

VESTAL TOWN BOARD WORK SESSION MINUTES

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2014

In Attendance: Supervisor Schaffer and Board Members Fitzgerald, Majewski and Messina.

Also Attending: Comptroller Laura McKane, Police Chief John Butler, Town Attorney David Berger, Human Resource Officer Nancy Olmstead, Town Clerk Emil Bielecki, Recreation Planner Sue Jastran and 5 members of the general public.

The Work Session was convened by Supervisor Schaffer at 6:00 PM.

UPCOMING PUBLIC HEARINGS

November 5, 2014, 6:00 PM - Local Law "F". A Local Law to Override the Tax Levy Limit established in General Municipal Law 3-c.

November 5, 2014, 6:15 PM - 2015 Preliminary Town Budget

6:00 Police Chief John Butler to discuss the 2015 police budget.

Police Chief John Butler appeared in front of the Town Board to present his case for hiring 3 additional police officers, primarily to relieve the afternoon and midnight shifts. Chief Butler noted that he understands the budgetary difficulties that the Board is facing. However, it is important that the Board be aware of the current difficulties and problems that are weighing on the Police Department. They include the following:

- Since 2010, the Police Department is down from 37 to 32 employees, a 13.5% staff reduction.
- The staff reductions have resulted in a cut in manpower during the busiest afternoon and night shifts. With only 3 officers working a shift, there is serious concern about adequate coverage, especially when 2 man incidents are in progress.
- In addition to the time lost due to ordinary vacation and other leave time, the Department has up to 6 people who will be eligible for retirement.
- The Department has handled over 8,400 complaints year to date, an increase of about 350 from last year.
- The additional assignment to narcotics also reduces officer hours on the street.
- We have a huge amount of vehicular traffic into Vestal, which is good for the Town but not so good for the police.
- The semi-rural makeup of Vestal makes it attractive for meth labs.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to keep the criminal element out of Vestal.
- The Police Department handles over 1,000 accidents per year.
- The Police Department handles about 240 arrests per year just at Walmart.
- Several State laws under consideration could add additional work to the Department.

Several Board members noted that hiring additional police officers is a good idea but current fiscal constraints make it difficult to accomplish. Councilwoman Messina added that the lack of a settlement with the police unions creates further uncertainty.

Supervisor Schaffer asked about sharing services with other departments, particularly the Sheriff. Chief Butler replied that most other departments do not have the resources to assist us in any meaningful way.

Comptroller McKane noted that when all expenses are factored in, it costs approximately \$80,000 per year to hire a new police officer under Tier 6. Chief Butler indicated that in some cases it could be more cost effective to hire experienced Tier 5 police officers. It can take up to 8 months to put a Tier 6

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officer on the street. If the Board authorizes the additional hiring, the decision needs to be made relatively soon in order to get any new officers into the police academy.

Chief Butler also asked the Board to consider a pay increase for our four school crossing guards. They are requesting that their hourly wage be increased from \$9.90/hour to \$10.15/hour. The total increase would cost less than \$400.

COMMITTEES

7.1 PUBLIC WORKS

1. Discuss the request from the Vestal Emergency Squad to give the Town a 1997 pick-up truck in exchange for \$12,000 in payment due on the squad building.

Supervisor Schaffer stated that two departments are interested in this vehicle (Parks, Maintenance). Retrofitting this vehicle for Town use could save us up to \$50,000 in capital expenditures.

Town Attorney Berger noted that the Board should get an independent valuation of this vehicle. Supervisor Schaffer indicated that he would try to get that information prior to the Regular Meeting.

OK-This item will be placed on the Agenda for a vote at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board.

7.2 FINANCE

1. **Warrants:** 2014-43, 2014-43E, 2014-43L, 2014-43W, 2014-44, 2014-44E

OK – This item will be placed as a ‘Receive and File’ on the Agenda for the next Regular Meeting.

2. Request from Comptroller Laura McKane to contract with Sun Life and Health Insurance Company to provide life insurance and disability insurance effective 1/1/15.

Comptroller McKane stated that these items are part of our benefits package. They went out to bid this year and Sun Life came in as the lowest bidder, saving us about \$6,000 per year. The contract also includes some enhancements.

OK-This item will be placed on the Agenda for a vote at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board.

7.3 PERSONNEL

7.4 PLANNING & ZONING

7.5 PUBLIC SAFETY

1. Request from Fire Chief Patrick McPherson to accept the following donations:

a. Check of \$500.00 donation from Citgo for Equipment Purchase to put against the Special Foam District F3410 4034R.

b. Cash donations of \$70.00 received from Park Terrace Pre-School (\$25), Home-School Group (\$35) and Anonymous Person (\$10) to go towards the Fire Prevention line of F3410 4612.

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Councilman Majewski noted that the Fire Department has amended the Citgo donation (a). The money will instead go into the Operation Line – F3410 4060 for purchase of Water Rescue equipment.

OK-This item will be placed on the Agenda for a vote at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board.

7.6 ADMINISTRATION

1. Request from IT Director Dan Williams to dispose of computer equipment items as listed in a memo to the Town Boards dated 10/23/2014. These items are no longer in service with the Town.

Councilwoman Fitzgerald noted that this is obsolete equipment and there is no indication that the school district has any interest in accepting these items as donations. The equipment will be recycled.

OK-This item will be placed on the Agenda for a vote at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilman Majewski stated that Parks Superintendent Jim Bukowski has requested Board authorization to purchase 2 surplus trucks at a cost of \$3,500 each. One of the trucks would be converted to replace the salt truck.

Comptroller McKane indicated that there is no money in the Parks operating budget for these purchases.

Several Board members had questions about the trucks and wondered why we would want to purchase 2 of them. Supervisor Schaffer stated that there is definitely a need for one truck but that that he would speak to the Parks Superintendent to get additional information about his request.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. **Kopernik Tower**

Broome County Emergency Services Director Brett Chellis indicated a willingness to proceed with the construction of a tower at the Kopernik Observatory location if an agreement can be reached with the Town concerning the construction of a new tower at the Andrew Road location. The Town is to submit to the County information about the users of the existing tower at Andrews Road so that bid specs could be prepared for the construction of a new tower at that location.

Update on 11/3/14: IT Director Dan Williams stated that the information that was being asked for has been provided to the County.

2. **Replacement of Fire Station 4**

The Town and the Fire Department are continuing to explore less costly alternatives for the replacement of the Station 4 building.

3. **Purchase of Town land by Vestal Veterinary Hospital**

The submitted formal bid of \$5,000 is under review. Supervisor Schaffer asked that the Town Attorney make it clear to the prospective buyer that as a condition of any sale, they must agree to pay all costs associated with moving this transaction through regulatory approval process and the closing.

Update on 11/3/14: Town Attorney Berger noted that a letter has been sent to the bidder. Supervisor Schaffer stated that a meeting with the interested party has been scheduled.

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4. Request to accept from DiRienzo Brothers Bakery a gift of the land parcel known as 561 Vestal Parkway West, Tax Map #173.21-1-4, containing approximately 0.16 acres of land.

Update on 11/3/14: Town Attorney Berger noted that he has already received some of the items that he needed and is waiting for one additional item having to do with a search for liens or judgments.

2015 Budget Update

Comptroller McKane distributed paper copies of a *PowerPoint* presentation that she would be showing at the Public Hearing on the 2015 Preliminary Town Budget. She asked that the Board review the presentation and offer suggestions for changes or additions. She also commented on two budget issues:

- One of the reasons for the drop in revenue was that the chargeback to Water and Sewer was reduced due to revisiting the allocation of services provided by the general fund personnel.
- Revenue from the sale of highway equipment is under review.

After a brief discussion, the Board asked Comptroller McKane to include the following items in her presentation:

- Show the potential cost of adding 2 new police officers.
- Create a pie chart to better show how the money from the total tax bill is allocated.

SUPERVISOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. Public Hearings on Wednesday, November 5, 2015:
 - **6:00 PM** - Local Law "F" A Local Law to Override the Tax Levy Limit Established in General Municipal Law 3-c
 - **6:15 PM** – 2015 Preliminary Town Budget
2. **Leaf Pick Up** – until snow falls. Place leaves along the curb but **AWAY FROM STORM DRAINS!** No yard waste or branches. For more information contact Highway Department at 607-785-4616.
3. **Winter Parking Hours** will begin on December 1 and go through March 31. Vehicle parking on all Town and County roads is prohibited between the hours of 2:00 AM to 6:00 AM.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion of Councilwoman Messina, seconded by Councilman Majewki, the following was

ADOPTED Ayes 4 Fitzgerald, Majewski, Messina, Schaffer
Nays 0

Resolved the Board enter into Executive Session for the following purpose:

- Discuss labor negotiation concerning the unsettled contracts with 3 bargaining units.
- Discuss potential litigation concerning the Police Department.

The time was 7:20 PM.

On a motion of Councilwoman Messina, seconded by Councilwoman Fitzgerald, the following was

ADOPTED Ayes 4 Fitzgerald, Messina, Majewski, Schaffer
Nays 0

Resolved the Board leave Executive Session and **adjourn the Work Session. The time was 8:10 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Emil Bielecki, Town Clerk