

Town of Fowler August 12, 2024 Minutes of Regular Scheduled Board Meeting at 6PM.

The Town of Fowler Regular scheduled Town Board meeting was held on the above date with all board members present. Also present were Town Clerk Tami Gale, Town Justice Tim Knowlton, Highway Superintendent Randy Durham, Planning Board members Stephen Gale and John Walsh, Assessor Chair Kathy Besaw, Code Enforcement Officer Glen Besaw, Maintenance Worker Byron Woodward, Ethics Committee Member Vivian Goodman, Debbie Walsh, Richard Clement, Laurina Greenhill, and Rachel Hunter, Editor of the Gouverneur Tribune Press.

Supervisor Newwine called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM then proceeded with the pledge of allegiance and led a moment of silence to honor our military men and women, all healthcare workers, our highway workers for their work over the weekend, and those who have passed since our last meeting: Mr. George Erdman.

Supervisor Newwine asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the July 8, 2024, regular scheduled board meeting. A motion was made by Councilperson Cleveland, seconded by Councilperson Bishop . All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Awarding of Surplus Equipment BID

Supervisor Newwine reported two bids had been received for items that were declared as surplus equipment and of no longer use to the Town:

Councilperson Leo Knight read aloud BID No. 1 received from Richrd Clement.

BID ITEM #	BID AMOUNT
Item #3	\$300.00
Item #8	\$300.00

Councilperson Karen Simmons read aloud BID No. 2 received from Heather Greenhill.

BID ITEM #	BID AMOUNT
Item #11	\$50.00

Supervisor Newwine asked the board for a motion to accept and award the bids that were received. A motion was made by Councilperson Cleveland seconded by Councilperson Knight . All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

It was the consensus of the board that the surplus equipment that had received no bids would be scrapped.

Discussion on Heating for the Town Barn

Supervisor Newwine discussed that Barry Smith, of Northern Tier Contracting had prepared packets for informational purposes, for the board, recommending two options to heat the Town Barn. After some discussion, it was the consensus of the board to have Supervisor Newwine call and get a BID for the work, as Highway Superintendent Durham is still busy dealing with the damage from tropical storm Debby.

Discussion on Sound System for Town Grounds

Supervisor Newwine reported that he would like to purchase a good sound system for the town, using some of the ARPA funds. It was discussed that Fred Scozzafava and John "Scooter" Wetmore would be contacted to further the cause.

Discussion on Declaring A State of Emergency

Supervisor Newwine reported that per the County Attorney, the Town of Fowler would not need to declare a State of Emergency as the County had done so. He had received a call from Senator Mark Walczyk's

Office, and they are looking into Federal funding. He reported that the Department of Financial Services will hold a meeting on Thursday that he plans to attend and will keep the residents updated as we learn how to apply for funding.

Resignation

Supervisor Newwine reported he had added an item to the agenda and read aloud a letter of resignation from Bill Finnie, a summer help, part-time employee of the highway department. Supervisor Newwine reported that as Bill Finnie was part-time help, he wasn't truly sure we needed a resignation, stating now it is official.

Discussion on Union Contract

Supervisor Newwine reported the Union Contract is settled in that the board will approve it tonight, and then he will need to sign the paperwork. Supervisor Newwine reported that Councilperson Knight and Councilperson Cleveland were instrumental in the negotiations and will provide an update on the changes.

Councilperson Knight reported that the union contract will provide for two more holidays: Juneteenth and Columbus Day. They will be paid 10 hours holiday pay when they are working 10-hour days instead of the 8 hours of pay that they were receiving when they were working 10-hour days. Vacations will be paid as follows: the first year of work will receive 1 week of paid vacation, and for every 5 years of work they will receive a week of paid vacation, up to five weeks. Health and hospital insurance will remain as single member coverage, which has an option to be amended. Wages will increase by \$4.00 an hour in 2025, by \$1.00 an hour in 2026, and by \$1.00 an hour in 2027. The yearly boot allowance will increase to \$200.00 per year. In return, they will lose 40 hours of comp time, and may only accumulate 80 hours of comp time a year.

Councilperson Cleveland stated the bottom line was our highway workers were the 2nd lowest paid highway workers in the County. This contract will bring them on par with everyone else. He reported we had too many workers leaving us for other towns who were paying 50 cents to \$1.00 more an hour. He stated this may help keep the continuity of the workers we have and may prevent the loss of anymore, especially with the way the CDL license process has changed.

It was discussed the highway workers had really shown their value over the weekend with tropical storm Debby.

After some discussion, Supervisor Newwine asked for a motion allowing him to sign the union contract. A motion was made by Councilperson Knight seconded by Councilperson Bishop. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Town Department Reports

Justice Department

Town Justice Tim Knowlton reported:

- Court Clerk Irma Ahley is back to work, after having her house destroyed by a fire on August 5th. He reported he feels very blessed and feels a sigh of relief that Irma and her family are okay.
- He held court last Tuesday by himself, which made him even more aware of the critical aspect her position is with the court system.
- They are continuing to complete their yearly on-line training.

Bookkeeper

Bookkeeper Barbara Finnie was not in attendance.

Supervisor Newwine reported:

- Bookkeeper Finnie had provided Cash Balance Reports for Month ending July, 2024 to the board for their review.
- Added to the bottom of the report is the amount of the fund balance that is available \$1,532,252.00 and is being used to repair the roads from tropical storm Debby, which we will hopefully get reimbursement for.
- She had commended Hwy. Superintendent Durham on the use of his budget to date.

Assessors

Assessor Chair Kathy Besaw reported:

- It is slow in the assessment office right now.
- The final tax roll has been completed.
- They were served by Fowler Hydro again two weeks ago. She has not spoken to the Town Attorney regarding the matter yet.
- She and assessor Thomas continue to work on updating the data cards for all of the parcels in the Town of Fowler. She reported to date that over 1200 property cards have been updated.
- Sales are up in the Town of Fowler, and are selling at very good prices, and the Town is missing out on a significant amount of money by not having a re-valuation done.

Historian

Historian Karen Simmons reported:

- She is working on a couple of genealogies.

Animal Control

Councilperson Simmons reported for Dan Moyer who was not in attendance:

- There were no dog control issues within the last month.
- There was a dog kennel inspection done by Ag & Markets and everything was okay.
- She had learned that the floor in the kennel must now be epoxied and not just painted.
- There will be a free rabies clinic at the Town Barn this Thursday from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM. Anyone who wishes to attend must make an appointment by going online, calling Public Health, or the Town Clerk's office.
- There have already been 100 appointments made to attend the clinic.
- Thanked Edward Roberts for donating an on the wall heating unit for the Fowler dog kennel.

Beaver Control

Councilperson Simmons reported for Dan Moyer who was not in attendance:

- Reported he had just submitted a bill for beaver control on the Country Club Road.
- He continues to work on beaver control on the Stone Road.

Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement Officer Glen Besaw reported:

- New construction projects in the Town of Fowler are coming along pretty good despite all of the rain.
- Two code enforcement ticket cases are due in court next Tuesday.

Town Clerk

Town Clerk Tami Gale reported:

- DEC Gross sales for the month were \$30.00 with the Town of Fowler's Commission being \$1.66. She had licensed 27 dogs, handled 12 building permit applications, issued 2 Certified Marriage Transcripts, collected \$3.00 in miscellaneous dog fees, and had collected \$1.25 for photo copies.
- She had received a check for the missing \$35.00 from last month's scrap metal check, as well as received a 2nd check for the amount of \$243.00 for 2.3 tons of scrap.
- Bottle & Can money was received in the amount of \$105.42.
- Pepsi Machine money received was \$243.00 & \$25.85. Reminded Hwy. Superintendent Durham that the bucket of wet coins in her office from the soda machine are now dry enough to cash in.
- Reminded everyone that the Local Government Conference at SUNY Potsdam is being held on October 15th from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM, which is returning to a full day with lunch provided and to contact her if you would like to be signed up for the training.
- There is a donation jug at the Town Hall to assist Court Clerk Irma Ashley and her family recover from their house fire. The community has been wonderful in their efforts to help.

Maintenance

Maintenance Worker Byron Woodward reported:

- The new sump pump in the cellar of the Town Hall is working well.
- He will be installing the new heater in the dog kennel.
- There is still a problem with pigeons in the highway garage.
- He suggested hiring the job out. The equipment is being continuously covered in feces from the birds. Supervisor Newvine reported he will look into a service to combat the problem.

Planning Board

Planning Board Chair Stephen Gale reported:

- There was a planning board meeting last Thursday to approve a tackle and bait shop on the Doane Road.
- The ice-cream shop was approved by the planning board at the end of July.

Highway Department

Supervisor Newvine thanked Hwy. Superintendent Durham and the highway department laborers for the remarkable job this last weekend in the aftermath of tropical storm Debby.

Highway Department

Highway Superintendent Randy Durham:

- Reported he would like to replace Truck 91 with a new Mack Plow Truck.
- In doing so, he would replace the box on Truck 05 with the box from Truck 91, which would allow for 5 primary plow trucks and Truck 17 as a back-up truck.
- Reported the cost of a new Mack plow truck is \$285,000 and asked the board for permission to work with the USDA on the purchase of a new Mack Plow truck. After some discussion it was the consensus of the board to approve the application with the USDA for the purchase of a new Mack Plow Truck.
- Reported he has received multiple complaints from flooding that occurred on the Popple Hill Road due to the State opening water in full capacity due to beaver activity.

- Reported all roads are now open except for outer Country Club Road.
- Asked drivers not to drive through swift water on the roads, as you have no idea what is underneath the water.
- Reported he has received a lot of help from many people mentioning the Towns of Louisville, and Gouverneur, Chad Soper, John Hall and many phone calls were received to offer help after the storm.
- Reported they are continuing to repair the roads and asked everyone to slow down and drive slow for their safety.
- Discussed the highway department had 140 hours of overtime and 56 hours of comp time accumulated from the weekend.

Supervisor Newwine thanked Hwy. Superintendent Durham and the highway workers for their great job.

Councilmembers

Councilperson Cleveland:

- Commended Hwy. Superintendent Durham on the good job by the highway department over the weekend.
- Asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham if the end of driveways that have been washed out is the property owner's responsibility. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated it should be, stating they are a very low priority right now. He stated that if he is working there and the road is washed out then they may put a little gravel in.
- Asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham what the standards were when they are cutting back the roads. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated his right of way is 25 to the ditch, and if there is no ditch they have to get the water off of the road, and this is the standard. Councilperson Cleveland asked that we have more continuity when cutting the roads back in consideration of the property owners, after being contacted with a few complaints on the matter.

Councilperson Lynn Bishop:

- Commended the highway department on the work they have done in the aftermath of tropical storm Debby.

Councilperson Leo Knight Jr.:

- Thanked the highway department for their hard work over the weekend.

Councilperson Karen Simmons:

- Reported in the month of July, the HAP Program was open 1 week and was visited 7 times.
- She has received a large quantity of grocery items from Dave Spilman Jr. and Dave and Shelley Fackler for the HAP Program and feels it will be stocked for a while.
- She reported Sue Spilman had brought items for the next SOS Program delivery. The next delivery will be made on September 13th with a total of 102 recipients.
- Fowler Family Day was very successful and took in around \$7,500 after expenses.
- She reported mailings were sent with raffle tickets to 424 taxpayers in the Town of Fowler, and 255 of the mailers had been returned by the day of the event.

Supervisor Newwine, while discussing Family Day... thanked our major sponsors of Fowler Family Day: Vanderbilt Minerals, Empire State Mines and Continental Construction, as well as recognized and thanked Carol Besaw of Bob's Market for all that she does year after year for our Family Day event.

- Councilperson Simmons added that she had sent individual thank-you letters and had placed a thank-you ad in the Gouverneur Tribune Press for all who have supported family day.
- Reported she will be meeting Dan Fifield in the Fullerville cemetery the following day to show him where to place a base for a new headstone and to determine where plots are in the old part of the cemetery.

Supervisor Ricky W. Newvine:

- Thanked the Gouverneur Volunteer Fire Department for all of their hard work during tropical storm Debby, and their heroic life saving measures that were performed. He reported the State is adding more regulations and mandating more training...and what the fire department really needs is more money and more help.
- Reported the Gouverneur Fire Department used to have a roster of 60 and their members are down to 42. He reported that we have to get after our Governor Kathy Hochul and say, “No More”, stating we can’t do without our fire department.
- Discussed the Sylvia Lake Beach has had their 1st inspection of the year, and everything was good, and now it is under 5 or 6 inches of water.
- The beach will remain closed for the week, and prior to its re-opening will have several safety checks, including water sample testing.
- Asked if the generator has been installed at Kilkarney Court yet. Councilperson Simmons reported that it hasn’t. Supervisor Newvine discussed that he saw a bill in the invoices this evening, for the generator. Councilperson Simmons stated that it needed to be paid for before being installed.
- Discussed setting a date for a chicken BBQ fundraiser to benefit Court Clerk Irma Ashley and her family. After some discussion it was decided that it would be held on August 31st at the Fowler Town Hall.
- Read aloud a letter he received from Senator Mark Walczyk, who is on active duty in the sands of Arabia, thanking him for all he does for the community and the Town of Fowler.

Public Comment

- Jack Woodward discussed the issue with large beaver dams on CR 22, and the impact they are having on taxpayers in the town. Supervisor Newvine stated the purpose of beaver control is to protect our town roads, and that the nuisance beaver dams being referred to are located on a County road, which is the County’s responsibility, that is now affecting our town road. Supervisor Newvine reported Don Chambers has his hands full right now with the aftermath of Debby, but he will contact him regarding this long going issue to see if they can remove the beaver dams that are causing the issues, possibly by using shared services.
- Stephen Gale asked if there was a time frame for CR 24 to be repaired by the County. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated it was going to be a long process, Supervisor Newvine stated he would call Don Chambers to see if he had any timeframe for repairing the road.
- Vivian Goodman reported her end of CR 24 has had the shoulders all washed out with the rain.

Supervisor Newvine asked for a motion to audit the bills. A motion was made by Councilperson Cleveland seconded by Councilperson Bishop to audit the bills. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

The bills audited for the General and Highway Fund were #281 to #332 with a total of \$61,854.97.

The Town Hall will be closed on Labor Day, Monday, September 2nd.

The next regularly scheduled board meeting will be held on September 9th, 2024, at 6:00PM.

With no further business, on a motion of Councilperson Cleveland, seconded by Councilperson Knight, the August 12th, 2024, Regular Town Board meeting was adjourned at 7:02PM. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Tami Gale; Town Clerk