Danby Town Board
Minutes of Normal Meeting via Zoom Video Conferencing
May 20, 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
Highway Sup't	Carl Seamon
Bookkeeper	Laura Shawley
Planner	Jason Haremza
Public	Ted Crane, Ronda Roaring, Kim Nitchman, Karla's iphone, Kent's iphone, plus two unidentified attendees

Meeting Opened at 7:04pm

Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

Schnabel brought up concerns about the differences between motions and resolutions, and how it is difficult to find resolutions because there is no resolution book at present motions do not have a numbering system, while resolutions do. She asks that in the future that certain items that had been motions (such as minutes and warrants) become resolutions so that they are easier to locate. Other additions include: revisiting the furlough and adding the Medicaid resolution re: Ric Dietrich. Ulinski asked to add the Workplace Violence Policy, because he would like that to move forward. Also added was discussing the reopening of the town hall and other town buildings.

Correspondence

During the Zoom meeting, Clerk Pfeifer mentioned that Ronda Roaring had sent several emails to the Town Board, and asked the board if she should read them out loud in their entirety or summarize them. The conclusion was to summarize the emails at meetings and share the emails in their entirety in the minutes.

The following email from Ronda Roaring and was addressed to the Town Board, Laura Shawley, and Ted Crane. The email was dated May 13, 2020 at 8:45am. The email reads, as follows:

Joel:

I had mentioned to you when you were elected that I was concerned about some of the salaries of elected officials. Not only do I think some may be grossly overpaid, but I think some may be underpaid. Therefore, before we start working on the budget, I am asking the Town Board to authorize Laura to check with towns in NYS the size of Danby, located in Upstate, to get some idea of how much they pay similar officials who are doing similar work (part-time vs. full-time, etc.). Perhaps even the Office of the State Comptroller has this information. The positions I am talking about are: supervisor, councilperson, town clerk, highway superintendent, town justice. All of these positions have job descriptions in NYS law, so they should be doing relatively the same type work throughout the state

Thank you for considering this matter.

Ronda Roaring

The following email is from Ronda Roaring and was addressed to Joel Gagnon and Ted Crane. The email was dated May 15, 2020 at 7:41am. Supervisor Gagnon then forwarded the email on to the rest of the Town Board and to Clerk Pfeifer at 10:47am, along with his reply.

Ted & Joel:

I have been having issues (for decades) with the TB not reading my emails into the record at TB meetings or considering them communications to the TB. So Joel asked Alex to put "communications" on the agenda. But that begged the question as to how communications to the TB should be identified. I had

put in the subject line "For the Town Board" and addressed it to all TB members and Alex, but she had not read it into the record. So I complained, which is when Joel instructed her to put "communications" on the agenda, and I now put "communication to the Town Board" in the subject line. So I would like something put into the DAN about this. AND I would like something put on the Town's website. Come up with a simple, straightforward policy as to how emails and letters to the TB are to be identified in the subject line or addressed on the envelope and state that communications so addressed will be read into the record at the next board meeting, and put this in an article in the DAN and on the Town's website. Thank you.

Ronda

Privilege of the Floor

Ted Crane addressed the board re: the correspondence section that was mentioned above, namely, when someone can't come to the meeting that correspondence is a substitute for privilege of the floor. He added that it is a courtesy to read it verbatim but to also limit it to three minutes. Crane also mentioned his approval for the removal of special permits sections from the zoning ordinance and is glad that the board is considering moving on it now. Additionally, he said that if the board gets to talk about the tax policy, that he would like to chime in. Gagnon acknowledged Crane and said that because he is Chair of the tax policy group that he can speak. Crane also said that he came out of the last meeting and didn't know what had been decided re: individual opinions from members of the planning board and CAC about the second part of the zoning ordinance amendment, which is about site plan review of those businesses which fall in the agribusiness category. Crane wasn't aware of action being taken from the TB. He said that the issue came up in the Planning Board, which Gagnon concurred. He noted that the TB would be making a recommendation on this issue on the recommendation of the PB and CAC.

Warrants

GENERAL FUND

#186-203 for a total of $30,509.44

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

HIGHWAY FUND

#94-99 for a total of $32,278.40

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

WEST DANBY WATER DISTRICT FUND

#14-15 for a total $129.74

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

Resolution to Increase the Budget for Medicare Deduction Reimbursement to Former Supervisor Dietrich

Before this resolution was voted on Bookkeeper Shawley explained that in 2010 the TB voted to pay for health insurance for the Supervisor. Ric Dietrich and his spouse, Penny, had health insurance benefits from his time working for the City of Ithaca as well as Medicare Part B, which got deducted from their Social Security checks. In error, the Town got the benefit rather than Ric and Penny. This error did not come to light until recently, and Shawley would like the TB's approval to give this money back that is owed to Ric and Penny Dietrich.

RESOLUTION NO. 51 of 2020 : APPROVAL BY THE TOWN BOARD TO INCREASE THE BUDGET IN THE GENERAL FUND FOR THE AMOUNT OF THE SUPERVISOR'S MEDICARE DEDUCTION REIMBURSEMENT
WHEREAS, it was discovered that the Medicare B deduction for the Supervisors retirement benefit from the City of Ithaca was deducted from the Town's health insurance bill in error.

WHEREAS, this deduction, over time, has resulted in the Town owing the former Supervisor that portion of his expected benefit, from which the Town benefited instead throughout this billing process from the City of Ithaca.

***W*HEREAS**, a check has been issued to Fredric Dietrich on abstract number 10 of 2020 in the amount of $17,739.20.

RESOLVED, that the Town Board approves the payment of $17,739.20 be made from the General Fund fund balance and that the total budget amount for 2020 be increased by that amount.

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

Town Reopening Procedures

The discussion began with the Justices' update. They relayed the information from their bi-weekly 6th District meeting, in which they were told that Judges and Court Clerks could go back to their judicial duties, but that no one is allowed in court. The Justices' will be putting up signs saying that those who enter must have face coverings and maintain social distancing. They rearranged the furniture in the Court to reflect the distancing rules. With this measure in place, only four people can be in the courtroom at a time (including the Justices' and Court Clerk).

The discussion moved to PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and other supplies needed for a safe reopening. Among the supplies needed are plexiglass (or similar material) for a shield for those who work with the public, which includes the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, and Court Clerk. There was talk of using a shower curtain (like the Ithaca Post office uses) for a barrier, but a number of participants were not happy with this idea--citing that it would not be easy to clean and that it would be better to spend the money on something more durable and long-lasting. Cortright was tasked with obtaining a quote from Jeff Rockwell for barriers for the Clerk and Court Clerk. Neither felt comfortable reopening without a barrier in place.

Each Department in the Town (including the Library) was assigned to create a reopening plan and send them to Cortright, who oversaw the closing plan, with the reopening plan. A motion to hold a Special Meeting on June 1, 2020 at 7pm was proposed in order to review the plan so that it could be approved at the first TB Regular meeting on June 8, 2020. Ulinski asked that reviewing the opening plan be the only item on the agenda.

MOTION- SETTING A SPECIAL MEETING FOR JUNE 1, 2020 TO REVIEW REOPENING PLAN

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

Furloughs

The discussion began with Carl Seamon, the Highway Superintendent, saying that there is plenty of work for the workers to do and asked the TB to reconsider the decision to furlough the highway employees. This led into talking about the budget and the need to look at areas in which to save money for next year. If there was a furlough, $40-60k would be saved in two months, though Seamon then said that there was much to do with the culverts even if the Highway Dept. was not allowed to work on Capital Projects.

The TB decided to defer the furlough discussion until June, and to discuss it every month to see where things lie with money and the budget, and also if Unemployment Insurance through the CARES Act was extended. Schnabel was worried that, if unemployment wasn't extended, that this would be the time to furlough so that the workers got the extra money each week.

Ted Crane objected to talk about cutting the DAN budget, which is roughly $14k of the $40k funding of the DCC, noting that having it printed every other month or cutting down the pages of the DAN deprives those residents of what may be their only access to Danby happenings and events.

[Clerk's Note: Because of time constraints, the TB decided to postpone the updates on the Rules and Procedures for Town Board meetings, the Update on the Appointment Procedures, and the discussion re: website issues. A website committee was formed that consists of: Jason Haremza (planner), Leslie Connors (board member), Sarah Schnabel (board member), and Alexandra Pfeifer (town clerk). Ulinski proposed the formation of a Workplace Violence Committee (threat assessment team) that consists of: Matt Ulinski (board member), Steve Cortright (code officer), Alexandra Pfeifer (town clerk), and a member from the Highway Department.]

Planning Group: Tax Abatements on Conservation Easements

Ulinski suggested that the PB and CAC give the TB their input on this issue before it comes up to the TB for a vote. He voiced concern that those who are not in the PG would otherwise not know the background of this issue and wanted to make sure that those individuals got their say in the matter. There was also the concern that Planner Haremza would receive the brunt of the back and forth between the CAC, PB, and PG. Schnabel agreed with Ulinski that the other boards should have a say, and that the TB is just asking for comments from either individuals, or the board as a whole to figure out their thoughts on this issue. Ulinski emphasized again that being on the PB is a huge commitment, and that the members have a lot of work to do. He added that it is unfair if they do not have a say because they are unable to add another commitment by joining the PG.

MOTION - MEMBERS OF PLANNING BOARD AND CAC ARE ENCOURAGED TO MAKE COMMENTS (EITHER COLLECTIVELY OR INDIVIDUALLY) ON THIS ISSUE (TAX ABATEMENTS FOR CONSERVATION EASEMENTS)

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

Planning Board: Zoning Ordinance Amendments

Connors mentioned the six instances of where the wording in the zoning ordinance should be considered for removal. Planner Haremza has the list and t a draft local law will be written up. She added that this issue could be brought up at the next Planning Board meeting. Haremza noted that it could be out of the PB in the next couple of months. These were changes that the previous Planner suggested be made.

The other amendment to the zoning ordinance that would be more complicated to tackle was the issue of commercial and agricultural activity not in a commercial zone. Connors hopes that the focus can be narrowed to agribusiness and that they can go through the process of site plan review and a subcommittee that can monitor the work being done at the site.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:31pm.

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Alexandra Pfeifer, Town Clerk