

VILLAGE OF RENSSELAER FALLS

Regular Meeting Minutes

January 4, 2021
(6:00 P.M.)

Present In Zoom: Mayor Michael Hammond, Trustee Jolene LaSiege, Deputy Mayor Charles Fifield and Trustee James Blackburn, Village Clerk Lisa Hammond, Sewer Superintendent Mark Basford, Diane Wilcox, John Danis, Scott Rivers, Mark Bomyea, Ellis Giacomelli, Adam Atkinson, Tim Danehy, Bob Washo, Karen Clemmons.

By telephone: Trustee Connie McAllister

Absent: Village Attorney Henry Leader and Code Enforcement Officer Tim Tuttle

6:00 p.m. Mayor Michael Hammond opened the regular meeting

1. Pledge of Allegiance was said by all in attendance
2. Trustees Sworn In:

Mayor Michael Hammond stated that because of COVID restriction, swearing in of the Trustees and Deputy Clerk will look a little different this year. Hammond stated that Charles Fifield & Connie McAllister will have a 2yr term, with the Clerk connecting with them to have them sign the Oath book.

Motion: Trustee Jolene LaSeige

Seconded: Trustee James Blackburn

3. Appointments:

Clerk - Lisa Hammond

Deputy Mayor - Charles Fifield

Planning Board - Full

Zoning Board - Full

Official Newspaper - North Country This Week

Mileage - 57.5

Mayor Michael Hammond read over the appointments and asked for discussion and approval. Trustee James Blackburn asked if it would be better to have an executive session prior to the appointments and asked if this was customary. Hammond stated that if the board

members would like to do that they could, but these are typically yearly appointments and tasks with little to no change recently. Blackburn stated this is his second year and it wasn't done last year either. Blackburn noted that he sent an email to the board members on December 21, 2020 about the appointment of the Clerk position and he only heard back from Mayor Hammond. Blackburn is concerned about transparency and the fact that the Clerk is living in a camp outside of the Village limits. Blackburn stated he would like to discuss appointments in the executive session so that Human Services discussions, decisions and conversations are not discussed publicly when not needed. Blackburn suggests that the board should amend the law to allow the Clerk to live outside the Village, as does Code Enforcement Officer Tim Tuttle. Trustee Blackburn researched the NYCOM book and an amendment can be done. Mayor Hammond stated he agrees that this can be talked about in the executive session, especially as Clerks transfer. Clerk Lisa Hammond asked if she would be part of the executive session and Mayor Hammond said yes if need be. Clerk Hammond stated that she has not changed her residency from 3 W Front Street. Mayor Hammond asked the board if they wanted to go into executive session about the matter or go ahead with the appointment. Trustees Connie McAllister and Trustees Jolene LaSeige both stated in the future they can go into executive session but for this appointment tonight it is not necessary. LaSeige said yes let's talk about appointments in executive session, but not for this one

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Charles Fifield for the appointments, seconded by Trustee Connie McAllister. Trustee Jolene LaSeige voted in favor. Trustee James Blackburn abstained.

4. Appropriations approved:

General and Sewer - Mayor Michael Hammond noted that bills were audited by Trustee Jolene LaSeige and Deputy Mayor Charles Fifield

Motion: Trustee Jolene LaSeige Seconded: Trustee Charles Fifield Vote: unanimous

Mayor Michael Hammond noted that maybe next year the January meeting should be moved out a week due to the bills

5. Approval of Minutes:

Minutes of December 7, 2020 Regular board meeting were approved.

Motion: Connie McAllister Seconded: James Blackburn Vote: unanimous

6. Reports: Departments and Committees

a. Sewer Report:

Mark Basford reported that Rensselaer Falls is being tested twice a week for COVID19 by Clarkson and there was a spike before Christmas and it's back down now. Basford stated that there is a small amount right now of COVID19 in the system. Trustee James Blackburn suggested that Corning testing be isolated. Basford wants to get the Sand tested down at the plant to move forward on replacing. The sand can go to people that make top soil if it tests ok, per Basford. Street widening is another option for the sand stated Mayor Hammond. DANC is allset per Mayor Hammond for GIS portal agreement. Basford stated that in the spring he will work with DANC to locate more cleanouts to be added to the system. Mayor Hammond asked Basford about the status of the generator. Basford stated that Heuveleton has a portable one that is big enough to do what we need to do here in Rensselaer Falls. Heuveleton does not use it anymore, but they want to keep it. Mayor Hammond stated that he talked with the Mayor Lashua about Heuveleton upgrading their sewer facility and decommissioning their water tower. There was talk of possibly giving Rensselaer Falls first dibbs at any of their equipment. West Front Street lift station has been having issues and will need to be cleaned out soon.

Motion: James Blackburn Seconded: Charles Fifield Vote: unanimous

b. Code Enforcement Report:

Tim Tuttle was absent due to unrelated work of the Village, but due to COVID responsibilities. Clerk Hammond will reach out to Tuttle for a written report and remind him that we need these monthly for the record.

c. Clerk's Report:

Clerk Lisa Hammond reported that mortgage tax was received in the amount of \$411.67. Hammond added that the USDA sent a request for the annual payment to them be placed on an automatic payment process. Approval was made.

Motion: James Blackburn Seconded: Connie McAllister Vote: unanimous

Motion: Charles Fifield Seconded: Jolene LaSeige Vote: unanimous

d. Mayor's Report:

Mayor Hammond stated in his report that the Fire Department Contract was signed and the DANC paperwork was sent out. Mayor Michael Hammond noted that he talked with Attorney Henry Leader by phone and discussion was held on consolidation of the laws and making them more fluid. Leader stated within a couple weeks the board should see these items in a new format. Mayor Hammond pleased that they are finally in the works. Discussion was also held between Hammond and Leader on the Rescue Squad contract and the outside Sewer users contract, noting that there is no mechanism in place for the unpaid charges from the sewer to be put on their Village taxes.

Motion: Trustee Jolene LaSeige Seconded: Trustee James Blackburn. All voted in favor.
Motion carries

e. Committee Reports:

Trees - None

Playground - None

Falls Festival - None

5. New Business:

a. Reimagining Canton Recreation:

Mayor Hammond updated the board on the recreation meetings that were held and noted the turnover of a couple Recreation Directors recently, there is currently no recreation director for the Town & Village of Canton. Hammond said a group of over twenty people have held general conversations in committee, with two meetings planned in both January and February. Hammond forwarded the minutes of the meetings to the Village Board members and asked for their input and that he would be the liaison for any messages. Trustee Jolene LaSeige stated that she saw a lot of good things in the minutes.

Motion: Jolene LaSeige

Seconded: James Blackburn Vote: unanimous

6. Updates:

- a. LWRP Boundaries: Mayor Hammond stated that the committees from discussions of boundaries is in its final stages. It will now be drawn up and put into a presentation for public comment. There is a survey on ?? . Hammond encouraged people to ask questions.

- b. Portable Generator Discussion:

Mayor Hammond stated that he wants the Village to continue looking for a portable generator and stay with the plan discussed. Did you say something about heuvelton.....

- c. Rescue Squad Request - Discussion & Possible Approval

Mayor Michael Hammond gave a recap of a 10% down payment on the life pack. Three annual payments. Hammond stated that he feels the board wants to help out with this. Trustee Charles Fified asked what amount of money is being asked for. Scott Rivers stated that they would like so much a year, for the next three years. Rivers noted that the City of Ogdensburg helped their Rescue Squad out and wondered if the Village of Rensselaer Falls would give them \$5,000.00 this year. \$9,300.00 has been sent toward the Life pack at this point. Donations have been received to Rescue. James Blackburn stated that a \$3,000.00 trade in will be on the old machine.

Annual payments are in the amount of \$13,764.13. Blackburn asked the company to apply \$4,300.00 that was raised in fundraising toward the first payment, but has not heard back from them yet. Diane Wilcox and James Blackburn discussed ideas for fundraising.

Linda Soulia is working on raffles to raise money. Scott Rivers stated he plans on doing a letter champain to ask for donations. Mayor Michael Hammond added that he thought the thermometer idea for raising money was a good idea. Trustee Charles Fifield asked about the Village grant writer helping the squad and Mayor Hammond stated that the board would approve hours toward this if needed.

Diane Wilcox asked for a commitment from the board, as it has been talked about three months now. Trustee Jolene LaSeige asked for something in writing, something on paper asking for a set amount and showing a proposal. LaSeige stated she was not opposed to helping and discussion was held again on asking the Town of Dekalb to help out as well. Mayor Michael Hammond stated that this needs to be talked about during the

budget process.

Trustee Connie McAllister asked how other municipalities are paying for things like this and added that maybe more fundraising could be done and more department members helping with it. McAllister suggested doing away with the service if the call volume is so low and volunteer help wasn't there to support. All board members were in agreement to help the rescue squad but wanted to see a more detailed proposal of what the squad actually needs and goals for fundraising.

James Blackburn asked about services provided to the taxpayers and that the services should be the highest in the budget. Fire, EMS, roads and sewer are provided. Blackburn stated that all members are 100 percent volunteer and "he didn't join to spend weekends fundraising." Blackburn pointed out how different Departments are funded in the surrounding area. Blackburn noted that Parks and Rec have a \$50,000.00 budget due to a grant from Patti Ritchies Office and feels this should not be higher than Fire & Rescue. Blackburn wonders why the Village would spend money on a Pavilion and not on Fire & Rescue. Mayor Michael Hammond noted the burdens and unfunded mandates that are strapped to EMS and Fire. James Blackburn wants to see what the Village is willing to offer and then the Rescue can plan on what they need to raise to make up the difference.

Trustee Jolene LaSeige made a motion to look for something in writing from the Rescue Squad and put it in budget talks and then get something annually. Trustee Connie McAllister second the motion. Deputy Mayor Charles Fifield voted in favor. Trustee James Blackburn abstained.

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

Mayor Michael Hammond noted that the Fire Department receives \$17,500.00 and the Rescue Squad receives \$8,750.00 in the 2021 budget from the Village of Rensselaer Falls. An amount that has increased each year since becoming Mayor.

Trustee James Blackburn stated he has several questions:

Blackburn asked if the Village has a conflict of interest policy, an Ethics Policy, a nepotism policy? Mayor Michael Hammond noted not to his knowledge but that recently a procurement policy was established. Blackburn expressed concerns about the agenda being posted in certain locations. Blackburn asked for Karen Clary contact information and Mayor Hammond will provide it. Blackburn asked for current copies of bank statements and asked about the voucher process and wants to see more of a budget process to be more up to date and prepared for the next budget cycle. Mayor Michael Hammond stated that he hopes Blackburn helps in the budget process with Karen Clary.

7:32 p.m Adjourned meeting by Motion of Trustee Charles Fifield, seconded by Trustee
Connie McAllister. Vote: unanimous

Respectfully Submitted:

Lisa Hammond, Village Clerk