

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR TOWN BOARD MEETING OF THE TOWN OF THURMAN HELD FEBRUARY 17, 2009 AT THE TOWN HALL, 311 ATHOL ROAD, ATHOL NEW YORK, COMMENCING AT 7:00 P.M.

PRESENT: MR. LEON GALUSHA

MR. CHARLES BILLS

MRS. RUTH KELLER

MR. LAWRENCE PITKIN

ABSENT: MR. JAMES LIGON

Recording Secretary: **Cynthia R. Hyde**, Town Clerk

The meeting was called to order by **Mr. Lawrence Pitkin, Supervisor**

Pledge of allegiance to the flag of the **United States of America**

Roll call of Town Board members by the Town Clerk

Moment of silence for our troops.

APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY MINUTES: Motion by **Leon Galusha**, seconded by **Charles Bills**

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN

PAYMENT OF CLAIMS: General fund abstract number 4, 0015 thru 0024, 0027 thru 0054, 0056, 0084, 0085 and also highway fund abstract number 52, 0025,0026, 0057 thru 0074, 0078 thru 0082, 0086 Motion by **Leon Galusha** seconded by **Charles Bills**.

MOTION CARRIED:

REPORT FROM THE SUPERVISOR: The auditors gave an exit report. In a month or so there will be a formal exit report, followed by a formal report at a later date which will be available on the internet.

KEY ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- purchasing policy needed
- payroll/ problems with time cards
- excess fund balance
- capital reserve fund

Supervisor Pitkin suggested tightening next year's budget, I don't see how we can't drop some rates for next year and possibly for a few years, by using this excess fund balance. He also suggested using the capital reserve fund for improvements on town buildings.

Pitkin reported that **Terry Beadnell** would be retiring and **Ed Brown** would be joining the highway department. There would be a net savings because **Beadnell** [who has longevity] would be replaced by a less senior employee. **Pitkin** said that **Pat Wood** has the prerogative to hire in the highway department and he has chosen to bring on another man. **Pitkin** also said that **Pat Wood** has agreed to take on some additional duties.

A new part time maintenance man [paid out of the general fund] will be hired for 24 hours each week, this will mean that the hours for this position will be cut back to where they were supposed to be in the first place. This equals a net decrease in labor costs.

Supervisor Pitkin said that the union contract called for a yearly increase and that the subject of a pay increase for nonunion employees had come up. **Pitkin** stated that in this environment he was not fond of going with pay raises. The number of the responses to the part time maintenance position was overwhelming and very qualified people were applying. **Councilwoman Keller** said that with today's economy she felt the town employees deserved a raise. **Councilman Galusha** stated that the board typically does this annually; it would be a 2% cost of living increase and he felt the nonunion employees deserved it. **Councilman Bills** agreed that the nonunion employees should get a raise.

On a motion by **Leon Galusha**, seconded by **Ruth Keller** the non union employees were given a 2% raise.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN

NEW BUSINESS: **Supervisor Pitkin** said that starting next month the agenda and any resolutions proposed will be available on the table by the caribou on the day before each meeting.

RESOLUTION #33: To authorize the supervisor to enter into contract with the Thurman Fire Company. On a motion by **Leon Galusha**, seconded by **Ruth Keller**

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN

RESOLUTION #34: To authorize the supervisor to enter into contract with the Thurman EMS. On a motion by **Ruth Keller**, seconded by, **Leon Galusha**

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN

RESOLUTION #35: To authorize the change from quarterly payments to monthly payments for the justice effective 01/01/09. On a motion by **Ruth Keller**, seconded by **Leon Galusha**

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ **KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN**

RESOLUTION #36: To establish the rate of pay and hours of the supervisor's secretary. On a motion by **Ruth Keller**, seconded by **Leon Galusha**

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ **KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN**

RESOLUTION #37: to endorse the NYS Association of Towns opposition to amending section 544 of the real property law. On a motion by **Leon Galusha**, seconded by **Lawrence Pitkin**

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ **KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN**

RESOLUTION #38: To approve purchase of and installation of a server. On a motion by **Ruth Keller** seconded by **Charles Bills**

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ **KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN**

RESOLUTION #39: To authorize **Lawrence M. Pitkin** to be the sole signatory for the town financial accounts. On a motion by **Leon Galusha**, seconded by **Ruth Keller**

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ **KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN**

RESOLUTION #40: To authorize the supervisor to enter into contract with the Thurman Connection Snowmobile club. On a motion by **Leon Galusha**, seconded by **Charles Bills**

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ **KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN**

RESOLUTION #41: To establish health insurance to part time employees at their own expense. **Councilwoman Keller** said that she would like to table this resolution until a policy was put in place so that the town wouldn't be opening the door to everyone regardless of how few hours they work. **Councilman Galusha** stated that if they're paying the expense what difference does it make. **Keller** said that we need to define a policy. **Galusha** asked if there would be a lapse in coverage for people who already have the health insurance, he said that we can't afford to do that. **Councilman Bills** felt it was important to outline the number of hours an employee needed to work to be eligible. **Pitkin** stated that we need to establish this. He also said that his concern was a lapse in coverage for a particular employee. **Supervisor Pitkin** suggested that an employee would need to make enough in a month to cover the expense, which would be deducted from their paycheck. The person involved is fine with this and it might be a reward for those who work more hours. He said that he would feel bad if this person had a lapse in coverage.

On a motion by **Leon Galusha**, seconded by **Ruth Keller**

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ **KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN**

RESOLUTION #42: To redescribe bookkeeper to account clerk. On a motion by **Ruth Keller**, seconded by **Charles Bills**

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ **KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN**

Supervisor Pitkin discussed the reason for the title change from bookkeeper. We need to do this because if we [we have hired a very valuable person] call this position bookkeeper we would have to go out to civil service. The rate of pay offered would not attract someone sensitive to small towns with the qualifications we have here. It would be an unwieldy process.

Supervisor Pitkin said that the week before **Susan Shepler** started she worked the better part of a week on her own time; these are the kind of people we don't want to lose. **Councilwoman Keller** said that **Susan Shepler** had made plans before being hired for a vacation in March. Because of the town financial situation and the report from the comptrollers she put her vacation on hold.

MAINTENANCE POSITION: Put on hold to give time to review letters.

Pitkin said that we are getting a lot of response and letters are still coming in. **Councilman Galusha** asked if there was a deadline.

Supervisor Pitkin stated that our defacto deadline is March 1 when we lose **Ed**. He said he hesitates because we're getting qualified applicants. There is pain out there for jobs. Unfortunately for them, but fortunately for us, we can bring on someone with a strong talent base. Ed Brown has done a really good job, but wants to move over to highway.

TAX COLLECTOR'S REPORT: SEE ATTACHED ~ Eileen asked for an area to work in that would enabled her to spread out her books. She said not to worry about it this year, but would like this put in place for next year.

TREASURER'S REPORT: SEE ATTACHED

AUDIT REPORT: **Supervisor Pitkin** discussed the audit report, [allowing that his numbers would not be specific without a report in front of him] he said that a town should have a 25% fund balance, our town in 06,07,08 had an average of a 90% fund balance. **Councilwoman Keller stated** that the audit report from 2007 said that we had enough money to run the town for a full year, without collecting a dime. **Councilman Galusha** asked if this included the CD. **Keller** answered that it didn't. **Pierre Cyr** wanted to know where the money was. **Pitkin** said it was in the bank. **Keller** stated that she thought there were nine accounts, **Pitkin** agreed and said that the accounts were drawing interest. **Pierre Cyr** asked how come we are just finding out about this now. **Councilman Galusha** replied that the board had started finding out in November, but by the time they found out it was too late to use it to act upon the budget. **Supervisor Pitkin** discussed using this money to gradually ease the tax burden. **Pitkin** suggested possibly using the capital fund on improving town buildings then went on to share some possible ideas such as a second floor on the town hall. He said that the capital fund, in the amount of \$350,300.00, can't be put in the general fund but could be refocused [this money originally was for a new town garage]. **John Schroeter** asked if this was money that was collected from the residents and never used. **Supervisor Pitkin** said yes. **Councilman Galusha** said we made that money when the dump was capped and the town sold the sand back to themselves. **Councilwoman Keller** said that the **\$350,000.00** was the capital reserve that the town has been sitting on since 1996, 97, but that the remainder of the money came from the citizen's pockets. **Pitkin** stated that this money is sitting in the bank drawing 1 3/4% interest in a 12 month CD, with inflation

we're losing buying power every year. It makes sense to use this money. By law it has to be used on a capital project. Our attorneys have advised that we can change the focus from highway to all town buildings.

RAISE FOR TONYA SPRINGER: See attached letter. **Councilman Galusha** said that **Tonya Springer's** pay was discussed and that the concern was that she wasn't getting all of the money. **Councilwoman Keller** said that she had raised that fact. **Keller** said that when she looked at the budget she didn't know why **Tonya's** salary was lowered. **Galusha** stated that there had been no raises this year. **Keller** said that was only for part time elected officials, not appointed and that Springer's pay went from \$6,200.00 in 07, \$6,200.00 in 08 down to \$5,600.00 in 09. **Keller** stated that **Tonya** deserves her pay and that she didn't know how her pay was lowered. **Galusha** wondered if they dropped it themselves. He said he did remember discussing it but is pretty certain it didn't pass. **Keller** said that she had learned that **Springer's** hourly rate was so low that she was only getting a portion of the money budgeted, **Keller** wanted to be sure that allowing the \$12.50 an hour would not result in going over the budget. **Galusha** replied that the letter from the justice states, not to exceed the budgeted amount. **Pitkin** asked if the Board agreed that **Tonya Springer** was worth it. **Galusha** and **Keller** both said she is a hard worker. **Pitkin** stated that with the stipulation that the pay rate would not go over budget, he would move that **Tonya Springer** would be granted the hourly pay of \$12.50. **Pitkin** said that a resolution would be written to establish the pay raise for **Tonya Springer** by **Norma Galusha** tomorrow. On a Motion by **Supervisor Pitkin**, seconded by **Councilman Galusha** it was approved that **Tonya Springer** would receive an hourly rate of \$12.50.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 AYES ~ KELLER, GALUSHA, BILLS, PITKIN

UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIM DENIED: The Town Clerk reported that the unemployment insurance claim filed by **John Haskell**, which was protested by the Town of Thurman, has been denied. Payments that have already been made will be reimbursed by the state who will in turn seek reimbursement from **Mr. Haskell**.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR: **Carolyn Cyr** asked if it was possible to get some sand for residents to use without salt. **Jeff Ackey** said that there was a pile for residents to use, but there may be a little salt in it and that there is sand available at the landfill.

Supervisor Pitkin asked that residents keep an eye out for a Kabota type of machine at the town salt pile, and if you see something please give us a yell. **Pat Wood** has reported that strange tire tracks have been seen at the salt pile, so someone has been at the salt pile that shouldn't be. Salt is too expensive, \$60.00 a ton

REPORT FROM COUNCILWOMEN KELLER: **Keller** said that she has visited some food pantries to glean advice. **Keller** said that most of them are only opened twice a week and she is proud to say the Thurman food pantry is open all week. **Councilwomen Keller** and **Robert Shepler** gave the pantry a good scrubbing. The Girl Scouts had a food drive and donated food to the Thurman Pantry. There is plenty of food in stock and she asks that everyone spread the word.

TERRY BEADNELL: **Councilwoman Keller** stated that she would like to thank **Terry Beadnell** for his 40+ years of service to the Town of

Thurman. There was a loud round of applause. **Pitkin** said that he would be missed and presented **Beadnell** with a gift certificate. **Keller** brought up that a luncheon would be held next Friday in **Terry's** honor.

QUESTIONS: **Joyce Eddy** asked what the final budget increase for 09 was. **Keller** and **Pitkin** both answered 30%. **Councilman Galusha** said that it started out at 60% the board overhauled it and got it down to 30%. **Pierre Cyr** asked how long has this cash been accruing. **Pitkin** answered that the audit of 2006, 2007, 2008 showed that each year there was a fund balance of 90 to 100%. **Pierre Cyr** wanted to know why no one had picked up on this before. **Keller** replied that the suspicion of excess cash was one of the reasons she ran for a seat on the board. **Pierre Cyr** stated that at past meetings he was always told there was no excess cash. **Keller** said that she thought she had been clear about the fact that she disagreed with the town board's claim that there was no excess cash. **Leon Galusha** said we weren't seeing this on the monthly statement. **Councilwoman Keller** reiterated that in years past we weren't privy to a whole hell of a lot and questions were not received favorably. **Keller** stated that she had had many doors slammed in her face; now the board is wide open. **Galusha** said that he had made a personal trip to the bank and that's when he found out about the excess money. **Pierre Cyr** said that it could be worse, we could owe that much.

Discussion ensued regarding lowering taxes and making improvements on buildings.

ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business on a motion by **Councilman Galusha**, seconded by **Councilwoman Keller** the meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m...

Respectfully Submitted,

Cynthia Hyde, Town Clerk

February 17, 2009

Attached: Approval signatures, the Tax Collector's report, and the Treasurer's report. A letter from Justice Filomena Riviello, the Town Clerk's report, and resolutions