

VILLAGE OF CHATHAM BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
TRACY MEMORIAL HALL, 77 MAIN STREET, CHATHAM NY
THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 2013, 7:00 PM EDT

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Curran open the Public Hearing to discuss the resolution to turn over running the Village elections to the Columbia County Board of Elections.

Present: Mayor Curran, Trustee Rippel, Trustee Morrell, Trustee Packet, Treasurer Henry, Clerk Burke, Virginia Martin, Democratic Election Commissioner, Georgene Gardner, Ernie Reis, Jim Garvey, Melony Spock, Kate Mostaccio from the *Register Star*, and Emilia Teasdale from the *Columbia Paper*.

Mayor Curran has been speaking with Virginia Martin and Jason Nastke from the Columbia County Board of Elections. Price that has been quoted to the Village is \$2,500 - \$2,800, which is probably comparable to what it costs to have the Village Clerk run the elections. Mayor's opinion is that Clerk is in awkward position doing elections, and believes the transparency and good government of having the Board of Elections take over Village elections is a good thing.

Virginia Martin - is the Democratic Election Commissioner and Jason Nastke is the Republican Election Commissioner here in Columbia County. The BOE would be happy to take over running Village elections. They are very accessible and the new voting machines are good. They have well-honed security systems and lots of experience in elections.

Trustee Rippel asked how many other Village elections the BOE handles.

Ms. Martin answered none and stated that there are only 3 Villages in the County and each does their own.

Trustee Rippel stated that he doesn't think the Clerk is in an awkward position during election time. Stated that many of the same residents are poll inspectors every year and wanted to know if they would be able to continue.

Ms. Martin answered yes, the same people can be inspectors, but they need to complete a training course with the BOE. A minimum of four (4) people will be needed on election day - two (2) democrats and two (2) republicans. That makes it a good and safe process because credibility is increased. Both sides watch each other, and two (2) people must look at everything. Would love to hire Village residents and train them to do the job.

Georgene Gardner - asked if the people who currently work the Village elections have already been trained.

Ms. Martin answered that she didn't know for sure about current workers. The BOE welcomes new people and provides training for anyone who is interested.

Trustee Morrell asked about the price quote given. Wants to know if that only covers certain things or if that covers everything that could possibly happen.

Ms. Martin answered that they quote covers ballot programming, moving the voting machine to and from the Village, advertising, administrative costs and technical costs, hourly pay rates for inspectors and pay for vote collectors to take the ballots when the day is done.

Trustee Morrell asked how absentee ballots would be handled.

Ms. Martin answered that the BOE would print, mail and collect, and open and count absentee ballots. That process is always completely bi-partisan.

Trustee Rippel asked if all ballots would be counted while in Chatham?

Ms. Martin answered that was a good possibility. She would like to have everything completed in one day and have official results before they leave.

Jim Garvey – asked if the new machines also count ballots.

Ms. Martin answered yes. The machine counts the ballots as people come in to vote.

Ernie Reis – stated that electronic results at the moment and absentee ballot counting here in the Village should be accurate, though probably not certified here that same night. Stated that Liz Chapman always did a great job here. Stated that absentee ballots can be handed out up to the day before the elections.

Ms. Martin stated that absentee ballots would most likely be mailed out of their office.

Trustee Rippel asked how residents would pick up ballots in Hudson if they can't drive.

Ms. Martin answered that absentee ballots can be mailed.

Ernie Reis – stated that there is some fear in the new voting machines because they are electronic. He disagrees with the BOE on 100% checking.

Mayor Curran asked if the state only requires a 3% check.

Ms. Martin answered yes. She believes that 3% is inadequate and that paper ballots are more trustworthy than computers. The BOE is trying to come up with a good audit so that people feel confident that their votes are being counted. Would like to come up with an easy and understandable way to accomplish this.

Mayor Curran asked if the County does 100% checks.

Ms. Martin answered yes, but stated that she thinks some lower number would be acceptable, if a decision can be made.

Ernie Reis – asked if elections would be held at the Tracy if the BOE runs the elections.

Mayor Curran answered yes, and stated that the building is handicapped accessible.

Jim Garvey – asked if there is a state law requiring the Village Clerk to run the elections.

Mayor Curran answered no and stated that according to the Village Attorney, all that is needed to switch elections to be run by BOE is a resolution and a 30 day referendum period.

Georgene Gardner – asked if costs would be the same, having the Clerk do everything and having the BOE do everything.

Mayor Curran answered yes, when accounting for time, inspectors, publishing costs, etc.

Georgene Gardner – stated that the elections should be impartial and fair-minded. Hundreds of people come out to vote now. Elections have changed. Appreciates consideration of trying to run elections in a professional manner.

Ms. Martin stated that it would be great to count all ballots here in the Tracy on election day. Stated that it is a good democratic, open, transparent process to watch. Stated that new inspectors might be brought in for ballot counting if the ones who have been here all day are too tired.

Jim Garvey – stated that voting has been handled by the Village Clerk forever and asked why want to change now.

Mayor Curran answered that there is a new Clerk now who has never dealt with elections before. This is a good time to make the change. Would like to make things easier for the Clerk.

Trustee Morrell commented that there could be perception issues with the Clerk running elections and some people might wonder is he/she is being fair.

Trustee Packet stated that it could be hard for the Clerk to deal with issues that are unclear. The Clerk has to call the BOE for answers. The elections are a tremendous amount for work for the clerk.

Trustee Rippel stated that Clerks have been handling the elections here in Chatham forever.

Trustee Morrell stated that just because something has been done before doesn't mean it shouldn't change.

Emilia Teasdale – asked why Village elections are held in March.

Ms. Martin answered that is Village law. Elections can be held in March, June or November – a change in the law would be needed.

Ernie Reis – Stated that the Village Clerk can be put in uncomfortable positions because he/she works for the Board of Trustees.

Trustee Morrell stated that the Clerk currently receives absentee ballot applications, then mails out a ballot to whoever requested one. The Clerk opens the ballot when it is returned in the mail. Asked how the BOE would handle this from now on.

Ms. Martin answered that the absentee ballot envelopes are inspected when they come in to ensure they were sent/received in time, and all information printed on them is correct. They are stored in a double-locked closet which requires two (2) keys – one (1) democrat and one (1) republican.

Melony Spock – asked if everything will look similar.

Ms. Martin stated that a different voting machine will be used.

Melony Spock asked who will be in charge on election day.

Ms. Martin answered that the two (2) co-chairs would be in charge, one (1) democrat and one (1) republican. They will be able to call BOE Commissioners if needed. Stated that the whole process is very organized.

Motion to close the public hearing was made by Trustee Morrell, seconded by Trustee Rippel. All approved.

MEETING MINUTES

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER at 730pm

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

ROLL CALL: Mayor Curran, Trustee Lenore Packet, Trustee Jay Rippel, Trustee Adrienne Morrell and Treasurer Barbara Henry. Absent: Trustee Mike Wollowitz.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD #1:

Wayne Sirlin told the BOT about his water billing problem. His first quarter bill was for \$627.79. He usually only pays a minimum payment (\$37.26). Clerk Burke checked his usage history – Mr. Sirlin has never paid above the minimum charge. Ed Czyzewski visited Mr. Sirlin’s property and could not find any obvious answer to this high water bill. There were no obvious leaks, flooding, etc. Mr. Sirlin stated that he had no problems inside the house like leaks, running toilets, filling swimming pools, washing cars, etc. Mr. Sirlin is looking for some financial relief with his first quarter bill.

Mayor Curran stated that he has spoken to Ed Czyzewski about water meters before. They may stop working, or slow down as they age, but they never speed up.

Trustee Packet stated that there has been a similar problem for a residence on Woodbridge Avenue, but does not recall how that was resolved.

Mr. Sirlin will pay current water bill, but not any charges from the first quarter bill he is questioning.

Mayor Curran would like to see what future billings look like.

Minutes

Motion made by Trustee Packet, seconded by Trustee Morrell to accept minutes from June 27 meeting as presented after changes. All approved.

Motion made by Trustee Rippel, seconded by Trustee Morrell to accept minutes from July 11 meeting as presented after changes. All approved.

Reports

Police Report – read by interim Chief Mark Leggett.

- Fireman’s Parade route set and Fair coverage is being worked on.
- Have three (3) fully-automatic rifles that will be returned to the military. Do not need full-auto in civilian use. Will not be used before they are returned.

Trustee Packet – asked what residence checks are.

Chief Leggett answered that officers check long term and vacationing residences.

Mayor Curran has been receiving positive feedback since the traffic/speed signs were set up on Route 295. This seems to be slowing down traffic and cutting down on noise complaints from “jake braking.”

Trustee Rippel asked interim Chief Leggett is everything has been going well since he took over.

Chief Leggett answered yes and stated that he gives Mayor Curran regular updates.

Trustee Rippel asked if professional development/training is happening.

Mayor Curran answered that nothing has been scheduled yet.

Trustee Rippel asked if the money for that is still available.

Treasurer Henry answered yes, it is still available.

Fire Report –report was read by Chief Paul Pratt.

- Courtney Haner is graduating Fire Fighter 1 school next week.
- Mackenzie Cox started Fire Fighter 1 school last week.

- Eight (8) new firefighters so far this year.

Mayor Curran attended the wet down ceremony for the new truck and said it was great. Chief Pratt and the rest of the fire department did a great job with the ceremony and with the carnival that weekend.

Wastewater/Water – no report.

- Trustee Packet stated that hydrants are still being painted.
- There have been some question about street lights that need to be repaired on Dardess Drive – Ed Czyzewski, Mayor Curran, Clerk Burke and NYSEG are looking into it. Jon Bartholomew found Highpointe maps. Mayor Curran thinks NYSEG is responsible for the poles in question. Will discuss is further with Ed and NYSEG.
- DPW is assisting with locating water/pipes on new Price Chopper property. Construction/ground breaking has begun.

Mayor Curran stated that the newly painted hydrants all look great and the Village looks good.

Streets – no report.

Treasurer/Administrator – read by Barbara Henry

- Facebook page for the Village is up and running. Please “like” it!

Discussion of having a contest to create a new logo for the Village of Chatham. Mayor Curran would like to see signs as you drive in to the Village.

Resolution #240 for Barbara Henry to work on logo contest project, with no limit on where participants are from, to be judged by up to five (5) volunteers, then the top three (3) will be given to the Board of Trustees for final judging with the first prize being \$100, and the next two receiving \$25 each.

Resolution made by Trustee Packet, seconded by Trustee Morrell. All approved.

Retirement – Trustee Rippel asked what Village employees get offered NYS retirement.

Treasurer Henry answered that all employees are offered NYS retirement, and stated that she had just submitted a few applications.

Trustee Rippel asked how many employees participate. Treasurer Henry answered that she was not sure of an exact number.

Trustee Rippel asked if the Mayor and Trustees are eligible. Treasurer Henry stated that she did not know.

Trustee Rippel asked if all people are asked about joining the NYS retirement when they are hired. Treasurer Henry answered yes.

Building Inspector – no report at this time.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Village Elections

Resolution #241 that pursuant to the New York State Election Law and Village Law, the Village of Chatham will transfer the authority to operate and run all Village Elections from the Village Clerk to the Columbia County Board of Elections starting with the next Village election in March of 2014. It is further resolved that the Village of Chatham will reimburse the County for all costs associated with the elections, not to exceed \$2,800 as quoted. This resolution is subject to permissive referendum and the Village Clerk shall cause such notice to be placed in the official Village newspaper and two (2) locations in the Village.

Discussion of the Resolution:

Trustee Rippel stated that he has heard the county is hurting for money and asked what would happen if they can't do it. This would also take another service out of the Village. Understands Mayor Curran's reasons. Asked if NYS would take over if the County has trouble. He is not comfortable handing this over now. There is a sense of community having Village people running the elections. Asked if it would be possible to hire a part-time election clerk if it is too much added work for the Village Clerk. Suggested that two (2) people could be hired, one (1) democrat and one (1) republican.

Trustee Packet stated that Villagers pay taxes to the County and they have the knowledge. Former Clerk have said it was a lot of work and was very stressful. Thinks the County knows exactly what needs to be done. Doesn't feel bad giving this responsibility to someone else.

Mayor Curran stated that Clerk Burke is not a full-time employee and is not trained in running elections. The last Clerk was full-time. There will be good professionalism having the Board of Elections run the Village elections. He stated that he does not see this as a negative to the Village.

Trustee Packet stated that the voting machine we have broke twice during the last election and people had to use paper ballots which made everything very chaotic.

Trustee Morrell stated that she likes the amount of transparency that the Board of Elections will offer. No one person will be put in an awkward position. This would stop any appearance of potential favoritism by the Village Clerk. Villagers will be able to receive training and can work with the Board of Elections if they choose. The election can still be held at the Tracy. The Board of Elections has lots of experience and answers for things that come up on election day. Elections take lots of work and are very emotional and very stressful for everyone involved.

Mayor Curran stated that the Clerk has lots of other work going on at the same time, things like water billing and budget preparation. Elections create lots of work for everyone. Thinks letting the Board of Elections taking over would be a positive change.

Trustee Rippel stated that both Treasurer Henry and Clerk Burke work part-time. Doesn't see amount of work as a valid reason as it can be a shared duty.

Treasurer Henry stated that she was working here for the last election.

Mayor Curran asked if further discussion was needed. Trustees said no and resolution was voted on.

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Trustee Morrell: AYE. Having the Board of Elections run the Village elections will show transparency, balance and fairness. The Board of Elections has information that we don't have. It is a good value monetarily and the process will be the same. The election will still be held in the Tracy. Village resident can still work elections if they get trained by the Board of Elections.

Trustee Rippel: NO. Agree with everything said by Trustee Morrell. Don't want to see change just for the sake of change. Thinks elections should be kept under Village control, not given to the County.

Trustee Packet: AYE. The Board of Elections have a new voting machine that should work correctly. Does not think Treasurer Henry and Clerk Burke are incapable of running an election, but they should not be forced to take on this extra work. The Board of Elections gives us more knowledge and serves the same purpose as always.

Mayor Curran: AYE. Having the Board of Elections run the Village elections will bring true bipartisanship to the voting process here in the Village. They offer a real level of professionalism and the actual voting location will remain in the Village.

Parking Behind Main Street

Mayor Curran would like the Village to be the lessee with CSX. Trustee Packet stated that this is already in place.

Mayor Curran stated that the Village will need to administer invoices for rented spaces.

Trustee Rippel asked how parking would be enforced when the Chatham Police Department is not on duty. Mayor Curran answered that he has spoken to Chief Leggett about this. The police department is going to start issuing tickets randomly throughout the week. Have also discussed increasing parking ticket fees, which might make buying a parking permit cheaper.

Trustee Morrell asked how much the parking spot rental cost would be. Mayor Curran answered that it is still being discussed. A lot will depend on how much it will cost to fix that parking area.

Trustee Packet stated that a safe barricade needs to be put in. The drive needs to be more smooth when vehicles pass through. Asked where funding will come from to fix everything. Thinks that if the businesses on Main Street contribute, then they shouldn't be charged to park in that lot.

Treasurer Henry stated that current parking spots are billed on a quarterly basis.

Trustee Packet would like to make sure this project continues to move forward.

Trustee Rippel asked if there is a time line to complete this project. Mayor Curran hopes everything is complete no later than March 2014.

Trustee Rippel asked whose liability this parking area will fall under. Mayor Curran answered that it will probably fall on to the Village's liability.

Trustee Packet stated that many people have parking in that area for years.

Mayor Curran stated that the biggest step is getting the barricade up. Trustee Packet stated that DPW likes to do that type of work and that they could probably get it done. Trustee Rippel asked if that would happen before winter. Mayor Curran answered yes, definitely before winter.

Permeable Pavement Grant

Mayor Curran stated that the Columbia Land Conservancy is working on permeable pavement grant and would like to use the Village as the applicant. They will write the grant. If granted, 10% of any fees would be paid by the Village, and the remaining 90% would be paid by NYS. The Columbia Land Conservancy is doing a feasibility study to see if this lot is good for this type of pavement.

It was agreed that this would wait until the feasibility study is complete before the Village pursues this matter further.

Kline Kill

Received letter from Patrick Prendergast re: Kline Kill Water Supply Emergency Generator bid results. The lowest bidder was Brunswick Electric at \$72,300. Mr. Prendergast found the bid to be in order and the company is not listed on the state's blacklist of contractors. He recommends awarding this work to Brunswick Electric.

Resolution #242 to award Brunswick Electric for the installation of an emergency generator at the Kline Kill water supply.

Resolution made by Trustee Packet, seconded by Trustee Rippel. All approved.

Water Tower

Mayor Curran stated that Village engineer Patrick Prendergast recommends the Village water tower be repaired as soon as possible. The tower will need to be drained and dried, after which a camera will be placed inside to see what it looks like. We did receive a quote on this a couple of years ago. Quite a few pinholes have been repaired already. Need a good estimate on what to do to fix the tank properly.

Because of the new procurement policy, Treasurer Henry asked if there are other companies that will be able to provide quotes. Mayor Curran answered yes.

Mayor Curran stated that the company the quote was received from previously cannot do the test until September.

Treasurer Henry stated that the procurement policy in place should be followed.

Resolution #243 to put out to bid, the testing of the water tower to determine if it can be repaired or if it needs to be replaced.

Resolution made by Trustee Rippel, seconded by Trustee Packet. All approved.

Donation of Bench

Mayor Curran read a letter he received from Claire Packet re: installing a commemorative bench in the Village in honor of Ms. Lauren Dapice. It will be a wooden bench, handcrafted by a local woodworking artisan.

Resolution #244 to accept donation of safe and sturdy park bench to be placed within the Village.

Resolution made by Trustee Rippel, seconded by Trustee Packet. All approved.

Collective Bargaining Agreement

Discussion of proposed resolution.

Trustee Rippel asked if this version had been voted on by Village employees who are CSEA members. Mayor Curran answered yes, and stated that he had met with Michael Richardson, union rep. Ed Czyzewski and a representative from CSEA. This is the approved draft. The final version must be signed by Union Rep and officials from the Village.

Treasurer Henry stated that this has not been ratified by the members as of yet.

Trustee Rippel asked if this proposed resolution would allow Mayor Curran and Michael Richardson to sign this Agreement. Mayor Curran answered yes, unless the workers choose not to sign it, even though it has already been verbally agreed to.

Trustee Morrell asked what changes were made. Treasurer Henry answered: the wastewater treatment operators salary was increased; there were some other raises given in the Chatham Police Department and water departments; changes in Health Insurance; a floating holiday was added; and pay will be switched to every two weeks, instead of every week.

Treasurer Henry stated all requests were agreed to.

Mayor Curran stated that the workers need to sign this agreement before it becomes final.

Trustee Rippel asked what happens if they don't sign this agreement. Mayor Curran answered that the workers must be happy otherwise they wouldn't have gotten this far along in the process. Treasurer Henry stated that if the workers refuse to sign, then the process would have to start over again.

Resolution #245 to accept the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Village of Chatham and the Civil Service Employees Association, Inc. for the period June 1, 2013 through May 31, 2016.

Resolution made by Trustee Morrell, seconded by Trustee Packet. All approved.

Correspondence

Sidewalk on High Street

The resident of 52 High Street would like to remove the sidewalk at the front of their property. The submitted a written request and photos to show what the sidewalk looks like.

Mayor Curran stated that he checked this property. The sidewalk on that portion of the street serves no useful purpose and he is not against this property owner removing that portion.

Trustee Packet stated that sidewalks are the responsibility of the homeowners.

Mayor Curran will have DPW locate water pipes to make sure they are not in the way of any removal and will check with ZEO Walt Simonsmeier to make sure it is okay for this work to be done.

Letter of Resignation

Received a letter of resignation from Police Officer Randy Strattman.

Resolution #246 to accept resignation of Randy Strattman from the Village of Chatham Police Department.

Resolution made by Trustee Packet, seconded by Trustee Rippel. All approved.

Code Enforcement

Received a letter from the Planning Board asking about Code Enforcement in the Village. Mayor Curran stated that Walt Simonsmeier is the Building Inspector and the Zoning Enforcement Officer.

Mayor Curran stated that Mr. Simonsmeier is going through old applications and finding problems. Attorney has asked how the Village would like to proceed with penalties.

Trustee Packet stated that the Village incurs costs every time they file charges against a resident.

Trustee Rippel stated that the Judge should handle and have the Village Attorney go through the process.

Planning Board

Received a letter from the Planning Board re: a possible conflict of interest. Ernie Reis has applied to become a Planning Board member and his daughter is the Secretary to that Board. There should be no conflict. The Planning Board has received two (2) applications in their search for a new member.

Mayor Curran stated that the Planning Board should interview all of their applicants and make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees for final approval.

Items Worthy of Mention

- 1) Speed enforcement is working – vehicles are slowing down and jake braking is reduced as well.
- 2) Flooding/Bordens Pond/Payn Ave – Pat Prendergast is working on this. He will be meeting with pond people to see if it is feasible to do some work.
- 3) Parking Behind Main St – already discussed.
- 4) Handicapped Parking – the Town of Chatham has approved a handicapped parking space in the municipal lot. DPW has the stencil to paint and will do shortly.

Trustee Packet stated that NYS does not do handicapped spots. Mayor Curran stated that the Village will also add a handicapped parking spot near Ralphs Café on Main Street.

- 5) Parking in Municipal Lot – the Village will install a sign at the entrance to this lot declaring it to be a 2 hour parking area only.

Tennis Courts on Jones Avenue

Scott Wood and his son Matt would like to donate some repair work at the tennis courts on Jones Avenue. Mayor Curran will ask for a formal proposal.

Flowers/Beautification

Trustee Packet stated that Linda Gibson will be taking over flowers and gardens on Main Street. Volunteers are needed to help weed and water.

Public Comment Period #2

No comments.

Resolution #247 to approve the abstracts in the amount of \$19,133.53 and off abstracts in the amount of \$40,340.33.

Resolution made by Trustee Packet, seconded by Trustee Rippel. All approve.

Motion made by Trustee Packet, seconded by Trustee Morrell to adjourn at 9:45pm. All approved.

Next regular meeting will be held August 22 at 7:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn A. Burke
Village Clerk