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Notes from the July 2022 meeting of the Hamilton, NY, Town Council (7.14.22)

At its monthly meeting July 14, the Hamilton Town Council unanimously approved a proposal to apply for a \$500,000 grant to fund a housing rehabilitation program that would benefit low- and moderate-income housing in the town.

Town Supervisor Eve Ann Schwartz explained the grant funds would be used to renovate houses that need repairs and that would subsequently be owned or rented by residents who meet criteria stipulated in the grant. Partnership for Community Development is assisting the Town in its application for a Community Development Block Grant to fund the project, which would be administered by PCD and an area non-profit housing agency.

If New York State funds the grant, it would underwrite the restoration of select houses into affordable homes – needs identified in recent housing studies. Schwartz estimated that the grant might fund three to six renovations and said that owners will be solicited to apply for the funds.

Senator Rachel May has notified Schwartz of a \$135,000 grant originally slated for the Town Office Building but now available to fund a capital project to be determined in the next month.

The Council unanimously approved the distribution of approximately \$3,000 in foreign fire tax funds to volunteer fire departments in Hamilton, Hubbardsville and Eaton. New York State annually collects the funds from excess line brokers and foreign insurance companies identified in State tax law.

Town Clerk Sue Reymers reported that a summer intern from Colgate's Upstate Institute has received a strong response to a survey of where townspeople find their local news, and how they value local news. A full analysis is expected at the August Council meeting.

Two Spring Street residents addressed the Council with concerns about the residual effects from the oil and stone sealing of their street. Highway Superintendent Luke Dowsland explained that the current dry spell has exacerbated the conditions, and that rain will mitigate the problem. His monthly report to the Council included oil and stone maintenance on several other roads in the town, completed with help from town crews from Lebanon and Smyrna.

Dowsland and Reymers are preparing a mailing to announce a town-wide cleanup day in October when residents can dispose of electronics, scrap metal, old tires and furniture by bringing their items to the Town Highway garage. Details coming soon.

Report of the Hamilton Town Council Meeting 7.14.22

The monthly report from codes officer Mark Miller reflects a busy summer construction season.

The process for reviewing property tax reappraisals is complete and resulted in only 70 grievances, compared with 410 grievances during the last reappraisal. Shwartz gave credit to Assessor Rochelle Harris and Clerk Reymers who scheduled more than 300 informal meetings with individual property owners to review and explain their assessments. Appraisals establish property values in the town and are a basis for the allocation of sales tax receipts across Madison County, Shwartz explained.

Bookkeeper Brynley Wilcox volunteered to be “a committee of one” to work with a vendor on updating and standardizing the policies that provide guidance for department heads and employees. The Council unanimously approved moving forward with the update.

Travis DuBois, the Council’s liaison to SOMAC, reported that the service has most recently been averaging 62 calls per month and is providing good coverage. As discussed at earlier meetings, SOMAC is undertaking a complete financial audit, which provides accountability for the Town taxpayers who underwrite the operation.

The Town continues to move forward on the 9-Mile Park project. Draft plans have been submitted to the DEC for approval and a survey of the site will be updated to identify wetland and floodplain locations on the project map.

Finally, the Council scheduled a public hearing at its next monthly meeting to discuss a proposed local law authorizing the use of videoconferencing to participate in public meetings.

The Council’s next regular meeting is scheduled August 11. Visit the Town website for details (<https://www.townofhamiltonny.gov/>)

Reported by Jim Leach for the Town Council