

**TOWN OF WESTERLO TOWN BOARD
WORKSHOP MEETING
OF
TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2014**

The Westerlo Town Board met on Tue., April 15, 2014 at the Westerlo Town Hall 933 County Route 401, Westerlo. The purpose was to discuss the recent NYS Office of the State Comptroller's Report of Examination, the newly revised Town of Westerlo Employee Handbook, and Health Insurance costs. Supervisor Richard H. Rapp called the workshop meeting to order at 7:00 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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

Also attending were: Deputy Supervisor Edwin H. Lawson, Highway Superintendent Keith Wright Sr., Zoning Board of Appeals member John Sefcik, several Highway Dept. employees, Town Clerk Kathleen Spinnato and approximately four residents.

Councilman Bichteman advised they need to discuss two sections of the revised Employee Handbook:

1. Allowance of Sick Leave section - Page 41: There was a definite error that needs correction. Should read will be credited with 16 hrs. and upon completion of six months will be credited with an additional 8 hrs. and with 24 hours after 1st year of service.

The five (5) year should be 40 hours instead of 56 hrs.

2. Compensation Time- Page 37, the 700 's section: Councilman Bichteman advised that the current handbook does not address compensation time off (there may be an omission).

Councilman Field advised that his copy has a statement on page 38 which read:

Compensatory time off – At the discretion of the employee's Department Head and in lieu of overtime pay, an employee may request and be granted compensatory time off for overtime hours worked between Nov. 1 and April 15. Compensatory time may accrue to a maximum of 75 hrs. off and may be taken with the consent of the Highway Superintendent commencing April 16. Compensatory time accrued and unused by October 31 will be forfeited. Councilman Bichteman requested a copy of the paragraph for himself and the Town Board members and he will add. Highway Superintendent Keith Wright asked if this section currently specifies how compensatory time accumulates for example, if an employee works 4 hrs. over time they would receive 6 hours of comp time? Councilman Sherman responded that it does not specify. Councilman Field believed the way this is written they will receive 6 hrs. compensation time. Councilman Bichteman agreed.

Councilman Bichteman will make the necessary corrections to the recently revised Employee Handbook.

Councilman Bichteman reported on the NYS Comptrollers Report of Examination. He offered clarification regarding the Water District funding. He reported a Water Board was formed to investigate issues approximately 1 1/2 yrs. ago. When the Town changed to an accounting firm it was confirmed there was a deficit. The expenditures to maintain the water district were looked at and reduced i.e. System operator, pump controls, electricity costs, reviewed collection procedures: gallons used vs. gallons produced and meters were checked or repaired. After reviewing several billing cycles the Water Board made a recommendation that the water rates needed to be raised to keep up with operation

costs of the district. The Water Board also recommended the bond repayment rate be raised to keep up with the increase bond repayment rate and repair fund as the district ages. Councilman Bichteman reviewed the three recommendations from the OSC.

1. Town Board needs to develop realistic and accurate estimates for preparing the annual budget.

Councilman Bichteman believed this has been accomplished.

2. Town Board needs to develop a comprehensive plan to insure that the outstanding advances be repaid.

Councilman Bichteman suggested that the repayment to the Town be spread out over a 5-7 yr. time period instead of a 1yr. time period. The Town needs to try to eliminate a spike in rates that would cause any undue hardship for water district users.

3. Town Board establish a multi-year goals and objectives to deal with long term operating needs and set aside funds for repairs/maintenance.

Councilman Bichteman advised that they are currently working on this.

The Water Board will be meeting sometime in May to reassess the cost to date. In the future putting the pumps on night cycle would produce a cheaper electric rate during nonpeak hour usage. Central Hudson has estimated this would save \$300-\$400 annually.

Councilman Bichteman advised that the chart recorders have not been working since the system was operational in 2005-2006 and there is no data to compare for water usage. All meters are operating properly now and they have instituted a policy if a water meter is not working properly that the meter must be repaired within 30 days following the immediate billing period.

Discussions followed on the following topics: accounting firm review the water rates, budget, Rural Water and possible grants, the possible utilization and training of a Town employee to operate the system, fire company had been asked to refrain from hydrant usage for drills and filling of trucks due to cost to 86 water district customers, etc.

The next topic discussed was increase in Health Care Insurance costs. The Board needs to come up with options before budget time. Possible options included:

1. employee contribution to help defray cost
2. Provide a fixed amount based on what our current cost is for employees, whereby they basically buy their own health care insurance and they choose their own insurance plan.

These are suggestions but a plan needs to be developed prior to budget process. Councilman Field suggested speaking to an insurance company from Oneonta, NY. Discussions followed pertaining to guidelines of the Affordable Care Act, the possibility of shared services with Albany County, Towns etc.

Councilman Bichteman would like to see town emails set up for the Councilmen, their personal home emails are being used and he would like to see this change.

Deputy Supervisor Edwin Lawson reported and advised about the setup of new email accounts, replacement of the current server and 5 computers. He had been in contact with the IT provider for the Town of Westerlo. It was suggested when the server is replaced the Town go to a new email account system, the emails could then be accessed remotely. He has the figures he received today which Claire Marshall had put together for him. Five (5) new computers were suggested they also included the ability to have webinars and CD presentations, with an approximate cost of \$11,000. The Town Clerk's office computers are not included in this cost those computers were replaced not too long ago. He will make copies and share the information with the Town Board.

Deputy Supervisor advised that the architect is working on the plans for the repairs to the highway garage, court building. The architect will put in the add alternates for additional insulation and steel as the Board had previously requested. They are also currently looking into how to phase the building so it will be functional during the construction period for court and garage access and they need to pick out a staging area for the contractor. Councilman Field asked about the architectural costs, Mr.

Lawson reported they had reduced the figure from approximately \$25,000 to \$19,500 and advised he had received the go ahead.

There being no further discussion. Councilman Bichteman made a motion to adjourn the workshop, Councilman Lounsbury seconded the motion, motion unanimously carried. The workshop adjourned at approximately 8:12 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Spinnato