

The regular meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Homer held on Wednesday, March 4, 2020, in the board room of the Town Hall was called to order by Supervisor Frederick J. Forbes, Sr., at 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT

Frederick J. Forbes, Sr., Supervisor
Michael R. Park, Councilmember
Barry E. Warren, Councilmember
Kevin M. Williams, Councilmember
Patrick M. Snyder, Attorney for the Town
John R. Phelps, Highway Superintendent
Anita W. Jebbett, Town Clerk

ABSENT

Larry R. Jones, Councilmember

OTHERS PRESENT

Kevin Fitch, Cortland County Legislator
Patrick Clune, Trustee, Village of Homer
Donald Ferris, reporter, The Homer News

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MINUTES

The minutes of the February 5th regular meeting were approved as presented, on motion by Councilmember Park, seconded by Councilmember Williams and carried unanimously.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Presented for audit by the Board:

1. The Town Clerk's report of all cash receipts and disbursements for February.
2. The Tax Collector's report of all activities for the month of January & February.
3. The Code Enforcement Officer's report of all building permits issued in February.
4. The Supervisor's report of all cash receipts and disbursements for January.

BILLS TO BE PAID

General Fund bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilmember Williams, seconded by Councilmember Park and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that General vouchers #31 through #53 totaling \$14,237.75 are approved for payment.**

Highway Fund bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilmember Park, seconded by Councilmember Williams and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that Highway vouchers #19 through #36 totaling \$38,594.04 are approved for payment.**

NEW BUSINESS

Original stairs to stage level – Councilmember Park reported on an incident which occurred during the past month in which an older person using the original stairs to access the Assessor's Office missed the last step and fell down. On Park's recommendation the Town will be utilizing an incident report form provided by the insurance company to be completed at the time of any future incident.

There was much discussion about the original stairs. Park said that the pipe railing installed during the renovation is not at hand-rail height, while the staircase next to the elevator, just a short distance away, meets all building codes.

On motion by Councilmember Park, seconded by Councilmember Warren and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that the original stairs to the upper level on both sides of the former stage be closed off to the public until such time as a more permanent solution can be determined.**

Postage meter refill – On motion by Councilmember Warren, seconded by Councilmember Williams and carried unanimously, **the Town Clerk was authorized to add \$1,000 to the Town’s postage meter.**

Deferred compensation plans – The Board discussed offering employees the option to participate in a deferred compensation plan and agreed in principle to do so. Supervisor Forbes said that he would determine which employees may be interested.

Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium (GTCMHIC) - Supervisor Forbes said that the Town had been asked to comment on proposed changes to GTCMHIC’s by-laws and board structure. Councilman Williams said that he has attended many of the meetings and explained that the proposed changes will allow for the Consortium’s growth without having an unwieldy number of board members. He said that although they are moving to more of an executive board, the Consortium has taken great pains to protect smaller communities. Overall, he said that the changes are a good thing and he did not recommend that the Town Board offer any other proposals.

Supervisor Forbes thanked Williams for his participation in the Consortium on behalf of the Town. Councilmember Williams said that he continues to be impressed by the well-run organization.

Zoning Board fees – Zoning Board Chair Gary Lawrence has suggested that the Town Board establish fees for applications for variances heard by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Attorney Snyder explained that there are two types of variances – area and use – with the use variance usually being more complicated. After some discussion it was decided that they need more information on fees charged by other Towns. The matter will be discussed further at a future meeting.

Unclaimed bail – Clerk Jebbett explained that Town Justice Foley has returned to the Town bail money left over from a previous justice court that cannot be attributed to anyone and has been unclaimed for over six years.

Homer Solar Energy Project – Supervisor Forbes reported that the proposed project by EDF is moving forward. He said that he will be limiting his public comments and deferring to the Deputy Supervisor on issues related to the project as he is negotiating to sell a piece of land to NextEra Energy, a different solar company.

Attorney Snyder explained that the project falls under an Article 10 designation which is designed to prevent local opposition to projects that the State deems to be beneficial to the general public. Forbes said that the only recourse for the Towns involved is to make sure that they negotiate a favorable PILOT plan, and he urged the cooperation of the communities involved.

Bridge committee – Supervisor Forbes suggested that the committee get together again to discuss options for the Wall Street Bridge.

Town Hall update – Forbes said that new more comfortable chairs have been ordered for the board room. Councilmember Park will be looking into what is needed in order for the Town to be given the grant money promised for the building renovation. Forbes requested that sometime this month Town Board members meet to discuss the future of the balcony space.

ATTORNEY FOR THE TOWN

Attorney Pat Snyder reported that he has begun his review of the Town of Homer Zoning Law which was adopted in 2008 after a couple of years of consideration by a special committee. Since then the Town has adopted 6 to 8 local laws. He will be incorporating them into the Town’s Zoning Law and looking for any loopholes or shortcomings that may need to be addressed. Snyder will be presenting it to the Town Board for their review before a final version is prepared.

HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT

Highway Superintendent Phelps reported on his department’s activities over the past month. They have finally received delivery of the new dump truck/snow plow that was ordered about one year ago. Sand is being stockpiled for next winter since he was able to obtain it for a low price. Phelps said that he is developing a list of roads that they will be repairing over the summer. He said that he would like to sell an older medium-duty truck and purchase a newer one that is built heavier.

On motion by Councilmember Park, seconded by Councilmember Williams and carried unanimously:
RESOLVED: that Highway Superintendent Phelps is authorized to sell at auction the Town's 2015 Chevrolet 3500 diesel one-ton dump truck with plow.

On motion by Councilmember Warren, seconded by Councilmember Williams and carried unanimously:
RESOLVED: that Highway Superintendent Phelps is authorized to purchase a new 2018 Dodge Ram 4500 diesel truck with a heavy-duty snow plow package from Robert Green Truck Division, Rock Hill, NY, through State contract for \$67,526.63.

Phelps said that he is considering renting a road sweeper in the near future, if the weather holds, as they have done in recent years to pick up leftover salt and sand from the winter months. Also, due to unexpected problems last year with leakage of the diesel fuel tank, he plans to have the gasoline tank used by the Village Street Department inspected to prevent a similar problem.

COUNTY LEGISLATOR

Newly-elected Legislator Kevin Fitch, who covers Scott and Preble as well as a portion of the Town of Homer, reported on activities at the County Legislature over the past month. He handed out copies of a newly-published Visitor's Guide to Cortland County designed to boost tourism, and discussed sales tax and efforts to adjust to changes in bail policy.

The Town Board thanked Fitch for attending the meeting and updating them on County matters.

VILLAGE TRUSTEE

Village Trustee Pat Clune again asked that the Town have the parking lot lights on the north side of the building angled down or shaded due to the spill-over of the bright light into the neighbor's yards. Supervisor Forbes said that Beard Electric will be coming soon to install the fire alarm system and that he would ask him to do so at that time.

The Town Board also thanked Clune for attending almost every Town Board meeting on behalf of the Village.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Anita W. Jebbett
Town Clerk