

State of New York
County of Fulton
Town of Stratford

Minutes of the Stratford Town Board meeting held on Thursday, March 14, 2013 at the municipal building located at 120 Piseco Rd.

Present:

Robert Johnson Jr.	---	Supervisor
Allan Perkins	---	Councilman
Bernard Leavitt,	---	Councilman
Lorraine Rumrill	---	Councilwoman
Bernard Leavitt	---	Councilman
Dawn Youker	---	Councilwoman
Diana Massicotte	---	Town Clerk
Leigh Anne Loucks	---	Assessor
Lita Hillier	---	Bookkeeper
Peg Klages	---	Deputy Town Clerk

Supervisor Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm with the Pledge to the Flag.

Supervisor Johnson paid tribute to Mark Snowman, Highway Superintendent, who passed away on March 6, 2013. The Town of Stratford lost a good man who motivated the guys and humble enough to learn. Mark was looking forward to future goals.

Residents in attendance: Fifty-four residents were present at the meeting.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Allicia Rice stated that the School Budget was coming up and encouraged residents to attend the School Board meeting in Dolgeville.

There was much discussion regarding the re-evaluation of property. Residents wanted the reval thrown out. The cost of the reval to the Town was \$43,500. An informational meeting was held February 27 to explain the appraisals. About fourteen people attended. The assessor and Mike Maxwell were at the office March 12 from 12:00 pm to 8:00 pm to avail residents of any information the residents needed. About ten people came in to talk to them. The residents felt the meeting was not publicized enough. The Assessor stated the information was published in both papers, posted on the town board, at the Transfer Station and on the Town's website. Sue Fogarty suggested the Board decline the reval or put it on hold. She stated there were serious issues regarding the assessments and how the amounts were calculated. She would like to see everyone work together to come up with a viable solution for everyone. A letter from Vicki and Phil Grillot was emailed to the Town Clerk for the Town Board which was read at the meeting. In part:

“We were advised by Theresa, the office manager of Maxwell Appraisal Services that the appointment would have to be scheduled for Wednesday, March 20. We expressed our shock of being given less than two weeks to provide supportive documentation for this firm to consider a truer current market value of our property. When we explained to

Theresa that we felt it was an unreasonable time frame for us to be able to acquire a ‘recent appraisal of the property’ (#2 example provided on their letter as an appropriate piece of material to present at the meeting with the reviewer), we were advised that we were WASTING OUR TIME AND MONEY and that it needed to have been done 6 months to 1 year ago. These remarks from Maxwell Appraisal Services makes it very clear to us that their offer to reconsider their current market value is a COMPLETE SHAM! We knew that the assessment was happening and cooperated with the assessors in providing them with any information requested. We did not feel that it was necessary to spend the time and money to do an independent assessment until we saw their figures. To now expect us to react to this almost instantaneously seems to be less than professional behavior.”

Heidi Christiansen supported the consensus that there were grave iniquities in the assessments. Since there were not enough sales in the Town of Stratford, the Town of Caroga was used as a basis for comparisons. Assessor Loucks said the State owns about 68% of the land which does not help the tax base for the Town. The Welcome Stranger Law prevents the Town from raising taxes on the new property owner even if he pays an exorbitant amount. Assessor Loucks said the underwater land at the lakes was adjusted. The Town has 1,158 parcels, 200 State owned. Real Estate Law takes the value of the land as of July 1 of the prior year.

There are serious issues and much concern among the residents. The Assessor has been working with Maxwell to correct the data. Supervisor Johnson said he attended the meetings with the State, Assessor and Maxwell and felt ORPTS listened to concerns.

Supervisor Johnson stated that he had concerns doing the update and reval the same year. He suggested that the residents should speak with one voice.

Motion made by Councilman Perkins, seconded by Councilwoman Rumrill to table the reval, if legal, for one year.

ADOPTED Ayes 5 Johnson, Perkins, Leavitt, Rumrill and Youker
Nays 0

REPORTS

Supervisor Johnson read the Dog Control Officer’s February 2, 2013 to March 6, 2013 report as follows:

Contacted two dog owners regarding licensing their dogs and told them to notify me when they complied.

Received one stray cat call and directed the concerned person to local cat rescues.

Have composed letters to be mailed to residents regarding the importance of vaccinations and licensing their dogs.

Have several calls to Little Falls Veterinarian about doing an April Rabies clinic.

There was no Superintendent’s Report for February.

The Treasurer's report for January and February was handed out to Board members.

Assessor Loucks read her report as follows:

Reval update: Data mailers have been sent, indicating the new assessed values, as well as the estimated tax amounts for the 2013 School Tax and 2014 Town/County tax. To date, less than 100 informal hearings have been scheduled which includes the phone hearings Mike has scheduled for out of town owners. There were approximately ten people who came in on Tuesday, March 12, between 12:00 noon and 8:00 pm when information was made available to property owners as needed.

The roll with the values is available at the Town Hall and will be available until Mike concludes the hearings and we review the paperwork to determine whether the owners justify a change. The Tentative Roll will be available on or around May 1, 2013. At that time, it will be online, as NYSRPTL mandates. Until the Tentative Roll is filed, the only available tax roll online will be the 2012 roll.

There were 12 – 14 people at the informational Meeting which was held on February 27.

BAR training will be held sometime in April. Mike will be conducting this so the members are well versed with the knowledge of how the values were arrived at and what tax payers need to provide for values to be changed.

Exemption forms are in and most were applied to the roll prior to the printing and mailing of the impact notices.

There was no Code Enforcement Officer report. Supervisor Johnson introduced our new Code Enforcement Officer, Norman Wright. Barry Vickers will be working with Norman for a short time.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion of Reval which was covered in Public Speaking.

NEW BUSINESS

The Auditor's Report will be made public shortly. Supervisor Johnson stated the Auditor was thorough and helpful.

Supervisor Johnson had asked Earl Youker, Jr. if he would be interested in taking over the Highway Superintendent's position, but he is not, he will stay on as Deputy Superintendent. We have thirty (30) days to appoint a Superintendent. Charles Goodwin said he is interested.

Supervisor Johnson made a motion to move into Executive Session at 9:08 pm to discuss job appointments, Seconded by Councilman Perkins.

Ayes - 5 Leavitt, Johnson, Rumrill, Perkins and Youker
Nays – 0

On a motion made by Councilman Perkins, seconded by Councilwoman Rumrill to return to the regular meeting at 9:55 pm.

Ayes - 5 Leavitt, Johnson, Rumrill, Perkins and Youker
Nays - 0

RESOLUTION #12-13 Naming Charles Goodwin to finish out the elected term of Highway Superintendent for the year 2013 and

WHEREAS, the Stratford Town Board decided at the Town Board meeting on March 14, 2013 and

WHEREAS, the information was examined and reviewed by the Stratford Town Board, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Charles Goodwin shall be appointed as Highway Superintendent in the Town of Stratford for the remainder of the year 2013:

Offered by: Councilman Perkins, seconded by Councilwoman Rumrill
ADOPTED: Ayes 5 Johnson, Perkins, Leavitt, Rumrill, and Youker
Nays 0

Charles Goodwin will also be head mechanic.

RESOLUTION #13-13 Naming appointed position for Building Janitorial Staff for the year 2013

WHEREAS, the Stratford Town Board decided at the Town Board meeting on March 14, 2013 and

WHEREAS, the information was examined and reviewed by the Stratford Town Board, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Diane Keck shall be appointed as Building Janitorial Staff in the Town of Stratford for the remainder of the year 2013:

Offered by: Councilwoman Rumrill, seconded by Councilman Perkins
ADOPTED: Ayes 5 Johnson, Perkins, Leavitt, Rumrill, and Youker
Nays 0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Councilwoman Rumrill, seconded by Councilman Perkins to approve the Board meeting minutes of February 14, 2013.

ADOPTED Ayes 5 Johnson, Perkins, Leavitt, Rumrill and Youker
Nays 0

Motion made by Councilman Perkins, seconded by Councilman Leavitt to approve the Board meeting minutes of February 20, 2013.

ADOPTED Ayes 5 Johnson, Perkins, Leavitt, Rumrill and Youker
Nays 0

Motion made by Councilman Leavitt that all new hires for a position in the Town of Stratford would be approved by the Town Board

ADOPTED Ayes 5 Johnson, Perkins, Leavitt, Rumrill and Youker
Nays 0

AUDIT OF CLAIMS

Motion made by Councilwoman Rumrill, seconded by Councilman Perkins to approve the bills on Abstract #3

Ayes - 5 Leavitt, Johnson, Rumrill, Perkins and Youker
Nays - 0

General Fund	Voucher Nos. 41 through 56	\$17,007.81
Highway Fund	Voucher Nos. 29 through 41	\$11,508.78

With no further business, on a motion by Councilwoman Rumrill, seconded by Councilman Leavitt, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Massicotte, Town Clerk