

Town Board Minutes
March 9, 2009

At a Regular Meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Cambridge, duly called and held the 9th day of March 2009, 7:30 PM at the Town Hall, the following were present:

Supervisor JoAnn Trinkle, Councilwoman Carol Imhof, Councilman Frank Ziehm, Councilman Ted Berndt. Councilman Joel Nichols was absent.

Others present: Town Clerk Sally Eddy, Code Enforcement Officer LaVerne Davis, Assessor Mary Ellen Hill-Pierce, Meaghan Wilkins, Carl Trinkle, Henry Peabody, Lou Imhof, Deiter Drake, Terry Hamilton, Dick Sutherland, Gerald Skiff, Dan Thomas & son, William Watkins, Dan Schmidt, Robert McIntosh, Jim Buckley, Jim Buckley, Jr., Alex Bass, Rani Bass, Ben Yurschak, Bob Hamilton, two uniformed sheriff deputies

Supervisor Trinkle called the meeting to order and led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Minutes

Councilman Carol Imhof motioned, seconded by Councilman Frank Ziehm, to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the February 9, 2009 meeting and approve them as mailed by the Town Clerk with one addition. The word “financially” shall be inserted immediately preceding the word “support” in line 6 and line 7 of paragraph 6 of page 1.

Vote: 4 – Ayes 0 – Noes

Items to Add to Agenda

Under New Business

- b) Discuss Homefront Letter
- c) Review Dog Control Annual Report

Supervisor’s Report

1. The monthly financial reports were reviewed and commented upon.
Councilman Ziehm motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Imhof, to accept the General and Highway Financial Reports for the month of February 2009 as presented.

Vote: 4 – Ayes 0 – Noes

2. On March 5, Supervisor Trinkle attended a meeting concerning the financial difficulties that Woodlands Cemetery Association is facing Cemetery associations from other local towns are facing the same issue and many of them were also present as well as three representatives from the NYS Department of Cemeteries. Cemeteries are financed by the interest and dividends earned from a permanent maintenance account. The account is formed by selling cemetery plots and a portion of the money is deposited into the account. NYS law says only the interest and dividends earned can be used, not the principal. The interest and dividends have been sufficient in the past. However, the current economic climate has greatly diminished returns and now expenses are exceeding income. Loss of income is also attributed to the fact that more people are being cremated and the plot price for ashes is considerably less, people are living longer and people are being buried in the National Cemetery which takes away local revenue.

Supervisor Trinkle commented that state law requires that if a cemetery defaults and is abandoned then the town in which it is located takes it over. It's expected to cost between \$75,000 - \$80,000 in 2009 to maintain the cemetery. To help solve the financial problem, it was suggested to seek volunteers to help with maintenance and to inform plot owners of the situation and ask them for donations.

Councilman Ziehm suggested bringing in the prison inmates to help out with the work and care of the grounds.

3. Tomorrow, March 10 there will be a meeting in the Town of Jackson of local officials and citizens concerned about the Lake Lauderdale Park. Because of the 2009 County budget cut, the park will only be open on weekends. Citizens have expressed dissatisfaction with the limited hours and now meetings are being held to find solutions to raise money to keep the park open more hours.

Town Board

Councilwoman Imhof stated that townspeople have asked her why the Jackson transfer station's hours were going to be cut to 3 days when the Greenwich transfer station hours were going to remain at the regular five days? She was under the impression that Jackson was the busiest facility ?

Councilman Frank Ziehm stated that he and Councilman Berndt attended a meeting in the Town of White Creek in February concerning the Comprehensive Plan that White Creek is drafting. Everyone got along and the meeting went well. We're going to watch and see how it goes. Their approach is more an agricultural protection plan as opposed to a comprehensive plan. There will be another meeting next month and anyone can attend.

Councilman Berndt remarked he thought the facilitator of the meeting had a lot to do with how smooth the meeting went. She has had practical experience in farmland protection. She handled the meeting well.

Town Clerk

Town Clerk Sally Eddy reported the town received a plaque from the Adirondack Tobacco Free Coalition for the town's participation in supporting tobacco free zones for school age children.

Tax Collector Sally Eddy stated there are 913 unpaid tax parcels to date which amounts to \$387,916.32. Late notices will be mailed to those property owners this week.

Planning Board

Secretary Sally Eddy reported the Planning Board met March 5 and transacted the following business:

1. Held a public hearing and granted final approval to Kimberly Davidson for a 3.74 acre minor subdivision on Conley Road.
2. Sam & Polly Scully, who own 8.9 acres on Belle Road, submitted a sketch plan to subdivide approximately a 2.5 acre parcel to convey to their son. The sketch plan met board approval and the Scullys were directed to proceed with the survey.

Highway Superintendent

In Superintendent Shaw's absence, Supervisor Trinkle read his monthly report.

1. PESH conducted a repeat inspection and all infractions had been corrected. We were signed off as being in compliance.
2. We met with FEMA a number of times within the past month. A damage and cleanup amount for our Town will soon be determined.
3. Roads were patched where needed.
4. Trees were cut for firewood at the shop.
5. Adverse weather was dealt with whenever needed.
6. The power sweeper was readied for spring cleanup.
7. Necessary repairs were made to the trucks and equipment.
8. Now that FEMA has finished conducting their assessments, the cleanup from the ice storm will get underway.

Communications

Supervisor Trinkle stated she received a letter from Andrew Pate, a resident of County Route 60. Mr. Pate expressed his concern about the illegal dumping of livestock carcasses in Washington County, in particular, the Town of Greenwich. He stated it poses a threat to public safety and wildlife of the area. He asked the Board to take measures to protect the town from the same thing happening in Cambridge. He encouraged the Town to do what it can to help farmers follow the guidelines put out by ENCON and Cornell Cooperative Extension for the proper disposing of animal carcasses.

Unfinished Business

Sole Assessor

Supervisor Trinkle introduced the town's new Sole Assessor, Mary Ellen Hill-Pierce. Ms. Hill-Pierce stated she has had 20 years experience in the assessing field and actually worked in the Town of Cambridge during the 1988 revaluation project. Her hours are Thursday evenings 5:00 – 9:00 PM and some Saturdays. She is also available by appointments. In addition to the Town of Cambridge, she is currently the Assessor of the Towns of Whitehall, Fort Ann and Corinth. In the Cambridge Office, Ms. Hill-Pierce stated there are still 30-50 2009 exemptions which have not been returned and she will be mailing a second notice to property owners this week to remind them.

Audit Town Clerk's Books

Town Clerk Sally Eddy submitted the Town Clerk's books to the Town Board for annual audit. The Board reviewed them and signed them for approval.

Clean-up Day

Town-wide spring cleanup has been set for April 11 – 25 to coincide with Earth Day which is April 22. Garbage bags will be available to citizens at the Town Hall and Highway Garage. Filled bags will be picked-up by the highway department. People need to call the highway garage to let Supt. Shaw know the location of the bags. It is hoped that the town roadsides will be cleaned up and free of debris and garbage before the Tour of the Battenkill Bicycle Race which is scheduled for the weekend of April 18 & 19.

Councilman Berndt reported that during the spring clean up time he is working to try to arrange for every household in the town to receive a reusable grocery bag, a compact florescent light bulb and recycling literature. The Cambridge Central School National Honor Society will distribute the items and Mr. Berndt will furnish breakfast to the group at the Town Hall on April 25. Hannaford and Stewarts are helping with the bags and he is soliciting donations from other sources. There is also a grant application available from Cornell Cooperative Extension to help fund the project. Mr. Berndt is in the process of investigating it.

High Speed Internet

Councilman Berndt reported that he has contacted Senator Little's Office concerning the status of high speed internet for the town. The Empire Grant, which will help fund the project, is currently being held up by the State and Verizon will not move ahead with the project until the funds are received.

Town Website

Mr. Berndt stated the town's website is up and running. The address is townofcambridgeny.org. He is working with Wilson Pratt to put additional information on the site, particularly aerial photos.

Bicycle Race

Dieter Drake, a resident of Coila Road and Coordinator of the Tour of the Battenkill Bicycle Race, was present to provide information to the Board about the upcoming race. The race will take place in the Town of Cambridge April 18 – 19 with an expected 1500 – 2000 bicycles and forty to fifty thousand spectators. It's the largest single day pro-am race in the country. He said about 300 volunteers are needed to help in various capacities such as race marshals at intersections and registration of participants.

Extra events will be going on in the community as well. He stated that it took a lot of cooperation and coordination with various agencies to make the race happen. He asked the Board to pass a resolution in support of the bicycle race.

In other matters, Mr. Drake offered to loan vests to people to wear as a safety measure when they are out picking up trash and debris along roadsides during spring clean up.

New Business

Investment Policy and Ethics Policy

The Board reviewed the town's Ethics Policy and Investment Policy. Supervisor Trinkle stated that in 2008 Now Municipal Special Accounts were added to the Investment Policy as another means of investing town monies.

Councilwoman Trinkle motioned, seconded by Councilman Ziehm, to approve the Ethics Policy and the Investment Policy for the Town of Cambridge as presented with no changes.

Vote: 4 – Ayes 0 – Noes

HomeFront Grant

Supervisor Trinkle stated she received a letter from HomeFront Development Corporation apprising her that HomeFront has been awarded over \$270,000 in funding from the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal. The funding is designed to assist 11 low income households to improve an existing home within Washington County. The average subsidy will be about \$24,000. Interested residents can call the Town Clerk for more information.

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Annual DCO/ACO Report

Ed Holland and Nancy Quell, Dog and Animal Control Officers for the Town, submitted an Annual Report of the activities of their department for 2008. Holland and Quell are DCO/ACO for several towns in the County. The report stated the shelter took in 170 dogs of which 9 belonged to the Town of Cambridge. Of the 7 dogs picked up 1 was placed in a humane center, 2 euthanized, 1 adopted and 3 redeemed by owner. One barking dog complaint was investigated and a case remains open involving chickens being killed by a dog on County Rt. 60. Several dog bite cases were attended to and dealt with through the County Health Department with no town involvement.

In 2008 Holland/Quell opened a new dog shelter at 1097 North Road, Greenwich, NY. Hours are: Mon. – Fri, 9:00 AM – Noon and 3:00 – 5:00 PM: Sat. –Sun. 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM. Since the expansion and relocation of the new shelter they are able to provide assistance to community members in placing pets of displaced owners. There has been much response and support.

County Report

1. Supervisor Trinkle related that the Washington County Historic Preservation Council looks for new members every year. Meetings are held at the Salem Court House. She said to contact her if anyone knows of someone who might be interested in joining.
2. On February 20, the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution to increase the price of solid waste stickers from \$1.50 each to \$1.75 each. Super. Trinkle voted in favor of it because without the increase some of the workers would have been laid off, the number of days the stations are open would have been reduced as well as the hours of operation. The \$.25 per sticker increase will keep the transfer stations operating at their current schedule.

Privilege of the Floor

William Watkins commented that the town did a reval in 2006- 2007 and the equalization rate was at 100%. He asked Assessor Mary Ellen Hill-Pierce why the town's rate has dropped to 91.1% in such a short period of time? Ms. Hill-Pierce responded that the equalization rate is established by the State when they do a comparison of the selling price of properties against their assessed values. She stated that properties are selling higher than what they are assessed for.

Mr. Watkins wanted to know why the town is not at 100%? Ms. Hill-Pierce responded that by doing a yearly up date the assessment roll can be kept at 100%. She would consider doing the update yearly so property owners would not be hit with any large changes which could happen if the update time period was longer. She said there is reimbursement aid from the State of \$5.00 per parcel when the update is made.

Mr. Watkins stated that the cambridgeboardwatch.com web site has had 438 hits in the last month with 2 being from Germany.

Mr. Watkins commented that he called the Animal Control Officer about an incident on County Rt. 60 where a dog killed some chickens. The officer has not responded to his call.

Mr. Watkins asked if any of the board members had any knowledge concerning the excavator rental contract with owner Ray Schraver? He asked how much Mr. Schraver was being paid per hour? Mr. Watkins source said it was \$100 per hour. Mr. Watkins stated his greatest concern was not the money, but was taking a

private individual's machinery into the town's shop and working on it. Mr. Watkins was referring to the trailer that was used to move the excavator. The trailer broke while the town was using it and the town fixed it. Who pays for it? Did Eric get reimbursed? What happens if someone gets hurt? Who's liable? Mr. Watkins said the highway garage is not a public facility.

Mr. Watkins asked what a part time/full time employee was? Supervisor Trinkle stated it was a seasonal worker who works a full 40 hour week with no benefits.

Jim Buckley remarked that some time ago he gave Supervisor Trinkle an old historical plaque which bore the name of a former town supervisor. The plaque came off of a bridge. He said the plaque should be displayed and wanted to know where it was. Supervisor Trinkle responded she still has it and will return it so Supt. Shaw can mount it somewhere on town grounds.

Mr. Buckley spoke disapprovingly of the Cornell Cooperative Extension Grant money that Councilman Berndt is looking into. Extension itself is facing large budget cuts. He said grants are taxpayers money and we don't need a grant to clean up the town. The people have been doing really well on their own for years.

Mr. Buckley spoke directly to Councilman Ziehm and stated "I see your on the Plan again". As a representative of the town to the Comprehensive Plan Committee you were there to protect the interest of the town. You knew the rules and regulations the Committee was to work under and what the town expected from these people. Do you think we did something wrong by putting the Plan down when you knew they were doing these things in violation of our rights? If you do not give up on the Plan I think I might personally sue you for the mistakes you made on this last Plan and get my money back that I spent fighting this thing. We will develop a Plan and we don't need grant money to do it.

Gerald Skiff thanked Dieter Drake for bringing the bicycle race to the Town and Village of Cambridge.

Supervisor Trinkle clarified for Rani Kronick that the Greenwich transfer station has been determined by the County to be the most used. Jackson station is a close second.

Cassie Fedler asked if there was a cost to the County to get rid of recyclables? Supervisor Trinkle responded there is for some of them. Recyclables are not a big source of revenue since the price so often fluctuates. Sometimes cardboard is high and glass is low or vice versa.

William Watkins stated he received a letter from an elderly taxpayer living on Galloway Lane asking him to inquire why the Highway Department is plowing and sanding private roads and lanes and not doing the same to their lane? It's a long driveway and costs \$60 every time it's plowed.

Supervisor Trinkle commented that the reason the town is doing the lanes they do is because they were put on the map many years ago and, by law, the town has to plow them. We're slowly getting rid of them. There are about 32 lanes in the town and it takes 4 ½ hours to plow them with the pick-up.

Support of Bicycle Race

Resolution by Councilwoman Carol Imhof

Unanimous Second

Be It Resolved, that the Town Board of the Town of Cambridge does hereby enthusiastically support the Tour of the Battenkill Pro-Am Bicycle Race and commends Deiter Drake for coordinating and bringing the event to the Town and Village of Cambridge.

Audit Bills

The following bills were presented for audit and approved for payment:

General # 27 – 52 \$25,045.32

Highway #24 – 35 \$ 8,647.74

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was moved and carried to adjournment 9:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sally B. Eddy