is concerned with the "buddy System" and does not feel that system works. John Dam asked the Town Board how part-time councilman, with little knowledge of highway maintenance, can find someone then to micromanage them to keep a budget down. He does not know how elected part-time council can micromanage a fulltime Highway Superintendent position without being out there, and that they would just be looking at numbers.

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, Mick McDonough and John Peters, Council members. Also present: County Legislator Keith Schiebel and 12 citizens.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, there was a moment of silence. The meeting was called to order by Supervisor Watson at 7:15 p.m.

Supervisor Watson asked the council members if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the May 6 and 15th, 2019 meetings. There being none, a motion to accept the minutes as written was made by McDonough, seconded by Peters. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

#### PUBLIC CONCERNS:

John Dam spoke as he does not see the positive outcome on the tax payers by making the position of Highway Superintendent appointed. Myron Thurston spoke and said we have a very conservative board and it shocks him that they would want to take away the opportunity of the residents to vote on any position in the Town of Vernon. "The election system works" stated Thurston. Freemire spoke that his only concern is that he doesn't want to lose his vote.

Vernon Historical Society spoke on the project for a new building. A model was presented copying what the Town of Verona has done. Bennati asked if the Historical Society has applied for any grants and Janice Buneo advised the \$250,000 they are requesting from the Town of Vernon would be a grant. Myron Thurston advised that the septic tank and leach field off the back of the pavilion would need to be avoided. He also advised Buneo that in order to get grant funding they would need a lead agency and a resolution would need to be passed by the Town Board that they are interested in pursuing a historical building. That would be the avenue for seeking grants.

#### REPORTS:

The following reports were presented: Town Clerk, Codes Enforcement, Education and Libraries: Bennati said he has spoken to the Village of Vernon Library and he is not sure where things are going with them as no reports have been submitted to the Vernon Board in a year. He has been told by residents that the library has not been open at all times they say they will be open; Supervisor's, Intergovernmental Relations: Adamkowski advised that he has set up an initial talk with Snyder Engineering in regards to the solar panels being put up out back of the Town of Vernon Offices. He had a conference call about the water survey and they need help from Peters to help getting Water District residents to complete and return surveys. They discussed abandoning the surveys and going another route with RCAP. He is still working on finalizing the water rates with the Village of Vernon. Highway Superintendent, Blacktop on Sholtz Rd is done. Truck is ordered and should arrive the beginning of September for the Mack and has not heard anything on the little truck. Legislator Schiebel reported on numerous subjects including: 1) Farm Fest 2) Agriculture continues to be in the fore front at the county level for issues such as people who abuse animals 3) Primary will be held on June 25, 2019 4) Oneida Castle is having some community activities in the park on August 25<sup>th</sup>.

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

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

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

#### BUSINESS:

After discussion to change the Highway Superintendent position from elected to appointed, McDonough advised that Thurston has swayed his decision and he is not going to vote in favor of this. His reason being, voting and not being able to get rid of someone if they appoint them. The Town Board decided they were not going to make a motion for this change.

The annexation Special Election for the Oneida Castle Sewed District passed.

A motion to approve request for gateway signs from Oneida Castle was made by Peters, seconded by Adamkowski. No Discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

The decision to renew the Vernon Library contract will be tabled at this time due to lack of monthly reports.

A motion to contract with Fiscal Advisors & Marketing for the Oneida Public Library Bond Anticipation Notes was made by McDonough, seconded by Peters. No Discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

Lagoy's Home Improvement completed all of repairs to town building and has done an excellent job.

A check has been received from Charter Communications for franchise fee in the amount of \$9,674.47.

New York Power Authority is offering a workshop Tuesday, June 18, 4:30-6:30pm at Jamo's Restaurant, 123 Mohawk St., Herkimer, NY 13350 for information on Clean Energy Programs and Smart Street Lighting.

GOOD OF THE ORDER:

None

Supervisor Watson announced that no further business would be conducted.

A motion to adjourn at 8:18p.m. was made by Peters, seconded by Bennati. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

None

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

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Champney  
Town Clerk

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

COMMUNICATIONS:

None