

Regular Meeting
December 5, 2018

The regular meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Homer held on Wednesday, December 5, 2018, in the Town Hall Senior Center was called to order by Supervisor Frederick J. Forbes, Sr., at 6:45 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
John R. Phelps, Highway Superintendent
Anita W. Jebbett, Town Clerk

OTHERS PRESENT

Patrick Clune, Trustee, Village of Homer
Victor Siegle, Village resident
Linda Jones, Cortland County legislator
Donald Ferris, reporter, The Homer News
Nick Graziano, reporter, Cortland Standard

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MINUTES

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

MONTHLY REPORTS

Presented for audit by the Board:

1. The Supervisor's report of all cash receipts & disbursements for October.
2. The Town Clerk's report of all cash receipts & disbursements for November.
3. The Code Enforcement Officer's report of all building permits issued for November.
4. The Dog Control Officer's report of all activities for November.
5. The Status of Funds report for the Community Development Grant as of November 16th.

BILLS TO BE PAID

General bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilman Warren, seconded by Councilman Williams and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that General Fund vouchers #249 through #274 totaling \$138,205.98 are approved for payment.**

Highway bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilman Park, seconded by Councilman Jones and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that Highway Fund vouchers #209 through #226 totaling \$46,934.51 are approved for payment.**

Community Development bills were approved as audited on motion by Councilman Warren, seconded by Councilman Williams and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that Community Development Fund vouchers #55 through #59 totaling \$37,656.76 are approved for payment.**

OLD BUSINESS

Fire District – On motion by Councilman Warren, seconded by Councilman Park and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that, following the public hearing, the Town of Homer approves of the 2019 contract between the Village of Homer and the Homer Town Fire District for \$90,080, subject to review by the Village and Town attorneys.**

Town Hall renovations – On motion by Councilman Warren, seconded by Councilman Williams and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that a change order for the purchase of lights for the renovation project totaling \$6,365, is authorized, out of the \$8,000 allowance for lights in the original bid.**

Forbes reported on the status of the project – the carpet and lights will be installed on the stage area in the next week. The Assessor will be moving his offices to the stage when that phase is complete, and the Town Clerk, Supervisor, and Code Office will be moving into the Historian's office and the large storage space also located on the stage to allow for the 2nd phase of the project.

On motion by Councilman Williams, seconded by Councilman Park and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that a change order for the installation of a 3-inch conduit for additional communication lines totaling \$2,155, an increase in the contract with Beard Electric, is authorized.**

Town Hall balcony - Supervisor Forbes updated the Town Board on the status of the separate balcony renovation project. Board members were asked to stop by to look over the project in order that decisions could be made. On motion by Councilman Park, seconded by Councilman Williams and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that an appropriation of \$3,000 is approved for continuing work on the Town Hall balcony to convert it into usable space.**

There was concern about the old knob & tube wiring still remaining in the balcony. On motion by Councilman Park, seconded by Councilman Jones and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that an appropriation of \$1,000 is approved for the removal of the old electrical wiring in the balcony.**

Forbes also suggested that the Town should request bids for the replacement of the electrical box located at the base of the balcony stairs.

Update on bridge repairs – Councilman Park reported that according to the engineers, Barton & Loguidice, the cost of rebuilding the Pine Street Bridge to allow for a 5-ton weight limit is around \$60,000. Park estimated that such a repair would give the bridge another 10 years. Highway Superintendent Phelps suggested that they contact the State DOT to look over and advise the Town on the status of the footers. Park said he would ask Barton & Loguidice for a quote for their engineering fees for the rebuilding of the Pine Street Bridge.

Forbes said that the Town received official notification that it was denied the Bridge NY grant for replacement of the Wall Street Bridge. Since another round of grant applications may not take place for a couple of years, Forbes said that he would be recalling the members of the Bridge Committee in order to discuss what the next step will be. Village Trustee Clune said that he would be asking the Mayor if he would like to be on the Committee.

NEW BUSINESS

Health insurance – Supervisor Forbes reported that the health insurance plan through the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium will be increasing 4% for 2019. Supervisor Forbes thanked Councilman Williams for his service on the board of the Health Consortium.

The cost of the dental insurance is not increasing. As for the Medicare Advantage plan, Forbes explained that for 2019 the Finger Lakes Group has suggested an Excellus plan that is less costly and offers more benefits than the current MVP plan.

On motion by Supervisor Forbes, seconded by Councilman Warren and carried unanimously: **RESOLVED: that the Town change the health insurance coverage for those over age 65 from MVP to an Excellus Medicare plan for 2019.**

Senior Center carpet – Councilman Warren reported that he had been asked by the Senior Center to obtain quotes for the replacement of their carpet. Warren said that although the current carpeting is only around 5 years old, it has not remained fully intact and is torn or wrinkled in spots, creating a potential hazard. He has obtained quotes for carpet tile from National Floor Center, Binghamton, for \$10,094.07 and from R.H. Osborne, Cortland, for \$7,658.00. The seniors have some funds to apply towards the cost of the carpet. Legislator Jones was asked to inquire whether the County would have funds to apply towards the carpet and Forbes will be checking with a local foundation.

2019 Town Meeting schedule – The Board agreed to schedule two meetings in 2019 on days other than the first Wednesday after the first Tuesday of the month: The January 2nd meeting will be moved to Tuesday, January 8th, and the July 3rd meeting will be moved to Tuesday, July 9th.

LOCAL LAW REGARDING CHICKENS IN A RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

There was much discussion about amending the zoning law to allow for chickens in a residential district. Supervisor Forbes will be asking the Planning Board to reconsider their recommendation on chickens in residential district to include verbiage regarding lot size.

SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS

Village resident Victor Siegle presented his concerns about Cortland County's local law approving PILOT programs (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) for commercial solar projects, and the Town's resolution to participate in the proposed PILOT program if the project is located in the Town. He explained why he thinks that reducing taxes for solar energy projects is a mistake. He explained that according to NYS Real Property Tax Law, the Town does not have to follow the County's lead regarding whether or not to tax solar energy systems; instead the Town could chose to "opt out" and provide that no exemption shall be applicable with respect to any solar energy system. He also argued that solar energy has the disadvantage of producing very little energy at night or during the winter months when electricity is most crucial. He urged the Town to reject the County's PILOT program law and write a simple law to "opt-out" of any exemptions for any commercial solar or wind projects. Siegle submitted a letter to the Town Board to that effect, along with other information for them to review.

Supervisor Forbes thanked him for his presentation and said that he would ask the Town Attorney and the Town Board to review the matter.

ATTORNEY FOR THE TOWN

Attorney Pat Snyder said that he would be preparing the Full Environmental Assessment Form for the proposed Local Law #1 of 2018 (allowing for farm breweries) for the next meeting of the Town Board. He suggested that now is the time to make any changes to the proposed law.

Snyder reported on the Planning Board's discussion of zoning regarding wedding or event barns. The Planning Board agreed that a barn used for that commercial purpose would need to meet building codes, and that it would be preferable and probably less expensive to build a new barn for that purpose. Such locations are becoming more popular and there is reportedly one operating in the Town.

HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT

Superintendent Phelps reviewed the activities of the Highway Department over the past month, primarily plowing snow and sanding roads due to the early winter weather. They were able to finish up their fall projects, but will be filling in with a few tree trimming/removal projects which will be hired out.

COUNTY LEGISLATOR

County Legislator Linda Jones reported on the adoption of the County budget with a 1.3% increase, but noted that Dwyer Park was once again underfunded. She also explained the recent confusion about the County's occupancy tax and described work that she and fellow legislator Kelly Preston have done on the committee to compare operational and financial aspects of similar counties to Cortland County.

Supervisor Forbes invited anyone interested to view the current status of the renovation project- the offices located on the former stage. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Anita W. Jebbett
Town Clerk