

## **Notes from the March 2021 meeting of the Hamilton, NY, Town Council (3.11.21)**

Though the Hamilton Town Council met via Zoom as it has since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the tone of the March monthly meeting was decidedly more optimistic than it has been for a year regarding the pandemic's effect on the Town's budget.

The Town's fourth-quarter 2020 sales tax distribution of nearly \$118,000 from Madison County was more than \$8,500 (7.79 percent) greater than the comparable figure in 2019. New York State is reportedly planning to restore the 20 percent it had held back from municipalities in highway improvement (CHIPS) funding. And the federal government's recently passed COVID Relief Bill includes supplemental funding for villages, towns, and counties.

Town Supervisor Eve Ann Shwartz said, "The good news is that the Town Board planned around anticipated losses, and now those losses are being made up." Additionally, Bookkeeper Brynley Wilcox reported that the Town has received more than \$4,000 from the State as its share of road repairs following the 2019 Halloween storm.

An insurance payment of \$200,000 has been approved to cover the loss of the Town's spare highway truck that was destroyed by an electrical fire more than a month ago. With a new truck on order as part of the planned rotation of highway equipment, and with the end of the plowing season in sight and adequate backup available, the Board is considering its options for using the insurance payment most effectively.

Highway Superintendent Luke Dowsland will distribute specifications to three engineering firms seeking bids to assess the condition of the Town Garage. The Board is exploring the installation of new ceiling fans at the garage to improve both working conditions and heating efficiency.

The Highway Department reduces Town expenses by providing maintenance and repair of SOMAC's ambulances. Supervisor Shwartz and Superintendent Dowsland cited Mike Helly, in particular, for his mechanical skills and efforts.

The Board approved the terms of a lease with Keith and Jody Palmer to farm a one-acre parcel adjacent to the Town's newly acquired access to Nine Mile Swamp. The lease will be posted as a public notice and subject to permissive referendum prior to final execution. Regarding development of the Nine Mile Swamp access, the Town will work with the Partnership for Community Development on planning and potential grant funding to improve the area.

No one chose to address a public hearing on the granting of a cable television franchise in the Town to Spectrum Cable. Noting that Spectrum is the only company that applied for the franchise, the Board voted its unanimous approval.

The Board also unanimously approved an emergency health plan for the Town, a measure prompted by the pandemic and required by the State for all municipalities by April 1.

In her report on activities at the Madison County level, Supervisor Shwartz commented on the success of COVID vaccination efforts, citing in particular the efforts of the county's various not-for-profit agencies in providing help for the vulnerable who are having difficulty scheduling and finding transportation to be vaccinated. "We are a tight-knit community with good coordination between agencies," she said.

The Council's next monthly meeting is scheduled April 8 at 6:30. Details will be available on the Town's website: <https://www.townofhamiltonny.org/>

*Reported by Jim Leach for the Hamilton Town Council*