

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR TOWN BOARD MEETING OF THE TOWN OF THURMAN HELD JUNE 16, 2009 AT THE TOWN HALL, 311 ATHOL ROAD, ATHOL NEW YORK, COMMENCING AT 7:00 P.M.

PRESENT: MR. LEON GALUSHA

MR. JAMES LIGON

MR. LAWRENCE PITKIN

MR. CHARLES BILLS

ABSENT: MRS. RUTH KELLER

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

A moment of silence for our troops.

APPROVAL OF THE MAY 19, 2009 MINUTES: RESOLUTION # 65 was passed at the May 19, 2009 Board meeting. The Town Clerk was given the wrong edition of this resolution, resulting in an error in recording this resolution properly in the May 19, 2009 minutes. **Councilman Ligon** asked that the proper **Resolution # 65** of May 19, 2009 be recorded.

RESOLUTION # 65: To authorize the Highway superintendent, Town Supervisor and one [1] Town Board Member, upon concurrence of all officials, to approve purchases in excess of \$1000.00 if and only if, the failure to execute such purchase would cause immediate and significant harm to the performance of town functions.

On a motion by **Leon Galusha**, seconded by **James Ligon** the minutes were approved.

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

PAYMENT OF CLAIMS: On a motion by **Charles Bills**, seconded by **Leon Galusha** payment of claims from abstract #21 General Fund [\$26,221.52], and #62 Highway Fund [\$17,091.38] were approved.

MOTION CARRIED: 3 AYES ~, BILLS, GALUSHA, PITKIN

1 ABSTAIN ~ LIGON

THURMAN'S INVENTORY REVIEW: **Thomas Birdsall** presented the board with a response to **Mike Swan's** [Chairman, Office of Real Property] Thurman's inventory review.

Mr. Birdsall addressed the issue of waterfront property. **Birdsall** said that waterfront should be the main feature of a property [such as a house on Garnet Lake] to be designated as such. The assessors are developing new criteria to more accurately describe true waterfront parcels.

Mr. Birdsall said that there were a few inventory errors at a couple of remote places that the assessors don't get to every year.

Thomas Birdsall reminded the board that many people still don't get building permits and he would like to see the town come up with a penalty for this.

Mr. Birdsall said that the assessors are updating their photo inventory and expect to have new pictures of all improved properties in their files and on the computer by fall.

Thomas Birdsall stated that **Mike Swan** [director, Office of Real Property] indicated that the Thurman assessment roll was in very good shape and wouldn't need special updating for the revaluation of 2011. **Birdsall** added that the Town of Thurman inventory was very tight.

There were questions and discussion about actual age and effective age. **Mr. Birdsall** said that an eighteen hundreds farm house might have an effective age of 1982 or 1983. **Birdsall** stated that we've had some older houses sell for a lot of money so they are still worth something; obviously people aren't walking outside to the outhouse. These houses have been modernized with running water, electric, insulation, new windows, and maybe an addition added on. The effective date takes all that into account. If we called an old house by its actual age [such as 1800 or 1900] it would be worth nothing. We have to find some value for these properties. **Birdsall** added that we have to follow the state rules, if we get the data correct the computer does all the rest.

Councilman Ligon said that **Mr. Swan** had explained how effective date was arrived at. **Ligon** then asked **Mr. Birdsall** if the inventory would be corrected by the July 1, 2009 evaluation date, **Birdsall** stated that it would be done July 2010. **Cynthia Hyde** said that the point **Mike Swan** [Director of the Office of Real Property] was making in regards to actual and effective age was that all properties or no properties had to have effective age and that **Swan** found that 40% of Thurman homes didn't have effective age and the rest did **Mr. Birdsall** said that the assessors would correct this.

The question came up regarding whether or not the information on the inventoried properties [from Swan's inventory review] was foible; the consensus was that it wasn't.

The discussion turned to how to address the building permit problem and who should enforce it.

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT: Supervisor Pitkin talked about the Warrensburg fish hatchery and said that it had not been cut or approved. **Pitkin** said Warren County would have to pay the larger share of ACC this year [a larger percent of students are from Warren County]. **Supervisor Pitkin** stated that the county is looking at many cuts. There were some questions on the future of the train.

Supervisor Pitkin asked to be notified by any resident who did not receive a newsletter so that he could make sure their name was on the mailing list.

VACATION DAYS: The highway crew's schedule for the summer is four ten hour days. **Supervisor Pitkin** reported that for the past couple of years when a vacation day was used [in the summer] it was credited as an eight hour day when the day off was actually a ten hour day. The result was 2 extra hours off [each time a vacation day was used] at the expense of the taxpayers. **Supervisor Pitkin** said that since the highway crew had gone to 10 hour days this May these extra hours had cost the taxpayers around \$800.00. All highway workers have received a letter stating that ten hour vacation days taken on the summer schedule would be credited as ten hours.

REPORT FROM COUNCILMAN LIGON: HIGHWAY: **Councilman Ligon** reported that any paving that does not get done this year will be finished next year.

WORKSHOP: **Councilman Ligon** reported that there was a town board workshop last Friday to discuss the personnel policy which will be voted

on at the next board meeting. The board asked the town clerk to post the policy on her website so that the public could look it over.

DISCUSSION: Discussion ensued regarding the Harris House possibly being taken over by the Historical society. To date the future of the Harris House is conjecture. The topic turned to possible improvements to the town hall. **Supervisor Pitkin** elaborated on ideas for moving the town court to the town hall and handed out some tentative plans, **Pitkin** said that we could pull as little as possible from the capital reserve fund and use grant funds already provided by the Office of Court Administration. **Pierre** and **Carolyn Cyr** asked questions about whether or not this plan would follow code. **Cathy Mannuci** stated that it was a nice plan but this kind of thing is what got our country in the mess that is in. **Supervisor Pitkin** said that he would like to see local carpenters hired for a limited time to do the [proposed] work on the town hall. **Pitkin** said that it costs the town \$10,000.00 to \$20,000.00 for upkeep to the Harris House. **Supervisor Pitkin** said that he would like to keep costs down and implement a plan [using the town hall] that would work well into the future. **Pitkin** also said that we have limited space to work with and people don't want to see an addition. **Pierre Cyr** thought that the needs of the town should be addressed even if it means spending a little money. **Supervisor Pitkin** said that he didn't think many residents would agree with **Cyr**. **Pitkin** added that the general consensus is to find ways of making do with what we have and do it well. Among those in attendance there was concern that offices had been moved between the town hall and the Harris House in the past and that it had not been effective. **Cathy Mannuci** said that we need to make use of the space we have. **Supervisor Pitkin** said that if

people think we're crazy we'll walk away from it. **Pitkin** added that the court issue did have to be dealt with.

RESOLUTION # 67: A resolution to put modifications out to bid. On a motion by **James Ligon**, seconded by **Leon Galusha**.

MOTION CARRIED 4 AYES ~ Galusha, Bills, Ligon, Pitkin

NOTE: **Supervisor Pitkin** said that the agenda shows this resolution as **#66**; **Cynthia Hyde [Town Clerk]** was given this resolution with the wrong number on it. The correct number for this resolution is **#67**.

GRANT: **Councilman Ligon** said that the court clerk had asked to apply for a second grant. **Ligon** wanted to follow up on the status of that grant. **Susan Shepler** [account clerk] stated that she believed that the small grant that had come in this year was the grant **Councilman Ligon** was talking about. **Shepler** asked that the board check to see if the grant that came in this year was the same grant that the court clerk applied for.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR: **Robert Anthoine** stated that he would like to correct a complaint that he had made regarding the Thurman Highway Department. **Anthoine** said that he was informed that the state DOT took road maintenance funds [for the road where he lives] from Thurman and gave them to Stony Creek. **Mr. Anthoine** would like to apologize for complaining about the Thurman Highway Department when the complaint should have been directed at the Stony Creek Highway Department.

Cathy Mannuci asked if the board had any thoughts on how they would allocate the \$600,000.00 fund balance. **Supervisor Pitkin** said that nothing had been decided yet; he added that at this time the incoming revenue was being monitored. **Pitkin** stated that the biggest sources of income for the town are mortgage tax and sales tax; how much money will be generated is unknown at this time. **Pitkin** said that we know the expenses, the big question is revenue and we'll firm that up by budget time.

Supervisor Pitkin said that he, **Councilman Ligon** and **Cynthia Hyde, Town Clerk** had called the comptroller's office and found out the audit report had not been sent to Albany for the final review. **Pitkin** urged residents to call the comptroller's office asking for the report to be finalized. **Councilman Ligon** said that he had the phone number of a good person to talk to about this.

Cathy Mannuci asked if the audit report would address ways to have a proper fund balance. **Supervisor Pitkin** stated that the auditors had given recommendations as to maintaining a reasonable fund balance.

Councilman Ligon explained that one of the problems in trying to give the excess fund balance money back is to avoid a situation similar to this year's 30% increase in the budget. **Ligon** went on to say that the 22 or 23% tax cut everyone received the year before was a fake cut done with surplus money to buy down the budget; that wasn't the real cost of running this town. **Ligon** said that the increase we saw this year was much higher than it should have been.

Cathy Mannuci stated that she had turned in a petition asking the board to put a stop to some of the spending. **Mannuci** then asked why

some of the signers had been contacted and asked to take their names off of the petition. **Supervisor Pitkin** said that the petition was not in good standing legally. **Pitkin** added that the board felt that the motion made already contained the protection the petition was seeking and that it was not that ambiguous. **Supervisor Pitkin** said that, out of respect to the people who signed the petition, he felt they should know what the actual motion was as compared to what was written in the petition and should be given a chance to reconsider whether or not their needs were being met. **Cathy Mannuci** felt that she had been slighted and that the petition reiterated what had gone on at the February meeting. **Mannuci** stated that **Mr. Pitkin** and **Mr. Ligon** felt there was a gossip thing going on, when in fact at the February meeting a second story [on the town hall] was mentioned as a possible idea. **Supervisor Pitkin** replied that one of the good things that came out of this petition was that he [**Pitkin**] had listened and tried to come up with alternatives that would be less costly to the town. **Pitkin** added that we wanted to talk to those people [that signed the petition] because the motion we made that day wasn't to spend money. **Mannuci** said that she had not misunderstood and that she had given this petition a lot of thought. **Mannuci** stated that **Mr. Pitkin** and **Mr. Ligon** jumped on it [the petition], like a dog on a bone, couldn't wait to contact the people that were on the petition to ask them to remove their names and make the petition invalid. **Supervisor Pitkin** interjected that the town attorney's found the petition invalid. **Cathy Mannuci** said that she would supply a copy of the petition, minus the names, to the **Town Clerk**, for anyone to look at. **Mannuci** said that she felt that she had been up front, honest and was sending a nonaggressive message to the

board members to let them know that we [people of Thurman] didn't want any excess spending at this time.

John Schroeter brought up the warren county adult home [where he worked for many years]. **Schroeter** said that he doesn't believe the adult home is lacking in residence because of a lack of need on the part of the people in this county, rather it is a lack of competence on the part of the administrators. **Supervisor Pitkin** said "all I can tell you is that I am one of twenty" [of the Board of Warren County Supervisor's]. **Schroeter** said that he felt someone on the board [of Warren County Supervisors] should have an idea what's going on there [at the adult home]. **Schroeter** said that he thinks most of the board does know and has known since Hal Payne and **John Haskell** changed the rules and changed how the place was run. **Pitkin** said that he really couldn't speak on that. **Schroeter** stated "well I can".

Supervisor Pitkin said that Warren County is one of the few counties that pay their workers for lunch break and that money could be saved by not doing that.

MEALS ON WHEELS: Bob Florence reported that seven people receive good hot meals thanks to meals on wheels.

Anyone interested in the Meals on Wheels program is urged to contact the office of the aging at 761-6347

LETTERS: The town clerk read letters from **John Schroeter**, who is resigning from the cemetery committee, **Susan Shepler**, who is interested in the cemetery committee administrator position and **Ruth Keller** who is resigning from the town board.

COMBINE BOARD MEETINGS: Councilman **Ligon** said that the fiscal meeting is going much quicker thanks to **Susan Shepler** and **Cynthia Hyde** setting up a good system and he would like to see it combined with the regular meeting. On a motion by **James Ligon**, seconded by **Leon Galusha** the fiscal and regular meetings will be combined and will take place on the 3rd Tuesday of every month for a 6 month trial period.

MOTION CARRIED 4 AYES ~ Galusha, Bills, Ligon, Pitkin

FISH HATCHERY: **Brian Hall** asked to revisit the subject of the **Warrensburg Fish Hatchery**. Discussion ensued on possible solutions enabling the hatchery to remain open, finishing with a resolution recommending continued funding for the fish hatchery.

RESOLUTION #68: The **Thurman Town Board** recommends continued funding for the Warren County Fish Hatchery contingent upon exploring ways of generating revenue. On a motion by **James Ligon**, seconded by **Leon Galusha**.

MOTION CARRIED 4 AYES ~ Galusha, Bills, Ligon, Pitkin

The **Town Clerk** provided copies of the recent foil [freedom of information law] amendments.

Jim Mosher congratulated **Charlie Bills** on being at the meeting tonight and everyone present gave **Charlie** a big round of applause. **Charlie Bills** had heart surgery just a short time ago and has recovered nicely.

ADJOURNMENT:

JUNE 16, 2009 REGULAR

With no further business on a motion by **Councilman Galusha** seconded by **Councilman Ligon** the meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m...

Respectfully Submitted,

Cynthia Hyde, Town Clerk

July 1, 2009