

September 14, 2020

The regular meeting of the Town Board of Vernon was held at 7:00 p.m. on the above date at the Town Office Building. Council members present: Randy Watson, Supervisor; Gene Bennati, Myron Thurston, Steve Adamkowski and John Peters. Also present: Tim Murphy, Highway Superintendent; Keith Schiebel, County Legislator and 1 resident.

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 August 10, 2020 meeting. There being none, a motion to approve the minutes as written was made by Thurston, seconded by Adamkowski. Thurston noted that the minutes were done thoroughly and a fine job was done by Town Clerk Jennifer Champney. Bennati added that a nice job was done. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

PUBLIC CONCERNS:

Rose Lockwood brought an article from the newspaper that stated the Town of Vernon could be getting another Grant for the Vernon Center Water District. The Town Board confirmed that they would know for sure that this project would be able to move forward after September 23rd. And the project is expected to begin in approximately 2 years.

Myron Thurston had a public concern about solar for residential homes being taxed. He wanted residential owners to be able to put them in and get a 15 year tax deferment on them. He understood the way the law previously had been passed, it wasn't done this way. Watson advised that the only way to make them so they are non-taxable would be to make them that way for all. The School and Oneida County have both opted out of collecting taxes on solar so it would only be taxing the residents on their Town taxes. The Board would like to collect taxes on large solar projects that may come to the area, so changing this law would result in forfeiting those monies. Thurston understands and wanted to make sure the Codes Office is aware and able to advise community members of this so they understand that this assessment is only subject to Town taxes.

REPORTS:

The following reports were presented: Town Clerk, Supervisor's and Codes Enforcement, SWOCO; Watson reported they will be taking quotes for siding, Highway Superintendent, County Legislator; Schiebel reported, 1-County Executive will be requesting the deadline for the budget be extended from October 5th to the end of October, 2-Sales tax and gaming revenues, 3- Renting of additional office space for Oneida County employees to maintain distancing protocols set by NYS Governor due to Covid, 4-Approval of snowplowing agreement. 5-Board of Legislators drafted a letter urging the State to fully restore funding for the Aid and Incentives for Municipal Program. At the Local municipal leaders meeting, Scott Musachio was going to reach out to County Executive to try to set up a meeting with other local municipal leaders in hopes to see if any additional funding may be provided if things turn around. Thurston asked if Schiebel believed legislature has enough intestinal fortitude to look at the figures in a couple months after things have evened out a little to override this very conservative, keep everything attitude that the County Executive has. Schiebel replied "no".

There were no reports from Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Assessors, Education and Libraries, Intergovernmental Relations, Economic Development, and Historian.

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

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

BUSINESS:

A letter was received from County Executive Anthony Picente discussing the 2021 budget. Watson stated the letter was telling us we won't be receiving any gaming money from the Oneida Indian Nation. The County is \$20 million behind and the gaming money will help cover that for them. Watson advised that we will not get much money from Vernon Downs this year. But as they get open at normal capacity we will get more the following year. He also spoke with Kevin Revere who is under Anthony Picente. The county is holding off on their budget for another month or two. However, the Town of Vernon is still working on ours. The County was originally looking at 40% loss since then it has been at 14%, 13%, 8%. Watson was trying to get a feel for sales tax money, which is coming back strong. We projected a 30% loss in sales tax money for the budget. Thurston added the Town of Vernon has always budgeted less than what we actually receive from sales tax. Watson added the Town has also made some large cuts in the Highway Department and the Town Office Building. They have postponed paving the parking lot and walking trail. This is just for the tentative budget. Thurston stated that we can take a look at it again next summer to see what the actual sales tax is and make an intelligent decision at that time. Last year \$185,000.00 was budgeted for sales tax by the Town of Vernon and historically we have received over \$200,000.00. More will be discussed at the Budget Meeting. Thurston added that the Town of Vernon historically has estimated the sales tax at a lower amount than we receive. Next week Watson will attend a meeting with County Executive Anthony Picente to get more information on what we can expect and not expect. OIN money that is given to Vernon is in a contract; however, that contract states that they can cancel/renege.

There was a discussion of speed change and added signage for Youngs Rd due to the Amish horse and buggies traveling in the area where there is limited view of the road ahead. Watson stated there needs to be a petition from others in that area. Once we have that then the Town can send a letter to the State for review. Watson advised he has the letter from NYS that was received when John Havener requested the change directly with the State without this documentation. The Board is more than happy to help with this as long as someone gets the petition. Codes officer Jody Thieme added he has had people come in to his office concerned that there will be an accident.

Codes Officer Jody Thieme explained to the board members that the current fees are low. Watson advised that the current fees are not covering the costs of the Town to send the Codes Officers out to these locations multiple times as needed. He does not believe it should be on the taxpayers dollar to help pay for someone who is doing work on their property. Adamkowski added that the town sets the laws to be followed and it is understandable if the town pays a part to enforce these laws. He does not feel it is appropriate to say, when you build a house our codes depart has to go back a certain amount of times as it is not their fault the town has the laws and the Town will have to pay for monitoring the laws in place. The town benefits by revenue being brought in when a new home is built. Thurston added the homeowner also benefits as the Codes Dept. provides an extra set of eyes to make sure everything is being done correct. Adamkowski is in support of a reasonable increase. Watson would like this to go in effect as of January 1, 2021. A motion was made to accept the Codes Permit Fees was made by Thurston, seconded by Peters. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to approve the request made by Vernon Town Court authorizing them to apply for the JCAP Grant up to the maximum available was made by Bennati, seconded by Adamkowski. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

Fire Department Budget Workshop will be held Wednesday, September 30th at 6:00pm. Thurston will not be present for this meeting.

Town of Vernon Budget Workshop will be held on Wednesday, October 7th at 6:00pm. Bennati requested all Board Members to bring in the explanation booklet provided to them that explains every line on the Budget so they do not have to take the time that night explaining each line.

White Goods Day to be held on Saturday, October 10th for 9:00am – 1:00pm. Highway Superintendent advised the Highway Department has been picking up excessive amounts of trash on the sides of the roads. Bennati would like something added in the Town newsletter about keeping the town looking nice by taking care of your trash. Peters stated that he does not believe Vernon has a law on littering. Thurston and Adamkowski believe the NYS laws apply to the

Town. Peters suggested signs be put up at the Town lines advising of fines for littering in the town.

A motion to reappoint James Sears to the Board of Assessment Review was made by Bennati, seconded by Adamkowski. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to approve proposal from Northland Communication to upgrade telephone and internet service at the rate of \$590.00 a month as it will save money was made by Thurston, seconded by Peters. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried

GOOD OF THE ORDER:

Adamkowski will work with the highway employees to put trees in around the walking path behind the Town Offices.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

None

A motion to adjourn at 8:08 p.m. was made by Thurston, 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:

Codes Permit Fees