

RED HOOK TOWN BOARD MEETING

October 13, 2009

A meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Red Hook, Dutchess County, New York was convened in public session at the Town Hall, 7340 South Broadway, Red Hook at 7:30 p.m.

Present: Deputy Supervisor James Ross
Councilwoman Micki Strawinski
Councilman Robert McKeon
Town Clerk Sue McCann
Absent: Supervisor Sue Crane
Councilman Harry Colgan
Also Present: Attorney for the Town, Christine Chale

Deputy Supervisor Ross welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk's report for the period September 1 - September 30, 2009 was read as follows: Total local shares remitted to Supervisor - \$1,423.91; Amount remitted to County Treasurer for Dog Licenses - \$64.10; Amount remitted to NYS Ag. & Markets - \$9.00; Amount remitted to NYS Department of Health for Marriage Licenses - \$135.00; Amount remitted to NYS Environmental Conservation - \$14,282.49; Total State, County & Local revenues - \$15,914.50.

Town Clerk Sue McCann announced the changes in burning regulations. There is no burning from March 15th through May 15th. Only small limbs and branches are allowed to be burned. No leaves, no paper and we've never been able to burn building materials but she wanted to alert everyone. Burn permits are no longer required. She will be sending out a press release to alert residents of the new issues. The DEC is aware that it will take about a year to educate people. They do not want people using burn barrels either. If anyone has any questions, call the Town Clerk's office.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Deputy Supervisor Ross opened the meeting for comments from the public.

Robert Latimer commented that while we are all concerned about the potential for a budget increase, it is unfortunate that one board member has chosen once again to show us that he does not need permission to act unilaterally. This time making comments in the Poughkeepsie Journal before the public and the Board as a whole could review the budget. He expects specific recommendations for budget adjustments will be forthcoming from Councilman McKeon. His comments in the Poughkeepsie Journal led one to believe that the Town has been fiscally irresponsible by drawing from reserve funds. Mr. Latimer reminded everyone that under the guidance of Business Manager Debbie Marks and Budget Officer Rose Rider the Town recently earned a rating which was the highest rating in the County. A Town does not earn that rating for fiscal mismanagement or short sightedness; it did so with unanimous adoption of the 2009 budget by a Board that included three people sitting there tonight. We cannot continue to push through policies and then complain about the costs. With a \$59,000 increase in payments slated for PDR's and a \$66,000 budget request for Centers and Greenspace, which Chairman Bill O'Neill calls modest in the same breath as saying they can get by with half that amount, you certainly cannot claim that you are not willing to raise taxes when you have these kind of cost increases. He would like to hear specific ideas for avoiding a tax increase that doesn't diminish, or render ineffective, all departments and services.

Lisa Pullaro commended Business Manager Deb Marks and Budget Officer Rose Rider. Last week we all saw firsthand how well prepared they were, how professional they were and more importantly, how lucky we are to have both of them helping to oversee the fiscal business of the Town. She thinks their work is commendable and they've offered superb guidance, insight and experience. We should be thankful for that and more importantly we should take that guidance to heart, take their suggestions and act upon them.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Deputy Supervisor Ross announced that he had a number of questions from the public that last week's meeting was not aired on PANDA at its usual time. He spoke to PANDA and was assured that it would be aired, hopefully, prior to this meeting. They didn't have the tape but he was assured that it will be aired.

Councilman McKeon made various event announcements.

SET PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE BUDGET

Deputy Supervisor Ross explained that the Board went through the A Fund at the last meeting and tonight they expect to go through the B and the DB Fund. Our Supervisor suggested we schedule the Public Hearing for November 4th. He asked for input from the Board members. The Board decided to hold an extra budget meeting on October 21st and schedule a Public Hearing for November 10th.

On a motion of Deputy Supervisor Ross, seconded by Councilwoman Strawinski, moved to set the Public Hearing on the budget for Tuesday, November 10th at 8:00 p.m.

Adopted	Ayes	3	Ross, Strawinski, McKeon
	Nays	0	
	Absent	2	Crane, Colgan

SIDEWALK GRANT

Councilman McKeon mentioned at the last meeting, his concern about the grant for the sidewalk project. In consultation with the Town Engineer, the County and some representatives from the Village he found out that it was a recommendation that they are flush sidewalks. He feels strongly about the potential danger around those curves. He is concerned that whether the sidewalks are raised or flat that they have some sort of guardrail especially around that portion of the curve.

Deputy Supervisor Ross referred to correspondence the Board received from Town Engineer Dan Wheeler. If the sidewalks are flush which is what the County DPW wants, it is estimated to cost around \$91,000 which the grant would cover. The estimated cost for a raised sidewalk is \$235,000 because it involves a lot more drainage. This includes the safety guide rail by the bridge. He suggested they ask Town Engineer Dan Wheeler to see if we could go with the flush but have a longer span of the guide rail not just at the bridge, but before and after it as well. Obviously we have to stay within the grant. It was decided to ask Dan Wheeler to give the Board an estimate of a longer span of the rail before and after the bridge.

Councilman McKeon walked the area today. If you have a guide rail it would be safer than having a sidewalk without a guide rail because it is fairly level and there is a bit of a shoulder there.

Deputy Supervisor Ross asked if the Board is in agreement to talk to Dan Wheeler and it was decided to contact him. He will also speak to Village of Red Hook Mayor Dave Cohen.

CENTERS AND GREENSPACE

Councilwoman Strawinski referred to an e-mail correspondence she received from Tiffany Zezula. She read the correspondence from the Land Use Leadership Alliance who announced that the Intermunicipal Task Force will be receiving their Groundbreakers Award. It is specifically giving the award to those members who are LULA graduates and that includes the Chair of the Committee, Bill O'Neill. The award is given to the graduates because they've done exemplary work using types of land use and decision making tools and techniques taught in the program. The work of the Intermunicipal Task Force of the Town of Red Hook and the Villages of Red Hook and Tivoli epitomizes the spirit and purpose of the land use leadership alliance training program. The Task Force was selected from a prestigious group of other LULA graduates nominated for this award. A dinner recognizing the members of the Task Force that are LULA graduates will be Thursday at 6:30 p.m. They will be recognized throughout the State. She thanked those members on behalf of the Board.

Councilman McKeon mentioned that it has been recommended by the Greenway Council that our grant be funded. The actual decision occurs tomorrow. There is one outstanding grant that

we will hopefully find out about soon. There is a third grant related to the solar panels which we may hear from this week as well.

2010 BUDGET

Deputy Supervisor Ross moved on to the budget and began with the B Fund.

Councilman McKeon wanted to speak once again about the fund balance levels. He echoed the sentiments about Rose and Debbie that they've done an outstanding job with the work they do. But passing budgets, determining fund balances and what to do with them are really Town Board decisions, they are not decisions that are made by your Business Manager or your Budget Officer. He thanked Deb Marks for arranging the fund balance report. He mentioned that it is on the website. He found that the fund balance declined significantly over the last couple of years. The Standard and Poor's report echoes concern about how the fund balances over the last couple of years have been reduced significantly while yet saying the Town was in good financial shape. He again, commented that the fund balance has gone down by over \$750,000 in the last couple of years.

Deputy Supervisor Ross directed his comment to Councilman McKeon explaining that they answered those questions at the last meeting. He repeated that the Town used \$206,000 of that to pay off our reevaluation debt, and we used a good portion this year to transfer into the Centers and Greenspace. It all adds up.

Councilman McKeon said he is just trying to make the public aware that we have drained the reserves as a mechanism for keeping the taxes low and that is not a sustainable course of action.

Deputy Supervisor Ross said our reserve is still higher than what the State recommends maintaining. He turned the budget review over to Rose Rider and Deb Marks.

Budget Officer Rose Rider began by stating that this is a very tentative budget and is presented as a starting point. They will now begin working on areas to reduce the cost. She began reviewing the B Fund, explaining it line by line.

Councilwoman Strawinski asked how many hours Building Inspector Bob Fennell worked.

Town Clerk Sue McCann listed Mr. Fennell's hours.

Councilwoman Strawinski asked if Code Enforcement Officer Steve Cole was full time or part time.

Councilman McKeon explained he works half time as Fire and Safety and another half time as Code Enforcement. The same thing with Bob Fennell.

Rose continued going through the budget lines.

Councilwoman Strawinski asked about the Registrars fees.

Town Clerk Sue McCann explained.

Councilwoman Strawinski asked about the salaries of the two employees of the Code Enforcement office.

Deb Marks explained that is a Civil Service position and compared to other Towns that is the going rate.

Councilwoman Strawinski understands that Bob Fennell works for other communities.

Deb Marks wasn't sure what it is that he does regarding other communities right now.

Councilwoman Strawinski would like to know that, you never know what we have to do moving forward. She also commented that Code Enforcement Officer Steve Cole is employed as a part time Village Police Officer.

Deputy Supervisor Ross doesn't understand what their other positions have to do with us.

Councilwoman Strawinski is trying to put things in perspective and how decisions the Board makes can affect them personally.

Deputy Supervisor Ross explained that going through the lines is self explanatory.

Rose continued to review the B Fund and answered questions the Board had regarding some of the lines.

Councilwoman Strawinski asked about the time frames for some salaries.

Deb Marks explained those employees who put their hours in quarterly, some monthly.

Councilwoman Strawinski wondered about how much time it takes to pay people different times. It seems very time consuming.

Business Manager Deb Marks responded it isn't that bad because she runs a weekly payroll for the highway men anyway. It's just a matter of adding in a few that turn in a time sheet.

Deputy Supervisor Ross said these are good questions to ask Debbie, but he asked her to stay on course going through line items.

Councilwoman Strawinski thinks it is important for the public to hear as well so they understand the budget they are paying for, in all due respect.

Rose continued reviewing the budget.

Councilwoman Strawinski asked why there are two different hourly rates for the Planning Board Secretaries.

Deb Marks explained the process and reasoning. There are two different jobs at two different pay rates.

The Board discussed the payroll lines for the committees and some reductions were made.

Deputy Supervisor Ross, in regard to Centers and Greenspace, commented that \$65,000 in times like this is much too much to budget. It's not like people are trying to overrun us with development. He has a problem with the Centers and Greenspace Plan because he doesn't think it's the correct thing for the Town. He commented that he may be alone on that but regardless, it is nothing we have to rush to do and spend \$65,000 on this year at a time like this. We should keep that line at a minimal amount and let the Task Force continue. The planning and attorney expenses should be cut until we have more public input.

Rose Rider said that would be a large cut.

Councilman McKeon thinks those items can be reduced. We have grants that could help fund the project.

Deputy Supervisor Ross thinks the numbers should be changed to \$10,000 for the Planner and \$5,000 for the Attorney.

Councilwoman Strawinski asked when we would hear about the \$40,000 grant. She doesn't think they should make any decisions on that line until they hear more about the grant.

Councilman McKeon said when you start this and don't fund to completion you waste the previous years.

Deputy Supervisor Ross explained there is no reason to rush and push right now; we don't have loads of developers banging on our doors as you pointed out before. Reducing the line gives us more time to get public input. He is just saying in hard times such as this he doesn't think we should spend \$65,000.

Councilwoman Strawinski doesn't think we need to make hard decisions tonight.

Deputy Supervisor Ross said keep this in mind when they have the Public Hearing.

Councilman McKeon had significant cuts in mind for both of those lines but not to the degree that Deputy Supervisor Ross had. Hopefully grants will help and if possible the cuts will be minor in nature. He agrees changes should be made but he wants to know what the public thinks about it as opposed to what he thinks.

The Board moved on with the review of the budget and adjustments and reductions were made. It was discussed to go out to bid for contractual services.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Lisa Pullaro asked about the People's Convention Resolution that was supposed to be on the agenda for tonight's meeting.

Councilwoman Strawinski asked that it be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

There were no more public comments.

On a motion of Deputy Supervisor Ross, seconded by Councilwoman Strawinski moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Adopted	Ayes	3	Ross, Strawinski, McKeon
	Nays	0	
	Absent	2	Crane, Colgan

Respectfully submitted,

Sue McCann, Town Clerk