

The regular meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Homer held on Wednesday, June 3, 2020, in the Town Hall Senior Center was called to order by Deputy Supervisor Michael R. Park, at 6:30 p.m. Social distancing was observed due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

PRESENT

Michael R. Park, Deputy Supervisor & Councilmember  
Larry R. Jones, Councilmember  
Barry E. Warren, Councilmember  
Patrick M. Snyder, Attorney for the Town  
John R. Phelps, Highway Superintendent  
Anita W. Jebbett, Town Clerk

ABSENT

Frederick J. Forbes, Sr., Supervisor  
Kevin M. Williams, Councilmember

OTHERS PRESENT

John R. Daniels, Code Enforcement Officer  
Victor Siegle, Village resident  
Patrick Clune, Village of Homer Trustee  
Don Ferris, reporter, The Homer News

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MINUTES

**The minutes of the May 6<sup>th</sup> regular meeting were approved as presented, on motion by Councilmember Warren, seconded by Councilmember Jones and carried unanimously.**

MONTHLY REPORTS

Presented for audit by the Board:

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

BILLS TO BE PAID

General bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilmember Jones, seconded by Councilmember Warren and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that General Fund vouchers #92 through #110 totaling \$6,663.90 are approved for payment.**

Highway bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilmember Warren, seconded by Councilmember Jones and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that Highway Fund vouchers #75 through #90 totaling \$205,034.84 are approved for payment.**

REGULAR BUSINESS

Homer Solar Energy Center – Deputy Supervisor Park updated the Board on a meeting held at the end of May with officials from the Towns of Homer, Solon, and Cortlandville. All three towns involved in the proposed 1,900-acre solar project agreed to work together to apply for \$31,500 in “intervenor funding” under Article 10. Obtaining those funds would allow them to hire the engineering firm of Barton & Loguidice to review the preliminary scope of the project and review the application, and to hire Patrick Snyder as an environmental attorney to represent them during the process. The Town of Cortlandville has agreed to take care of the finances should they be awarded the funding.

Attorney Snyder explained that the funding would enable the local governments to see that the overall project meets certain criteria, and addresses environmental concerns, such as water runoff and loss of farmland. Deputy Supervisor Park said that the towns, if they wanted to, would be unable to stop this project. The State has made recent changes to the Article 10 process to make the process faster and smoother for the commercial solar developers.

Victor Siegle presented a chart based on his computations of various length PILOT plans and assessment rates. He is very concerned that the towns receive adequate compensation from the large commercial solar project. Although he said he does not want to stop the project, he is urging the towns and the County to use all their leverage to make certain the IDA sets up a PILOT plan that compensates the local governments as much as possible. The Board thanked him for the information.

Tax collection – Town Clerk Jebbett reported on the tax collection to date. Despite the current health crisis, the rate of collection has been the same as last year, around 94%. Taxes will be returned to the Cortland County Treasurer’s Office on Thursday, June 11<sup>th</sup>.

Justice Court – Deputy Supervisor Park reported that the Court has re-opened with their regular office hours after being shut down by the State for two months. They are having a Plexiglas barrier installed in the Court Room in order to be ready for court to resume. Park reminded Councilmember Jones that he and Councilmember Williams will now be able to conduct their annual audit.

Town Clerk’s Office – Councilmember Warren agreed to meet with Town Clerk Jebbett to discuss the installation of barriers in the Town office prior to re-opening. Board members agreed that the Town will need to coordinate with the Village on the re-opening.

Code Enforcement Officer - John Daniels was present to update the Board on all he has been doing since he took over from the Deputy Code Officer May 1<sup>st</sup>. He said that there are quite a number of smaller projects and that he has already issued about 20 permits. Two houses started in 2019 are currently being finished up, and one other is in the works. Frederick Ave continues to be a problem area due to the close proximity of the houses.

There was also discussion about a recent complaint concerning the former gun shop property, north of the Village. Daniels agreed to look into the matter. Attorney Snyder said that it has been a problem property due in part to its designation of being in the flood way. This makes it extremely difficult to improve or sell the property. Dog Control Officer Andersen is looking into the dog situation that was part of the complaint.

Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) – Village Trustee Clune said that the Village would like the Town to participate in the LWRP which involves making improvements to the Tioughnioga River waterfront. The State has awarded a \$48,000 contract to Homer & Cortland. One phase of their current plan involves a walking trail from Homer’s downtown area to the linear park in the Cortlandville portion of the Village. Clune said that the grant could also help with the removal of the old Wall Street Bridge, or anything else to do with the river. Highway Superintendent Phelps reminded the Board that at some point in the future, the Albany Street Bridge will need some attention. Clune said that based on the ownership of the bridges by the Town, it would make good sense for the Town to join. He said that it may help the Town with the BRIDGE NY grant process.

Park asked Attorney Snyder to review the Plan and what would be involved. Trustee Clune was to get Snyder more information, in particular about how the grant can be used.

## HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT

Highway Superintendent Phelps said that he has not heard anything about BRIDGE NY since the COVID-19 outbreak and is doubtful it will be available this year. On the other hand, he is expecting that CHIPS money will be available and has completed approximately four miles of highway reconstruction already this year – on Brake Hill Road, which has now been completely re-surfaced over the past couple of years, and on the east side of town all of Chapman Road that is plowed and Searls Road from the turnaround for one mile. Phelps said that when he learns how much of the CHIPS money will be paid to the Town, he may schedule the rest of Searls to be black-topped. He reported savings in doing those projects due to the low price of oil at the time. In about two weeks they will go back and seal the roads that were re-surfaced.

Phelps said that his department has also been stockpiling grindings to use for smaller road repair projects. The 2015 Chevrolet 3500 one-ton dump truck w/ plow sold much higher than expected at auction, bringing \$29,100, approximately one-half the cost of the new 2018 Dodge 4500 dump truck w/ plow purchased this month.

#### ATTORNEY FOR THE TOWN

Attorney Snyder said that if any Board member has questions about the solar project, he will do his best to answer them. He thinks it is likely that the towns will be awarded the \$31,000 in funding. Snyder also reported on his progress in updating the Town's Zoning Law. He currently has compiled a list of the local laws adopted since the current law was written, with links to the official versions. The next phase will be incorporating those newer local laws into the original 2008 Zoning Law. The final phase will be to make recommendations for new laws to update and improve the Zoning Law, i.e., allowing chickens in residential areas. There was some discussion about how to get FEMA to update their maps which Park and Snyder agree have some shortcomings in the area just north of the Village. Attorney Snyder said that to do so may require the hiring of a hydraulic engineer which can be costly.

Village Trustee Clune noted that a Black Lives Matter march would be taking place on Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup>. People will be walking from Durkee Park to the Village Green and back. The Village is working to make things go smoothly and coordinating with the local police and fire police to address traffic issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Anita W. Jebbett, Town Clerk