February 5, 2024

State of New York
2679 Route 8
County of Hamilton
Town of Lake Pleasant

A Meeting of the Lake Pleasant Town Board was held on February 5, 2024 at the Lake Pleasant Library 2864 State Route 8, Speculator, NY 12164. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M., to make approvals, give reports, establish organizational tasks and conduct any business that may come before the Board.

The following were present:
Supervisor: Betsy Bain
Councilman: Neil McGovern, Don Braunius, Katherine O'Connell and Meg Parascandola
Town Clerk: Stephanie Smith
Highway Superintendent Randy LaVarnway
Guests: Karen McComb (Library President), Mary Caldwell (Speculator Chamber of Commerce Director), Tracy Joy (Speculator Chamber of Commerce President), Nancy Seifts (budget officer), Jamie Parslow (DEC Natural Resource Planner), Stanley Meketa, Shorty Hoffman and Rick Swift

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Resolution #21 To Approve the Minutes of January 16, 2024
Offered by: McGovern
2ND by: Braunius
Discussion – None
Be it resolved, that the minutes of January 16, 2024 be approved as presented
Adopted by the following vote:
Ayes: All (Supervisor Bain, Councilpersons - McGovern, Braunius, O'Connell and Parascandola)
Nays: None

Highway Report:

- LaVarnway reported that highway crew has been tidying up buildings and moving items at the health center, Christmas lights are down at town hall. Not much plowing due to the lack of snow so crew has been getting caught up with other tasks.
- Snowmobile trails and noise on fawn lake Rd. has been a concern with residents. Sheriff's department has been contacted about sleds taking short cuts to Sagandaga Lake. Trail from Fish Mt. cemetery to the end of Fawn Lake Rd. is the topic of concern. LaVarnway has asked Jamie Parslow, with DEC to do some work looking into ways the trail can be routed for the future. Parslow works for DEC out of Northville as their Natural Resource Planner covering all forest preserve lands in the Jessup River Wild Forest. The trail that LaVarnway has asked her to scope out is behind Fish Mt. following

an old jeep Rd. that comes out on top by Fish Mt. Cemetery. Parslow cross country skied the trail on two separate visits with local forest ranger, officer Neilson Snye, covering 2-3 miles of decent trail. Parslow is currently laying down trail information to see if a new or reroute trail is possible. Typically, with trail reroutes they need to be done without an UMP (Unit Management Plan) Amendment and need to be under a quarter mile long. Since this trail was laid out as a UMP for Jessup River Wild Forest Parslow and those on task are hoping that the staff in Albany will be agreeable to this project. Parslow needs to complete her report, get report to Rob Daily and then Daily will need to schedule time to discuss with DEC lawyers in Albany to see if they would like to move forward with this project. Parslow explained that the trail would need earth work and tree cutting so field work will be necessary to find out if Albany will accept this proposal of trail reroute. She also explained that there was a case lost in court (7th lake Mt. Trail case) that resulted in the ADK park not being able to build any new trails. Case was found unlawful of Article 14 that states; forest preserve land has to be protected and trees over a certain size diameter are prohibited from being cut. New trail construction was halted at that point in the ADK's. Snowmobile use on wild lands is permitted but Albany DEC would have to allow this project to get started.

Bain opened up for the public to speak

- Town of Lake Pleasant resident, Stanley Meketa at 142 Fawn Lake Rd., spoke up stating that the small shoot trail has been rerouted to pass in front of his house. He wants to know what he can do as a resident to have a route that doesn't go close to the houses. Concerns that he has are noise level and middle of the night travel, as well as wear and tear of the road. He wants to register a complaint. He asked if there are any other trail stretches that are on a plowed road. LaVarnway answered that this is the only one and that it is temporary. The board explained that they decided to open up this public road temporarily after it was the only way to connect the trails. O'Connell stated that this was opened for one year only and if they abuse it, they lose it. McGovern explained that in Wells they got the snowmobile trails away from residential areas and this is the direction they plan to go in for long term. Stanley asked why the trail was moved and McGovern explained that the trail went through private land but after years of the snowmobilers abusing the use of private land, the land owner closed his land to trail through traffic. This put the town board in a tight bind to connect trails and road reroute was the only way. The trail project that the town has Parslow looking into will go through state land. Stanley asked if there was anything he could do to help the situation at the state level. McGovern asked Mr. Meketa to be with the town and snowmobile clubs to reach out to the state. McGovern asked about law enforcement and LaVarnway said that they have been at the site. Officers were concerned about sleds overheating going down the stretch of road. Braunius mentioned that in the summer everyone called about the campgrounds closing and got that turned around. He would like to do this for the snowmobile trails. Parslow stated that once she gets maps and tree count to the state and they don't approve the proposal, then will be the time for the public to call. Agreements will need to be made with private landowners along this trail which is a strike against the proposal. McGovern stated that this is a corridor trail and the community has to have a way off of Sagandaga lake and onto the trail to Oxbow Lake and into the Town of Arietta. Parslow asked the board if they would like the trail to continue and not go around Fish Mt. Discussion resulted in the board agreeing that trail going around Fish Mountain is best.

Hold harmless agreements will need to be handed out and signed by residents and the owners can pull their agreements at any time. Discussion of trails ending at the lakes and the state and the town not being responsible for any grooming or trails on the lake went around the room. The town wants all to be safe but the lakes are not safe and traveling over them is at the individual's own risk.

- Swift has a 6 ½ acre tract in the village where he is selling half of the land with a deeded ROW to snowmobile trails in the sale so that there is no risk with new owners and trail usage.
- Parslow explained that at this time the 1-3in. trees can be cut but over that size is not allowed to be cut on state land at this time unless it is labeled a hazardous tree. Parascandola asked about this trail being a mountain bike trail and Parslow explained that this could be accessible in other recreational purposes but this trail will be considered a snowmobile trail allowing an eight-foot corridor.
- Bain thanked Stan, Parslow and Swift for coming and discussing this issue with the board.
- LaVarnway mentioned that the NYSSA trail coordinator contacted him to let him and DRAG know that he would be coming up to inspect trails. Swift lent a rental sled to ride the trails for the inspection. All trails were gone over and input was to put up a few more signs. Inspector was over all impressed with the trails.
- LaVarnway brought to everyone's attention, that the newspaper contained an incorrect article last week about the Hydro plant power plant located and operated in the Town of Lake Pleasant. Ampersand out of Boston Massachusetts owns the dam and it is located in the Town of Wells and operated by a hired hand. Article had to do with the flooding after the storms due to the dam having debris clogging it. Discussion about this issue went around the table.

Old Business:

1. **Unemployment Update –**
   Bain mentioned that the unemployment claim was for an individual that gets the health insurance buy out . This individual will get the buy out by voucher only moving forward to prevent this window from opening. The first bill was from the 2022 insurance buy out and the second was for the 2023 insurance buy out. Bain made copies of the checks and filled out the paperwork, sending a letter back stating that this was for a person that has not worked for the town since retirement.

2. **Tyler Report –**
   Bain explained that going live will be in two steps. Step one will be financials then step two will be the paychecks going live. This will save the town money since the treasurer's office is trained. The county will be taking over fully by the end of February.

New Business:

1. **Chamber Report –**

Town of Lake Pleasant has not paid a fourth quarter for 2023. Discussion about when quarterly reports will be done and paid was gone over. Seifts explained that the treasurer's office closed out 2023 budget and the last quarter was not paid. The funds will roll over in the budget to the next year. McGovern suggested compressing all the payments into 2024. O'Connell asked about services rendered for the quarter not paid. McGovern stated that services were rendered but the paperwork was not filed. The Chamber has had some bumps in the road, but the town and the Chamber will get back on track for the coming year.

Mary Caldwell was introduced to go over the Speculator Chamber of Commerce 2023 report. She gave a recap of October – December to the Board. Caldwell gave a social media report and a report from Roost that enables the Chamber to see how they have reached people. Bain asked about the hours of operation and days open. The chamber is open from Wednesday – Saturday this winter, Wed. and Thursday 9-3, Friday 10-3, Saturday 10-1. O'Connell asked about the $19,000 sold in gift certificates. Caldwell explained that these were all sold during the Holiday stroll. Discussion about gift certificates and how they benefit the businesses and customers was had.

****See attached for Chamber of Commerce report that was provided to the board****

O'Connell asked about the membership drive for 2023. Caldwell explained that they are trying to change the renewal dates from January to September. Joy explained that the Chamber is getting positive feedback with businesses at their get togethers. The fundraiser to purchase snowflakes to go on lamp posts is in the works for community beautification and festivity. Camp Fowlers is doing a snowshoeing event in the future. Parascandola explained that the events are open to anyone. The after hours is for members and members can invite anyone, they want to come in to the after-hours events. Joy explained that it is good for the business owners to mingle and exchange information. Saturday February 10th is the Ball at the Lemon Tree.

2. **2023 End of year Budget Transfers**

   Resolution #22 Town of Lake Pleasant Town Board to Approve the 2023 End of the Year Budget Transfers as Listed.

   Bain asked the board if they had any questions about the budget transfers for 2023. None had.

   Offered by: McGovern

   2nd by : Braunius

   Adopted by the following vote:

   Ayes: All (Supervisor Bain, Councilpersons - McGovern, Braunius, O'Connell and Parascandola)

   Nays: None

3. **NYS Retirement –**

   Bain received an E-mail from NYS retirement which explained changes to the law for the Contribution Stabilization Program. She called to get explanation about this to find out that back in 2014 the town had filed for this program due to the state retirement system not billing the town correctly. This put the town in arrears for prior years. It was explained to Bain that this is a graded rate of 1%, which is based on salary overtime or bonuses. If there is any money left in the end, it will go into a reserve fund. They had

amortized it for ten years. The town has now satisfied that one but in 2015 the town was contacted again with another correction to the billing, and back then the town agreed to have its bill amortized for twelve years for that amount. At this time the balance the town owes is $6,258.00 which is three more payments away from being satisfied in 2027. The fees are added into the town's annual retirement bill and if there is any money left once, we are paid off in 2027, it will go into a reserve fund and we can request it or just apply it to the towns next invoice in 2028.

4. **Town Justice Audit for 2023**

Resolution #23 Lake Pleasant Town Board Reviews and approves The Town Justice 2023 Reports

Offered by: O'Connell

Whereas, the Town Board is required annually to audit the financial reports of the Town Justices in accordance with Section 2109-a of the Uniform Justice Court Act and said fiduciary duty is memorialized into the minutes of the Board's proceedings

Resolved, that the Town Board accepts the Audit Report of Judge Visscher and Judge Smith for the Year 2023

2nd by: McGovern

Adopted by the following vote:

Ayes: All (Supervisor Bain, Councilpersons - McGovern, Braunius, O'Connell and Parascandola)

Nays: None

Proclamation Honoring Josephine E. O'Connell was read by Neil McGovern and will be presented to Mrs. O'Connell.

Proclamation in Honor of Josephine E. O'Connell

Whereas, Josephine E. O'Connell will reach her 100th birthday on February 15, 2024;

And Whereas, Josephine E. O'Connell was born in and has been a lifetime resident of the Town of Lake Pleasant;

And Whereas, Josephine E. O'Connell has the distinction of being a descendent of one of the Town's Founding Families, Courtney;

And Whereas, Josephine E. O'Connell served as Postmaster in Lake Pleasant from the age of 21 when she was appointed by President Harry Truman until her retirement;

And Whereas, Josephine E. O'Connell has volunteered in her community during her lifetime with the Red Cross, TWIGS, and various school programs.

Therefore, I Betsy Bain, Supervisor of the Town of Lake Pleasant, New York do hereby proclaim, February 15, 2024 as Josephine E. O'Connell Day. I hereby set my hand and have caused the Seal of the Town of Lake Pleasant, New York to be affixed this the 5th day of February, 2024.

Betsy Bain

Bain explained that this will be given to her on her Birthday and encourages everyone to send Josephine a card.

5. **Historian Report –**
   Bain gave the historian report for Aaron Weaver.

*****See attached for Historians Report *****

Committee Reports:

- **Youth Recreation –** O'Connell and Parascandola met to go over the direction they are taking. The Committee is working on a ski day for the kids during February break. They are also working on events that come to the kids instead of having them travel.
- **Web Site Committee –** A quick survey will be given to board members soon about the website as it stands now reported Parascandola. The current site is at minimal cost but needs could be better met with site provider in use at this time. Committee is exploring different platforms.
- **Health Committee –** Smith mentioned reaching out to Marshall and Sterling about any updates and there are no contracts signed yet and termination dates are stated but no answers for negotiations.
- **Highway committee –** LaVarnway explained that employee that left was replaced with a new laborer who is doing well at this time.

Resolution #24 Motion to pay Bills: Abstract #6 dated 1/29/2024, #3254-3259 in the amount of $26,702.72. Abstract #7 dated 2/02/2024, #3260-3285 in the amount of $23,046.73.
Offered by: Braunius
2nd by: Parascandola
Discussion: None
Adopted by the following votes:
Ayes: All (Supervisor Bain, Councilpersons - McGovern, Braunius, O'Connell and Parascandola)
Nays: None

Public Comment:
-McComb announced that those that missed the Historical Society's Cemetery Tour this past fall missed out on Sandy LaVarnway playing the part of Goldie, Josephine O'Connell's mother. She also mentioned that the snowflakes fundraiser by the Speculator Chamber of Commerce members is a great movement to beautification of the village and the town. McComb suggests that the town give a token gesture from the budget to make the community look better again.

Roundtable:

- McGovern let the board know that Senator Mark Walczyk sent a postcard about small towns fighting the fight against electric power in our small mountain communities. Small towns such as this one don't have the power grid to move in this direction.

- Bain let the board know that the report came from AGA markets about the Towns dog kennel and new dog warden, Frankie Page, has completed her dog training.
- Ken Kurt stopped by town hall to let the town know that they will be holding an EMT/first responder class in late August or early September. All those interested are to contact Ken Kurt. SVAC is still in need of drivers.
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Next meeting: Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 20, 2024 at 7PM at the Lake Pleasant Library

***ON A MOTION BY**: Don Braunius **2ND by:** Parascandola
To Adjourn @ 8:35 P.M.
All in Favor
Respectfully submitted,
Stephanie Smith, Town Clerk