

November 7, 2023
6:30 p.m.
2354 State Route 434
Apalachin, New York

Regular Meeting of the Owego Town Board

A. Call to order, roll call and the Pledge of Allegiance –

The Supervisor called the meeting to order, the Town Clerk called the roll
Councilmember Marks led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council

Present: Supervisor Castellucci, Dean Morgan, Craig Jochum and Jonathan Marks
Absent: Gary Hellmers.

Department Heads:

Present: Phil Baker, Parks Maintenance Supervisor
Joann Lindstrom, Planning & Zoning Administrator
Rick Pedro, Sole Assessor
Mike Roberts, Highway Superintendent
Irene Graven, Town Attorney
Mary Kennedy, Town Clerk & Tax Receiver

Absent: Tyson Stiles, Director of Utilities
Peter Gordon, Town Historian

B. Minutes of the previous meeting –

The minutes of the October 17, 2023 regular meeting will stand as submitted.

C. Consideration of bids –

1. Unsafe structure demolition – 5099 State Rt. 17C

The Planning & Zoning Administrator reviewed that this project was originally advertised earlier this year. The Board chose not to award a contract at that time as the price was unreasonably high. She then stated that only one bid was submitted this time, but it's a better price and recommended approval. **Councilmember Morgan made a motion to award Gorick Construction (with a bid of \$20,500) the contract to demolish 5099 State Route 17C. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks and unanimously carried.** Councilmember Morgan also thanked Joann Lindstrom and the rest of the Planning & Zoning Department for their work on this project.

D. Public Hearings –

1. 2024 Budget

A motion was made by Councilmember Marks to open the Public Hearing on the 2024 Budget. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jochum and unanimously carried. The Supervisor then reviewed the following Executive Summary.

PRELIMINARY BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

INSURANCE/WORKERS COMPENSATION/RETIREMENT/ASSESSMENT

- Medical Insurance is up approximately 11%
- Dental Insurance increased 5%
- Workman’s Compensation increased approximately 8%
- Retirement increased 19%
- Liability Insurance increased 9%
- Townwide Assessments increased 8,312,379
- Outside Village Assessments increased 4,061,394

GENERAL FUND (A FUND)

- Budget is up approximately 1.71% from last year.
- Town personnel will receive on average a 4% increase.

GENERAL FUND TOWN OUTSIDE (B)

- Operating Budget is up approximately 15.32%.
- Town personnel will receive on average a 4% increase.

HIGHWAY FUND (DB)

- Operating Budget up approximately 7.49%
- CHIPS is expected is expected to stay flat
- Town personnel will receive .70/hr increase.

WATER/SEWER DISTRICTS

Water Districts

- \$38.15 for first 6000 gallons Min.
Water bill \$81.60
- \$6.25 for each 1000 gallons after Min. sewer
bill \$84.48
- \$6.00 billing each reading Min water
and sewer
- \$37.45 capital each billing = \$112.35/ year \$498.24/ per
3 billing cycles

- Beginning January 1, 2023, the minimum usage charge increase .57 cents. Water bills will be based on a minimum usage up to six thousand gallons at a rate of \$37.80, plus the \$6.00 billing fee for a total of \$43.80 dollars per cycle. There will be a charge of \$ 6.18 per thousand/gallons for additional usage. An increase of 12 cents per thousand gallons. Capital

charges will decrease \$5.45 to \$105.00 per year (\$35.00 per billing cycle). The annual minimal bill will be \$236.40. This rate represents a decrease of \$14.64 per year.

SEWER DISTRICTS

- \$47.55 for first 6000 gallons
 - \$7.00 for each 1000 gallons after
 - \$36.93 Capital charge each billing = \$110.79/ year
 - \$144.95 Flat Rate billing = \$434.85/year
 - \$2,323/ year Marshland Links
 - \$90,000/ year Lockheed Martin
- Sewer bills will be based on a minimum usage up to six thousand gallons at the rate of \$47.08. This is an increase of .47 cents. There will be a charge of \$ 7.00 per thousand /gallons for additional usage. This is an increase of .11 cents per thousand gallons. The capital charge per unit will decrease to at \$93.99 (\$31.33 per billing cycle). The annual minimum bill will be \$235.23. This rate represents a decrease of \$9.60 cents.
- Homes that have municipal sewer but do not have municipal water will be charged \$430.52 per year (\$143.51/bill), an annual increase of \$1.42 for sewer use. The sewer capital fee will remain at \$105.00 per year (\$35 per billing cycle). Total annual bill will be \$535.52 an increase of \$4.26 per year.

ROUTE 38 DISTRICT 7

Water

\$40.00 min bill for first 6000 gallons
\$6.00 for each 1000 gallons after
\$3.00 billing each reading = \$12.00/ year
\$3.00 / 1000 gallons capital charge

Sewer

Flat Rate \$350/Billing \$1400/yr
\$30/1000
\$5/1000 gallons capital charge

LIGHTING DISTRICTS

- Rates are down due to final debt repayment made this year in 2023.

New York State Property Tax Cap

- ❖ NYS limits the amount local governments and most school districts can increase property taxes to the lower of 2% or the rate of inflation. This year the Town's allowable levy is 2%
 - Allowable levy limit is \$3,605,104
 - Taxes proposed in Final budget to be levied are \$3,579,874
 - The Town is currently under the Tax Cap by \$25,230

Tax Rates

- ❖ **Townwide** taxes are paid by all property owners in the Town and Village
 - Tax Rate is \$1.418581 per \$1,000 of assessment – increase of \$0.14 from last year
 - Example – Home assessed for \$64,033 will pay \$90.84 in total Town taxes – an increase of \$8.89 from last year

- ❖ **Townwide/Town Outside Village** taxes are paid by property owners outside of the Village
 - Tax rate is \$4.494529 per \$1,000 of assessment – increase of \$0.12 from last year
 - Example – Home Assessed for \$96,992 will pay \$435.93 in total Town taxes – an increase of \$11.83 from last year

Major Purchases

Highway

1 F350 XL W/plow
1 Tandem Dump Truck
1 Med Dump Truck

Utilities

Tractor
½ Ton Pick Up
1000 Water Meters

Supervisor Castellucci then thanked the Department Heads and the Board members for their hard work, and stated this was the smoothest budget process that the Town has had in a while.

Councilmember Morgan made a motion to close the Public Hearing on the 2024 Budget. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks and unanimously carried.

E. Reports of Department Heads –

Joann Lindstrom, Planning & Zoning Administrator - reported that she and 2 members from each of her Boards attended a one day training session in Corning last week, which proved to be a valuable experience for all. Next, she stated that Bill Carrigg hosted an Emergency Preparedness training at Apalachin Elementary for all Town residents that was well attended. She also conveyed her gratitude for his leadership.

Rick Pedro, Sole Assessor – reported that he is preparing the Utilities Relevy for the Town & County tax bills. He also stated his office is gearing up for Exemption renewal season.

Phil Baker, Parks Maintenance Supervisor – reported that Hickories Park campground is now closed after a great year.

Mike Roberts, Highway Superintendent – reported that paving projects are done and the leaf vacuum is here.

Mary Kennedy, Town Clerk & Tax Receiver – no report

Irene Graven, Town Attorney – reported a need for Attorney/Client privilege after the meeting.

Councilmember Marks for Tyson Stiles, Director of Utilities – reported that Keegan needs to attend several trainings over the next few months. **A motion was made by**

Councilmember Marks to allow Keegan Bulger to attend 3 trainings at SUNY Morrisville with all reasonable expenses paid. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Morgan and unanimously carried.

Supervisor Castellucci – reported that the Town’s Aflac representative will be holding a meeting on November 28th to review changes in the benefits offered to Town employees.

F. Privilege of the floor –

Daniel Cerqueira, Main Street, shared that his utility bill was not paid properly even though he was enrolled in auto pay. He does not want to pay the penalty and have it rolled onto his tax bill. The Supervisor stated he would need to provide proof that his bank did not decline the payment.

Bill Chandler, Sulphur Springs Road, asked if the hotbox would be fixed for next year. The Supervisor stated it is not fixable. Mr. Chandler then asked about department personnel dynamics.

Rose Howard, Sequoia Lane, asked if a broken hotbox means there will be no ability to pave next year. The Supervisor explained that a hotbox is for fixing potholes only.

G. Presentation of Petitions, Communications, Notices and Transfers –

1. Pothole complaint – Paul Phillips

Supervisor Castellucci reviewed the complaint that was submitted via email. Mike Roberts, Highway Superintendent, stated that his crew has begun the process to fix the hole and that it should be completed within 2 weeks.

H. Abstracts -

Councilmember Morgan made a motion to approve the following abstracts as presented. A short discussion was held regarding vendor liability for poor product. **The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks and unanimously carried.**

AO-General Fund	40,121.91
BO-General Fund-Town Outside	42,328.95
DB-Highway-Town Outside	346,192.16
FO-Water Districts	26,715.35
FA-Route 38 Water	6.66
GO-Sewer Districts	45,635.99
GA-Route 38 Sewer	26.43
HN – NY Rising – Shared Services Building	<u>47,630.00</u>
	\$ 548,657.45

The Supervisor then stated that the invoice for the leaf vacuum came in after the abstracts were completed. He would like to pay this invoice in between meetings in order for the Highway Department to be able to start using it sooner. **A motion was made by Councilmember Marks to authorize the payment of \$98,636.71 to SEI for a leaf vacuum. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Castellucci and unanimously carried.**

I. Unfinished Business – none

J. Reports of Standing Committees –

Councilmember Hellmers – absent

Councilmember Morgan – reminded all that the Veterans’ Day Ceremony will be held at the VFW on 11/11 at 11AM.

Councilmember Jochum – no report

Councilmember Marks – no report

K. Presentation of Resolutions, Motions and New Business

1. Schedule Special Meeting –

Supervisor Castellucci stated that since the 2024 Budget is complete, it could be adopted now, and therefore negate the need for a Special Meeting. **Councilmember Jochum made a motion to adopt the Preliminary Budget for 2024 as the Final/Adopted Budget for 2024. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Morgan and unanimously carried.**

2. Merit bonus – Dog Control

The Supervisor reviewed that Kyle Fleming, Dog Control Officer, has had duties for 2 other Towns thrust upon him with no pay increase. **A motion was made by Councilmember Jochum to approve a merit bonus of \$500 for Kyle Fleming. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks and unanimously carried.**

3. New Hire – Planning & Zoning

Supervisor Castellucci explained that although Mike Katchmir is retiring, the Planning & Zoning Administrator would like to keep him as an on-call Code Enforcement Officer. This requires that a new position be created by Civil Service for a replacement to his Part Time position. **Councilmember Morgan made a motion to adopt the following resolution authorizing Civil Service to create a second Part Time Code Enforcement position. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jochum and unanimously carried.**

WHEREAS, the approved 2023 budget for the Town of Owego Planning & Zoning Department has budgeted for and includes a part time Code Enforcement Officer position; and

WHEREAS, with the retirement of Michael Katchmir in October 2023, this position is now vacant and it is necessary to fill this position; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Owego currently has 1.5 FTE Code Enforcement Officers approved by Civil Service; and

WHEREAS, in the event Planning & Zoning wishes to engage Michael Katchmir as an on-call Code Enforcement Officer in the future, Civil Service will require a total of 2 FTE Code Enforcement Officers;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Town of Owego hereby authorizes Civil Service to create a second part time Code Enforcement position.

A motion was made by Councilmember Marks to adopt the following resolution to hire Jeff Hontz as a Part Time Code Enforcement Officer. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jochum and unanimously carried.

WHEREAS, the approved 2023 budget for the Town of Owego Planning and Zoning's Office has budgeted for and includes a part-time Code Enforcement Officer, working up to 12 hours per week, without benefits; and

WHEREAS, due to the retirement of Michael Katchmir within the Planning & Zoning Office this position will be vacant and it is necessary to fill this position, at \$22.00 per hour;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that Jeff Hontz is to be hired as a part time CEO at a rate of \$22.00 per hour up to 12 hours per week, without benefits, effective November 13, 2023, with a probationary period up to 52 weeks.

4. New Hire – Town Clerk

Councilmember Morgan made a motion to adopt the following resolution hiring Pam Brown to fill the Part Time Deputy Clerk position. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jochum and unanimously carried.

WHEREAS, the approved 2023 budget for the Town of Owego Clerk's Office has budgeted for and includes a part-time Clerk, working up to 40 hours per two week pay period, without benefits; and

WHEREAS, due a retirement within the Clerk's Office this position will be vacant and it is necessary to fill this position, at \$15.00 per hour;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that Pamela Brown be hired at \$15.00 per hour, as a part-time clerk, working up to 40 hours per two-week pay period, without benefits, effective November 13, 2023, with a probationary period up to 52 weeks.

5. Retirement Proclamation – Planning & Zoning

Councilmember Morgan read the following proclamation. Supervisor Castellucci thanked Mike Katchmir for his work and wished him well in retirement. **A motion was made by Councilmember Morgan to adopt the following proclamation in honor of the retirement of Michael Katchmir. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks and unanimously carried.**

WHEREAS, Michael Katchmir, Town of Owego Code Enforcement Officer, retired on October 25, 2023, after 38 years of dedicated service to the Town of Owego and its citizens; and

WHEREAS, Michael Katchmir, started with the Town of Owego on November 12, 1985 as a Building Inspector for the Town of Owego Planning & Zoning Department;

and

WHEREAS, Michael Katchmir had a great rapport with town citizens in resolving their complaints regarding junk cars and other code violations, bringing many properties into zoning compliance; and

WHEREAS, throughout his many years of service, Michael Katchmir has served the people of Owego with dedication and fairness; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Owego Town Board, on behalf of the Town of Owego and all its residents, does hereby extend its sincere and grateful appreciation for the dedicated service that Michael Katchmir has provided to the Town of Owego and offers its congratulations on his retirement.

6. Employee upgrades – Highway

Councilmember Jochum made a motion to adopt the following resolution upgrading William Perry to the position of HEO II. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks and unanimously carried.

WHEREAS the approved 2023 budget for the Town of Owego Highway Department has budgeted for and includes an HEO II position which is currently vacant; and

WHEREAS William Perry, currently in an HEO I position, is available and willing to be promoted to the HEO II position retroactive to November 6, 2023;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED that William Perry is appointed to the position of HEO II retroactive to November 6, 2023, at an hourly wage of \$22.77 per hour with a probationary period of fifty-two weeks.

A motion was made by Councilmember Jochum to adopt the following resolution upgrading Tyler Boland to the position of HEO II. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks and unanimously carried.

WHEREAS the approved 2023 budget for the Town of Owego Highway Department has budgeted for and includes an HEO II position which is currently vacant; and

WHEREAS Tyler Boland, currently in an HEO I position, is available and willing to be promoted to the HEO II position retroactive to November 6, 2023;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED that Tyler Boland is appointed to the position of HEO II retroactive to November 6, 2023, at an hourly wage of \$22.77 per hour with a probationary period of fifty-two weeks.

Councilmember Jochum made a motion to adopt the following resolution upgrading Ryan Kline to HEO II. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks and unanimously.

WHEREAS the approved 2023 budget for the Town of Owego Highway Department has budgeted for and includes an HEO II position which is currently vacant; and

WHEREAS Ryan Kline, currently in an HEO I position, is available and willing to be promoted to the HEO II position retroactive to November 6, 2023;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED that Ryan Kline is appointed to the position of HEO II retroactive to November 6, 2023, at an hourly wage of \$22.77 per hour with a probationary period of fifty-two weeks.

7. New Hire – Highway

Supervisor Castellucci reviewed the details of the new hire. **A motion was made by Councilmember Jochum to adopt the following resolution hiring Joshua Burnham as a Full Time MEO III. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Morgan and unanimously carried.**

WHEREAS, the approved 2023 budget for the Town of Owego Highway Department has budgeted for and includes a full time MEO III position; and

WHEREAS, this full time position is vacant and it is necessary to fill this position; and

WHEREAS, Joshua Burnham has been offered and has accepted such position as of November 20, 2023, at an hourly rate of \$19.72 per hour, 40 hours per week, as a permanent appointment with up to 52 weeks of a probationary period; and

WHEREAS, Joshua Burnham has both CDL A and B endorsements and is capable of operating heavy equipment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, such full time position shall be filled by Joshua Burnham at an hourly rate of \$19.72 per hour, 40 hours per week, with full time benefits, effective November 20, 2023, with a probationary period of up to 52 weeks from date of hire, subject to satisfactory license/background check and meeting all requirements of pre-employment drug testing.

8. Purchase meters – Utilities

Councilmember Marks made a motion to adopt the following resolution authorizing the purchase of 1,000. Badger Ultrasonic meters and remote brackets from Schmidt’s Wholesale, Inc. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Morgan and unanimously carried after a short discussion detailing that the purchase will come from the 2024 budget.

WHEREAS, the Town of Owego Director of Utilities is requesting approval from the Owego Town Board to purchase water meters and remote brackets; funds to be taken from the 2024 Utilities budget; and

WHEREAS, Town of Owego Code Chapter 120 Water, Article VI, Section 120-31. Materials, specifies the use of Badger meters; and

WHEREAS, Badger Meter no longer provides direct sales; and Schmidt’s Wholesale, Inc. is the northeast distributor of Badger meters; and

WHEREAS, Schmidt’s Wholesale, Inc. has provided a proposal to purchase 1000 meters and remote brackets; and

WHEREAS, upon approval from the Town Board to purchase the meters and remote brackets, appropriations will be taken from the following account to pay for said meters and remote brackets.

Account FO 8310.2000 Water - Equipment \$ 329,850.70

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Owego Town Board upon a vote has approved of the purchase of 1000 Badger E-Series Ultrasonic Meters and 1000 Badger Orion MC Endpoint Remote Brackets; and it is further

RESOLVED, that appropriations are to be made as follows:

Account FO 8310.2000 Water - Equipment \$ 329,850.70

AND BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED, that payment for the purchase of 1000 Badger Ultrasonic meters and 1000 Badger Orion ME Endpoint remote brackets be made to Schmidt’s Wholesale, Inc., 150 Jefferson Street, Monticello, NY 12701.

L. Second Privilege of the floor –

Rose Howard, Sequoia Lane, asked when one of the drains in her neighborhood would be fixed.

M. Executive Session – none

N. Adjournment

Motion by Councilmember Morgan, the meeting was adjourned at 7:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kennedy
Town Clerk