

Regular Meeting
June 2, 2021

The regular meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Homer held on Wednesday, June 2, 2021, in the Town Hall Senior Center was called to order by Supervisor Frederick J. Forbes, Sr., at 6:50 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

Hal McCabe, Mayor, Village of Homer
Gary & Suzanne Michales, Town residents
Gary Lawrence, Don Fisher & Jim Reeners, Little York Lake Preservation Society
Kevin Fitch, Cortland County Legislator
Brooke Poli
Heather Hill
Don Ferris, reporter, The Homer News
Kevin Conlon, reporter, Cortland Standard

MINUTES

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

MONTHLY REPORTS

Presented for audit by the Board:

1. The Town Clerk's report of all receipts and disbursements for May.
2. The Supervisor's report of all financial activities through May.

BILLS TO BE PAID

General bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilmember Jones, seconded by Councilmember Williams and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that General Fund vouchers #96 through #118 totaling \$13,365.85 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 #72 through #86 totaling \$23,775.74 are approved for payment.**

REGULAR BUSINESS

Supervisor Forbes thanked Don Ferris for providing the transportation for Town & Village officials who rode in the Memorial Day Parade.

County Hazard Mitigation Plan – On motion by Supervisor Forbes, seconded by Councilmember Park and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that the Homer Town Board hereby authorizes the adoption of the 2021 Cortland County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update** (see attached).

Supervisor Forbes said that the County has been working on the update over the past six months, and that as part of the update, the Town of Homer will be receiving funding to purchase two generators to use in the event of a power outage at the Town Hall and the Highway Garage.

Soil & Water Conservation District signs – There was discussion about a request from Soil & Water Conservation District Director Amanda Barber to both the Town and Village to contribute a total of \$2,500 towards the replacement of highway signs noting that certain areas are in the aquifer. After some discussion about the value of such signs, County Legislator Kevin Fitch said that as a member of the board of the Conservation District, he would obtain more information about the request. A decision on the signs was tabled until the July meeting.

Little York Lake Preservation Society – Gary Lawrence, Don Fisher and Jim Reeners were present on behalf of the Society to explain their proposal to create a special assessment district around Little York Lake which lies in both the towns of Homer and Preble. Fisher explained that it is necessary to treat Little York Lake each year to prevent and limit the growth of invasive species, primarily variable leaf milfoil (VLM). If it is not treated each year, the growth of VLM will make the Lake unusable and reduce property values.

Fisher said that so far they have been able to obtain financial support from the Conservation District, along with some grants, as well as receiving donations from lake property owners. However, by creating a lake protection and rehabilitation district through the County, they would be able to have ongoing stable funding and raise a baseline amount each year to better maintain the lake through a special assessment tax on lake property owners.

There was much discussion about types of treatment and how much money is needed each year. While dredging the lake may be a good solution, Fisher said that it was much too costly for them to even consider. At this time, Fisher said that they are just informing the Town Board of their proposal. They are working to get the support of Little York Lake property owners in the form of a petition to submit to the County. The process would also require a public hearing at the County level. Attorney Snyder said that he is very impressed by all the hard work and research done by the members of the Preservation Society. Lawrence, Fisher and Reeners thanked the Town Board for their time and consideration and said that they plan to ask the Town Board for a resolution of support at the July meeting.

2021 Tax Collection – Town Clerk Jebbett reported that at the end of the tax collection period for 2021, the Town had collected 95.8% of all taxes billed. This is the highest percentage collected in many years, up from an average of 92.37% over the last 8 years.

Proposed Local Law regarding Chickens – After the discussion at the May Town Board meeting, Attorney Snyder had circulated to Board members two versions of a proposed local law to address raising chickens in Residence Districts. Councilmember Williams presented his proposal which combines aspects of both versions. There was much discussion about each section of his proposed version of the local law.

Attorney Snyder explained that the purpose of the law is to reduce the regulations on the raising of chickens in a Residence District which had required the applicant to get permissions from the Town Planning Board and/or Zoning Board of Appeals. He believes that the current version of the law is a good compromise and allows residents the right to raise chickens in Residence Districts within certain guidelines without having to go through the planning or zoning boards.

On motion by Councilmember Williams, seconded by Councilmember Jones and carried unanimously:
RESOLVED: that Local Law No. 2 – to amend the zoning law to allow the raising of chickens in the Residence District without any town permits provided that certain conditions are met – be advertised for a public hearing to be held on July 7th.

Supervisor Forbes reminded the Town Board that they also will be holding a public hearing on Local Law No. 1 – to establish residency requirements for the office of Town Clerk – on July 7th.

Health insurance consortium – Councilmember Williams reported that a class action lawsuit has been filed against Blue Cross-Blue Shield for overcharging on insurance premiums. The Greater Tompkins County Health Insurance Consortium has made claim forms available for those employers or employees who wish to become part of the lawsuit. Claims must be filed by November 5th, 2021.

Town Hall cameras & FIOS – Williams said that he is working on obtaining at least 2 RFP's for installing cameras on the outside of the Town Hall. He reported that all Town offices are now connected to the internet using FIOS instead of Spectrum.

New Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk – Supervisor Forbes introduced Heather Hill and Brooke Poli as the hires for Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk to replace the retiring Clerk Jebbett and Deputy Clerk Karen Livingston. He said that the Board was very happy to have such fine candidates for the positions. Ms. Poli will start working on June 7th and Ms. Hill on June 21st.

Town Hall roof – Councilmember Warren said that he has only been able to obtain one quote for the needed repairs to the roof of the Town Hall despite contacting several contractors. On motion by Councilmember Warren, seconded by Councilmember Park and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that the quote from M.A.B. Roofing, Cortland, for repairs to the Town Hall roof in the amount of \$2,500 is approved, contingent upon their consideration of the prevailing wage rate in that quote.**

ATTORNEY FOR THE TOWN

Attorney Pat Snyder reported that he has been reviewing a lengthy proposal from EDF, developers of the Homer Solar Energy Project, for a road agreement. During the construction phase in particular EDF will be hauling large, heavy equipment over Town highways to reach the proposed solar sites. Snyder said that the proposal is very preliminary, with no maps included, but that in his review he has found several differences with the Town's own Road Protection Law. He suggested, and Town Board members agreed, that the EDF proposal should comply with the current Town law.

CORTLAND COUNTY LEGISLATOR

County Legislator Kevin Fitch reported on the activities at the County over the past month. He said that Trish Jessett has been appointed to replace Dan Dineen who is retiring as County Planning Director, urged Town residents to complete the survey on broadband access, and reported that TC3 has been working to develop courses to better provide the skills necessary for today's jobs.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Anita W Jebbett, Town Clerk