

SPECIAL TOWN BOARD MEETING

The Special Meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Cortlandville was held at the Town of Cortlandville Municipal Garage, 3587 Terrace Road, Cortland, New York, with Supervisor Williams presiding.

Members present:

Supervisor, Thomas A. Williams
Councilman, Jeffrey D. Guido
Councilman, Theodore V. Testa
Councilman, Douglas E. Withey
Town Clerk, Kristin E. Rocco-Petrella

Excused:

Councilman, Jay E. Cobb

Others present were: None. (Town Attorney, John A. DelVecchio was excused.)

Supervisor Williams called the special meeting to order, which he convened to discuss several items since declaring a local State of Emergency in the Town of Cortlandville on March 16, 2020 due to the novel coronavirus, COVID-19.

Supervisor Williams asked if there were any comments from the Board. Members of the Board reported that they had not heard from constituents in respect to action the Town was taking. Councilman Withey commented that he heard from a resident who was requesting internet in the area of Kinney Gulf Road, but not in respect to the state of emergency. He commented that residents were well-aware of the situation and were understanding of the Town's need to close buildings. He stated that his own personal business has slowed down and would most likely take a "big hit" this year.

Supervisor Williams asked whether the Board would be interested in conducting business by videoconference utilizing the program "Zoom". Supervisor Williams suggested that the Town purchase Chromebook laptops to be used by the members of the Board, the Town Clerk and Town Attorney to accomplish the meetings as well. Supervisor Williams asked Cortland County IT for a quote for seven Chromebooks at an approximate price of \$250/each from the State bid.

Councilman Guido was familiar with Zoom videoconferencing and noted that the meeting could be recorded as well. Councilman Withey and Councilman Testa preferred to meet in person if necessary rather than videoconference. Town Clerk Rocco-Petrella commented that she was familiar with Zoom videoconferencing and was in favor of attending meetings in such a way during the stay at home order.

Supervisor Williams explained to the Board that he has the authority to extend the local state of emergency, which he declared on March 16, 2020, for an additional 30-days after April 14, 2020. There was discussion amongst the Board about the current status of the state and country. At this time, the Board made no decision as to whether or not they would meet via videoconference for their regularly scheduled meeting. The Board opted to wait until Governor Cuomo of the State of New York had taken further action with regard to his "Stay at Home" Order.

Supervisor Williams apprised the Board he had a meeting earlier today with Water & Sewer Sup't. Alteri, Highway Sup't. Bassett, Bookkeeper Hicks and Assistant Bookkeeper Johnson to discuss the Town's finances and upcoming projects. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the "what if's?" and to identify sources of money that the Town does not have to spend or could defer spending. Supervisor Williams was concerned that the Town's budget could be negatively impacted and "take a huge hit" as result of a potential decline in sales tax to be received.

Supervisor Williams identified four major expenses/projects that the Board could consider holding off on. The first project he brought to the table was the study to interconnect the City of Cortland and Town of Cortlandville water. The City and Town received a shared services grant to conduct the study, which included a \$12,500 match from the Town that was previously approved by the Town Board. Supervisor Williams asked the Board if they wanted him to discuss halting the project with Mayor Tobin from the City of Cortland at this time. Councilman Withey was in favor of moving forward with the study.

Supervisor Williams explained that the Town's engineering firm, CHA looked at the project and estimated that the cost to interconnect the City and Town water would be approximately \$3 million. Councilman Withey asked if CHA was looking at connecting "tank to tank", and if not, why not? Supervisor Williams explained that they were not looking at connecting tank to tank and stated that Water & Sewer Sup't. Alteri recommended that the Town

would be better off “if they put water into our system halfway between the tanks rather than from one end.” Supervisor Williams stated that a study was done in the past about connecting the two systems tank to tank, which would be quite costly. Councilman Withey stated that he would discuss the possible connection with Water & Sewer Sup’t. Alteri. Councilman Testa asked what Councilman Withey’s concern was. Councilman Withey stated that by connecting the tanks, 3 million gallons of water would be readily available rather than tying in mid-way.

Supervisor Williams asked the Board if they wanted to proceed with funding the study to interconnect the City and Town water, knowing that the total cost of the project to connect the two would be approximately \$3 million, or if they wanted him to discuss the project with Mayor Tobin. Councilman Withey suggested he speak with Mayor Tobin. Councilman Guido agreed, stating that if the City was prepared to move forward with the study then the Town should as well. The consensus of the Board was to move forward with the study, agreeing that more discussion would be had on the actual connection at a later date.

Supervisor Williams brought up two additional projects for the Water/Sewer Department for discussion. The first project was the Hillside Drive Sewer Repair Project to replace approximately 250 feet of 8-inch PVC sewer main on Hillside Drive, which has developed pipe sags, along with minor repairs to laterals in the vicinity, for the approximate cost of \$78,000. If the issue does not get repaired and there is a problem, then Hillside Drive, Alexandria Drive and Meadow Lane would be without sewer. The second project was for the Lime Hollow well to increase contact time, which would cost approximately \$256,000. According to Supervisor Williams, Water & Sewer Sup’t. Alteri suggested the Town move forward with both the Hillside Drive Sewer repairs and Lime Hollow well projects.

Supervisor Williams commented that if the Lime Hollow well tested positive for E.coli, similarly to what happened at the Terrace Road well and had to be shut down, it would have a huge impact on the Town. The Terrace Road well could not satisfy the need for water and mentioned that Byrne Dairy could potentially have to shut down. Also, the Town would not be able to get water from the City at this time because the systems are not connected.

Councilman Withey asked whether the Town was sure that there was not already enough contact time at the Lime Hollow well and whether the project was being pushed by the Health Department. Supervisor Williams stated that the project was preventative and not being driven by the Health Department.

Councilman Withey stated that there may already be enough contact time at the Lime Hollow well. He suggested that perhaps the \$256,000 cost would be better spent connecting to the City water. Supervisor Williams reiterated that the approximate cost to connect the City and Town water was \$3 million.

Councilman Withey stated that the Lime Hollow wells were in jeopardy already because of the gravel bed. He stated that the Lime Hollow wells would be great for an “auxiliary source” of water but stated that maybe they should be downgraded from a primary source to auxiliary. Councilman Withey said that he was not saying that Water & Sewer Sup’t. Alteri was not right, but “looking at the whole grand scheme of things with water, that might be the better approach.”

Supervisor Williams stated that another option would be to add another well. He recalled that several years ago a study was conducted in Blodgett Mills by Town Engineer, Hayne Smith, in which he reported there was more water available. Councilman Withey suggested that Supervisor Williams talk with the City. Supervisor Williams suggested that he invite Water & Sewer Sup’t Alteri to the Board’s next meeting to discuss the projects.

Councilman Guido asked what the problem was with the Lime Hollow well. Supervisor Williams explained that there was no current problem with the wells and that the project was preventative. He explained the Terrace Road well project that occurred in 2019 to increase “contact time” before water was provided to its first customer. Councilman Withey added that the project was about flow and time to the first customer; it was a serpentine in the ground before the first customer received water. Supervisor Williams stated that he would talk with Water & Sewer Sup’t. Alteri and would talk with Mayor Tobin.

Supervisor Williams asked what the Board wanted to do with respect to the Hillside Drive project. Town Clerk Rocco-Petrella asked whether the Board planned to go bond for the projects or if the costs were being paid for directly from the water and sewer budget or reserves? She reminded the Board they previously approved the engineering work to be completed for the three projects. Supervisor Williams did not expect to go to bond for the water/sewer projects, noting that money was available in the water/sewer reserves.

Councilman Guido asked whether the Town Water & Sewer Department could complete the repair on Hillside Drive. He stated that it sounded like a health issue that should be taken care of. Supervisor Williams stated that per Water & Sewer Sup’t. Alteri, the repair was too deep for the Town to repair on its own. After further discussion, the Board agreed that the Hillside Drive sewer project was a necessity and was a health concern. More information was needed with

regard to the Lime Hollow well project before making a decision about whether or not to proceed.

Supervisor Williams noted that there was a third water project planned (Route 281 Water Main Extension) to “do a loop” between Blue Creek Road and Fisher Avenue, which Water & Sewer Sup’t. Alteri indicated could be put on hold. The project called for the installation of approximately 400 feet of 8-inch water main along Route 281 to connect the dead-end main on Blue Creek Road with the main on Fisher Avenue. The cost of the project was \$200,000+.

There was discussion regarding the Gutches Lumber Sports Complex and proposed projects to be completed. Supervisor Williams asked the Board what they wanted to do with regard to the proposed construction of a storage building at the Gutches Lumber Sports Complex (GLSC). He explained that \$350,000 was earmarked in the budget for the project; however funding would not be in place until after going out to bond.

Councilman Withey asked what the status of the concession stand and locker room was. Supervisor Williams explained that he was working with Thoma Development Consultants (“Thoma”) for updates on the status of possible grants.

Supervisor Williams explained there was approximately \$78,000 in CDBG grant funds committed to construct a playground at GLSC, as well as a \$10,000 private donation for the playground. The estimated cost of the playground was \$180,000-\$220,000. Councilman Withey was concerned that if the Town did not use the committed CDBG funds that the State could ask for the money back, especially after the shortfalls the State would have this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Supervisor Williams explained that Thoma was looking into the grant money with the State.

Councilman Testa commented on the Town’s fundraising efforts for the GLSC and the generous donations received to date. He spoke about the money raised for Phase 1 of the park, as well as the continued efforts for future phases, noting that he and former Supervisor Tupper received a commitment for a donation from a local bank, yet was not sure of the dollar amount.

Referring back to the proposed storage building, Councilman Guido suggested the Board hold off on the construction of the storage building. Councilman Withey agreed, noting that he understood the need for the building. Supervisor Williams explained the purpose of the building, noting that the biggest need for the building was to house the mowers and equipment that is transported back and forth.

Supervisor Williams apprised the Board that he recently reached out to his contact at Byrne Dairy. He planned to ask if the Town could utilize the old barn on Byrne Dairy’s property for storage and hold off on construction of the storage building. The Board voiced their support for the idea. Supervisor Williams would also ask CHA where they were in the process of completing the plans for the engineering of the storage building. Once the status was known, the Board could decide if they wanted to pause that process as well.

Supervisor Williams reminded the Board that the month of May was approaching quickly and that discussion was necessary with regard to the BAN or long-term bond for the Gutches Lumber Sports Complex (GLSC). The Board briefly discussed the financial benefits of aligning the Town with the National PBR or a subsidiary of Major League Baseball, which included the possibility of funding for the construction of more baseball fields and the positive economic impact on the community/county in regards to sales tax. Supervisor Williams noted that there was an increase in the 2nd and 3rd quarter 2019 sales tax, which he attributed to the increased use of the GLSC. The question the Board was faced with was whether or not to move forward with a tax-deferred bond, which would not allow the Town to align itself with the PBR or other groups.

Councilman Withey asked whether the PBR gave the Town an assessment of the financial impact to the Town/county. He asked how the Town would specifically benefit in respect to payment of the bond. He commented on the annual payment of the bond (approximately \$300,000) and the revenue earned for rental of the GLSC in 2019 (approximately \$40,000). He stated that even if the cost of the rental doubled, the cost to the Town including the work done by the Highway Department was greater.

Councilman Testa commented that the GLSC project was far from being complete, noting that 80% of the entire project was left to build. He stated it would be a steep hill and that it would take time to build. He compared the GLSC to the Town’s Testa Park, and the vast differences in size and potential. Councilman Testa contemplated whether or not the Town would receive any money from the PBR until more fields are built. He also mentioned that Gutches Lumber was interested in building a restaurant near the GLSC.

Supervisor Williams apprised the Board he spoke with John McNerney today in regard to the schedule for the GLSC. All sports have been cancelled through April, with college sport seasons completely cancelled. High school sport seasons may not happen either. The revenue listed in the 2020 Budget for the GLSC was \$40,000 which Supervisor Williams stated may not be received.

Supervisor Williams reiterated that the Board must make a decision as to how it will proceed with the BAN in May/June. Councilman Guido recalled that the difference between renewing the BAN without the tax advantage was an additional \$5,000 per year or approximately \$68,000 over the life of the bond. While the additional cost was of concern, the potential payout from the association with the PBR was great.

Councilman Withey stated that neither the town nor the county was equipped to operate the GLSC and that professionals were needed to do this. He stated that the only way to bring professionals in on the Town's bond was to structure it so they were not taking advantage of the Town's tax exempt status. Councilman Withey was in favor of having options.

Supervisor Williams reiterated Councilman Testa's comment on the intent of Gutchess Lumber for siting a restaurant near the GLSC off of Gracie Road. He commented on the traffic concerns since there is no traffic signal at the end of Gracie Road, and the potential the Town had to ask Gutchess for funding to help construct the road that is planned to run through the GLSC property. Councilman Withey Councilman Testa commented that he would not be comfortable with asking Gutchess for more money at this time, noting that Gutchess swapped approximately 100-acres of land for the 10-acre Citizens Park.

After continued discussion, the Board agreed that Supervisor Williams would first discuss the matter with Councilman Cobb and then ask Attorney DeVecchio to start the process for the long-term bond issue. The long-term bond would cost more money in the long-run but would give the Town more options in the end.

Moving on, there was discussion regarding the Highway Department Budget for 2020 and concerns over the expected loss of revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ability to fund the budget. Supervisor Williams explained that he talked with Highway Sup't. Bassett today and asked where the Town could save money in the budget. Highway Sup't. Bassett indicated that \$700,000 was included in the budget for paving as well as the money expected to come in from the state funded CHIPS program. Supervisor Williams indicated that Highway Sup't. Bassett asked to keep \$50,000 available to repair Homestead Road and Halstead Road. If there is a huge shortfall in revenue, and to get through the crisis, Highway Sup't. Bassett would make due with the \$50,000 and CHIPS money; however the Town may suffer as a result in the future.

Councilman Withey stated that he would like to speak with Highway Sup't. Bassett regarding paving and such. Supervisor Williams said he would ask both Highway Sup't. Bassett and Water & Sewer Sup't. Alteri to attend the next Town Board Meeting to provide their input.

Supervisor Williams mentioned that both Water & Sewer Sup't. Alteri and Highway Sup't. Bassett have trucks on order, for the total cost of \$275,000+/- . Supervisor Williams asked the Board if they wanted to entertain putting the purchases of the vehicles on hold if possible. Councilman Withey stated that there was no harm in asking if the Town could walk away from the purchases, especially if the Town can get another year out of the current vehicles.

Councilman Testa stated that both of the superintendents do not ask for vehicles unless the Town needs them. He stated that they both have the best interest of the Town in mind and are "tight as a drum as far as money is concerned". He also commented that the Town's roads are in good condition in comparison to the roads in the City of Cortland.

Supervisor Williams explained that the Town rotates vehicles on a 10-year schedule.

Town Clerk Rocco-Petrella commented that water/sewer purchases are funded separately. Supervisor Williams was aware of the funding, however he questioned whether the Town should save as much money as possible because of a potential shortfall or continue on as the Town has done in the past?

Councilman Guido stated that in no way does he think that the Town Highway Department or Water/Sewer Department is frivolous in its spending. If the Town can squeeze more time out of the current equipment and can put off the purchase of the equipment at this time then it would be worth exploring. Councilman Withey agreed and stated that the Town would know more about its finances in six months than it does right now.

There was discussion regarding a problem the Town Water/Sewer Department encountered when completing a repair for a water leak on private property. Councilman Withey apprised Supervisor Williams that he requested a quote from Bill Tier Electric to accomplish the repair, which he would provide to Supervisor Williams. Supervisor Williams was in receipt of a quote as well from Beard Electric. Councilman Withey requested a third quote be obtained, per the Town's procurement policy. Supervisor Williams indicated that he would ask Water & Sewer Sup't. Alteri to obtain a third quote for the cost of the repair. The Board would discuss the matter at a later date and decide how they wanted to proceed.

Supervisor Williams apprised the Board that in the near future he would be meeting with Town Clerk Rocco-Petrella and Water & Sewer Sup't. Alteri in regards to a plan for the partial opening/re-opening of the municipal building. Councilman Withey stated that he received an email from the federal government about how to re-open, which he would pass on to the Supervisor. Councilman Guido suggested the use of plastic shields at the counters to limit exposure (to COVID-19).

Councilman Guido asked the Board if they wanted to consider deferring penalties on water/sewer bills, which the Village of Homer recently did. He said that many residents may be out of work (due to the pandemic) and may find it more difficult to pay on time. Members of the Board asked Town Clerk Rocco-Petrella for her opinion.

Town Clerk Rocco-Petrella first commented that she has received inquiries from taxpayers about waiving penalties on tax bills that are due, which she has no authority to do by law. With respect to the water bills, she apprised the Board that the 1st Quarter bills would be mailed to customers on March 31, 2020. She explained that a minimum water/sewer bill was \$52.05. The Town serves residences that may have minimum bills or larger, as well as businesses and industries such as Byrne Dairy and Pall Trinity that have \$30,000+ bills. She explained how penalties are applied manually through the billing software. She said that she empathized with everyone who may be struggling during this time and suggested the Board could discuss waiving penalties with Water & Sewer Sup't Alteri.

After continued discussion amongst the Board, Councilman Guido made a motion to waive penalties on the 1st quarter water/sewer billing until after May 31, 2020. The Board could revisit the matter at a later date to decide if a further extension was necessary.

RESOLUTION #91	AUTHORIZE TOWN CLERK TO WAIVE PENALTIES ON 1 ST QUARTER (APRIL) WATER/SEWER BILLING UNTIL JUNE 1, 2020
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Motion by Councilman Guido

Seconded by Councilman Withey

VOTES: AYE – Williams, Guido, Testa, Withey NAY – 0

ABSENT – Cobb

ADOPTED

WHEREAS, in an effort to reduce the possible financial burden of many residents and businesses as a result of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, the Town Board determines it would be in the best interest of the community to waive penalties on the 1st Quarter water/sewer billing, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, the Town Board does hereby authorize and direct the Town Clerk to waive the water/sewer penalties on 1st Quarter April Water/Sewer Billing until June 1, 2020, at which time a one-time 10% penalty will be applied to any unpaid water/sewer accounts pursuant to Town Code.

Councilman Williams commented that included in the 2020 Budget was \$2.3 million in sales tax revenue, \$40,000 in revenue for building permits, and \$40,000 in revenue for the Gutches Lumber Sports Complex. He projected a 20-30% decrease in sales tax revenue due to the pandemic, and added that the mortgage tax revenue could also decrease.

Supervisor Williams recapped the discussion that was had earlier in the meeting and the action that he would take/follow up with:

- Contact the City of Cortland to discuss the interconnect between the Town and City water;
- Talk to Water & Sewer Sup't. Alteri about the Lime Hollow well project to increase contact time and whether or not the Town should repurpose the funds for the project to interconnect the Town to the City water;
- Talk to CHA about completing the playground at the GLSC;
- Talk to CHA about their status with the engineering for the proposed storage building at the GLSC and putting the project on hold;
- Talk to Councilman Cobb about moving the GLSC BAN to a non-tax-exempt bond;
- Talk to Highway Sup't. Bassett and Water & Sewer Sup't. Alteri to discuss the possibility of delaying the purchase of vehicles already approved for purchase.

Supervisor Williams would report back to the Board at a later date.

No further comments or discussion were heard.

Councilman Withey made a motion, seconded by Councilman Guido, to adjourn the Special Meeting. All voting aye, the motion was carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristin E. Rocco-Petrella

Kristin E. Rocco-Petrella, RMC
Town Clerk
Town of Cortlandville

*Note:

The draft version of this meeting was submitted to the Town Board for their review on April 21, 2020.

The final version of this meeting was approved as written at the Town Board meeting of May 6, 2020.