

VESTAL TOWN BOARD WORK SESSION MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2014

In Attendance: Supervisor Schaffer and Board Members Fitzgerald, Majewski and Messina.

Also Attending: Comptroller Laura McKane, Town Attorney David Berger, Human Resource Officer Nancy Olmstead, Fire Chief Patrick McPherson and Station Chiefs Rose, Paffie, Stout and Harrington, Museum Director Ramona Kacyvenski, Town Clerk Emil Bielecki, Press Reporter Megan Brockett and 5 members of the community.

The Work Session was convened by Supervisor Schaffer at 6:00 PM.

6:00 PM - Museum Director Ramona Kacyvenski to discuss filling curator position.

Museum Director Ramona Kacyvenski asked the Board for authorization to hire a person to organize the collection at the Museum. The basement is full of items that are not categorized in any fashion and are not being kept in conditions conducive to long term preservation. The person could perhaps be hired on a temporary basis. Once the collection is organized, it will be functional for exhibits. We don't necessarily need a curator on a continuing basis.

Human Resource Officer Nancy Olmstead asked the Museum Director to prepare a job description so that she can work with Civil Service to properly categorize the job.

Councilman Majewski suggested that the balance of the funds available in the curator line be used to hire one or two Binghamton University interns. The Museum Director responded that she would pursue that option but was uncertain if she could get interns with adequate experience in collections management.

After a brief discussion, the Board authorized the Museum Director to work with the Human Resource Officer to determine the best option to hire someone for organizing and managing the collection at the Museum.

7:00 PM - Fire Chief Pat McPherson to discuss the 2015 Fire District Budget.

Comptroller Laura McKane stated that she is working with the Fire Department to establish a long term plan for the replacement of capital equipment. Such a plan would require increasing the Fire budget to build capital reserves. This would impact the overall state budget cap.

Fire Chief Pat McPherson noted that the Fire Department has cut over \$100,000 from the budget before it came to the Town Board. Any further cuts would be very damaging to the Fire Department.

Station Chief Doug Rose stated that the 2015 Fire budget is up by only \$7,000 which is only about a .7% increase. That is considerably less than the rate of inflation. We are trying to smooth out the year to year to year budgets to at least keep pace with the rate of inflation. History has shown that whenever the Fire budgets have been reduced, they were followed by years with sharp increases in the budgets. We are trying to reduce those shocks by budgeting responsibly to maintain our equipment and our services. Give us the money that we need and we'll figure out how to spend it responsibly.

Station Chief David Harrington noted that the Fire Department is doing all that it can to maintain quality services. The Fire District is not just another department. We need to show our volunteers that the Town gives them the support that they need to do the job.

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Supervisor Schaffer stated that the state mandated cap combined with a lack of revenue growth is forcing the spending reductions. We are trying to spread out the pain across all departments so as not to compromise safety. Since the Fire District Budget has to be ready by the end of September, it is receiving the most attention at this time. The reductions that were made to the budget by the Board (mostly in Station 4 maintenance and repair) are either unnecessary or too costly in light of the fact that the Station is slated to be replaced. In light of what was now presented by the Fire Department, the Board will take another look at the cuts.

COMMITTEES

7.1 PUBLIC WORKS

7.2 FINANCE

1. Warrants: 2014-38, 2014-38E, 2014-38L

OK - This item will be placed on the Agenda as a Receive and File item at the next Regular Meeting.

2. Request to hold Defensive Driving Course on 10/10/14 at no cost for employees and volunteer firefighters; \$22 for all others.

Councilman Majewski stated that the employees should contribute 50% (\$11.00) of the cost of this course. This is a reasonable request since the employees are compensated during the time they take the course and benefit from the savings they receive in their auto insurance.

The Board agreed to schedule the course with the added \$11.00 employee contribution.

OK-This item will be placed on the Agenda for a vote at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board.

3. Request from Comptroller Laura McKane to authorize the issuance of a credit card to Museum Director Ramona Kacyvenski for the purpose of making small purchases, with a credit limit of \$500.

OK-This item will be placed on the Agenda for a vote at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board.

4. Request to pay Czerenda Court Reporting \$673.00 for copy of transcript deposition for the Ulrich vs Town of Vestal litigation.

OK-This item will be placed on the Agenda for a vote at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board.

7.3 PERSONNEL

1. Human Resource Officer Nancy Olmstead to discuss vacation carry over.

Human Resource Officer Nancy Olmstead noted that there has been a lot of confusion in the past few years about how the requests for vacation carryover are processed. In some years when the Town experienced emergencies, the Board granted additional carryover times. However, in the last few years, such requests have been submitted (and approved) without regard for the rules. This has created some problems. The rules vary for each bargaining unit and non-union employees are covered by the

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language in the Employee Handbook. She is looking for Board direction on how to handle this year's requests.

Town Clerk Emil Bielecki stated that the rules should be announced early and applied consistently so as to give everyone adequate time to make proper plans. He recommends that the Board not grant additional vacation carryover beyond what is available under the contracts and the Employee Handbook.

After a brief discussion of the topic, the Board instructed the Human Resource Officer to issue a notice to all Town employees that the Board will not entertain requests for vacation carryovers beyond what is permitted under the provisions of the applicable union contracts or the Employee Handbook.

2. Human Resource Officer Nancy Olmstead to discuss medical services, including flu and pneumonia vaccines, from Lourdes and UHS.

Human Resource Officer Nancy Olmstead updated the Board on the cost of various medical services and vaccine shots provided by UHS and Lourdes. The prices submitted by the two health service providers for vaccines appear to be essentially equal. The prices and availability of other services such as drug and alcohol testing and PPO services for Workers Comp require more analysis. The decision on these medical services can be made at a later time, but the Board needs to act now on the vaccines.

After a brief discussion, the Board agreed to authorize the scheduling of two in-house clinics for vaccine shots to be administered by Lourdes. Specific language for approval at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board will be provided by the Human Resource Officer.

3. Request to promote Todd Ingersoll (Highway Department) to Mechanic II, effective 9/20/14.

OK-This item will be placed on the Agenda for a vote at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board.

4. Request to re-appoint Shep Bennett to the Board of Assessment Review, effective October 1, 2014. This term will expire September 30, 2019.

Supervisor Schaffer noted that Mr. Bennett is experienced and has indicated an interest in continuing to serve in this position.

OK-This item will be placed on the Agenda for a vote at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board.

7.4 PLANNING & ZONING

1. Request from A.C. Moore for a special permit for 3 temporary storage trailers for the holiday season.

Supervisor Schaffer stated that he visited the location and sees no problem with approving this request with the additional requirement that each trailer is equipped with at least one hand held 2 pound fire extinguisher to assist in the event of a small incidental fire.

OK-This item will be placed on the Agenda for a vote at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board.

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2. Request from Community Electronic Informational Signage, LLC (CEIS) for a Gateway

Sign at 912 Vestal Parkway East.

Councilman Majewski stated that he opposes this request because the proposed location of the sign is not a gateway to anything.

Supervisor Schaffer noted that this location is a gateway for much of the traffic that comes into Vestal off of Route 26.

Councilwoman Fitzgerald asked if other locations will be considered for gateway signs. Supervisor Schaffer responded that there was already another application but the Board rejected it. He expects that there will be other applications but this is a place to start.

Town Attorney David Berger noted that the Town has not yet received the required 239 L and M review from the County. In addition, this sign request does require a setback variance. After the L & M is received and reviewed, he advises the Board to determine if it wants to ask the ZBA and/or the Planning Board for input on the application prior to making a decision.

7.5 PUBLIC SAFETY

1. Request from Fire Chief Patrick McPherson for approval to go to permissive referendum to use up to \$50,000 from the Capital Reserves for the purchase of a new vehicle for the Department Chief (known as Chief 32).

Supervisor Schaffer stated that the current Chief 32 vehicle is unsafe and should be replaced.

Councilman Majewski expressed shock at the estimated cost of the new vehicle and asked if the Fire Department has adequately researched all options. Fire Chief McPherson noted that the vehicle is the same as the one it is replacing (4 wheel drive Tahoe). It is a basic model. The State contract price of around \$34,000 is the most competitive and the additional cost is for the package that includes such necessary items at lights, radios and decals.

OK-This item will be placed on the Agenda for a vote at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board.

7.6 ADMINISTRATION

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Town of Vestal FOG Control Program (Fats, Oils and Grease)

On hold for additional review and revision.

2. Kopernik Tower

Emil Bielecki, Vice President of the Kopernik Board of Directors, noted that the County has indicated that it is ready to install the tower but is being held up by some unresolved issues with the Town of Vestal.

Supervisor Schaffer stressed the importance of moving ahead with this project and stated that he would schedule a meeting with the representatives of the Town, Broome County and Kopernik Observatory to resolve any of the issues so as to get this project back on track.

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3. Replacement of Fire Station 4

Supervisor Schaffer stated that he is in regular contact with Fire Lieutenant Chuck Paffie concerning alternative designs for the Station 4 replacement project. He is optimistic that we can break ground in the first half of 2015.

4. Amendments to Employee handbook

The Board is continuing to review the proposals that were presented by Human Resource Officer Nancy Olmstead and will discuss the items at the Work Session on October 6, 2014.

5. Purchase of Town land by Vestal Veterinary Hospital

The parcel in question is park land. The Supervisor will send a letter to the owner of the Vestal Veterinary Hospital requesting the submission of a formal offer to purchase this parcel of land.

NEW BUSINESS – 2015 Budget Review Update

As part of the ongoing Board review of the 2015 Town Budget, Comptroller Laura McKane distributed updated estimates of where things stand at this stage of the process. The most significant challenges come from contractual increases in wages and rising health insurance premiums coupled with decreasing non-property tax revenues. We have reduced appropriations for overtime in Highway and could perhaps cut back on salt purchases and turn to appropriating fund balance if there is a shortfall.

There are several requests for new positions and some unfilled vacancies that should be looked at closely. As everyone is aware, it is much less painful to not create a new position or to leave a position vacant than to eliminate an existing employee. As it now stands, the Board would need to cut around \$450,000 to stay under the state mandated cap.

In light of the difficult budgetary circumstances, Supervisor Schaffer stated that he is considering sending a notice to the department heads to freeze unnecessary spending for the rest of the year. He asked Comptroller McKane to advise him on how best to carry out such a directive.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion of Councilman Majewski, seconded by Councilwoman Messina, the following was

ADOPTED Ayes 4 Fitzgerald, Majewski, Messina, Schaffer
 Nays 0

Resolved the Board enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing labor negotiations with the Police Benevolent Association (PBA) bargaining unit. The time was 8:15 PM.

On a motion of Councilwoman Fitzgerald, seconded by Councilwoman Messina, the following was

ADOPTED Ayes 4 Fitzgerald, Messina, Majewski, Schaffer
 Nays 0

Resolved the Board leave Executive Session and **adjourn the Work Session. The time was 8:42 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Emil Bielecki, Town Clerk