

**TOWN BOARD WORKSHOP  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2015**

The Town of Westerlo Town Board met on Tuesday, September 15, 2015 in the Town Hall at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was called to order by Supervisor Richard H. Rapp with the Pledge to the Flag.

Present were: Supervisor Richard H. Rapp  
Councilman William Bichteman Jr.  
Councilman Alfred Field  
Councilman Anthony Sherman

Also present were Mr. Fred Grober of Delaware Engineering, Deputy Town Clerk Gertrude A. Smith, Justice Carl, Zoning Board member Sefcik, several Highway employees and approximately sixteen residents. Absent were Town Clerk Kathleen J. Spinnato and Councilman Theodore Lounsbury III.

Supervisor Rapp announced that because the vote on Sept. 1 was defeated, we must go back to square one. Councilman Bichteman stated that we need to review the proposal, and try to reduce the scope of the project; thereby reducing the cost. Mr. Grober informed the Board that they did not do a very good job of providing the facts and scope of the project; they will need to do a better job of informing the public. The plans for the highway building could be altered, and the public should be made aware of the energy savings.

Councilman Bichteman said the Town Board had presented the project as they saw was needed, but did not present it well enough to the public. He said we need to educate the public, and to look at the entire scope, including the energy savings in a new building, to which Mr. Grober noted that we need to go back to the drawing board and present some options. Councilman Field noted that the people didn't understand the project. Councilman Bichteman said he feels that the residents would like to see a smaller figure for the project. Councilman Field added that the figure of 2.75K scared the people.

Resident Laub had a suggestion, to do one thing at time, breaking up the project in steps. Councilman Bichteman answered that the concept of phasing is not feasible, but something must be done on the garage roof as soon as possible, maybe a tarp or something, before the winter. Keith Wright said that is a waste of money. Resident Laub suggested moving the court to the Town Hall, then then working on the garage piece by piece. The public would be more apt to accept the lower cost of the project. After a discussion, councilman Bichteman asked Mr. Grober if that concept is feasible, to which he answered that it is, but will cost more in the long run. He gave examples of how piece-work could be more work and more expensive. If the court and state troopers are moved to Town Hall, and money to renovate Town Hall is borrowed, it would be more costly to do one phase at a time. He also explained that to put a roof on the garage is a waste, because the building isn't insulated, and it is falling down. A discussion about energy cost of a new garage, that there would be a substantial savings in heating cost in a new garage. There was a discussion about the heating system in Town Hall; it is very old, and should be replaced, but it doesn't make sense to replace it without insulating the building. Councilman Bichteman estimates the energy savings will be \$200 to \$300 a month after the renovations.

A resident noted that there is some money left from the grant, could that money be used for a new heating system for Town Hall? Councilman Bichteman answered that that money is for a new heating system, but that would be a waste without insulating the building first.

A resident asked why the building was purchased, when they knew they would have to renovate it. Councilman Field answered that the people voted to purchase the building; also, the present members were not on the Board at that time.

A resident asked about sixty-six thousand dollars allotted because of the 2% tax cap. She was also confused about some other funds, which Supervisor Rapp explained. She also said that the vote for the project was defeated because of the amount of money involved.

Mr. Laub asked about any plans for either building that don't require large amounts of money. Councilman Bichteman said several things went wrong with the boiler, and the garage roof needs to be dealt with NOW, but how? With blue tarp, or put plywood over the roof for a temporary fix to last through the winter. Something needs to be done so that the court can function.

A resident explained how the work can be done in phases; do part of the garage, for about \$200,000; then do part of the Town Hall. He also talked about energy savings, but noted that other items, such as insurance will increase. To reduce the tax load, try 30-year bonding instead of 20-years. He also suggested a Town Newsletter, to inform the public of what's going on. He also suggested doing the garage in phases, starting with 2 bays, then add other bays at a later date.

Councilman Bichteman stated that he agrees that there needs to be better plan, something the tax payers will accept and understand.

Mr. Grober agreed that he can go back and re-visit the numbers, then try to adjust them. There are also certain building codes regarding types of door handles, etc. Councilman Bichteman asked if he could re-visit the numbers, and was told yes, that will be done. He agreed that they need to better educate the public.

Mr. Grober said he can look at the plans again, and try to find a way to spend less money and also accomplish the project. He asked would like to meet with Keith Wright in the near future.

Resident Sefcik said the committee for planning the project was just the Town Board. She suggested that other citizens should be involved, like Mr. Umholtz. A committee could work with the Town Board. There was a discussion regarding the duties of the Town Board, freedom of information, etc. Councilman Bichteman stated that all of the meetings were open to the public. She asked that the Board do what they are supposed to do.

Supervisor Rapp asked Mr. Grober if he would work on a revised plan. He will meet with Keith Wright and discuss ways they can trim expenses with a two-year or five-year plan, etc. He also suggested a hot-air heating system for Town Hall. Something needs to be done as soon as possible. He will try to come up with a new plan.

Mr. Umholtz suggested that the Town use 20-yr bonding and 30-yr bonding. You can get more money if you consider 30-yr bonding. Though it's true that there will be more interest, but you can stretch out the expenses. Discussion between Mr. Umholtz and Mr. Grober took place.

Several residents asked that Mr. Umholtz be included in revising the project, that the whole process will have to be different, and the voters should be given several options to vote on. Councilman Bichteman said that you can't do A, B, C options. More discussion on how to inform the public of any plans. Everyone should be made aware of what the options are. Another resident said economic development needs to happen. One resident said more business needs to be brought into town. There was a discussion about the Comprehensive plan, that there are no Commercial Development areas designated. Councilman Sherman stated it was felt that any application for commercial entities would be considered via special use permits.

A discussion regarding the Comprehensive Plan ensued; that a committee is needed to institute it. Also, see if the gas line company will provide service to the town. Ideas for use of the Town Park to raise money were suggested, followed by a discussion.

There being no further business, and no other questions or comments, Councilman Sherman made a motion, seconded by Councilman Field and passed that the workshop be adjourned. Meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gertrude A. Smith  
Deputy Town Clerk