

**Danby Town Board
Minutes of Regular Meeting
October 14, 2019, 7pm, Danby Town Hall**

Present:

Councilpersons: Ric Dietrich (Supervisor), Jim Holahan, Matt Ulinski

Not Present:

Councilpersons: Leslie Connors, Jack Miller

Others Present:

Town Clerk	Pamela Goddard
Justices	Garry Huddle
Bookkeeper	Laura Shawley
Public	Ted Crane, Ronda Roaring, Pat Woodworth, Jia Forrest, Katherine Forrest, Joel Gagnon, Katharine Hunter.

Meeting Opened at 7:05 pm

Privilege of the Floor

Supervisor Dietrich revised the (07-October) procedure for public participation in Privilege of the Floor. Those attending will be permitted three minutes to speak on any subject, as usual, at the beginning of the meeting. The Town Board may choose to hear comments during their discussions. Those comments will be limited to a few (1-2) minutes.

Roaring asked for clarification as to what time the budget meeting, scheduled for October 21, is to start and how long it will run? That meeting is scheduled to start at 6pm and expected to last in the range of one hour.

Crane made some announcements for the Danby Community Council. Report on very successful Harvest Festival, with an estimated 372 people attending. Upcoming events include a talk about ticks on Wednesday evening, October 23, a presentation about Flu preparedness on November 6, and a concert on November 17. He also thanked the Supervisor for returning to a policy that allows meaningful public participation at meetings.

Warrants

ABSTRACT #16 OF 2019:

GENERAL FUND

#456-472 for a total of \$16,058.94

Moved by Holahan, Second by Ulinski. The motion passed.

In Favor: Holahan, Ulinski, Dietrich

HIGHWAY FUND

#296-308 for a total \$11,602.65

Moved by Ulinski, Second by Holahan. The motion passed.

In Favor: Holahan, Ulinski, Dietrich

Email Policy

Clerk Goddard noted that there are some questions regarding the suggested removal of a section detailing responsibilities. There is also a question about the length of time for which an Email account should remain active at the time of departure of a staff or board member. She posed the question whether Email accounts (particularly for staff) should be specific to a position or individual? There was some discussion regarding these questions. Board members noted that that the time frame for suspending Emails might depend on the reasons and conditions for termination of employment or involvement with the Town.

Crane noted that, in many other situations, when a person departs, their Email is immediately redirected. No-longer-involved people should not be responsible for responding to Town Email unless someone from the Town explicitly directs a question to them.

The Email policy will be redirected to Records Manager Mary Ann Barr and Deputy Clerk Alex Pfeifer for further review and revision.

Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy

Ulinski opened a discussion on the advisability of having these policies for the Town of Danby. He noted that Workplace Violence and Harassment should be two distinct policies. Ulinski has consulted with the Town Attorney, who has advised that these policies are not required but are recommended for municipalities. The Workplace Violence policy would cover both internal (between staff/offices) and external (from the public) violence.

Enacting these policies will take several steps: creating a written policy, adopting such policies, training staff, and workplace assessment for threats. Ulinski said that these are all good things to do, and will require some effort. He suggested directing the Town Attorney to draft these policies. Supervisor Dietrich reminded the Board that there will be a need for the municipal union (covering Highway Employees) to review the policies prior to adoption.

The Board reached consensus to approve having the Town Attorney begin to draft a Workplace Violence and a Harassment Policy.

New Roof and repairs to Danby Town Hall

Laura Shawley gave an update on steps being taken to address the need for a new roof on the Town Hall. Second and third evaluations have been made by roofing companies. Quotes from these businesses should be received during the next week. It is hoped that an appropriate quote will come in under \$35,000. This is the threshold for being able to award the contract without a bid package. Ulinski noted that there is some urgency to this repair, and it would be best not to wait for another month.

There was a related discussion of the need to replace the main entrance doors to the Town Hall. The locking mechanism has been problematic for several years and can no longer be properly repaired. Additionally, replacing the doors may be in line with steps to improve security in the building. Dietrich suggested that staff research new doors. He thought that it might be possible for the same builders to do both the doors and the roof.

MOTION - AUTHORIZE SUPERVISOR TO AWARD REPAIR CONTRACT

Moved, That the Town Board of the Town of Danby authorizes the Town Supervisor to award a contract for roof and door repair, in the event that a quote under \$35,000 is received from a reputable builder. If quotes are over \$35,000, a bid package will be prepared.

Moved by Ulinski, Second by Holahan. The motion passed.

In Favor: Holahan, Ulinski, Dietrich

Building Maintenance

Dietrich noted that ongoing maintenance Town Hall building exterior is a concern. These needs include pressure washing the outside of the building, painting, gutter work, etc. He suggested that the Board consider adding an “on-call” staff person to address these needs. There is precedent for such staff, as someone is on-call for snow shoveling the Town Hall entrance during the winter.

There was some discussion of what the cost might be and how many hours of work would be involved. Dietrich’s idea was to have someone contracted for an on demand/as needed basis. There is not a particular person identified for this role. The position would need to be advertised.

Ulinski agreed that this is a good idea, and wondered how it would fit in with the budget. He agreed that preventative maintenance saves money in the long run. Holahan suggested that this be tried on a quarterly basis, as a test.

Gagnon asked what the Town does for a custodian? There is a contract for interior cleaning and maintenance, but they do not address exterior work. Interior cleaning is done once a week.

Budget Workshop

Laura Shawley presented additional budget information to assist the Board in weighing its options for the 2020 budget. Shawley presented the options of

- a) adopting the budget, as presented, which stays under the tax cap and look at project plans for the future.
- b) creating a Fund Balance Plan regarding how to use fund balances and reserves for future needs.
- c) going over the tax cap in this budget, undertaking some projects at this time, with a small increase in the tax rate.
- d) greatly exceeding the tax cap and fund all desired projects at this time.

There was a substantial discussion regarding best practices for the use of Fund Balances and the amount of funds to keep in such balances. Shawley informed the Board that the NYS Comptroller’s Office recommends that Fund Balances be replenished within three years of the time when funds are used for municipal projects. Gagnon asked whether there is a limit to the amount that can be kept in Fund Balances. Shawley responded that there is not a limit, as the importance of holding funds in such accounts is recognized as important for emergency response and emergency needs. The NYS Comptroller’s Office sees this as an important aspect of risk assessment. However, it is recommended to have a policy regarding the use of such funds.

Ulinski asked about the proper way to designate funds for either a fund balance or a reserve account. Shawley explained the difference, using the Salt Shed Reserve as an example. Reserve funds are limited to a specific use, such as replacing the canvas cover for the salt shed (knowing that an expensive item, such as this, has a limited life time). Fund Balance monies are non-specific and can be used for unexpected expenditures. There was a related discussion about a proposed reserve account for the eventual purchase of the solar array. Funds were allocated for this reserve in the 2019 budget, but the account has not yet been set up. Shawley is seeking information and quotes from additional investment firms, in order to earn better interest in these accounts.

Shawley distributed a six year analysis of Fund Balance increases and decreases, by year, for the General Fund, Highway Fund, and Water District Fund. While there have been increases and decreases in the General and Highway Funds, the overall trend is toward decreasing balances. This is greater in the General Fund than the Highway Fund, where larger increases were added in 2016 and 2017 following a large decrease in 2015. The projected Fund Balance amounts, for January 1, 2020, are \$450,000 in the General Fund Balance, \$320,000 in the Highway Fund Balance, and \$315,000 in the Water District Fund Balance.

Shawley and Dietrich presented a list of projects that require attention and/or consideration in the near future including, but not limited to, more funding for the salt shed reserve, creating and funding a solar array reserve, replacing the Town Hall roof and main entrance doors (this can be done from the building reserve), dealing with abandoned properties, website improvement, major road reconstruction (a 20-30

year plan), various Bridge NY projects that are estimated to need an additional \$25,000 above the grant funded amounts, additional expenditures related to NYSERDA grant funded energy improvement projects, possible administrative support for the Code and Planning offices.

Dietrich stated that the easiest thing would be to pass the budget as it is. However, these questions will not go away. He said that he has a “gut fear” that the Town is not in a healthy place financially. Dietrich said that this is a difficult time and a difficult budget. Long range fiscal planning needs discussion and an action plan.

Ulinski and Gagnon agreed that these questions need to be addressed this year. They believe that residents would like the Town to do more, such as having a full time Planner, and doing more costs substantial amounts of money. Dietrich reminded the Board that there is the option to Bond out major purchases, such as expensive road rebuilding.

There was a discussion regarding the Water District Fund Balance and whether it is at a sufficient level in the event of an emergency. While there are no specific needs anticipated at this time, Shawley and Dietrich noted that major repairs in the water system are very expensive. A meeting will be set up between Board members and Water District Commissioners to talk about reserves for emergency repairs. Shawley informed the Board that the WDWD is also considering a rate hike for water service. The water rates have been unchanged since 1969. The Water Commissioners have used property taxes in the district to cover the bulk of expenses. This may change in the future.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm

Pamela Goddard, Town Clerk