

**TOWN OF WESTERLO
TOWN BOARD
WORKSHOP MEETING
OF
TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2014**

The Town of Westerlo Town Board held on Tue., May 20, 2014 at the Town Hall 933 CR 401, Westerlo, NY. Supervisor Rapp called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

ATTENDING WERE: Supervisor Richard H. Rapp
 Councilman Alfred L. Field
 Councilman William F. Bichteman Jr.
 Councilman Anthony W. Sherman

ABSENT: Theodore S. Lounsbury III

Also attending were: Deputy Supervisor Edwin H. Lawson, Planning Board Chair Dorothy Verch, Highway Superintendent Keith Wright, Zoning Board member John Sefcik, Town Clerk Kathleen Spinnato several Town employees and approximately eight interested persons. Supervisor Rapp reported the Town received one application for the position of Clerk to the Planning Board, Zoning Board and Water Board and one more application is on its way.

The Town Board and Deputy Supervisor Lawson reviewed and discussed the potential purchase of new computers and a new server. Preville Technology Services (PTS) provided a quote for computers, server, and other equipment to the Town Board. The items listed on the quote were listed on an ala carte basis. Ed Lawson advised that the quote was below State Contract Price. Councilman Field asked if the Town needs to receive more than one bid on the computers. Discussion followed regarding the quote from Preville Technology Services, the types of equipment included in the quote. Dorothy Verch questioned the security of the Town Wi-Fi. Discussion of Wi-Fi security, the need for new equipment due to the age of the current computers and server, and a cost comparison followed. The Town Board made the request that Deputy Supervisor Lawson solicit prices with add alternates for the same equipment (i.e.: computers, server, etc.) as quoted by PTS from other companies as well. Ed advised he will work along with the Assessor's Clerk Claire Marshall to try to obtain more quotes.

Councilman Bichteman advised the Board they need to investigate what the Town can do to deal with increasing Health Insurance costs. They need to explore alternate ideas of how to manage the insurance premiums before the budget process begins, by either forming a committee or holding workshops. The Board needs to do whatever is best to satisfy both sides; consider the impact to the employees, retirees, and also try to reduce the cost to the Town of Westerlo. Last year the Town was able to stay within the 2% NYS Tax Cap, the year before that they just barely bridged it. In order for the Town to be able provide the services we have been providing we are looking at a potential significant tax increase, and that won't sit well with anyone. He suggested the Town Board come up with individual lists and share information to arrive at a consensus and have a plan. Councilman Field offered to contact another insurance company in Oneonta. Councilman Bichteman suggested also communicating with the same insurance broker the Town currently has so they can try to forecast upcoming costs as well. More discussion followed on the topic of health insurance by Councilman Bichteman and Councilman Field. Suggestions were made by two residents: 1. Reach out to other towns to see how they are handling health insurance premiums. 2. Consider an insurance company named Cool. Supervisor Rapp advised he had suggested partnering on health insurance coverage to Albany County in the past, but nothing became of it.

Councilman Bichteman indicated the next important issue is the Draft Hydrofracking Report. The Town Board had previously heard public comments and discussion about what people thought about the report at a Special Town Board meeting. Councilman Bichteman summarized the ideas suggested by John Sefcik for the potential changes to the report, which was basically to take the Towns of Berne & Rensselaerville reports and add specific conditions which exist to the Town of Westerlo; he advised that still remains an option. He discussed the Moratorium on Hydraulic Fracturing, its effective date being one year from the date of filing with the State, the legal requirements as advised by the Town Attorney which qualify for an extension of a moratorium. He shared his opinion that revising the draft Hydrofracking Report may not help the situation at this point in time, he suggested in lieu of that, the Town move to make Zoning changes to protect the infrastructure and environment within the Town. Councilman Bichteman gave his opinions:

- He is not in favor of banning Hydrofracking. What is unfair about banning hydrofracking is that landowners of large parcels of land within the town would be denied financial opportunity to gather what they can potentially from their property in the future.
- Home Rule may not protect the Town. State and other agencies may potentially overpower the Town.
- Through zoning changes the Town protects the infrastructure and environment.
- Have not heard anything from the City of Albany. The City of Albany should lobby the State Legislature to protect reservoir(s)/streams located in the Town of Westerlo which are the watershed supply for the City of Albany.
- Set a deadline for zoning changes.

Councilman Sherman was in agreement, Councilman Field needed to ponder the matter.

A resident suggested extending the Moratorium to address the Zoning changes and also suggested the Board not limit themselves to the Draft Hydrofracking Report in making any decisions. Councilman Bichteman advised that he personally is not limited to the Draft Hydrofracking Report and has read reports from two other towns and articles from other sources.

A resident advised that 94% of comments on the Hydrofracking report were not favorable and also suggested that the protection of the health, safety, and welfare of the entire community be included in any Zoning changes.

A resident advised at a previous meeting Albany County Legislator, Deb Busch had announced that Albany County was working on passing a law to protect County roads from vehicle traffic from Hydrofracking. Supervisor Rapp advised he may see her at an upcoming meeting and will ask if the law was passed.

Another resident suggested that the Attorney's Helen and David Slottje who modified the Zoning regulations for Dryden/Middlefield. They have volunteered to help Towns modify Zoning Laws. The Town of Westerlo should take advantage of that free legal advice. Councilman Bichteman asked the resident to email this information to him.

There being no further discussion Councilman Sherman made a motion to adjourn, Councilman Field seconded the motion, motion carried by the Board members who were present. The Workshop meeting adjourned at 8:18 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Spinnato

