

Public Hearing
November 3, 2021

A public hearing on a proposed Local Law #4 of 2021 to opt out of Section 487 of the New York State Real Property Tax Law, held in the Senior Center of the Town Hall Building on Wednesday, November 3, 2021, was called to order by Supervisor Frederick J. Forbes Sr. at 6:34 p.m.

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
Heather M. Hill, Town Clerk
Brooke L. Poli, Town Deputy Clerk

OTHERS PRESENT

Martin Sweeney, Town Historian
Chris Spadolini, Cortland County Recycling Coordinator
Brian Horan, Town of Homer Resident
Michael Barlyski, Cortlandville Resident
Victor Siegle, Homer Village Resident
Liz Arnold, Homer Village Resident
Don Ferris, Homer News
Patrick Clune, Trustee Village of Homer

PLEDGE

Supervisor Frederick J. Forbes Sr. asked if anyone would like to speak relative to the solar issue. Victor Siegle, Homer Village Resident shared his handout with the board. Victor stated that in the past eight issues of the Homer News he has published eight columns of 1,000 words each. Victor read from this latest column that he published in the Homer News. Earlier this year New York State introduced new solar regulations (Major Renewable Energy Development section 94-c of the Executive Law). Cortland County ability to protect our local environment has been obliterated by the combination of these new solar regulations. The only compensating factor was that New York State still allowed towns to conduct fair appraisals on solar projects, leading to fair assessments and fair taxation. Although the appraisals have multiple problems it is still better than any of the pilots. This new appraisal model contains tax formulas that significantly reduce solar appraisal values, thereby reducing property taxes for new solar developments. After informing the board of his findings Victor concluded in his opinion that opting out be the only viable option.

Supervisor Frederick J. Forbes Sr. commented that Brian Fitts made him very aware about the rates he was talking about at the last month's meeting have been cut in half. The state assessors association was very unhappy with the new state policy and that they had not been consulted in the information of the policy, contrary to a requirement in the law. Supervisor Forbes wanted to make all aware that he and Brian Fitts had spoken.

Michael Barlyski, Cortlandville Resident shared his handouts with the board. Mr. Barlyski stated that first, there are a number of reasons to reject the proposal to opt out of 487. Since the passage of the minimum \$7,000 per megawatt PILOT in Cortland County, not a single new solar project has been proposed. In fact, opting out of the 487 exemption would likely establish an even higher per megawatt minimum PILOT payment. As you can clearly see, the PILOTs have a much lower range than what would be generated by opting out of 487. Simply put, solar projects are not as profitable today as they might have been at some point in the past. I would like to reiterate that for the reasons I have stated, as well as others, the Homer Town Board should vote down this proposal. I would, at the same time, encourage this board to commence a dialogue with the County Legislature to repeal the \$7,000 fixed PILOT and return to the IDA the ability to negotiate PILTOS and solar projects solely on the basis of the economics of each of those proposals.

Supervisor Forbes stated that he thinks we have gone far enough, this isn't for debate this is for the board to gather information for the public.

Supervisor Forbes asked the public if there was anyone who would like to speak relative to the solar issue. Supervisor Forbes asked a second time if anyone from the public would like to speak on the solar issue.

As there were no questions or comments from the public, the public hearing was closed at 7:04 p.m.

Heather M. Hill
Town Clerk