

REGULAR MEETING, TOWN BOARD, TOWN OF LITTLE FALLS, APRIL 9, 2024

A Regular meeting of the Town Board, Town of Little Falls was held on April 9, 2024 at the town hall commencing at 6:05 p.m. with the following members present:

Present: Supervisor Dan Casler
Councilman Anthony Viscomi
Councilman Kirk Schwasnich-Entered meeting at 6:57 p.m.
Councilman Kevin Sullivan
Councilman Mitch Soules-Entered meeting at 6:57 p.m.

Others Present: Town Clerk, Sandra Regan; Highway Superintendent, Don Cotton; Town Attorney, Nicholas Macri; Elaine Cobb, Planning Board Chairwoman; City of Little Falls Mayor, Deborah Kaufman; Engineer, Chet Szymanski; Resident, David Warner.

Note-Meeting was moved to 6:00 p.m. and notice posted at the town hall.

-Supervisor Casler called the meeting to order directing the clerk to call the roll.

RESOLUTION #34

Minute Approval

On motion of Councilman Viscomi, seconded by Councilman Sullivan, the following resolution was ADOPTED-vote:

Ayes-Supervisor Casler; Councilmen Viscomi, Sullivan

Noes-0

RESOLVED that the minutes of the March meeting, as submitted by the clerk, hereby be approved.

-Privilege of the floor was granted to those present. There were no comments.

-Supervisor Casler stated that there was supposed to be another speaker here tonight to give a presentation on comprehensive planning but he couldn't make it.

-Supervisor Casler introduced City of Little Falls Mayor, Deborah Kaufman, and Engineer, Chet Szymanski, stating that he has met with Mayor Kaufman and discussed projects and current contracts the City and Town has and comprehensive planning.

-Mayor Kaufman stated that the town and City are connected and the City's looking at how to expand their base in a way that benefits the city on the revenue side and gives a good deal to their friends and neighbors; that they're already working with Dolgeville and are looking to work with the town as well.

Mayor Kaufman gave an update on the City's Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) stating that there are two projects she thinks will connect nicely with the town; the first is the DRI Ceiling Promenade Project, which is a pedestrian walkway that will be built along the canal leading the way to a sky bridge that goes over Lock 17 and connects canal place to the bike trail; the second is the Main Street Project which is the Downtown Revitalization Project where all the streets will be torn up, streetscaping done, parking changed, Main Street made more walkable and friendly, and replacement of the current canopy; this project will lead into a lot of utility changes, one of which is the installation of fiber optics.

Mayor Kaufman stated that another DRI project in the works is the façade improvement project which allows businesses to make improvements and fix up their buildings and that the City has just been designated as a NYS Trail Town meaning the state will now be working on their behalf marketing the trail to bring more attention to our area.

Mayor Kaufman stated that people coming through here don't know the difference between the city and town and where the border is, that it doesn't really matter; to all of us it's Little Falls and she thinks the nature of collaboration between the town and the city couldn't be more important than it is right now; that in the town you have solar, in the city it's affordable living; they need to be in a position where codes are in place and zoning strengthened, that a comprehensive plan forms a legal foundation for any kind of dispute; whether there's zoning or not, they're still coming in for variances and pushing in real hard.

Mayor Kaufman stated that affordable housing is kind of the new phrase for low income section 8 and in each project there's section 8; not that that's a problem, but as far as Main Street there's better locations; it's like solar panels, it's not that you don't like solar panels, it's just where should they go to protect the integrity of the town or the city. Another thing coming at us is Pro Housing Communities, there's a real push by the state to give up Home Rule and go with the state dictating your land mass. Home Rule essentially allows a community to dictate what goes on in their community, not having that changes everything such as an increase in our schools, we already have an increase in mental and behavioral problems that the schools are screaming about, a push for high density with children really places a lot burden on the schools, right now their tapped out, they can't handle any more; the other thing is crimes, squatters and homelessness; the city has done some things from a program perspective policy that she thinks is working; that they're very vigilant and in the last month are seeing less.

Mayor Kaufman stated that another thing you have with unplanned growth is that people start spreading out, if they can't get land in the city they'll start spreading out and they'll be coming to your town; a lot of places that have seen past growth like that, that has not been planned and was unprepared for, it becomes the demise of the Aquarian lifestyle, land insecurity, and environmental degradation; the bottom line is a decrease in the quality of life you've been enjoying, the elbow room that you like is the reason you live in the country. These are important things to be considered.

Mayor Kaufman stated that planning, comprehensive planning, site plan, subdivision regulations and zoning updates is a pretty big task; planning puts you in a situation where you're not a victim of change; you're out in front of it and able to think before it happens; the world has changed a lot, even in the last five years, things seem upside down in a lot of areas; anything coming from the state does affect us; if we make a mistake, it not only affects the city, it affects you, it's the same way on your end, whatever you do, because we're so tightly linked, effects us; having the opportunity to brainstorm together to be more strategic and looking at Little Falls as a whole, the time couldn't be better.

Mayor Kaufman stated that another thing is to understand the environmental conditions before we make snap decisions, we're trying to make well thought out changes; we look at it and make the right decision, but we think about it ahead of time and know what were going to say; if something needs to be strengthened or changed from 20 years ago let's do it now before we get challenged because these are not small companies that are coming after us these are very large companies that have two floors of attorneys and they've done this before; it's predatory in a way, they're really pushing their way around; the city doesn't have the land so they'll be looking for the next closest land and that's the town, so it's important we share information and try to work together on some of these things; the other thing about collaboration is it gives us a chance to pool limited resources and reduce duplication; shared services allows us to address complex challenges to achieve better outcomes; nothing we're dealing with right now in regards

to homelessness, squatters or anything else it isn't easy; in the city's situation with high density multi unit developments they've never been asked to do this before, they now have three or four coming at them; two are already in sync; that's around a 300 million dollar of investment for section 8 and affordable housing; that's a lot; we desperately need more single family houses, apartments for working people and middle income; we had a senior housing that was initially presented as luxury senior housing; it went from luxury to Section 8 within a matter of months; planning is really important going forward; coming from a common platform we'll able to develop initiatives and programs that link together, so it's a win win for both of us to work closely together and for us to attend each other's meetings just to be on the same page for things that are coming at us, because for her, it's about protecting our way of life rather than trying to transform everything; you want to look to the future and be able to grow a community, but at the same time protect the lifestyle you have, planning, comprehensive plans and all those things will do that for you.

Little Falls City Engineer, Chet Szymanski, asked if the town had any churches or religiously owned land because he just learned that there's a bill in Albany right now that they're looking at passing that will allow religious groups, whether it's a church or property owned by such, to put Section 8 there without municipal zoning approval, which is a way around city and town councils. Mayor Kaufman stated that the state is already working with Catholic Charities and the border that they have too many people in NY City and the plan is to move them up here in affordable housing to get them off the streets.

-Mr. Szymanski thanked the board for approving the engineering services contract with the City of Little Falls and gave an overview of his background. Mr. Szymanski stated that what he currently does for the City of Little Falls and Dolgeville is to essentially act as a project manager and advocate for the municipality, that there's a lot of development happening, development that's being pushed by regulators, things the regulators are making them do, so he acts as the municipality's technical person and advocate for the municipality in between the municipality and the engineers that are the horsepower behind him that help get things designed and built, that he also works with the regulators to make sure what they're building and or doing is correct or correct in response to a notice of violation or a required upgrade, taking those requirements and seeing what's changing over the years and making sure they're compliant. Mr. Szymanski stated he's also helping the City of Little Falls and Dolgeville move through their many projects, applying for grant money, bringing that grant money in and helping bring projects to fruition.

Mayor Kaufman noted that Mr. Szymanski's fees can be included in a grant application and all or the majority of it will be paid by the grant.

Mr. Szymanski stated that there's been talk about the city possibly providing water to the town, that upgrades are in the works right now, that the city has a ton of water; that they have a couple of real good sources that they use for the city and have some that are secondary sources that they need to make some upgrades to that can all be wrapped into the development of their water system; there's a lot of grants available that will fund developing treatment and also getting a pipe where it needs to go to provide water to the end users, that he knows there's areas in the town that don't have great water, have sulfur water or not enough water, so it opens the door to providing safe and secure water to those users and if you go to a property that doesn't have good water it opens a development potential for that property; that it kind of ties hand and hand with a comprehensive plan, site plan regulations and zoning which can be worked on all together, which he can help with.

Supervisor Casler stated he believes the timing is perfect right now for the town to move forward with a comprehensive plan and engage the services of Mr. Szymanski to address future growth including water accessibility. Mr. Szymanski stated the first step is to have a couple more conversations to see what the town is looking for and he can help angle in on that.

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Mr. Szymanski stated that he met with Northland Communication to discuss their fiber optic line project that's going to run through the City, that Northland's waiting for their environmental permitting to be finished and they're looking to have construction completed by the end of 2025. Mayor Kaufman stated that Northland would like to meet with the town and she will give Supervisor Casler their contact information.

Mayor Kaufman suggested that the town and city have strategy meetings in the future to discuss things such as water accessibility.

Supervisor Casler stated that the timings right for the town to move forward, that the first step is for the town to get a comprehensive plan developed so we have a road map on where we want to be; that he's excited to be working with the city and is looking forward to moving ahead on some of these projects.

Mayor Kaufman stated that with comprehensive planning there's a lot of public meetings to get people out to share their thoughts about what they want in different sections of the town and what might or might not be appropriate; it's good to give everybody a voice so when you're moving forward you have the confidence of the community behind you as you make those decisions; that it is a time consuming project but there are people who do this, like Anthony Swann, who is very affordable and practicable and that there are grants available for this.

-Supervisor Casler thanked Mayor Kaufman for attending the meeting.

-Supervisor Monthly Report:

Supervisor Casler reported:

- That RIC Solar Company (Newville Road Project) has handed off the project to new owners.
- That he doesn't have a financial report for this month.

-Assessor Report: None.

-Town Attorney Report: Nothing at this time.

-Justice Report: None.

-Codes Officer Report:

Clerk Regan reported that three permits have been issued so far and that Officer Green will be away at school for three days.

-Planning Board Report:

Planning Board Chairwoman Cobb reported:

-That the Planning Board met with ARC Herkimer and two neighbors that live by the proposed event center to discuss the neighbors concerns. One concern was that the event center's driveway is right across from a new home and lights from cars leaving at night would be shining directly at the house. After discussion on this Arc Herkimer stated that they would move the driveway and lighted entranceway sign southward to alleviate this problem. Another concern was the loss of privacy between the event center and the neighbor to the north. After discussion ARC Herkimer stated they would put in some evergreens since they don't lose their foliage like other trees and that they would consider other additional screening. One neighbor asked if there would be enough water, and was told there would be and that they shouldn't be affected; another neighbor was concerned about noise late at night and was told that the town has a noise ordinance as does the state that ARC Herkimer will have to abide by. Chairwoman Cobb stated that the meeting went well.

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-That she and Vice Chairman Schlag were authorized to do the coordinated review and it was approved that the Planning Board be Lead Agency.

-That there's a man coming to next month's meeting who wants to sell cars off a vacant lot located on Route 5.

-That the planning board will be working on some changes to the town's site plan review checklist.

-Health Officer Report: None.

-Dog Control Officer Report: None.

-Highway Superintendent Report: Nothing at this time.

-Town Clerk Report: Nothing at this time.

-Supervisor stated that the Worker's Compensation Coverage through Comp Alliance is due for renewal, that it's a three year renewal at \$18,253.00 per year. This was approved.

RESOLUTION #35

Renewal of Workers' Compensation Coverage For Three Years Through New York State Municipal Workers' Compensation Alliance

On motion of Councilman Soules, seconded by Councilman Viscomi, the following resolution was ADOPTED by roll call vote:

Supervisor Casler	Aye
Councilman Viscomi	Aye
Councilman Schwasnick	Aye
Councilman Sullivan	Aye
Councilman Soules	Aye

RESOLVED that the Town of Little Falls hereby renews the Town's Workers' Compensation Coverage through New York State Municipal's Workers' Compensation Alliance, for a term of three years at an annual premium of \$18,253.00, per year.

-Supervisor Casler stated that he'd like to add \$2,000 to the \$40,000 principal payment on the Cat Loader that was approved last month for a total payment of \$42,000. This was approved.

RESOLUTION #36

Supervisor Authorization to Increase The Principal Payment on the Caterpillar Loader to \$42,000

On motion of Councilman Soules, seconded by Councilman Sullivan, the following resolution was ADOPTED by roll call vote:

Supervisor Casler	Aye
Councilman Viscomi	Aye
Councilman Schwasnick	Aye
Councilman Sullivan	Aye
Councilman Soules	Aye

RESOLVED that the Town Supervisor, hereby be authorized to increase the \$40,000 principal payment on the 2022 Caterpillar Loader to \$42,000.

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-Meeting recessed at 7:30 p.m. to audit the bills.

-Meeting resumed at 7:42 p.m.

RESOLUTION #37

Payment of General Bills

On motion of Councilman Viscomi, seconded by Councilman Schwasnick, the following resolution was ADOPTED-vote:

Ayes-Supervisor Casler; Councilmen Viscomi, Schwasnick, Sullivan, Soules

Noes-0

RESOLVED that the General Bills #38-57 in the amount of \$35,925.52 hereby be paid.

RESOLUTION #38

Payment of Highway Bills

On motion of Councilman Soules, seconded by Councilman Sullivan, the following resolution was ADOPTED-vote:

Ayes-Supervisor Casler; Councilmen Viscomi, Schwasnick, Sullivan, Soules

Noes-0

RESOLVED that the Highway Bills #47-61, in the amount of \$24,223.97 hereby be paid.

-The next regular meeting will be held on May 14, 2024 at the town hall at 7:00 p.m.

-Meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.-Councilmen Soules, Sullivan

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Regan, Town Clerk