

VILLAGE OF RENSSELAER FALLS

Regular Meeting Minutes

April 4th, 2022

5:45 P.M. 2022/2023 Budget Public Hearing

6:00 P.M. Regular Monthly Meeting

Present: Mayor Michael Hammond, Deputy Mayor Charles Fified, Trustee Jolene LaSiege, Trustees Connie McAllister, Village Clerk Lisa Hammond, Code Enforcement Officer Tim Tuttle, Sewer Superintendent Mark Basford, Esther Gushea, Melissa, Ralph Hammond and Bob Poor and Tom Grazer.

Present by phone: Trustee Stacy Gushea

Absent: Attorney Henry Leader

5:46 p.m. Mayor Michael Hammond opened the 2022-2023 Proposed Budget Public Hearing

Discussion was held on contingency funds and the homework put into this year's budget. Mayor Michael Hammond noted that the Village is staying under the tax cap. A slight tax increase. Progress has been made in the structure of budget, consolidation of some funds, along with coding that now coincides with recommended codes from the State Comptroller which will then in turn help with filing our AUD. Mayor Hammond stated that an increase to the Attorney fee line has been made and an increase to the Clerks salary in both General and Sewer Funds has been made. Hammond noted that the Clerk will look into interest being paid on the USDA loans and the possibility of refinancing. A Reserve line has been set up in the Sewer Fund this budget cycle. Hammond added that homework is still being done on fire tax and the conversation will be ongoing with other Villages. Emergency preparedness line stayed in the budget and Fire and Rescue are staying the same this year.

Trustee Charles Fifield asked about items that were paid for under clerk expenses that indeed were building expenses, such as heat as an example. Mayor Hammond noted that Becky Donnelly while working with him on the budget noticed that things coming out of the clerks line should be coded differently, hence consolidating some line items to help code things correctly. Fifield also asked what the Clerks present salary was currently and Mayor Hammond stated \$8,750.00 half from Sewer Fund and the other half from General Fund going to \$12,000.00. A brief discussion was held on the average real property tax in the Village of \$40,108.00. \$100,000.00 for Streets was reduced to \$60,000.00. Parks and Recreation was reduced by \$5,000.00. In closing Mayor Hammond noted that Esther Gushea was present and that she ran the Village and created budgets from 1976 to 2019 and laid the foundation for all the great

things the Village has going on in our little Village. Hammond noted that we are lucky to have her with us at this meeting. Ralph Hammond was present and stated that Eshter Gushea handled over two million dollars without the use of a computer and when audited by the State, Esther was spot on to the penny.

6:02 p.m. Mayor Michael Hammond closed the budget Public Hearing

6:03 p.m. Mayor Michael Hammond opened the Regular monthly meeting

1. Pledge of Allegiance was said by all in attendance

2. Appropriations: Sewer and General

Bills were audited by Trustees Charles Fified and Connie McAllister

Motion: Connie McAllister Seconded: Charles Fifield Vote: unanimous

Bills for tree removals and turnout gear did arrive at the last minute, but were audited and approved.

3. Approval of Minutes:

Minutes of March 4th special meeting and March 7th, 2022 regular meeting

Clerk Lisa Hammond noted that she has Code Enforcement Officer Tim Tuttle as being in person on March 4th and she will make the change that he attended the meeting by phone.

Motion: Jolene LaSiege Seconded: Connie McAllister Vote: unanimous

4. Reports: Departments and Committees

a. Sewer Report: A written report was received. Mark Basford was present and stated that things are looking good. Spring melt was good and brought no violations. DEC gave Basford the go ahead to replace sand. The old sand can be used at the Sewer Plant for backfill, so therefore we won't have a cost to dispose of it.

26 Hours reported by Basford for January and 36 Hours reported for Jared Murray

Motion: Charles Fifield Seconded: Jolene LaSiege Vote: unanimous

b. Code Enforcement Report:

Tim Tuttle was present and gave a verbal report. Tuttle stated that he has six projects that he needs to speak with the Attorney Leader on before serving them the paperwork, hopefully tomorrow. Discussion was held on a property that had been in court before and the Canton Judge had previously indicated that if nothing much was done, that he would go another route with the matter. Tuttle wants to discuss with Attorney Leader the process of going back to court or just cleaning it up and billing the landowner. Discussion was held on the recent Apartment Building Fire on Main Street owned by Anhminh Reynolds. Tuttle stated he had two lengthy conversations with Kevin Reynolds, Anhminh husband before they left for their vacation. Tuttle stated that this matter could be pending litigation and details should not be discussed in public. Tuttle did state that the insurance company had paid nothing at this point, but had previously told him the check was in the mail. Insurance company is waiting on reports and more interviews need to be conducted. Testing for asbestos is expensive and possibly Atlantic Testing may do this testing. This is the hold up at this point of removal of the rubble. Kevin and Anhminh Reynolds have been cleared of any wrongdoing per Code Enforcement Tim Tuttle. Tuttle stated that Reynolds does not want to drag this out and is talking about building another structure there. Tuttle has an email address for Reynolds to stay in contact while he is on vacation, out of the Country. Mayor Michael Hammond noted that he has been in contact with the County about possibly helping out with matters in the Village such as this and other structures. Hammond to continue to have conversations with the County. Appearance tickets for the board to see after they are written to the five property owners. Tuttle stated he had a problem with his software for issuing tickets recently but is now fixed. Tuttle noted that there is a dumpster at Ed Couglars building and that David Hartman is removing items from the building. Trustee Jolene LaSieve thanked Tuttle for his work.

Motion: Connie McAllister Seconded: Jolene LaSieve Vote: unanimous

c. Clerk's Report:

Clerk Lisa Hammond noted that it has been a pleasure working with Becky Donnelly on the budget. A new laptop has been purchased and a new Quick books program will have to be purchased. Hammond stated she is working on the sewer relieves that will be sent to the County at May's meeting.

Motion: Charles Fifield Seconded: Jolene LaSieve Vote: unanimous

d. Mayor's Report:

Mayor Hammond stated that some tree projects got taken care of recently and it looks really nice. National Grid took down three very large trees in the Village. Michael Wainwright, a Village resident conveyed to the Village Board members how happy and grateful he is to have the tree gone at his property - Wainwright cleaned the tree up himself at no cost to the Village. The other two trees in the Village were picked up by the Village. Some ditch line work was conducted also. All debris is located in the Village dump. Bob Poor was present and noted how nice things look with the clean up. Mayor Michael Hammond noted that he has spoken with Canton Highway Superintendent Steven Smith and will be meeting with him soon about the stump removals, approximately twelve stumps. Hammond noted that the Village will be billed for such matters and that the Town Highway guys are really good to the Village of Rensselaer Falls. Street sign replacement needs to be done as soon as possible. Village website is updated and working well stated Mayor Hammond

Motion: Connie McAllister Seconded: Jolene LaSiege Vote: unanimous

e. Committee Reports:

Trees - see Mayors report - A brief discussion was held on the Ash trees that have been marked surrounding the Village and how many of them will have to be actually cut down.

Playground/Falls Festival Committee:

Mayor Michael Hammond noted that pizza sales for the Falls Festival are going really well. Jolene LaSiege reminded all present that April 30th is the first fundraiser to be held for the Festival located at the Fire Department. There will be music, food, and cornhole. A Bottle drive will be held at this event. April 13th a meeting will be held for final preparation of the 30th date. A brief discussion was held on having the appropriate power hook ups ahead of the events to avoid issues. Mayor Hammond noted he will work on this issue and will be a village investment.

Motion: Jolene LaSiege Seconded: Charles Fifield Vote: unanimous

5. New Business:

A. Proposed Budget 2022-2023 Discussion and Possible Approval

Mayor Michael Hammond asked if there were any more questions or concerns and if all questions were answered. All in agreement. Motion was made to adopt the 2022-2023 budget as present.

Motion: Jolene LaSieve

Seconded: Charles Fifield

Vote: unanimous

B. Reratify, Village Code 2015 as LL #4-2022 Discussion and Possible Approval

Mayor Michael Hammond stated that this Local Law #4 was voted on and passed in 2015 and not filed with the State. No changes have been made. Approval was granted to have Attorney Henry Leader file this LL #4-2022 with the State. Copy has been reviewed by all board members. Motion was agreed upon by all board members.

Motion: Jolene LaSieve

Seconded: Charles Fifield

Vote: unanimous

C. Code Updates - Discussion

A brief discussion was held on updating the codes. Tim Tuttle noted that the code is updated every three years and the Village should review and update their files. Matter tabbled and will be added to next month's agenda. Trustee Jolene LaSieve would like to see annual discussion on behalfs of Code as the Village grows and evolves. All members in agreement of this idea. Clerk Lisa Hammond added that a Sexual Harrassment training will be held at next months monthly meeting - May 2nd by the Villages Insurance Company.

D. Congress Street Project: Discussion and Possible Approval

Mayor Michael Hammond stated that he would like to see this project a priority as it has been a problem for years. The ditch will

be dug up from Rensselaer Street toward CR 14 and a new drainage line will be put in. Mainly in front of the Fire Station. This is another project that Hammond will talk to Canton Highway Superintendent about doing this summer.

E. Paving Jobs: Discussion and Possible Approval

Mayor Hammond reminded board members to keep their eyes open for projects to be possibly done this summer. Mayor Hammond reminded board members of the ditching issue at the corner of Elizabeth and CR 15 along with ditching on CR 14 toward Kendrew. Ralph Hammond was present and noted that the hand rail located at the corner of Elizabeth and CR 15 is in bad shape and should be taken care of.

6. Updates

A. Local Laws/Policy -Discussion

Mayor Michael Hammond stated he wants this board, future boards and Attorneys to know that it is the Attorney for the Village's job to file Local Laws with the State of New York after approval within 20 days of its passage. Hammond stated a policy will be drafted.

7. Any other business that may come before the Board:

Mayor Michael Hammond introduced Tom Grazer from the Watertown Times and Plaindealer, among other titles. In June the Plaindealer will be his only priority. Grazer wants to help advertise the Villages fundraiser ideas and will remain in contact. Grazer stated nothing is too small to go in the Plaindealer. Mayor Hammond will reach out for the upcoming concert events to advertise.

7:12 p.m closed regular monthly board meeting

Motion: Charles Fifield

Seconded: Stacy Gushea

Vote: unanimous

7:13 p.m went into executive session for the purpose of Public Officers Law 105
Personnel

Motion: Connie McAllister Seconded: Charles Fifield Vote: unanimous

7:36 p.m. came out of executive session

Motion: Charles Fifield Seconded; Connie McAllister Vote: unanimous

7:36 p.m. reopened monthly meeting

Motion: Jolene LaSiege Seconded: Connie McAllister Vote: unanimous

Discussion was held on Department Heads providing the Board members before the monthly meeting with a written report. Discussion was held on the importance of the Code Enforcement Officer providing the members with documentation and progress on issues arising from matters of violations in the Village. The Village Board requested Clerk Lisa Hammond reach out to all Department Heads and request the reports in advance of monthly meetings.

7:45 p.m. closed meeting

Motion: Stacy Gushea Seconded: Connie McAllister Vote: unanimous

Respectfully Submitted:

Lisa Hammond
Village Clerk