

The regular meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Homer held on Wednesday, August 5, 2020, in the Town Hall Senior Center was called to order by Supervisor Frederick J. Forbes, Sr., at 6:30 p.m. Social distancing was observed due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

PRESENT

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

OTHERS PRESENT

Jeremy Boylan, Bailey Place Insurance
Patrick Clune, Village of Homer Trustee
Kelly Preston, Cortland County Legislator
Shenandoah Briere, Cortland Standard reporter

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MINUTES

The minutes of the July 8th regular meeting were approved as presented, on motion by Councilmember Park, seconded by Councilmember Jones and carried unanimously.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Presented for audit by the Board:

1. The Dog Control Officer's report of all activities for July.
2. The Code Enforcement Officer's report of all building permits issued in July.
3. The Town Clerk's report of all cash receipts and disbursements for July.

BILLS TO BE PAID

General Fund bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilmember Warren, seconded by Councilmember Jones and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that General Fund vouchers #133 through #153 totaling \$21,919.76 are approved for payment.**

Highway Fund bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilmember Park, seconded by Councilmember Warren and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that Highway Fund vouchers #110 through #120 totaling \$40,810.52 are approved for payment.**

REGULAR BUSINESS

Liability Insurance renewal – Jeremy Boylan of Bailey Place Insurance reviewed the proposal for renewing the Town's liability insurance for 2020-2021. He said that the Town has been with Selective Insurance for over a decade. The Town did have one claim last year for \$11,000 which has led to an increase in the cost of the insurance of 4.7% which Boylan said is not out of line with a normal increase in cost. The premium for all coverages – including Public Officials Liability Insurance – increased by \$1,568 to \$34,977.

Boylan explained that the Workers' Compensation Insurance policy is due to be renewed in November. He will be attending a future meeting when the cost of that policy is known but expects it to be the same or less as a result of the pandemic.

On motion by Councilmember Warren, seconded by Councilmember Jones and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that the Town agrees to renew its liability insurance policy with Selective Insurance through the Bailey Place Agency for 2020-2021 for the amount of \$34,977.**

Internet provider- Supervisor Forbes said that the Village recently changed their internet provider from Spectrum, still used by the Town, to FIOS. He asked Councilmember Williams to check into using FIOS for the Town's internet through the Village connection.

Health insurance – Supervisor Forbes and Councilmember Williams plan to meet again with a representative from Haylor Freyer & Coon to discuss the Town's health insurance policies.

Code violations – Forbes reviewed a report from Code Officer John Daniels regarding the code violations discussed at the July meeting. At the Rowley property just north of the Village on Route 11 a few of the camping trailers parked there have now been removed. At the Metzger property, the former Dave's Archery, also located on Route 11, Daniels had met with a person interested in purchasing the property to make them aware of the code violations that will need to be addressed.

Solar farm update – There was much discussion about the solar farm proposed by EDF Renewables for the intersection of the Towns of Homer, Cortlandville and Solon. Forbes said that he is working with those towns to come to a recommendation to the IDA on an amount per kilowatt hour to charge in a PILOT plan. He said he would like to see the Central New York region establish a rate for any proposed large solar projects so that different areas are not competing with each other and developers would know what to expect. The Town representatives will be meeting again on Thursday, August 6th.

Town Hall balcony – Forbes reported that a crew from Homer Iron Works will be stopping by to look over the dome on top of the Town Hall to make sure that it is weatherproof before the winter. He will also be asking Board members to meet in the balcony and discuss ideas about its renovation in the near future.

Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) – Village Trustee Clune explained that joining the Village and the City of Cortland in this program would open up opportunities for the Town to obtain grant monies for infrastructure, etc. Supervisor Forbes said that the Town does have a few miles of riverfront since both branches of the Tioughnioga River flow through the Town of Homer.

On motion by Councilmember Park, seconded by Councilmember Williams and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that the Town of Homer agrees to join with the City of Cortland and Village of Homer in the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program and to pay a one-time fee of \$2,000 to join, and that the Town also agrees that the Village of Homer is to be the lead agency for the program.**

Speedway lawsuit – Attorney Pat Snyder said that the Town is once again the subject of an assessment lawsuit by Speedway, Inc., the owner of the gas station/convenience store at the corner of Route 90 & Route 281 and the store in Little York. He stated that Speedway is asking for a 90% drop in their assessed value just as they did last year and, also the same as last year, they provided little or no documentation to prove why they should be assessed at the lower value. He said that he is hopeful that the lawsuit will be dismissed as it was last year.

Bridge Committee – Supervisor Forbes asked the Board to consider re-convening the Bridge Committee to discuss the Town's next steps regarding the Wall Street Bridge.

Forbes noted that the Town has still not received the \$200,000 grant awarded by the State for the Town Hall Renovation Project.

Town Hall board room – Forbes asked if board members would like to name the board room after a particular Homer person. There was no interest in doing so.

ATTORNEY FOR THE TOWN

Attorney Pat Snyder reported that a company looking to place solar panels on a 6-acre parcel on Wolf Road near the intersection with Sweeney Road had attended the last meeting of the Town Planning Board for a preliminary review of their proposal. Snyder said that the project will require a use variance from the ZBA since the parcel is zoned residential, and a site plan review by the Planning Board. He said that the standards for the issuing of a use variance are often difficult to meet.

Snyder said that he has begun work along with the engineering firm of Barton & Loguidice on the review of the large solar farm proposed by EDF Renewables. He discussed various legal cases involving other solar farm projects in New York State that might have an effect on the EDF project. Attorney Snyder said that having a PILOT agreement takes a project out of the taxing realm into a contract which supersedes the Town's ability to tax. Also, when the PILOT plan is done through the county IDA, the agreement can be made for 30 years.

CORTLAND COUNTY LEGISLATOR

County Legislator Kelly Preston reviewed what has been taking place at the County Legislature over the past month. They are starting work on the 2021 County budget, a process she said was very difficult due to the uncertainty of State and/or Federal support as a result of the pandemic. The County's web page has up-to-date information on the COVID-19 outbreak in Cortland County.

Preston noted that only 57.9% of County residents have responded to the Federal Census so far, and that Census volunteers would soon begin going door-to-door. Several other issues were discussed including that local leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement have reached out to County Legislators to emphasize an awareness of all people in the community.

Town Councilmember Jones complimented Legislators Kelly Preston and Linda Jones on their in-depth study of County governments from neighboring counties with populations and characteristics like those of Cortland County. The County Legislature recently voted to hire Transpro Consulting to conduct a similar study, which is getting similar results at a much higher cost to the taxpayers.

Police support flag - Supervisor Forbes suggested that in light of the Black Lives Matter movement, the Town fly the police support flag on the Town Hall flagpole, beneath the POW-MIA flag, to show support for the police force.

Councilmember Williams questioned the addition of another flag and suggested that the Board consider the issue for the next month's meeting. He questioned how a request from citizens to fly a particular flag would be handled and who would make that determination. Forbes said that it would be up to the Town Board. Williams said that he did not want to see the Town Hall flag pole turned into a political expression. Forbes said that he would like to get more information about the flags and whether all three could be flown at the same time.

On motion by Councilmember Park, seconded by Councilmember Warren and carried, with Councilmembers Park, Warren, Jones and Supervisor Forbes voting in the affirmative and Councilmember Williams opposed: **RESOLVED: that a police support flag be flown on the Town Hall flagpole.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Anita W. Jebbett
Town Clerk