

Town of New Scotland
Special Town Board Meeting
07/24/2020

The following Town Officials were in attendance:

Supervisor:	Douglas LaGrange	
Councilperson:	Adam Greenberg	
	William Hennessy	
	Daniel Leinung	
	Bridgit Burke	Arrived at 1:25 PM
Town Clerk:	Diane Deschenes	
Town Attorney:	Michael Naughton	
Highway Superintendent:	Kenneth Guyer	

1. Call to Order

Supervisor LaGrange called the special meeting to order at 1:05 PM. This meeting was legally noticed. Our Town Clerk Diane Deschenes had it noticed in the Altamont Enterprise and he had it in front of him. This meeting is being done through Zoom pursuant to the Governor's Executive order 202.1 which includes not having public meetings. A roll attendance was taken.

Supervisor LaGrange said that he had the Sheriff's report. The newest one was yesterday. He hasn't received one yet today. We have three cases at the moment in New Scotland. Those are confirmed positives. As far as the contact list, which is people who have been in contact with a confirmed positive and are under quarantine, he has 11 in the Town of New Scotland today. Those are both bumped up from last week and the week before. On a county-wide level this is for the last five days. The total number of cases and contacts has gone respectably since July 19th, 84 cases and 556 contacts. The next day 66 cases, so some had gone and tested negative and dropped down to 524 total contacts. The 21st it was 66 still with the positives and 501 in quarantine. On the 22nd it jumped to 80 cases and 580 in quarantine. As of yesterday there were three more cases added. So there are 83 positive cases in the county with 540 under quarantine. It's still hopping around pretty good out there. Again those are the latest numbers. There are other lists going around and different things but he tries to stick with something that we're consistently working with so we're not jumping around too much.

Councilperson Leinung thanked Supervisor LaGrange for the update. He thought a lot of this was probably still from the 4th of July. He thinks there was a lot of not social distancing going on. He saw it in a few places around town. You know not a lot of groups of people but people waiting in line somewhere, getting ice cream, not necessarily wearing masks while they were waiting in line. He thinks we have to keep reiterating to everybody that if you're outside, even if you think you're not going to be near somebody, you really should have a mask with you and on at all times. Understood if you are exercising or whatever. He's run a few times with a mask on. It's not great but it's doable. Just a reminder to everybody to really try to keep it going because this would be the worst thing for us to have spikes just because people are getting complacent. Supervisor LaGrange agreed adding that that's a good point.

Supervisor LaGrange said that he wanted to follow up with what Bethlehem and Guilderland are doing at this point. He has a note from first Peter Barber and then David Van Luven. This was from Wednesday. Supervisor LaGrange kind of talked about how we opened up. Peter Barber is saying that they are following the same there except for the courts which will soon operate under OCA rules which is the same with us. Our senior program is doing transports to doctors and groceries. It helps to have an EMS department which uses an ozone generator and a UHVC light to disinfect rooms, ambulances, police cars, and highway vehicles. That's also what the Sheriff is doing up at their site and so forth. Mr. Barber added that their summer camp, swim classes, and adult lap swimming are very popular with reduced capacities. It helped to expand pool capacity by taking down the diving board. They are still doing virtual meetings with all Board members present at Town Hall. They've been doing that right along. Applicants and public participate by calling direct on phone lines. Supervisor LaGrange added that they can do that because they do live broadcasts of their meetings. David Van Luven from the Town of Bethlehem says their Town Hall remains closed to the public except by appointment. The layout of the building makes it extremely difficult to ensure visitors are wearing masks but their services continue at 100%. All meetings continue to be by Zoom. To date not one person has asked them to reopen Town Hall. Supervisor LaGrange added that that's quite interesting. So that's kind of an update

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on those folks. I don't have anything else directly COVID related but we did discuss how this is affecting us budget-wise. I have a side note here that the Comptroller sent out yesterday. It's quite interesting. From March 1st to July 17th New York State has paid out \$32.1 billion dollars in unemployment benefits. And just as a comparison for all of 2019 it was 2.1 billion. He just wanted to give the Board some perspective on that.

Councilperson Hennessy said that on the COVID reading, just to be clear, do those include Voorheesville or is that just the Town without Voorheesville. Supervisor LaGrange replied it's the whole town including the village. Councilperson Hennessy said that he believed the village might have been 13 last week and it's up to 16 on the Albany County website. He didn't want to talk about it that much; he's just trying to get a handle on location. Councilperson Leinung asked if they do it by zip code? It's partially by municipality but they also do it by zip code. Councilperson Hennessy said that he was looking at the zip code 12186. Supervisor LaGrange said he's not saying there is one or anything, but Voorheesville addresses can be at the top of Cass Hill in Clarksville. The zip code is tough to follow. When he tries to do this he tries to go down through and check anything that says Voorheesville, Delmar, or obviously Slingerlands, and so on, Clarksville, Feura Bush. Then he'll also go over to the roads that are there and confirm it with both. He had a Voorheesville address but it was Ketchum Road and that's not in the Town of New Scotland. It's tough but he tries stay consistent with this list to whatever degree it's reliable. He thinks it's relatively reliable. This is the one we get from the Sheriff.

Supervisor LaGrange added that he sent out to everyone the fact that we did take a hit with our sales tax in the second quarter. If you combine the first and second quarters, the first quarter we did have like a 4% bump. We're running about \$120,000 less for the year than we had projected and hoped for that is compared to last year. He and Lisa have been working at it between other things starting to do an analysis of where we stand at the half-year point and project what we might do in the second half, both revenue and expenses. He thinks it says a lot for our budgeting. When I say our budgeting I mean the Town Board and the way we've built up fund balances and stuff. To be honest with you, as Adam mentioned earlier when we first started talking before the meeting, we got ahead of this early. We had great cooperation from Ken and the Highway Department budget. As you are well aware the B fund is where the sales tax goes. The B fund supplies the DB fund which is Highway. So we're really ahead of the game. Even if we project out the sales tax at the same figure we just got for the next two quarters each, unless something catastrophic happens with a wraparound and a close down and things like that, we think that's underestimating the revenue. We're still going to be in good shape and that's figuring the 80% CHIPS money and we figured in the expense of the new paver. We've done about as good as we can to fine tune this and figure out where we will be. We'd be estimating in that regard about a \$218,000 loss in the sales tax. The A fund on the side we anticipate using around \$79,000 of fund balance quite honestly, even with a tremendous hit in the courts, and that's our biggest A fund issue obviously because they've had to close and fines have just dribbled in. We are still awaiting the mortgage tax which goes to the A fund. My hunch is that it's going to be solid because it seems like there is still a lot of building around. I'm hearing of a lot of people refinancing and all those things go into the mortgage tax. Unless we take a tremendous hit there, we should be about even to what we budgeted in the A Fund. Again there have been a lot of provisions made. We are identifying areas. Obviously we started with Ken and the Highway because that's our biggest nut to crack when it comes to the budget. We've been going through the budget and talking to different departments on their modest spending for the first six months. Can we hold that and maybe save more here and there? Everybody is on board. We are getting it together. We have a draft of the B fund that shows where we are, what we budgeted, and our projections which quite frankly are easier to project than a normal budget. Lisa always talks about a crystal ball. It's a lot harder to do the following year than it is to do the rest of this year when we have a lot of the numbers in already. As soon as we get this together, he would anticipate it would be early next week, we will send it out. He has about five pages of B fund and DB. It's set up like this. He didn't mean for everyone to read that. He's just showing the set up we used. We are going to have a column with either savings or non-savings that you can peruse and see where we are at. Dan talked about that when I sent out the note on the sales tax. We are pounding that out. I think we're in pretty good shape on the B fund and DB to have everything together. Lisa left this late for me yesterday and she wasn't in today. I have a couple of questions on it. We will try to get that and an A fund out to you, too. Again, if things continue as we expect and we only do what we're expecting to do even if we only get 80% of the CHIPS money we're still in solid shape by the end of this year. I guess in part that's a thank you to the Board and budgeting and so on and so forth. A bigger thank you to the departments and especially to Ken's department. That's my update.

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Councilperson Leinung had two questions. Number one is cash flow. This states being \$120,000 down when we're expecting that. Are we expecting to need to dip into the A fund balance just for payroll and for normal operating expenses? Supervisor LaGrange asked if he meant the B fund. Councilperson Leinung said whichever. Do we need to dip into reserves to be able to make payroll or is there still enough of a cushion there? Supervisor LaGrange said that at this point we budgeted zero fund balance out of B. DB if you recall had about a \$300,000 fund balance at the end of last year. Generally we try to keep that at about \$100,000. So when we budgeted last year we budgeted using that \$200,000 of fund balance out of B. So, when you take away the paving that we budgeted all things added up together. To your point about needing, no, we look to be right on track in the B fund which is excellent. Councilperson Leinung said that that's good news. It seems like we're in more decent shape than some of the other towns around us that probably do rely a little more heavily on sales tax, too. Supervisor LaGrange agreed adding that we're like the first or second lowest in the area for reliance. Maybe 26% of our budget is through sales tax. That's definitely good.

Councilperson Leinung said that this is starting in the time of year too when you start looking at next year's budget. I know it's a little early. Supervisor LaGrange said it's really not. We requested that all the departments have their budgets in at the end of June or early July. Everybody did relatively well. We're already plugging those numbers in but we wanted to do this in conjunction with that so we can kind of get a feel for where we are going. Councilperson Leinung said that he assumes that next year hopefully sales tax is better than this year but it's probably doubtful that it's going to be similar to 2019. I'm sure once we do those projections it might be a little tough budgeting for next year too. I don't think the first quarter next year is going to be all of a sudden back to where we were in 2019. He thinks it's still going to be less than what we are hoping for but he assumes that we will factor that in probably. Supervisor LaGrange said that obviously it all depends on the pandemic situation. It depends on vaccinations. Our "crystal ball," as cloudy as it is, is almost black when it comes to trying to figure out how this pandemic is going to affect us 18 months from now. We've done well in the past and we've been conservative in our budgeting starting from this office right out through November 1 when the Board passes it and that is something that we should take a little humble pride in that we do a good job that way. Again, it goes back to this Board and Ken working together very early in this whole situation to identify opportunities, and we did it, and we've implemented it. I can't say enough for that. I am happy to be sitting in my chair here at the Town of New Scotland working with the people I work with. Any other questions? That is a general overview on A and B, but I will get stuff out to you early next week so you can peruse our charts and ask any questions at that point.

Councilperson Hennessy had a question about a conversation they had the other day. Just confirming that part of the significant savings from the whole lack of contribution from the Town toward the paving, is that still the case? He thought that would have been about \$200,000 that was in our budget that we were contributing toward paving. Is that one of the savings that we are adding up for the whole loss/benefit on this? Supervisor LaGrange said that that is all a part of it.

Councilperson Burke arrived at 1:25 PM.

Supervisor LaGrange told her what they had been discussing. They had gone through the Sheriff's report and what Bethlehem and Guilderland are doing which is about the same. We just discussed the budget, and things are looking very good for us because of the planning we have done. He and Lisa are putting something together to show where we stand at mid-year and what we project for the end of the year. Just to sum it up, we look good. That is using low sales tax numbers. He doesn't anticipate them being as low as the second quarter for the third and the fourth, but we are using the second quarter numbers for the third and the fourth just to be on the safe side. We are working on some charts I will send out to the Board probably early next week. We have the B fund pretty close to done so you can kind of look through it and see what we are talking about for savings and where we stand. Lisa got started on the A fund a little bit, but the B fund is the big thing so we wanted to make sure that we got that done first, and that was directly addressed to sales tax. He is hoping we get the mortgage tax in the next couple of days. We expected it by now but like everything else it's seemingly slowed down. As soon as we see where we stand with that we can do a better projection for the rest of the year too on the A fund aspect of it.

As everyone knows, Supervisor LaGrange and Bill West did interviews for the DPW position that was

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open. Much to Ken's dismay, we settled on Eric Vasquez who has been in Parks for a year. He is just a quality candidate and it gives him an opportunity to move laterally and up at the same time in the Town. We are excited to have Eric in DPW. Doug and Bill met with both Eric and Ryan this morning to discuss our expectations and so on. We don't want to leave Ken and Jamie Duncan short for the Parks until we at least get the process rolling, so I was suggesting to Ken and he had already had it noted that we would like to see the Board okay him to advertise for that position ASAP.

Superintendent Guyer stated that Eric will be going to DPW so we are looking to advertise as soon as possible for a two-week span. We will use the Altamont Enterprise, the website, the Facebook page and then we will see what we get in. Eric will stay on a few weeks at the Parks. Hopefully we will get some resumes and interviews and we won't have that much of a span in between. Supervisor LaGrange stated that both Eric and Ryan understand. Ryan has been desperately asking when we are going to hire somebody. Now that he knows that it is within the next two to four weeks he is comfortable riding that out and pulling double duty as best he can.

Resolution 2019-178

Highway Superintendent asking for permission to advertise for the Parks position soon to be vacated by Eric Vasquez

Supervisor LaGrange made a motion to authorize the Highway Superintendent to advertise for the position that is going to be available soon with Eric Vasquez leaving the Parks Department.

Motion seconded by Bridgit Burke.

Councilperson Greenberg asked if it would be two weeks of advertising. Superintendent Guyer replied that we always do it for at least two weeks, and usually two weeks works out fine. He and Teresa will take care of that and get it to Diane for Facebook and the website.

Roll call vote was taken.

Supervisor LaGrange voted yes.

Councilperson Greenberg voted yes.

Councilperson Hennessy voted yes.

Councilperson Burke voted yes.

Councilperson Leinung voted yes.

Superintendent Guyer stated that they had talked about waiting until September for highway employee hiring. They are down two employees. He would like permission to advertise to hire two Operator I employees which are truck drivers. We would probably wait a few weeks to put it out. We would then put it out for two weeks. That would put us into September. We would get resumes back, go through them, and set up interviews. That is going to put us at least to the middle of September before we would have interviews conducted. He is looking for permission to advertise to hire and get it out of the way. Supervisor LaGrange wanted to make two points. The calculations he and Lisa have made were considering hiring, health care, etc., with a September 1 date. Those projections with getting into the middle of September are still conservative. Ken has another gentleman leaving in October or November. Superintendent Guyer replied that it would be in November. Our projections included two new hires for September and then another hire in November. That doesn't take away from the projections we have made and funds B and DB. Superintendent Guyer said that all three of his retirees this year were budgeted. They were Operator II's, at the top of their pay scale, and we will be replacing them with Operator I's. The pay scale will fall where their experience level is. As well, they will have lower insurance rate costs to the town with a higher contribution from the employee as well as retirement system contributions also. This is under the assumption that new hires would be coming into the system at a Tier 6 so the Town would have a lower contribution to the retirement system, as well, so there is savings there.

Resolution 2020-179

Highway Superintendent asking for permission to advertise for two weeks for the Operator I positions

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Supervisor LaGrange made a motion that the Board authorize the Highway Superintendent to start advertising for two weeks using the normal methods for the Operator I positions.

Motion seconded by Councilperson Hennessy.

Councilperson Hennessy asked if Superintendent Guyer was looking to fill all three positions ultimately or was he just looking at filling one now, one later, and the last one later. Superintendent Guyer replied that he would like to fill two now in the first round and when the third employee leaves in November we would like to advertise for that, as well. Summer paving season and winter snow plow season, everyone is out there. If there is someone out sick or on vacation we can shift around and do that on our own. If there are two people sick on their normal crew, at that point he is stealing from the Parks Department or DPW to come and sit in the wing seat. When it snows, he plows with his truck at turnarounds and intersections to help the big trucks. Chris and the mechanics plow. He needs everybody on his crew. Supervisor LaGrange asked if we are still down one employee. Superintendent Guyer replied that he is down two from when he started 21 years ago but we have been down one recently. One person sick we can work with; with two people sick we can still work with it, but at that point we are stealing from a different department to help out. We all need to be here.

Vote on advertising for highway department applications:

Supervisor LaGrange voted yes.
Councilperson Greenberg voted yes.
Councilperson Hennessy voted yes.
Councilperson Burke voted yes.
Councilperson Leinung voted yes.

Superintendent Guyer then brought up the asphalt paver. He, Teresa, Lisa, and Doug have been through budget numbers from cost of equipment to trade-in to New York State CHIPS money multiple times. Everything seemed to work. Doug and Lisa did their projection for the end of the year and said that we are in decent shape for the pandemic. The numbers they came up with were utilizing the purchase of this paver. With the scheduling and with the State being late in getting back to us with our money, this is the year to upgrade the equipment. Four complete years on our other one doing this, we've proven that we can save money working on our own schedule. It's a good purchase if we can get the State to buy 85% to 90% of this machine. This will last the town a good 15-plus years. We should have many years of no repairs. There will be savings in our repair budget. It will allow us to continue paving projects at the park. We did the Town Hall parking lot. We are working on the future. Other departments will benefit from this, as well. This seems to be a good way to utilize our CHIPS money. You have to spend it to get reimbursement. He thinks it's a great opportunity for us to upgrade our equipment to something brand new and have years of trouble-free use.

Councilperson Greenberg said that he and Superintendent Guyer spoke the other day. One of the reasons we are in a little bit of a hurry is that he can get a deal on a machine that has some whistles and bells that he would not have normally gotten for the same price that he would get for one without if he takes it off their lot soon. That is why we are striking now. Superintendent Guyer confirmed this. Part of the sales team went to their boss. If we order one without the whistles and bells, it's the same price. They have one there even though we told them that it has more than we want and we want to order one. They want us to get the one off their lot. They were able to work a deal and they said they would take off the cost if we would get this paver off their lot. They agreed to that with the signing of papers by the end of July. If he can get approval today, he will sign papers and we can lock in the price.

Councilperson Leinung said that he thought it made a lot of sense especially if we are not paving. It sounds like a great way to use CHIIPS money. It sounds like Superintendent Guyer has already gotten sign-off on the use of that CHIPS money. Is that definitely an allowable use for that money? Did we actually get our CHIPS money yet? He noticed that 80% thing but do we physically have that CHIPS money yet? Supervisor LaGrange stated that you have to spend it out of the fund balance and then be reimbursed by CHIPS. Councilperson Leinung is still a little worried because right now they are holding up everything going out the door even if it's the 80%. He is just a little worried about the CHIPS money not going out for a while if at all. He's sure we are going to get the CHIPS money but we still haven't gotten it yet. Supervisor LaGrange reiterated that we have to spend it to get it. Because of the position

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we are in, even with the situation we are in with the pandemic, we have the means to purchase it and ride it out until we get the money without any issue whatsoever.

Councilperson Greenberg asked Superintendent Guyer if we have a letter from the State saying that we will get money? Superintendent Guyer replied that we do. We have our official paperwork from New York State. It has the numbers on it and it says that there will be no more than a 20% reduction, so that is a guarantee that it is coming. Councilperson Burke asked if that expires at any point? Superintendent Guyer stated that the letter is good for the year. As far as reimbursement goes, it is done quarterly. There are four quarters throughout the year and dates you can submit for each quarter. The first one has passed and the second one is coming up very soon so if we can get this wrapped up next week there should be no issues submitting for the second quarter. It is a relatively quick turnaround on the CHIPS money. Councilperson Leinung asked if we got our first quarter CHIPS money? If you spend in the first quarter, you submit all the returned checks, all the vouchers, etc. We are still in the second quarter so we can still submit now in this quarter for a quicker turnaround.

Councilperson Greenberg asked whatever happened to our shared service reimbursements and is this a thing that would qualify if the Village of Voorheesville uses it? Supervisor LaGrange responded that everything is on hold regarding shared services because of the pandemic. He will check on that with the County on Monday. This particular piece of equipment does not qualify for that anyway. That was only a one-year timeframe from 2018. We postponed it as a group to 2019. It worked out better for us because we had the packer truck and a couple of other odds and ends. That was only a one-time shared services/equipment buy. There are other opportunities coming to share services with the County coordinating us all together but there has not since been a pot of money set aside from the State to pay for shared services and activities like purchases of equipment. No one knows if that will happen in the future though in 2020 it lessens the opportunity that that will come about anytime soon. He asked Councilperson Leinung if he had heard anything different and he replied that he had not. He will check on where we stand with the County regarding our other purchases on Monday to see if they have heard anything.

Resolution 2020-180

Highway Superintendent to move forward with purchase of new paver

Supervisor LaGrange made a motion to direct the Highway Superintendent to move forward with the purchase of a brand new paver, model Wyler P385B from Milton Cat. It has never been used and has zero hours. The Highway Superintendent will sign for that. The price is \$170,300 including a \$10,000 trade-in.

Seconded by Adam Greenberg.

Superintendent Guyer thanked everyone. This is a great opportunity for the Town and for the Highway Department.

A vote was taken.

Supervisor LaGrange voted yes.
Councilperson Greenberg voted yes.
Councilperson Burke voted yes.
Councilperson Leinung voted yes.
Councilperson Hennessy voted yes.

2. Adjourn

Supervisor LaGrange made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilperson Burke. A vote was taken.
Supervisor LaGrange voted yes.
Councilperson Greenberg voted yes.
Councilperson Hennessy voted yes.
Councilperson Burke voted yes.
Councilperson Leinung voted yes.

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The meeting adjourned at 1:50 PM.

A vote was taken.

Diane R. Deschenes, Town Clerk.