

The regular meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Homer held on Wednesday, October 5, 2016, in the board room of the Town Hall building was called to order by Supervisor Frederick J. Forbes, Sr., at 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT

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

OTHERS PRESENT

John R. Phelps, Highway Superintendent
Linda Jones, County Legislator
Dorina Johnson, resident
Donald Ferris, reporter, The Homer News
Jacob DeRochie, reporter, Cortland Standard

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MINUTES

The minutes of the September 7th public hearings and regular meeting were approved as presented, on motion by Councilman Park, seconded by Councilman Jones and carried unanimously.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Presented for audit by the Board were:

1. The Supervisor's report of all receipts & disbursements for August & September.
2. The Town Clerk's report of all receipts & disbursements for September.
3. 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 Jones, seconded by Councilman Williams and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that General vouchers #221 through #237 totaling \$18,886.84 be approved for payment.**

Highway bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilman Warren, seconded by Councilman Park and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that Highway vouchers #154 through #173 totaling \$22,413.35 be approved for payment.**

NEW BUSINESS

Mega Energy information – There was discussion about Mega Municipal Electric & Gas Alliance which proposes to offer municipalities reduced prices for electricity and gas service. The Board members agreed to have a representative from Mega Energy give a presentation at a future meeting, possibly December or January.

Dog shelter inspection – Supervisor Forbes reported that the Country Acres Pet Services animal shelter has passed an inspection by the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets.

New pedestrian crossings – Forbes reported that the NYS Department of Transportation has approved two pedestrian crossings for the intersection of NYS 41 and 281, anticipated to be installed next year.

Senior Center incident – The Senior Center reported an incident in which someone visiting from the Murray Center became distraught and ended up breaking a window in the door to the men’s room. The door repair was paid for by the Murray Center.

OLD BUSINESS

Assessor appointment – Supervisor Forbes reported that the committee to appoint a new Assessor for the Towns of Homer and Virgil and the City of Cortland is currently working out the details on an appointment. He suggested that a special meeting might be scheduled in the near future.

Alternate board members – On motion by Councilman Williams, seconded by Councilman Warren and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that Lindsay Andersen and Kim Fairchild are appointed to serve as alternate members of the Town Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals for a two year term.**

Meeting with Village representatives – Supervisor Forbes and Councilman Warren agreed to meet with representatives from the Village’s building committee to consider what space is available in the Town Hall if the Village were to move their offices back into the building. The meeting will take place on Thursday at 3:00 p.m.

Wall Street Bridge repair/replacement – Councilman Williams suggested contacting the Village Board for a resolution regarding the repair/replacement of the bridge to be certain that the Wall Street Bridge is the bridge that they want the Town to maintain for vehicular traffic.

The Town Board agreed to obtain at least three quotes for conducting borings prior to making any decisions on the bridge.

Solar energy projects zoning – Attorney Snyder said that the change to the Town’s Comprehensive Plan which is under consideration qualifies as an unlisted action under SEQRA. He then read through the SEQRA short form that he had completed. All board members agreed that any impacts were small and that the proposed change in the Comprehensive Plan would not result in any significant adverse environmental impacts.

On motion by Councilman Warren, seconded by Councilman Park and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that Supervisor Forbes is hereby authorized to sign the negative declaration under SEQRA for the proposed change to the Town’s Comprehensive Plan to allow for solar projects in the Town of Homer.**

On motion by Councilman Park, seconded by Councilman Jones and carried unanimously:

WHEREAS the current zoning law does not address solar energy projects, and

WHEREAS solar energy projects are likely to become a common land use in the Town, and

WHEREAS the Town Planning Board has recommended that the attached language be added to the Town Comprehensive Plan, and

WHEREAS the proposed language has been reviewed by the County Planning Board and it approves the language, and

WHEREAS a public hearing was held on the proposed revision to the Comprehensive Plan, and

WHEREAS the town board has adopted a negative declaration under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) for the adoption of this amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, and

WHEREAS the Town Board deems this amendment to the plan to be in the public interest, now

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Town of Homer Comprehensive Plan is revised to incorporate the attached language (see attached copy of the amendment).

ATTORNEY FOR THE TOWN

Attorney Snyder explained that an application for the construction of a commercial mini-storage building on the site of the former Pine Grove Inn has encountered several roadblocks. Due to the zoning, the applicant, Dorina Johnson, first had to apply for a variance of the required set-back from the road from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Then, during a site plan review by the Planning Board, it was determined that the property was in the flood plain, and would need a flood plain variance, also from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Dorina Johnson attended the Town Board meeting regarding this matter. She intends to elevate the project by having fill brought in, but it will still not be in full compliance with the flood plain laws. She can raise it up to the 100 year flood plain elevation, but to raise it 2 feet further would require filling up to 5 feet in places, which she believes is impractical and potentially dangerous.

HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT

Highway Superintendent Phelps said that he was working with the NYS DOT to solve issues with the Hights Gulf Bridge which was flagged recently. Phelps said that he and his crew are already preparing trucks and equipment for the winter months, and that he hopes to have the sand and salt mixed next week. He is planning to hire two part-time seasonal employees to help with snow and ice removal during the winter months.

COUNTY LEGISLATOR

Linda Jones reported on the activities of the County Legislature over the past month. One of the matters discussed was an attempt to bring back the military preparedness training group which provided free health clinics at the Homer Intermediate/Junior High Schools this past summer. Jones offered to find out if the military could offer any help with the Town's plan to repair or replace the Wall Street Bridge.

2017 TENTATIVE TOWN BUDGET

Supervisor Forbes reviewed the highlights of the tentative 2017 Town budget. He said that the tax rate will remain level, reserves will be used in all four accounts to balance them, and that there was a 1% reduction in the Town's total assessed value. He reminded the Board that he has not yet received an estimate of the cost of health insurance for 2017.

Forbes noted that Highway Superintendent Phelps has done more with fewer employees in the past few years and has been instrumental in keeping the budget in line.

On motion by Councilman Park, seconded by Councilman Williams and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that the tentative budget as presented is adopted as the preliminary budget for 2017, with a proposed tax rate of \$1.30 for Village residents, and \$1.30 plus a \$.43 fire tax rate equaling \$1.73 for Town residents.**

A budget workshop was not scheduled. The public hearing on the proposed budget will be held on November 2nd.

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

Anita W. Jebbett
Town Clerk