

The regular meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Homer held in the board room of the Town Hall Building on Wednesday, October 5th, 2011, was called to order by Supervisor Frederick J. Forbes at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Frederick J. Forbes, Supervisor
Barry E. Warren, Councilman
Dan A. Weddle, Councilman
Kevin M. Williams, Councilman
Brian D. Young, Councilman
Patrick M. Snyder, Attorney for the Town
John R. Phelps, Highway Superintendent
Anita W. Jebbett, Town Clerk

OTHERS PRESENT

Dale Everts, Deputy Highway Superintendent
Mark Helms, Captain, Cortland County Sheriff's Department
Steve Hughes, reporter, Cortland Standard
Bonnie Johnson, Budget Assistant

MINUTES

The minutes of the September 7th regular meeting were approved as presented, on motion by Councilman Warren, seconded by Councilman Young and carried unanimously.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Presented for audit by the Board were:

1. The Town Clerk's monthly report of all receipts and disbursements for September.
2. The Code Enforcement Officer's report of all building permits issued for September.

BILLS TO BE PAID

General bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilman Young, seconded by Councilman Williams and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that General vouchers #240 through #260 totaling \$15,945.04 be approved for payment.**

Highway bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilman Warren, seconded by Councilman Weddle and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that Highway vouchers #159 through #188 totaling \$83,795.21 be approved for payment.**

CORTLAND COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Mark Helms from the Cortland County Sheriff's Department was present to make the Town Board aware that the County has been discussing making serious cuts to the Sheriff's Department budget. He told the Board that the caseload for the Sheriff's Department has increased and that there is no more room to cut personnel without jeopardizing coverage in the Towns. He asked the Board members to contact him if they would like more specific information.

The Town Board thanked him for his presentation.

OLD BUSINESS

Worker's Compensation Claim – Supervisor Forbes said that there has still been no decision on the compensation claim that had been filed by a Village employee.

Town Hall Renovations – Supervisor Forbes said that work had been delayed by other obligations of the contractor, Diamond & Thiel. Just this week they have begun the work to finally complete the project to renovate the windows and are hoping to finish the work within a week or two. The masonry work on the exterior is now complete.

New Visions meeting – A group has been organized to collect signatures of those Homer residents who may be interested in a new alternative for internet, television and telephone service. They will be holding a meeting on Tuesday, October 18th, at 7:00 p.m. in the board room of the Town Hall.

2011 Assessment Reval - Of the three property owners who filed assessment grievances in Small Claims Court, only one, Herbert Mead, has had his assessment lowered. The Town is responsible for reimbursing him the \$30 filing fee.

There was much discussion about the assessment cases that have been filed in Cortland County Supreme Court. Supervisor Forbes reported that the County has agreed to set aside funds to defend the assessments if necessary. The Homer School District is reportedly not interested in fighting any of the claims at this time and no one at the meeting knew what the Village's decision was in regard to the matter.

On motion by Councilman Young, seconded by Supervisor Forbes and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that the Town move ahead with the necessary action to defend the 2011 assessments of the Ryan and Barber properties, including the preparation of the necessary appraisals.**

On motion by Supervisor Forbes, seconded by Councilman Young and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that the low bid of Pomeroy Appraisal, Syracuse, be accepted for the preparation of full appraisal reports on those two properties.**

Court Audit – Councilman Williams reported that he and Councilman Young would be auditing the Justice Court records prior to the November 2nd board meeting.

Knox box – Due to some recent issues at the Town Hall the Homer Fire Department has again suggested that the Town purchase a “Knox” box - a specially designed box to hold keys to the entire building in the event of an emergency. There was discussion regarding security issues.

On motion by Councilman Warren, seconded by Councilman Young and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that the purchase of small size Knox box for the Homer Town Hall at a cost of \$280.00 is hereby authorized and is to be included with the aforementioned General Fund vouchers as voucher #261.**

HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT

Highway Superintendent Phelps reported on his preparations for the upcoming winter season. Phelps said that he and his crew will be doing some more ditch work and tree work prior to winter.

He said that he had completed more CHIPS projects this year than usual and with fewer employees, including culvert pipe work on Mead Road and re-surfacing Tamarack Lane.

ATTORNEY FOR THE TOWN

Attorney Snyder reported receiving a request for a refund of taxes from the Henkel Corporation's attorney following a negotiated settlement of their assessment lawsuit. He will be contacting Assessor David Briggs regarding just how much the Town owes to the Henkel Corporation for back taxes.

On motion by Councilman Young, seconded by Councilman Weddle and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that the assessment settlement proposed by Attorney Patrick Raymond on behalf of Verizon for its property located in the Village hereby be accepted subject to the review and approval of Assessor David Briggs.**

2012 TENTATIVE BUDGET

Supervisor Forbes presented the tentative budget for 2012. As proposed, the total tax levy remains the same as in 2011, although the rate is lower due to the reval. Forbes said that for the first time, he is not proposing to use any surplus to balance the accounts. He has budgeted for the receipt of the \$100,000 NYS grant that was awarded in 2008 but not yet received. Forbes said that the Fire District does not have a new contract from the Village as yet so he has budgeted \$85,000 to cover any increase there may be.

Forbes read through the tentative budget. There was some discussion about the State's new property tax cap law, funding the Phillips Free Library and setting aside funds for the next assessment reval. Supervisor Forbes said that he has lowered the total amount budgeted for the Highway payroll, due to the retirement of two former workers; yet there is still room for some increase in the pay rate for Highway employees.

Forbes asked Councilmen Warren and Williams to meet with Village Recreation Director Jeff Lewis to discuss the Town's contribution to their recreation programs, and he asked Councilmen Weddle and Young to meet with the Highway Department to discuss equipment and wages prior to the November meeting.

On motion by Councilman Young, seconded by Councilman Weddle and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that the tentative budget for 2012 is hereby adopted as the preliminary budget for 2012, with a proposed tax rate of \$1.28 for Village residents and \$1.28 plus the fire tax rate of \$.42 for a total rate of \$1.70 for Town residents.**

The November 2nd meeting is scheduled to begin at 7:00 p.m. with a public hearing on the proposed Town Budget for 2012 scheduled for 7:30 p.m.

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

Anita W. Jebbett
Town Clerk