

Notes from the February 2022 meeting of the Hamilton, NY, Town Board (2.10.22)

Hamilton Central School agriculture teacher Johanna Fox-Bossard and a team of her FFA students presented a skit depicting a “Wage Board Hearing” to open the February meeting of the Hamilton Town Council. Members of the award-winning team portrayed the points of view of the various constituencies affected by New York’s proposed 60-hour overtime rule for farm laborers.

The presentation helps qualify the team for their next level of competition. Town Council members said the skit raised their understanding of the overtime issues.

In his report to the Council, Town Highway Superintendent Luke Dowsland (coincidentally one of Fox-Bossard’s alumni) said his crew had successfully experimented with creating a “natural snow fence” by piling snow in a field alongside Larkin Road.

The town garage is a growing concern and the Council’s Highway Committee is looking at facilities in other towns as it considers options for the future. Town Supervisor Eve Ann Shwartz observed “Everything was smaller” when the garage was built 51 years ago on a landfill adjacent to the current County Transfer dumping station. Today the space is crowded and inefficient, concrete walls are cracking, parts of the building are settling, and the roof leaks. Design, location, and financing are among the questions to be answered in planning a replacement. The Highway Committee “feels like it’s time,” said Shwartz. Council member Darrell Griff estimated a timeframe of four to five years to fully consider and implement a solution.

Bookkeeper Brynley Wilcox reported that fourth-quarter 2021 sales tax revenues from Madison County are up nearly 13 percent over 2020, totaling nearly \$133,000 toward a yearly budget of \$475,000. Among the receipts noted in Wilcox’s report were an annual gift from Colgate of \$86,133 and a \$615 payment in lieu of taxes from Madison Lane. The Council unanimously passed a resolution funding annual donations or payments totaling \$280,000 to fifteen agencies and departments that provide various services to the Town’s citizens, from fire protection to food cupboards to community development.

In addition to the many responsibilities of her office, Town Clerk Sue Reymers continues to coordinate improvements to the technology that supports communications and information systems in the new Town Office Building. Town Assessor Rochelle Harris will be sending out notices to all the property owners soon as a result of the Assessment Update. Too late for this information.

Travis DuBois is the Council’s new representative to SOMAC; he reported that ambulance calls were down in January and costs were up. The Highway Department continues to service SOMAC’s vehicles, which DuBois said has saved approximately \$10,000 in annual operating costs.

Reporting on activities of the climate action group, Chris Rossi said that the Town Council will sponsor a Heat Smart Program March 1 at 7:00 at the Poolville Community Center to educate the public on fuel-efficient heating methods, such as heat pumps. The program is offered by NYSERDA. The March 1 event helps qualify the Town for grants through the State’s Climate Smart Communities initiative. Town of Hamilton’s climate activities rank among the highest qualifying for small towns in the State.

The Town continues to develop plans for parking facilities and a small park near the launch for Nine-Mile Swamp. Look for updates on the website at www.TownofHamiltonNY.gov.

Jeff Schindler has been appointed to a five-year term on the Zoning Board of Appeals, and Pam Salmon to a three-year term as alternate on the Planning Board, both by unanimous approval.

Finally, the Council voted its unanimous approval for a resolution honoring Peter Darby for 12 years of service on the Town Council and for his many volunteer and board activities on behalf of people in the Town.

The Council's next meeting is scheduled March 9 at 7:00 pm. Consult the Town website at www.TownofHamiltonNY.gov for details.

Jim Leach for the Town Council