

Sate of New York  
County of Fulton  
Town of Stratford

Minutes of the Stratford Town Board meeting held on Thursday, December 12, 2013 at the municipal building located at 120 Piseco Rd.

Present:

Robert Johnson Jr.	---	Supervisor
Allan Perkins	---	Councilman
Lorraine Rumrill	---	Councilwoman
Dawn Youker	---	Councilwoman
Diana Massicotte	---	Town Clerk
Charles Goodwin	---	Highway Superintendent
Lita Hillier	---	Bookkeeper

Absent:

Bernard Leavitt,	---	Councilman
Leigh Anne Loucks	---	Assessor
Peg Klages	---	Deputy Town Clerk
Norman Wright	---	Code Enforcement Officer

Supervisor Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm with the Pledge to the Flag.

Residents in attendance: Heidi Christiansen, Peter and Mary Szczebak, Gary Rumrill, Allicia Rice, Dorothy Eifert, Ken Thompson, Sue Fogarty, Judy Snowman and Reta Christman.

### **PUBLIC SPEAKING**

Frank Rice read an informative report on the status of the Stratford Volunteer Fire Company. He handed out copies to those who were present. The report is on file at the Town Clerk's office. The meetings are open to the public, the first Tuesday of the Month at 7:30 pm. They have new members and Judy Snowman's minister is volunteering his time for any victims of a fire. One reason it is difficult to get volunteers is because the training is time consuming. The state mandates make it difficult for the volunteer departments.

### **REPORTS**

The Bookkeeper handed out the Treasurer's report for November to the Board.

The Dog Control Officer, Karen Jaquay, submitted her report which Supervisor Johnson read as follows:

November 13, 2013 to December 12, 2013

12/11/13 and 12/12/13 - One dog at large, two complaints – issued ticket.  
No other dog problems to report.

Supervisor Johnson read the Assessor's report as follows:

All exemption renewal forms have been mailed and are beginning to be returned. All residents who have enhanced STAR have until March 1, 2014 to return them to my office. If anyone is in need of having their forms picked up, they can call the office and let me know.

Basic STAR registration with the NYS Department of Tax and Finance must be completed by December 31, 2013. Anyone who is not registered will be removed from the program by NYS and will not be reinstated unless directed to be by NYS. It is not up to local Assessor's office anymore, unless the STAR is new for the tax roll 2014. Letters have been mailed by me to all residents who were on the unregistered list that the NYS Department of Tax and Finance issued on Tuesday, December 11, 2013. The list is inclusive of all registrations, as of December 8, 2013. Please remind everyone you can of this deadline.

I was inundated by letters, emails, and phone calls regarding a letter sent out by the SLA President. The letter contained a vast amount (almost completely) of erroneous information pertaining to assessments and the breakdown of the values. While I am completely agreeable for having information out there regarding assessments, reval, etc, I do prefer that the information be correct, which this is not. I have attached a copy of the letter to each Board member's report.

Heidi Christiansen asked about the \$30.00 reimbursement for the residents who were successful in their STAR appeal. Bookkeeper Hillier said that it would come from the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk said she would mail them out on the year end abstract.

Superintendent Goodwin reported as follows:

- The men are plowing and sanding.
- Checked with insurance company regarding stolen signs, but they cannot do anything about it.
- Had problem with hinge on sander box, fixed it.
- Wood furnace working better since the fittings were changed.
- Checking on radiators to put into the barn.
- Worked on water system. No filter system in it.
- Backed into snowplow with pickup, getting estimates.
- Split wood, mixing green with dry wood.

Code Enforcement Officer's report read by Supervisor Johnson as follows:

- November 14, 2013 – December 11, 2013
  - Four permits issued
  - Two inspections
  - Issued one Demolition permit
  - Had three meetings
  - Attended school
  - Followed up on numerous telephone calls.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Bookkeeper Hillier said there was a big impact on the Budget that was adopted at the last Board Meeting. A copy of the budget is sent to Alice Hunt, the Budget Director at the County. They prepare the taxes on

what we submit to them. She received an email from Alice Hunt stating that she was using a wrong assessed evaluation for the Town. Unfortunately that put our assessment at a \$20,000,000 decrease. Lita called the Real Property Office and Alice to find out how this could happen. There is no way to prove it. We just have to move forward. Supervisor Johnson and I discussed it and wanted to wait for this Board Meeting to determine how we should handle this. Unfortunately, we could not do that because Alice had to have the information right away so there was no time to get together with the Board. The decision that Supervisor Johnson and I made was that the Board's intent at the Board Meeting was that they wanted to adopt the budget with the intent of a 49% decrease. We left it at that but leaving it at that, we had to use another \$60,000 in fund balance of the Highway Department to keep the tax rate at what we adopted at the budget meeting. Bookkeeper Hillier said she did not use all the \$107,000 that the Superintendent Goodwin is getting for chips, she used the \$89,000 which helped out a little bit. We still have a pretty good fund balance which she projects at 22% balance left in fund balance. We felt that the Board wanted the \$3.48 per thousand and you wanted to give your people the 49% decrease, so we worked out the fund balance and had to make that decision fast. We adopted the budget at \$3.48 per thousand but it is actually \$3.49 per thousand because the Fire District Contract is what it is and the assessed evaluation she gave me raised it a penny. The assessment for the Fire District was correct. The Town-wide evaluation was not correct.

Bookkeeper Hillier has to contact the State Comptroller's office because she has to resubmit the tax cap because the scenario that we chose brings the fund balance to be raised by taxes down. Bookkeeper Hillier said over the years she has been having issues with the Assessors because some of them cannot read the tax rolls. Bookkeeper Hillier said she was always comfortable going to the County because the County said to call them because they have a more up-to-date version of the rolls. Budget Director Hunt said the reason we have the difference could be because we had 6% corrections of error and that may in turn have affected exemptions. There were also little small claims that were won and that would definitely affect the exemptions. She asked if there were any small claims that came in and was told that there were no small claims that big that came in and so we went ahead and adopted the budget.

Bookkeeper Hillier said she always called the County but over the years I have been going back to the Assessors. Now I will have to double check with the assessors what their assessed evaluation is versus the County. To compensate, we would have had to raise the budget 50¢ per thousand but we decided to stay true to what was adopted if the fund balance could hold it.

Town Clerk Massicotte said that she had their computer system checked with Bill Renolds. They changed the password so only Town employees can use system.

The question was asked if there would be outside help for the Assessor. Supervisor Johnson said he wanted to touch base with Mr. Galarneau to see if he would be available to help with land values. We have some money from the state for reimbursement for maintaining 100% assessment.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Supervisor Johnson stated that at the November 21, 2013 Town Board Personnel Meeting the following resolution and motion was offered, seconded and adopted:

**RESOLUTION 26-2013**

**RESOLUTION BY TOWN BOARD TO ADOPT NEW LOCAL LAW PROVIDING FOR THE ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE NEW YORK STATE UNIFORM FIRE PREVENTION AND BUILDING CODE**

Offered by Councilman Perkins, seconded by Supervisor Johnson

**ADOPTED**           Ayes 4       Johnson, Perkins, Youker and Rumrill  
                          Nays 0

**WHEREAS**, the Town Board of the Town of Stratford agrees to have the Town Attorney draw up a new Local Law which will give the Code Enforcement Officer more authority to write tickets as needed,

**WHEREAS**, said law will provide for the administration and enforcement of the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code,

**RESOLVED**, that the Town Board agrees to have said law No. 1 drawn up by the Town Attorney as outlined in the attachment to this resolution.

**APPROVAL OF ASSESSOR’S SALARY**

Motion made by Councilwoman Rumrill, seconded by Councilman Perkins to keep the Assessor’s salary at \$14,710.00.

**ADOPTED**   Ayes 4       Johnson, Perkins, Youker and Rumrill  
                          Nays 0

The reorganization meeting will be held January 2, 2014 at 6:30 pm.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

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

**ADOPTED**   Ayes 4       Johnson, Perkins, Youker and Rumrill  
                          Nays 0

Sue Fogarty asked about the meeting the board had. They discussed the law for the Code Enforcement Officer. Supervisor Johnson said it was a personnel meeting which he planned to have three or four times a year to see if there are any problems or improvements that can be made. It is not public, it is to help the employees do a better job for the town. He has a Memorandum of Agreement coming for the Assessor.

**AUDIT OF CLAIMS**

Motion made by Councilman Perkins, seconded by Councilwoman Rumrill to approve the bills on Abstract #12.

Ayes - 4       Johnson, Perkins, Youker and Rumrill  
Nays – 0

General Fund	Voucher Nos. 218 through 245	\$ 6,962.73
Highway Fund	Voucher Nos. 151 through 167	\$70,689.13

With no further business, on a motion by Councilwoman Rumrill, seconded by Supervisor Johnson, the meeting was adjourned at 7:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Massicotte, Town Clerk