

Notes from the June 2021 meeting of the Hamilton, NY, Town Board (6.10.21)

Hamilton's Town Board convened June 10 at the Town Hall for its regular monthly meeting. Chris Rossi, who chaired a committee that reviewed and recommended changes to the Town's zoning regulations, attended to answer any questions from the Board. The Board's review of the zoning recommendations is detailed and ongoing and will be the subject of a future public hearing before the Board approves any changes to the law.

The Town Supervisor's financial report, prepared by Brynley Wilcox, indicated budgets recovering from precautions taken during the height of the pandemic. NYS, for example, paid the Town the final installment (\$2,200) on the 20 percent it had withheld from the 2020 AIM (Aid and Incentives in Municipalities) payment. Likewise, the County had withheld 20 percent of the 2020 "Host Community Benefit" that is paid to the Town in recognition of the Yellow Brick Road Casino; the County paid 75 percent of that withheld benefit (\$5,800), with the balance expected this budget year. Sales taxes continue to track ahead of 2020 (\$112,000 recently received from the County). The Town anticipates its payment from the American Rescue Plan will be approximately \$200,000. Finally, the state is beginning to report movement on grant funds that had been stalled in the legislature.

Highway Superintendent Luke Dowsland's report included updates on paving, ditching, installing culverts, and general maintenance on several town roads. Of special note, a FEMA-funded project underway on Borden Road, undertaken in conjunction with the Department of Soil and Water, will prevent future flood damage such as occurred during recent epic storms.

On the recommendation of the Highway Committee, the Board authorized Dowsland to purchase a new truck with plow and service body at a cost not to exceed \$75,000, replacing a high-mileage and less-serviceable truck in the fleet. The new truck, which will extend the highway department's flexibility and efficiency, will be funded with the proceeds from a \$177,000 insurance payment from an earlier truck fire. The balance of the insurance payment will be placed in the Town's reserve.

Included in Town Clerk Sue Reymers' report on the infinite details involved in the Town's record-keeping, operations, and licensing: applications for marriage licenses have increased.

Peter Darby, liaison to the Southern Madison County Ambulance Corps, said that SOMAC calls typically diminish during the summer when college is not in session. Staffing also declines when Colgate student volunteers are away. SOMAC anticipates a fund drive to replace one of its ambulances. Issues related to sharing services with surrounding communities present a constant and complex challenge for SOMAC and the Town Board.

Mary Dinski updated the Board on the activities of the Partnership for Community Development. Supervisor Eve Ann Schwartz has been consulting with the PCD and a landscape architect to prioritize work at the Town's recently acquired site on Nine Mile Swamp, access being the highest priority. Preliminary sketches could help the public envision the possibilities during a future meeting (yet to be scheduled) to discuss hopes and concerns for the project.

The Town continues to adapt to its new office building on Milford Street, fine-tuning mechanical systems and moving forward with landscaping. An open house will be scheduled in the near future.

The Town Board's next monthly meeting will convene at 6:30 p.m. July 8. Check the Town's website for details.

Jim Leach for the Town Board