

## VESTAL TOWN BOARD WORK SESSION MINUTES

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2017

Board Attendance: Supervisor Schaffer; Board Members: Agneshwar, Messina, Fitzgerald, Majewski

Also Attending: Town Attorney David Berger, Human Resource Director Nancy Olmstead, Police Chief John Butler, Town Clerk Emil Bielecki and 11 people from the general public.

Supervisor Schaffer **convened the Work Session at 6:00 PM.**

### **6:00 PM - John Burkhard (PBA) – Veterans Benefit**

Police Officer Jack Burkhard, speaking on behalf of the Vestal Police Benevolent Association (PBA), addressed the Board concerning the granting of a benefit for police officers who served in the military to buy back up 3 years of military service to apply toward NYS Retirement. The State has already approved this legislation. Even though the Town's position is that this a negotiable item under the PBA contract, the PBA is asking that the Town Board to approve this benefit unilaterally because it is beneficial to the eligible employees and to the Town. These officers fought for this country and they deserve the support of the Board. Among the features of this benefit are as follows:

- The Town would not pay anything. The eligible employees would fund the buyback.
- By replacing an eligible officer with a new officer, the Town would save money in longevity, pay rate and vacation time. The savings would be approximately \$25,000 per officer per year.
- The one cost to the Town would be the healthcare contributions of the officers who leave early.
- There would be savings in health insurance costs because the new officers would be contributing at a higher rate and would more likely be using single rather than family coverage.

Councilman Majewski stated that he supports the granting of this benefit but he wished that the PBA was more willing to make this into a two way street when negotiating with the Town. Officer Burkhard responded that police officers are deserving of this benefit because their jobs are uniquely dangerous. As to the negotiating positions, each case has to be evaluated on its own merit and he has to take positions that reflect the wishes of the majority of members.

Police Chief John Butler urged the Board to grant this benefit because it would provide savings when Grade 2 officers are replaced by new Grade 6 officers.

Several Council members asked how many officers in the department are currently eligible for this benefit. Officer Burkhard stated that there are 5 eligible officers in the PBA unit and 1 in the Supervisors unit.

Supervisor Schaffer stated that the Board is currently studying the issue and will discuss it further before making a decision.

### **6:20 PM - Engineering Firm McFarland Johnson Inc.**

Scott Faulkner and Rich Rooney, Professional Engineers with the engineering firm of McFarland Johnson Inc., presented the Board with a *Powerpoint* presentation that highlighted the expertise of the firm in public works projects. The presentation focused on how McFarland Johnson could work with the Town on some of the upcoming highway and construction projects that are being funded by Federal and State grants.

The major benefits of using McFarland Johnson include the following: Experience; Relationships; Reduced Design Time; Reduced Construction Time; Visioneering. The presenters described each

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benefit in detail and showed examples of successful local projects. They also noted that the firm has a very good working relationship with the local NYS DOT representatives.

### **UPCOMING PUBLIC HEARINGS**

February 15, 2017

Local Law 2 – Amending Sewer Rents

Local Law 3 – Placing a Temporary Moratorium on Telecommunication Towers within the Town of Vestal

### **COMMITTEES**

#### **7.1 PUBLIC WORKS (FITZGERALD/Majewski)**

1. Request for Town Supervisor John Schaffer to sign agreements with NY State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) for the Washington Drive over Fuller Hollow Creek Bridge Rehabilitation.  
**OK**-This item will be placed on the Agenda for a vote at the next Regular Meeting of the Town Board.

#### **7.2 FINANCE (AGNESHWAR/Fitzgerald)**

1. Warrants: 2017-06, 2017-06A

Councilwoman Agneshwar stated that she reviewed the warrants and has been in a discussion with the Business Office for clarification concerning payment for an accident involving a Parks vehicle.

Councilman Majewski asked about a payment to Norfolk Southern Railroad. Councilwoman Agneshwar stated that she would look into it and provide an answer.

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

2. Request to accept a PERMA Wellness Grant in the amount of \$400 to help fund the *Get Healthy in 2017 Program* by Positive LifeForce corporate wellness services.

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

3. Request to pay Town Attorney David Berger \$262.50 for January 2017 billable hours.

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

#### **7.3 PERSONNEL (FITZGERALD/Agneshwar)**

1. Request to authorize Town Clerk Emil Bielecki to hire Tarah Tripp as the Dog Control Officer (part-time) at an annual rate of \$28,000.00 with a start date of March 1, 2017.

Councilwoman Fitzgerald asked if this position is in a union. Human Resource Director Nancy Olmstead replied that the position is in the CSEA unit but due to the unique nature of this job, we are discussing some alternatives of how to classify the position. However, due to time constraints resulting from an unexpected cancellation of an Inter-municipal Agreement for dog control services, we are asking the Board to approve the hiring of a part-time dog control officer at a set salary so as not to have a gap in providing the state mandated dog control services.

#### **7.4 PLANNING & ZONING (MESSINA/Fitzgerald)**

#### **7.5 PUBLIC SAFETY (MAJEWSKI/Messina)**

#### **7.6 ADMINISTRATION (MESSINA/Majewski)**

1. Request from Museum Director Cheresse Wiesner-Rosales to authorize the use of land in

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Castle Gardens for a sustainable and community based garden project.

Town Attorney Berger noted that there are still many unanswered questions about how this proposed initiative would be structured. If we are going to allow private individuals to use Town land (designated by FEMA as forever green) there should be an agreement in place that spells out the terms and conditions.

After a brief Board discussion, Supervisor Schaffer stated that he will instruct the coordinator of this proposed project to work with the Parks Superintendent and the Town Attorney to finalize the details of the garden project and to incorporate it into an agreement for the Board's review and approval.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**1. Anthony Folk's proposal to hold the Southern Tier Enduro Bicycle Race at Jones Park in June 2017.**

Town Attorney David Berger stated that he has drafted an agreement to allow this event to be staged as a benefit for the maintenance and preservation of Jones Park and its trail system. If the Board agrees with the terms of the agreement, it should authorize the Supervisor to sign the agreement.

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

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Supervisor Schaffer informed the Board that he met recently with representatives from NYS DOT to hear a presentation about an ambitious project to put sidewalks along wide stretches of the Parkway. The sidewalks would be connected to the Rail Trail system. While the project should be beneficial to the Town, Supervisor Schaffer expressed several concerns to DOT. He feels that if the sidewalk system turns into the Binghamton University Campus, provisions should be made to provide public parking. Also, there is the question of who will be responsible for maintaining the sidewalks.

2. Supervisor Schaffer stated that he will be meeting with a developer concerning the potential development of a parcel in the Town of Vestal. It appears that this developer works primary work with student housing. He will report back to the Board after the meeting.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

**ADOPTED** Ayes 5 Agneshwar, Fitzgerald, Messina, Majewski, Schaffer

Nays 0

Resolved the Board enter into Executive Session to discuss the following:

- Potential litigation concerning gateway signs.
- Negotiations with the CSEA bargaining unit.

The time was 7:18 PM.

On a motion of Councilwoman Agneshwar, seconded by Councilman Majewski, the following was

**ADOPTED** Ayes 5 Agneshwar, Fitzgerald, Messina, Majewski, Schaffer

Nays 0

Resolved the Board leave the Executive Session and **adjourn the meeting. The time was 8:14 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Emil Bielecki, Town Clerk