Danby Town Board
Minutes of Normal Meeting via Zoom Video Conferencing
May 11, 2020 7pm

Present:

Councilpersons:	Leslie Connors, Joel Gagnon(Supervisor), Jim Holahan, Sarah Schnabel, Matt Ulinski

Others Present:

Town Clerk	Alexandra Pfeifer
Justices	Garry Huddle and Theresa Klinger
Bookkeeper	Laura Shawley
Highway Sup't	Carl Seamon
Dep Highway Sup't	Jack Shawley
Planner	Jason Haremza
Code Officer	Steve Cortright
County Legislator	Dan Klein
Public	Katharine Hunter, Philip Smith, Ted Crane, Bruce Richards, Ronda Roaring, Karla (last name not given), Penny (last name not given), SamDB, plus three attendees who chose not to disclose their identities

Meeting Opened at 7:09pm

There was no correspondence this meeting and there was talk of what items to defer until the next regular meeting. The discussion of layoffs/furloughs will be combined with the discussion of the long-term budget process.

Privilege of the Floor

Ted Crane said that he had a number of items that he wanted to comment on, and would speak about them when they came up during the meeting.

Justice Report

Justice Huddle reported that they had only 12-15 days to go from for the March and April reports. He added that they are unsure about May, and will be having another Skype meeting with the District. He noted that they are not able to process tickets yet. He did, however, note that Diane, the Court clerk, came in for 5-6 hours in order to process the mail. Huddle also added that nothing has changed as pertaining to the scofflaw tickets because the dates are held up until further notice. Justice Klinger added that the state is being kind to the defendant in this case. Klinger noted, too, that the Sheriffs are not pulling people over for traffic violations. The report concluded with Huddle adding that Gov. Cuomo extended the moratorium on evictions until August 20th.

Code Report

Steve Cortright reported that it was a slow month for building permits; only three were issued: 2 re-roofs and 1 re-roof with foundation repair. Cortright reported issuing no Certificates of Compliance or Certificates of Fire Safety Compliance in April. In other activity, he went on five construction inspections,drafted the work plan for the Pandemic work procedures at Town Hall, and assigned two new addresses. In addition, he also gathered information to update the Town emergency response plan and started reviewing the Town Hazard Mitigation Plan for the upcoming update.

After giving his report, Cortright fielded questions from the TB. Holahan asked what the two new addresses were, and Cortright replied that one was on Station Rd. in West Danby and the other wason Comfort Rd. Schnabel added that Phase 1 starts on May 15th, which means that construction can begin again. Cortright also added that on Wed, May 13th the new building code takes effect.

Planner Report

Planner Haremza reported that in April he had a subdivision approval at 107 Gunderman and at 1562 Coddington. He added that in April the PB drafted a resolution re: Howland Rd. Hemp operation as violating the zoning ordinance. He reported that the BZA met on April 14th and they approved an area variance for a lot setback for a home that is being re-built at the same location. He added that the CAC also met on April 14th, and that in the future he will not schedule two meetings on the same evening.

Haremza concluded his report by talking about the four working groups and that the Planning Group met twice: on April 7th and May 5th.

Warrants

General Fund

#165-185 for a total of $11,217.98

Moved by Connors, Second by Schnabel. The motion passed.
In Favor: Connors, Holahan, Schnabel, Ulinski, Gagnon

Highway Fund

#87-93 for a total $53,293.07

Moved by Holahan, Second by Ulinski. The motion passed.
In Favor: Connors, Holahan, Schnabel, Ulinski, Gagnon

Legislator's Report

Dan Klein first reported on the "most pleasant" plant exchange that occurred on Sunday from 12-2 at the fire station on 96B. He received permission from the health department and the fire district in order to hold the event. He also said that the Ag District public hearing is on May 19th, and that he would let the TB know if there were any surprises.

Klein also noted an email that he sent to the TB re: those who are up for re-election in 2021. He asked for comments because the Census data would not be back yet in time to re-district. The question is to continue with four-year terms or have a two year term in order to give time to redistrict, so as to not have a mismatch with the Census data. Klein added that he would be writing an article for the DAN re: this matter. Klein also mentioned that he talked about this issue in committee, and that there would be a full Legislature meeting in July.

Klein informed the TB that the Ithaca Wastewater Treatment Plant would be closed to receiving septage in June, July, and August because the plant is getting upgrades this summer. In the duration, the waste will be transported to Syracuse, which is the closest facility. Ulinski wondered if the residents would be notified? Klein replied that the haulers were being notified and would be most likely passing on the added transportation costs to consumers. Holahan asked would the customers know in advance when the waste would be transported to Syracuse instead of Ithaca? (No, they would not.)

Klein also mentioned that there are currently 133 positive Coronavirus tests in Tompkins County and that 4 of the positive cases were Danby residents.

Klein concluded his report with an update on the state of the Tompkins County budget. He noted that the County estimates taking in $10-$18 less in revenue in 2020 than budgeted for. In order to cut costs, the county has furloughed 90 employees and is not filling 30 vacancies. He also noted that TC is scaling back projects, offering early retirement packages, and there will be adjustments to health insurance. He also added that the county would not be looking at the 2021 budget until August and that there would be a minimum 7 million dollar shortfall.

Adoption of Email Policy

Before the policy was voted approved, Schnabel screen-shared the document to the TB. She noted the comments from Mary Ann Barr and also said that this document was linked in the agenda. She added that she removed the redundancies and references to the time frames (i.e six years). Klinger and Huddle interjected to make sure that their emails were excluded from this policy because even though they had town emails, they did not use them.

Resolution No. 50 of 2020-Adoption of Town of Danby Email Policy

Resolved, that the Town Board of the Town of Danby moves to amend the Town of Danby Email Policy, and that the Town of Danby Justices are excluded from this policy.

Moved by Gagnon, Second by Ulinski. The motion passed.
In Favor: Connors, Holahan, Schnabel, Ulinski, Gagnon

Request for Recommendation from the Planning Board regarding possible Zoning Ordinance Amendments

There was an extensive discussion, which was initiated by Connors, on the issue as to whether the Planning Board would be willing to take on the possibility of amending the Zoning Ordinance. Gagnon

expressed mixed feelings because he said that the Planning Group did not wish to make any interim changes and instead wished to move on to other things such as creating the working groups.

The amendments in question are six things (sentences) in the Zoning Ordinance that the previous Planner, C.J. Randall, suggested being removed because of redundancy, which was spoken about for the course of years. Since Planner Haremza was able to help the PB with commercial zoning, Connors also advocated that this process be also used in agricultural zoning (i.e having a site plan review for ag businesses such as cideries). She is asking the PB to get together meaningful recommendations that would help to fix the problems such as those businesses not having to have a site plan review and also addressing safety issues of said businesses.

Haremza replied that striking out the phrases will have to be run by the PB. He also noted that adding the site plan review will be a more involved process. He also added that it is not an either/or proposition, and that these issues can be dealt with in parallel. Haremza said that he will take both issues to the PB for initial discussion and it can go from there. Gagnon was concerned about using staff resources and the associated costs that came with changing the law. Schnabel replied that this is just the first step and that they are just asking the PB for advice.

Ulinski then segued into a discussion about the need for frugality in the town and if it was prudent to dip into the attorney's fees right now. He noted that there is a potential hit to the highway budget of $100k, and that frugality was wanted right now. Connors replied that this issue is important to the people who live in Danby and that it was important to at least draft a Local Law. She asked how much the attorney cost and if he was on retainer. Shawley answered that Krough is not on retainer to the town and charges $225/hr. She added that he sends an itemized bill to the Town every six months and that he is well worth it.

MOTION- Support the Planning Board acting to address possible Zoning Ordinance Amendments

Moved by Connors, Second by Holahan. The motion passed.
In Favor: Connors, Holahan, Schnabel, Ulinski Against: Gagnon

Discussion: Long-term Budget Process and Layoffs/Furloughs at the Highway Dept.

Ulinksi began the extensive discussion by explaining that it would be prudent for the Town to begin the long-term budget process early because the Town's tax base will be impacted by COVID-19. He added that, while the Town has gotten the tax money for this year, there are still concerns if the Town will receive CHIP money. Ulinksi said that he chatted with Gagnon and Shawley about saving some money in the budget in certain areas such as the highway, community council, the library, and the park program.

Highway Superintendent Seamon and Bookkeeper Shawley explained that in the event of a furlough the Town pays half of UI (Unemployment Insurance) and that the workers would still receive health insurance. Seamon added that the highway employees can still work on maintenance, but not work on any of the capital projects.

A discussion came about which went over the details and benefits of the CARES Act (which adds an additional $600/week to the $504/week of NYS UI. The TB decided to revisit this issue again in late June to decide whether or not to furlough the highway employees, because they are not sure what's going to happen later in the year. Personal experiences among the TB regarding applying for UI was also discussed.

The discussion concluded with the exploration within the budget to find where to cut expenses in order to cover the deficit this year and the impact on taxpayers.

Discussion: Planning Group recommendation for tax abatements for conservation easements

Before the main discussion unfolded, it was decided that the recommendation from the PG regarding the tax abatements for conservation easements would go to the PB for review. There was also the question whether or not Barbara Lifton and State Legislature would be able to take up the issue this year.

The TB wondered if it was a good idea taking up this issue without it being discussed with the PB and the CAC (because it is a conservation issue). Haremza brought up the concern of getting locked into referring back and forth to boards without getting anything resolved. Connors said that she would like to offer those on the PB that aren't in the PG a chance to make comments. Gagnon responded that those who are not on the PG did not have time to play a large role in the group, and that the purpose of the PG was to broaden participation in the community. Ulinski added that those on the PB were appointed and that they

should be respected even if they are not part of the PG. Haremza chimed in that he has no problem taking the issue to the PB, but that he didn't want the issue to get bogged down in endless revisions or to have the CAC pick it apart. He said that there should be a middle ground.

Schnabel suggested that the remaining members of the boards that are not in the PG have a week to make suggestions and give their input. Haremza said that it would be put on the PB's agenda. There was concern that since this issue was at the end stages (as far as the PG was concerned) that it would not get meaningful changes. The TB members said that this issue wouldn't be resolved tonight and that they weren't looking for a formal review. Gagnon, responding to Roaring's comment that people who didn't come to the meetings discussing this issue wouldn't know the backstory, said that this issue evolved quickly by the tax working group. Gagnon also mentioned the need for publicity outreach for the PG as a whole and wanted ideas for how to get the word out. He mentioned that the meetings are discussed in the DAN and are also found on the Town of Danby websites calendar. Roaring suggested having Jason having an informal zoom meeting explaining what the PG is and how it works.

In the interest of time, the TB decided that this issue would be taken up again next week. Connors noted that taxes are important to everyone and that it would be prudent to take time to deal with this issue and to get the word out so that Danby residents know what is going on. She also added that this issue should have a public hearing before any action is decided upon.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:21 pm.

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Alexandra Pfeifer, Town Clerk