

**TOWN OF WESTERLO
SPECIAL TOWN BOARD
MEETING OF
THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2020**

The Town of Westerlo Town Board held a Special Town Board meeting on May 28, 2020 at the Richard H. Rapp Municipal Building located at 933 County Route 401, Westerlo, NY via ZOOM. Supervisor Bichteman opened the meeting at 7:00 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Attending were: Supervisor William Bichteman Jr.
Councilwoman Amie L. Burnside
Councilman Richard Filkins
Councilman Matthew Kryzak
Councilman Joseph J. Boone

Also attending were: Town Clerk Kathleen Spinnato

ZOOM attendees: Planning Board Chairperson Verch, Highway Superintendent Jody Ostrander, Highway Employees John Hunter & Dave Pecylak, Attorney Javid Afzali, Library Director Debbie Scott and employees Kim Slingerland & Amy Powarynski, Library Trustees Laura Tenney & Maureen Sikule and approximately fifteen interested residents.

OLD BUSINESS

FINANCIAL PLANNING - PANDEMIC COVID-19

BUDGET ANALYSIS

Supervisor Bichteman provided his projections via a power point presentation "Town of Westerlo Financial Condition May 2020" which was viewable to the public. He reviewed current estimates of revenue for the remainder of 2020 and 2021 including sales tax revenue, layoffs vs furlough vs reduced hours, possible solutions such as long term borrowing or tax increase and then discussed his recommendations.

Councilman Kryzak expressed concern for making decisions based on estimates. He suggested pressuring the county and state for assistance, examining long term borrowing and having the Town Board meet weekly to work through this situation. Attorney Afzali indicated that the Town wouldn't be able to borrow to make up for budget deficits. Councilwoman Burnside agreed to holding weekly meetings and indicated she was not willing to decide on any employee cuts at this time.

Councilwoman Burnside questioned why a \$600 desk was purchased in the Supervisor's office if the town is limiting unnecessary spending, no response was given. She also expressed concern for the poor condition of the side entrance stairs at the Town Hall, indicating they needed to be repaired immediately. She provided her suggestions for non-employee cuts such as increasing insurance costs to employees, a possible reassessment, cutting the Comprehensive Plan Consultant pay for the remainder of the year, cutting salaries for the Grant Writer, Historian and Planning and Zoning Boards and cutting house cleaning cost with her offering to clean the offices for less.

Councilman Kryzak indicated it had come to his attention that Supervisor Bichteman furloughed three library employees as well as the part time Deputy Town Clerk and wondered if his intention was to eventually bring those employees back. Mr. Bichteman responded that if they work, they will be paid. Councilwoman Burnside and Councilman Kryzak mentioned it was their understanding from the last discussion that no employees would be furloughed or cut without Town Board discussion. Councilman Boone kindly requested that if there were any further changes to the staffing that Supervisor Bichteman inform the Town Board members out of courtesy, all agreed.

Supervisor Bichteman mentioned that the Comprehensive Plan Committee is planning to send out a questionnaire to Westelro residents. To save the Comprehensive Plan money, he offered to have his staff prepare the questionnaire and indicated that the Supervisor's office budget would cover all costs associated with the mailing. Councilman Boone believed it was important to proceed.

PROPOSED FEE SCHEDULE CHANGES

Supervisor Bichteman will work on a list of proposed fee schedule changes to provide to the Town Board at the next meeting.

SCHEDULING CONTINUATION OF SPECIAL TOWN BOARD MEETING

Councilman Boone made a motion to adopt the following resolution,

WHEREAS: The Town Board must continue tonight's Special Town Board meeting discussion next week, be it hereby

RESOLVED: the Special Town Board meeting will continue on Thursday, June 4th at 7pm at the Town Hall and available via ZOOM.

Seconded by Councilman Kryzak, a vote resulted as follows:

AYES: Councilman Kryzak, Councilman Boone, Councilman Filkins,
Councilwoman Burnside, Supervisor Bichteman

NAYES: None

RESOLUTION # 34 of 2020 is thereby duly adopted.

ADDITIONAL TOWN BOARD COMMENTS

Councilman Boone wondered if the Town Board emailed each other ideas for dealing with the financial issues before the town, if that would violate open meetings law; Supervisor Bichteman believed it wouldn't as long as it was not a discussion.

Councilwoman Burnside expressed concern again regarding the side entrance stairs at the Town Hall and requested her concern be noted on the record. Supervisor Bichteman will look into how much the repairs will cost and get back to the Board.

NEW BUSINESS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Supervisor Bichteman spoke with the Chairman of the Comprehensive Plan Committee who requested that the Town Board appoint both Barbara Russell and Guy Weidman to the Committee. Supervisor Bichteman made a motion to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS: Due to the resignation of Susan Fancher on the Comprehensive Plan Committee and a potential loss of a second member, be it hereby
RESOLVED: The Town Board appoints Barbara Russell and Guy Weidman as members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee effective immediately to fill those vacancies.

Seconded by Councilman Kryzak, a vote resulted as follows:

AYES: Councilman Kryzak, Councilman Boone, Supervisor Bichteman

NAYES: Councilwoman Burnside, Councilman Filkins

RESOLUTION # 35 of 2020 is thereby duly adopted.

PLANNING BOARD ENGINEERING FIRM

Supervisor Bichteman indicated Ingalls Smart Engineering has provided the Supervisor with their contract as consultants for the remainder of the year to the Planning Board. He mentioned that the contract and cost remain the same as before. Councilwoman Burnside made a motion to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS: The Planning Board requires an engineering firm for the remainder of the year, be it hereby,

RESOLVED: The Town Board retains Ingalls Smart Engineering as the engineer firm to assist the Planning Board through December 31, 2020.

Seconded by Councilman Filkins, a vote resulted as follows:

AYES: Councilman Kryzak, Councilman Boone, Councilman Filkins,
Councilwoman Burnside, Supervisor Bichteman

NAYES: None

RESOLUTION # 36 of 2020 is thereby duly adopted.

GRANT WRITER

Supervisor Bichteman advised that Grant Writer, Dr. Nicole Ambrosio is foregoing her salary for the remainder of the year due to the COVID-19 crisis; the Town Board thanked her.

ELIMINATION OF SALARIES FOR PLANNING & ZONING BOARDS

The Town Board advised that the possible elimination of the Planning and Zoning Board salaries will be discussed next week.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A resident agreed with Councilwoman Burnside that employees should not be removed at this point in time. She believed in giving the employees options and expressed concern that once the employees are removed, the Town no longer has them. She questioned if the County, State, or Federal Government would provide assistance and wondered if the \$15,000 the Town would collect from each of the five solar farms could be used toward the financial crisis instead of toward the town parks; Supervisor Bichteman indicated no.

Planning Board Chairperson Verch advised she submitted a letter to the Town Board requesting to appoint resident Carrie Wallace to the Broadband Research Committee (BRC) as there is

currently a vacancy. Ms. Wallace was in attendance via ZOOM and introduced herself to the Board. Councilwoman Burnside made a motion to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS: There is currently a vacancy on the Broadband Research Committee, be it hereby

RESOLVED: The Town Board appoints resident Carrie Wallace to fill the vacancy left by John Sefcik.

Seconded by Councilman Kryzak, a vote resulted as follows:

AYES: Councilman Kryzak, Councilman Boone, Councilman Filkins,
Councilwoman Burnside, Supervisor Bichteman

NAYES: None

RESOLUTION # 37 of 2020 is thereby duly adopted.

The Town Board thanked Ms. Wallace for volunteering. Mrs. Verch wondered when the BRC could meet again, no decision was made.

Councilman Kryzak asked the residents what type of tax increase would be too much. A resident indicated she wouldn't like to see any tax increase but suggested speaking to other towns to see what they are proposing. Mrs. Verch suggested keeping senior citizens in mind when discussing increasing taxes.

POSTPONMENT OF SPECIAL TOWN BOARD MEETING

Supervisor Bichteman made a motion to postpone the Special Town Board meeting until June 4th at 7pm. Seconded by Councilwoman Burnside, all in favor motion carried. The Town Board meeting adjourned at 9:26pm.

Respectively submitted,

Kathleen Spinnato
Town Clerk