

September 11, 2023

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: Highway Superintendent, Timothy Murphy; County Legislator, Keith Schiebel and 12 community members.

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 14, 2023 meeting. There being none, a motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Peters, seconded by Thurston. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

PUBLIC CONCERNS:

Rose Lockwood advised that her husband Doug has contacted NYS Transportation to request a permanent horse drawn buggy sign on Youngs Road. Peters stated that Keith Schiebel was able to get several "share the road" signs from Oneida County for the Town to put up on Town roads. Over the next few weeks, the Highway Department will be putting the signs up. Lockwood was hoping that solar fed signs would be put up, so they are seen after dark.

Ron Albro is looking to sell some land on Route 5. The property has 160ft of road frontage. He has been through the permit process and was denied as 200ft frontage is required on an arterial. Albro stated that DOT has given permission to put in a driveway and it is okay with them with only the 160ft of frontage. Peters advised that the state transportation does not look at the size of the lot. They are only looking at vehicle visibility and water flow when they approve lot access. Albro said that his permit from the state says it is based on all local, state and federal requirements being satisfied. Peters asked if he was able to get a variance and Albro said he was denied for a variance. Peters asked if Albro would be able to get more road frontage from the neighbors so he would have the required amount of road frontage. Albro is not able to get property from one neighbor and has not approached the other neighbor yet. Watson advised that the Town Code is 200ft of road frontage for a building lot and they are not able to make an exception for just one person. Watson does not know how to help. Albro's lawyer is talking to the town's lawyer. Bennati feels like the board's hands are tied in this situation. Albro has a buyer that wants to be able to put a house on the property. Zoning advised Albro that bottom line is it was his and his lawyers' fault for not looking into it when he bought the property. Albro does not want to go after his lawyer.

Matt Pelicano introduced himself to the board and is representing a company Whetstone Studio. They are a digital marketing company. He advised the board members that they keep up with the regulations. Pelicano talked about the Americans with Disabilities Act. There are many users with disabilities using the internet. It is important for the website to be ADA Compliant. He left information on Whetstone Studio for the Board members and hopes to work with the Town of Vernon in the future.

Rose Lockwood asked for an update on the Vernon Center Water district. Watson advised that they had a presentation with Delta Engineers just before the meeting. Peters said that they have an agreement with the Village of Vernon for the water, however they haven't received the signed contract yet. Preliminary reports are done for the fire hydrants, quotes have gone out for the water tower. They are preparing to get quotes for directional boring. Within a month NYS Department of Health, Department of Transportation permit will be done along with digging under the arch. The town has received the verbal approval of the DOT Property on Churton Road but won't have it in writing until after the first of the year. Looking to get quotes for fence and culvert on Churton Road property. At this time, they are looking to break ground in the spring of 2024 as bid packets will be out by the first of the year. Lockwood let the board know that they are thankful for them working so hard on the project.

A community member from Marble Rd. asked the board about a roadside grader as there are roadside and ditching problems that he is seeing on his road. The board members advised that they are not in a contract with Oneida County for these services. Currently the Town of Vernon only contracts plowing and mowing with them. They advised that he speak to County Legislator Keith Schiebel for assistance and that he contacts Oneida County DPW.

REPORTS:

The following reports were presented: Town Clerk, Codes Enforcement, Education and Libraries: The Town of Vernon contributes to the libraries in our town but are careful with our money and how it is used. After a long period of time of inconsistent records from the Vernon Library there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Lori Klopfer and Jessica Yerdon were present and are working on new beginnings for the library. There will be a library board meeting next week and the election of new officers. Bennati thanked them for bringing records and information for review. Klopfer advised they are looking to improve funding and the way they run the library by being financially and fiscally responsible. One of the new plans is to eliminate the director's position and have 2 part-time employees and everything else will be run by the board. Bennati asked if they will have a system of checks and balances when it comes to distributing and paying money. Klopfer said she and Yerdon will be responsible for paying the bills and the Treasurer will be responsible for checking everything to be sure it is accurate and accountable. Klopfer would like to salvage what they are able to at the library, however, can't guarantee that they can. Thurston added that they will understand if it is determined to be beyond repair. He commends them for putting the effort into it. Klopfer plans to be at the next Town of Vernon meeting to update with a plan for the library. Bennati talked highly of Bill from the Sherrill library and advised that he is sure Bill would be willing to help or answer any questions they may have about the library. He should be used as a resource. SWOCO: Watson reported that they are looking into solar; Highway Superintendent reported that the cost of salt has gone down from \$73 to \$64.95. The new garage doors should be coming next week. County Legislator, Schiebel submitted a written report and spoke about the 24 "Share the Road" signs that he delivered to the highway department along with 1 more to be used at the Town Offices on display. Peters will send the locations of these signs to Oneida County. Watson asked Schiebel if he might be able to assist with getting Congressman Brandon Williams to visit the Town of Vernon to see and taste the water in some of the Vernon Center homes located within the water district. Watson stated that they had sent a letter to Williams recently as they are looking for extra funding for the water district project.

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

A motion to accept the 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:

Received request for SEQR resolution of Negative Declaration from Delta Engineers on the Vernon Center Water District.

A motion to schedule a Vernon Center Water Public Hearing October 10, 2023 at 6:30PM was made by Peters, seconded by Bennati. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to schedule a Public Hearing to enact a Local Law to increase tax exemption eligibility for seniors on October 10, 2023 at 6:45PM was made by Peters, seconded by Bennati. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to reappoint Brian Dam for Zoning/Planning Board Chairman was made by Peters, seconded by Bennati. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to approve General Code codification project proposal of \$8,995.00 was made by Thurston, seconded by Peters. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to table the process to create an Ethics Board for the town of Vernon was made by Peters, seconded by Adamkowski. Thurston asked for an explanation of what the ethics board would be meant for. Watson explained that he would like an ethics board basically for the elected officials. Watson would like to go office to office to establish what is required for hours worked. Thurston is unsure if an elected official could be released of their duties by the board of ethics. Adamkowski finds this to be an extremely slippery slope. He wonders if something that triggers the violation could be used to weaponize like is being seen in the department of justice and like we are seeing in the rest of the country. He also asked who oversees reporting. Say someone doesn't like a person and the ethics board doesn't like the public official. Will that person be targeted? Adamkowski said this could be the case in the future being a small town and many people don't like to report for committees. The public elects officials and if they don't like something being done by an elected official they will not reelect that person next time. Adamkowski stated there must be due recourse now at a county level and we will have to look into that. There should be guidelines that need to be followed so if someone wants to run for election, they should be able to know what is required by them. Bennati asked what vehicle they have to address issues that may arise without an ethics board. Adamkowski stated that for elected officials it is available through the County. He would like to explore it more before they decide to proceed. Bennati would like to talk to the Town lawyer. Thurston suggested seeing what other towns have in place what is working for them. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to approve purchase of a 2020 New Holland Boom Mower from Tracey Equipment in the amount of \$141,500.00 was made by Bennati, seconded by Peters. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

A motion to appoint Garrett Burke as Deputy Highway Superintendent was made by Thurston, seconded by Peters. No discussion. Ayes 5. Nays 0. Motion carried.

Received update on Project Cost Estimate from Delta Engineers for Vernon Center Water District.

Fire Department work session is scheduled for September 20th at 6:00pm.

Budget workshop is scheduled for October 4, 2023 at 6:30pm. Thurston asked to discuss with Bookkeeper Wendy Coston to see if they could do a different date as he had a prior commitment.

Received 2nd quarter Oneida Sales Tax from Oneida County in the amount of \$358,180.00

Received 2nd quarter Oneida Indian Compact from Oneida County in the amount of \$31,250.00

Received franchise fee from Charter Communications in the amount of \$9,771.79.

GOOD OF THE ORDER:

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

None

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn at 8:07 p.m. was made by Peters, seconded by Thurston. 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