

These are the Town Board Meeting Minutes held on April 5, 2023 at the Blenheim Town Hall.

Meeting commenced at 6:30 pm with the salute to the flag.

Present: Supervisor Don Airey
Councilman Chester Keyser
Highway Superintendent Dave Mattice
Councilwoman Renee Grabowski
Councilwoman Carolee Russell

Absent: Councilwoman Anne Mattice-Strauch Town Clerk Robin Alley

Supervisor Airey announced that the public hearing on the Short-Term Rental Law will remain open and future comments can be sent to Town Clerk's email (blenheimclerk@midtel.net)

Supervisor's Report - Supervisor Airey

Town Clerk has been experiencing issues with sending and receiving email. Computer was taken to the County for evaluation and repair. Issue continued and was deemed to be a problem with MidTel email system. Solution being worked with MidTel.

- Flood Committee/Gilboa Dam Update- NYCDEP will attend the June meeting of the OBS and present an updated report on the dam reconstruction project. The siphons are still operating at present.
- Miller Road- discussion regarding proposed abandonment of .34 miles of road (lower part of Miller Road to Betty Brook). Supervisor Airey has been in contact with attorneys for other party and with NYS DEC. The Town does not plan to engage an attorney for this matter. When issues have been clarified by all parties, a public hearing will be scheduled.
- There was discussion regarding the well issues at the Hitchcock municipal building. Estimates will be sought for the work needed.
- Solar/Wind Energy- discussion of issues relating to valuation and taxation of proposed renewable energy projects. The Town of Blenheim's lawsuit challenges the excessive tax incentives granted to energy companies, e.g. reductions in PILOT payments. The NYS Dept of Tax and Finance (DTF) has now proposed new legislation designed to circumvent their own process, even further benefiting the energy companies. The legislative proposals would enable the NYPA to extend its powers of eminent domain to even private-sector proposals, subverting the Home Rule process in siting decisions. Blenheim's attorney (Lewis Greer) working with county's attorney. Supervisor Airey proposed a Letter of Intent, with a no-cost retainer, be approved.

Motion to enter into a non-fee retainer agreement with the law firm Lewis-Greer as special counsel (who represents the County for the lawsuit vs NYSDTF regarding proposed renewable energy projects that may be applied for in Blenheim.

Motion was moved by Councilman Keyser; 2nd by Councilwoman Russell and unanimously approved.

- The April 1 deadline for the State Legislature to enact the Budget has passed without a budget agreement.
- Homeless Shelter Committee – The county has engaged GPI to develop a preliminary proposal for developing a homeless shelter by renovating the former county Public Safety (jail) property in Schoharie. If the project is feasible, the county could be eligible for state grant funds up to \$10 million. The county expenses for homeless cases currently exceeds \$1 million annually, primarily for housing homeless persons and families in motels.
- Economic Development- Supervisor Airey reported on the recent auction of the former Best Western motel property in Cobleskill, to a bank. The developers from Cortland who were interested are still negotiating with the bank to ultimately develop the property
- Blenheim Hose Company- The BHS recently obtained the "jaws of life" equipment, with a grant from Schoharie County that reallocated the county NYPA annual grant. They will have a demonstration of the new equipment on Wednesday, April 12, 2023 at 1 pm at the fire hall site, open to the public.
- The GCCS car wash site has been changed to Sundae's in Grand Gorge on Route 23; it will NOT be at the Blenheim Municipal Complex
- NYPA Settlement Funding – the annual payment to the Town is expected in June

Motion was made to transfer \$100,000 from the General checking account to the General savings account by Councilman Keyser; 2nd by Councilwoman Russell; so moved

Highway Report - Superintendent Mattice

- Roads have been groomed with rented equipment
- Superintendent Mattice is revising the road work plans substantially; due to winter deterioration, more repair work will be needed than anticipated in earlier plan
- Discussion of Miller Road issues presented by NYSDEC
- Researching costs for potential purchase of a new town truck. The process would take two years
- Superintendent Mattice recommends the Town rent an excavator for one month

Motion made to approve the rental, for \$4,800 for one month from Eklund Equipment, of a ditch excavator. Motion made by Councilwoman Russell; 2nd by Councilman Keyser; so moved

Code Enforcement Officer Report – Brian Caron

- No report

Judge's Report – Ralph Arrandale

- The Town Justice requested that the Town pay for a cellphone for the Town Court's use. It was decided, due to the absence of Councilwoman Mattice-Strauch, to table this issue for discussion when the full board is present.
- CAP Board – after hours arraignment is up and operating. Judge Arrandale to be participant in this program.

Assessor's Report – Robert Mann

The current rate of valuation is 60%, the lowest ever. Mr. Mann recommends that the Town should consider adjusting assessments to full value (100%)

BLTRC Report – Gail Shaffer

Gail Shaffer, Chair of the Blenheim LTRC, reported that the committee has voted to move forward with repairs to the BCC, to scrape and paint the exterior of the building (including the belfry) and to caulk and glaze the windows as needed. The estimate (attached for this work is for \$12,860.00. The committee requests that the Town of Blenheim pay for half of this and that RARE/BLTRC will pay for half.

Motion was made to appropriate \$6,420.00 of Town funds to cover half of the expenses of repairs to the CC, to be done by Lenny's Painting, per their estimate. Moved by Councilwoman Russell; 2nd by Councilman Keyser; approved unanimously.

Other:

- David Gregg, new resident of Blenheim, appeared in need of a permit to install a pre-constructed 12'x20' shed on their property. The neighbor has approved of its location 12 feet from the property line. Mr. Gray voiced his concern that the Code Enforcement Officer has not been responsive to multiple requests.

Motion was made to authorize the Town Supervisor to grant a variance, if applicable, contingent on written approval of adjoining property owner Steve Whitesell, for David Gray to install a shed on his property, subject to the consent of the Code Enforcement Officer. Motion made by Councilman Keyser; 2nd by Councilwoman Russell and unanimously approved.

- Insurance Update – Councilwoman Grabowski
 - Insurance Renewal premium increase of \$50/month for medical and \$0 for dental. The base premium for medical will be \$950/month

PUBLIC HEARING COMMENTS: No comments made at this meeting regarding the Short Term Rental Law. Public hearing will remain open.

Correspondence (not read at meeting but available during Town Clerk's business hours):

- Schoharie County Conservation Association Newsletter
- The Gathering Place Newsletter
- Assoc of Towns- Town Finance Schools registration form
- Solicitation letter from Bank of Greene County
- Solicitation/Advertisement from GreenSheen- paint recycler in Rotterdam
- Solicitation/Advertisement from Mark Rust- Great Family Entertainment

Motion made to pay bills \$6,033.85 General; \$9,403.35 Highway by Councilman Keyser; 2nd by Councilwoman Russell; so moved

7:30 pm Motion to adjourn made by Councilman Keyser; 2nd by Councilwoman Russell; so moved

Minutes respectfully submitted by Gail Shaffer

Kenee Grabowski, Town Councilwoman
Carol Russell