The following Town Officials were in attendance:

Deputy Supervisor: Adam Greenberg
Councilperson: Daniel Leinung
Councilperson: William Hennessy
Councilperson: Patricia Snyder
Town Clerk: Diane Deschene

Absent: Supervisor: Douglas LaGrange

1. Call to Order

Deputy Supervisor Greenberg called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

2. Discussion/Action regarding Court Clerk vacancy

Deputy Supervisor Greenberg advised that we are here to discuss the court situation which we have discussed at the past few meetings. One of our two court clerks left in March and since then the other court clerk has done an admirable job filling in for both. We think that we have come to a resolution on a new hire potentially so we will discuss that and possibly take action.

Judge Johnson said that basically it was his clerk that left the Town of New Scotland and went to Bethlehem for a similar position at an advanced level of compensation and a full-time job. We started looking and we have probably gotten 10 resumes this time, more than we did the first time. We interviewed all of them with the exception of two. We then rated them and we brought in three to finalize and offer them the job. In each case once they understood that it was a part-time job as well as the pay scale, they declined. One person had come from a very large job at the State. She said that unfortunately she’d be looking as soon as she started getting training. In fairness there is a musical chairs game going on with these courts clerks because it’s about a year to a year and a half to get up to speed. Clerks get a required 12 hours of training a year, but it’s involved. Judge Johnson then reminded the Board that they are always invited down on Thursday nights if they want to see the process. Judge Wukitsch has about 110 cases and Judge Johnson had about 108 last Thursday night. They are all over the ballpark. Judge Johnson added that he is going down tomorrow night to clean up two matters that involve the State Police, the Park Police, and the Sheriff’s department.

Anyway, they sent a resume that got shared with the Board for Elizabeth Vadney. She was actually our number one pick three months ago. She turned it down because of it being part time and went out into the private sector and got a very nice job at a law firm. That lasted about three weeks. She called us back saying she was rethinking her position. Judge Johnson said that the Board has been great and have been very flexible. We kept asking for 40 hours for Mrs. Thompson plus Karen Creed who was a former Chief Clerk in Bethlehem who has been our fill-in person. We’ve always been very careful. The Board has given us a total of 55 hours for clerks, 27-1/2 hours each, and with the exception of one being at a level 4 and the other a 5 we’ve stayed pretty close to our budget. I’m sure Mrs. Boehlke could tell you that even with paying someone else to come in. We now have this opportunity. We’ve offered her the job. We’ve explained it to her fully. Its 27-1/2 hours and she would come in at a level 5. Basically, that was a question Councilperson Snyder had. In this case, she was a Chief Clerk for three bankruptcy courts in this region. She had worked for three different judges and a couple simultaneously. She’s worked with a number of attorneys at a high level. She did that for 20 years and then retired. Like a lot of people who take early retirement she just decided she wanted to get back into it. The only discouraging thing for this was the pay level. It’s 27-1/2 hours at level 5 which I believe currently is $19.82. We’ve explained it to her and she has agreed to do it. We want her to start next week. We want her to come in and start learning under Mrs. Thompson who has been here 13 years. Mrs. Thompson is very experienced; she taught Mrs. Turner and really got her up to speed. We had tried through various discussions with several Board members to indicate that we really think for our court to be protected (that’s the word he used) because this court represents the Town and we really try to make sure that people who come before us feel they are treated fairly and they have complete knowledge before they make decisions, but just as important that we run it efficiently and correctly. Councilperson Snyder and Councilperson Leinung have been at our audit. That’s where our concern is for anyone new coming in. We really have to have them learn that process quickly because we will probably take in between $125,000-$150,000 between the two judges this year. We want to be sure we’re okay. Our concern is that we have to get someone in there and trained as soon as possible. We’d like Ms. Vadney to start next week, either Monday or Thursday. He and Judge
Wukitsch have been trying to talk about that. She originally wanted to start September 16, 2019, but we told her she had to come in a little bit sooner, and September 12, 2019, is what we are aiming for. Councilperson Leinung added that Judge Johnson has court that night. Judge Johnson replied that that was correct. Judge Wukitsch has the first 15 days of the month, and he has the balance, and it’s every Thursday night. For a while we had combined court for just motor vehicle things, but we found that we can handle it with these 110 nights instead of doing three Thursday nights. Thursday night is a return night to give you the complete answer. Not every Thursday. Do we have the presence of a Public Defender and the District Attorney’s office? If we don’t have the Public Defender and District Attorney there, we don’t finish. We basically arraign them and tell them their rights, and then we have them come back. That’s really where we are right now. Councilperson Leinung asked if they would still have Mrs. Creed come in for at least the first couple of Thursdays? Judge Johnson said we’ve asked Mrs. Creed if she would be available should we need her. She had a long career in Bethlehem and she’s doing us a favor coming in. We’ve very conscious of the hours. We’re not trying to load it up. We might ask her to come a couple of nights. Money collection is a big deal. It’s not just writing a check and here’s the money. Last Thursday they were there until 11:30 PM proving. So, that could happen, and if that does we will come back to you. We think we are bringing someone in at the highest rate because, first of all, she can probably put any of these attorneys on the phone right where they need to be. She’s dealt with them and she’ll be fine. We think it’s a great opportunity. He really appreciated the Board taking the time here. He wanted to show her that we were serious about bringing her in.

Resolution 2019-187
Deputy Supervisor Greenberg offered the following resolution and moved its adoption:

RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of New Scotland does hereby allow the court to hire Elizabeth Vadney as early as September 9, 2019, at level 5 of the salary scale.

Seconded by Councilperson Hennessy All present and voting, the motion carried (4 Ayes).

Deputy Supervisor Greenberg wanted to thank Mrs. Thompson for filling in for 3-4 months and the judges for dealing with this. He knows it wasn’t easy. Deputy Supervisor Greenberg also thanked Mrs. Creed. Judge Johnson said that he would pass that on. Deputy Supervisor Greenberg said that he thought it was a good resolution. He worried that if we had two part-timers and one left we’d really be in trouble. This at least doesn’t put all of our eggs in one basket. Judge Johnson replied, “Exactly.” The Board may still hear from the judges ultimately still looking at the importance of a full-time job. Once again, we had put a proposal forward that we could have someone full time at level 5 and then still have enough part-time hours, about 15 or 16, which would be sufficient to come in Thursday nights and also be there on a day taking calls and filling out forms. That’s the best way to make us competitive to keep people versus losing them. That’s the issue. That’s what we’re looking for. Councilperson Hennessy said that it sounds like you’re adding up 40 plus 16 which is 56. That’s pretty much what it is now. Judge Johnson said that it’s 35 and then another 15-16 hours but we are also conscious of the fact that once you bring someone in full time there are other outside costs that go up too. We’re taking that into consideration too. There is retirement and a few other things. He will have all the figures when we talk to the Board about that. We want to get this solved and we want to get someone learning the job.

Councilperson Snyder asked if Mrs. Thompson is going on vacation soon. Judge Johnson said that she is going away for about 10 days at the end of October so that will be a bit of a trial by fire. Councilperson Snyder said that at least we’ll have somebody with her. Judge Johnson said, again, that that is if Mrs. Creed is willing to do it; we’d sort of like her to be a mentor if we need it. She did run a court with four clerks and two judges. We don’t know what’s happening but if anything like that were to happen we’d come back to the Board and let you know ahead of time. We’re not going to do it without the Board’s knowledge and permission.

Councilperson Snyder asked if any of these gals have professional experience with one another. Judge Johnson replied not yet.

Councilperson Leinung said that the Board had approved Mrs. Thompson’s hours until the end of September. Judge Johnson said that what will happen is that, once Mrs. Vadney comes on board, we’re finished with that and that’s understood. We have talked to Mrs. Thompson about the fact that we’re probably in a position now where we are going back to two part-time people. So that’s been put on the table.
3. **Adjourn**
   Councilperson Hennessy made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilperson Snyder. The meeting adjourned at 7:13 PM.

_______________________________
Diane R. Deschenes, Town Clerk