

Town of Fowler Regular Board Meeting & January Organizational Meeting Minutes held on January 11, 2021 at 6:00 PM.

The Regular scheduled board meeting and January Organizational Meeting was held on the above date, at the Town Hall with all board members present. Also present were Highway Superintendent Randy Durham, Bookkeeper Barbara Finnie, Town Justice Tim Knowlton, Pavilion Committee member Richard Clement, and attending the meeting via teleconference was Councilperson Lynn Bishop, Assessor Chair Sherry Geer, Assessor Phyllis Shaw, Town Clerk Tami Gale, and Rachel Hunter, Editor of the Gouverneur Tribune Press.

Supervisor Newvine 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, and the Town of Fowler highway workers and Stephen Gale, who have all recovered from having COVID-19.

Supervisor Newvine asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 14th, 2020 Town board meeting, with one correction. Supervisor Newvine reported that Sherrie Williams name was spelled incorrectly. A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons, seconded by Councilperson Andrews, to approve the minutes with the corrections. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Supervisor Newvine asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 29th, 2020 Year End Transfer Meeting with two corrections noted by Councilperson Simmons. The meeting dates read for 2020 and should be changed to 2021, and at the very end of Resolution 22 of 2020, it needs to be changed to Resolution 22 of 2020 instead of Resolution 21 of 2020. A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons, seconded by Councilperson Cleveland, to approve the minutes with the corrections. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Supervisor Newvine reported the board had approved the recommended appointments for 2021 and had approved keeping the mileage reimbursement at .57.5 cents per mile at the December 29th, 2020 Year End Transfer Meeting until the Government announced their mileage reimbursement amount. He reported the board needed to re-visit the mileage reimbursement for 2021, as the reimbursement amount that has been set by the Federal Government is now announced and is set at .56 cents per mile. A motion was made by Councilperson Andrews seconded by Councilperson Simmons to change the set amount for the Town of Fowler mileage reimbursement rate to .56 cents per mile. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Supervisor Newvine read aloud the Town of Fowler Salary Schedule for the year 2021 and reported the board is amending the Custodian salary from \$2,856.00 per year to \$3,640 per year to bring the custodian's pay up to \$14,00 an hour from \$10.00 an hour when factoring in all the hours that are worked weekly. Supervisor Newvine asked for a motion to approve the Salary Schedule and adopt it to include the amendment to the custodian pay. A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Cleveland to approve the Salary Schedule. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Supervisor Newvine read aloud the Town board meeting dates for the year 2021, that were previously accepted and approved at the December 29th, 2020 Year End Transfer Meeting.

Supervisor Newvine read aloud the 2021 Town Board Committees that required department heads. After some discussion, the department heads were determined as follows

2021 TOWN BOARD COMMITTEES & DEPARTMENT HEADS

Supervisor Ricky W. Newvine

Councilperson Jeff Andrews

Councilperson Karen Simmons

Councilperson Lynn Bishop

Councilperson Scott Cleveland

Audit Committee

Union Contract Negotiations

- Sylvia Lake Beach, Hailesboro Ballpark, Solar Projects

- Highway Department

- Animal Control, Cemeteries, Town Hall Use, SOS Program, Beaver Control

- Mowing

- Pavilion & Playground

- Supervisor Newvine, Bookkeeper Finnie, Councilperson Simmons

- Supervisor Ricky W, Newvine, Councilperson Bishop, Councilperson Andrews

RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION # 1 of 2021

PREPAID VOUCHERS

A motion was made by Councilperson Andrews seconded by Councilperson Cleveland to adopt Resolution #1 of 2021, a resolution to authorize the payment in advance of audits of claims for public utility services, postage, freight, express charges, and health insurance premiums. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

AYES: 5 NEWVINE, SIMMONS, ANDREWS, BISHOP, CLEVELAND

NAYS: 0

RESOLUTION # 2 of 2021

PROCUREMENT POLICY FOR THE TOWN OF FOWLER

Supervisor Newvine discussed a resolution to adopt the Town of Fowler Procurement Policy.

A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Andrews to adopt Resolution #2 of 2021, a procurement policy for the Town of Fowler, its officers, agents, and employees required by Section 104-b of the New York State General Municipal Law to apply to the purchasing of all goods and services which are not required by law to be publicly bid. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

AYES: 5 NEWVINE, SIMMONS, ANDREWS, BISHOP, CLEVELAND

NAYS: 0

RESOLUTION # 3 of 2021

SENIOR EXEMPTION FOR 2021-2022 TAX ROLL UNDER SECTIONS 459-C AND 467 OF THE REAL PROPERTY TAX LAW.

A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Andrews to adopt Resolution #3 of 2021, a resolution for the Town of Fowler, that the Board of Assessors shall extend the 2020 exemption status for those individuals receiving the senior exemption and the persons with disabilities and limited income exemption through 2021 without a renewal application except that the Board of Assessors may require a renewal application if he or she believes that an owner that qualified for the 2020 exemption has since changed their primary residence, added another owner to the deed, transferred the property to a new owner, or died.

All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

AYES: 5 NEWVINE, SIMMONS, ANDREWS, BISHOP, CLEVELAND

NAYS: 0

Town Department Reports

Justice Department

Justice Tim Knowlton reported:

- The court is still closed to the public for in person proceedings.
- He will be going over court correspondence with court clerk Irma Ashley the following day.

Supervisor Newvine thanked Justice Knowlton for his report and for being in attendance.

Bookkeeper

Bookkeeper Barbara Finnie reported:

- W2's will be provided in the next pay checks.

Assessors

Assessor Chair Sherry Geer reported:

- They have been busy doing values, finishing up on checking on and recording data from work that has been done according to building permits.
- She reported there had been a lot of action in the building department this year.
- The assessors have been trying to meet on the weekends at the Town Hall, when not many other people are at the Town Hall for social distancing best practices.

Historian

Historian Karen Simmons reported:

- There is nothing going on up in the Historian's Office right now.
- She reported there are quite a few boxes of donated food items up there right now that were picked up on Saturday January 9th by Supervisor Newvine and herself, who went to Gouverneur and picked the donated items up. She reported that the Town would be doing something with the donated items, they haven't really decided yet how it is going to work, but they are hoping to get a blessing box for the back of the Town Hall and maybe make the items available out there. She reported there would be more on the donated food items, and how to obtain them, next time.

Dog Control

Dog Control Officer Dan Moyer was not in attendance.

Councilperson Karen Simmons reported for Dan Moyer:

- Nothing has been going on with dog control and it has been very quiet.
- There have been no complaints on dogs or the chickens since the State Troopers spoke to the owners of the nuisance chickens.
- She reported that she is still trying to get people to pay their dog licenses and reminded everyone that there is a drop box located at the rear entrance to the Town Hall to conduct Town business amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and they can always send in their license renewal by mail.

Beaver Control

Councilperson Karen Simmons reported for Moyer's Wildlife Control:

- The beavers have been very quiet.
- Highway Superintendent Durham stated he thought they had closed out the last beaver problem.
- Beaver control should be done now until March.

Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement Officer Glen Besaw was not in attendance.

- Supervisor Newvine reported you can see that he has been doing his job with the number of building permits that were processed this year.

Town Clerk

Town Clerk Tami Gale reported:

- She had provided the board with a handout on the Summary of money handled by the Town Clerk of Fowler January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

- DEC Gross sales for the month were \$405.00 with the Town of Fowler Commission being \$5.56. She had licensed 28 dogs, handled 2 building permits had taken in \$7.50 in photo- copies, had issued 1 marriage license, and issued 2 Certified Marriage Transcripts.
- Asked if Justice Knowlton received the key fob that she had left for him.
- Wanted to make everyone aware of the virtual training opportunity from the Association of Towns that is available February 14th thru February 17th, 2021. Information and registration instructions were left for all department heads.
- Thanked Deputy Town Clerk Kim Reed for coming into work for her, while she was quarantined.
- Thanked Deputy Town Clerk Debra Tupper for getting the newsletters folded, stapled, and prepared for tax receipt season.
- Thanked the board members and co-workers for their well-wishes and prayers for Steve during his recent illness.

Supervisor Newvine stated that the Town should thank Town Clerk Gale as well, for doing her job when she wasn't able to be there. He stated he called Deputy Town Clerk Kim Reed and thanked her, he hadn't yet spoken to Deputy Town Clerk Debra Tupper, but stated the combination of the 3 clerks had done a great job keeping the Town Hall going and wanted to express this to them.

Highway Department

Highway Superintendent Randy Durham reported:

- He has spoken to the USDA in regards to the new plow truck, and it is in the process but they have no information as to the financing as of yet.
- That Truck 12 is back in the shop.
- Supervisor Newvine stated he feels it is time for the Town to get rid of Truck 12, reporting the Town has spent thousands of dollars on repairs to the truck. Councilperson Simmons remarked "since day one." Councilperson Bishop stated he felt it should have been gotten rid of a few years ago. Councilperson Andrews stated it is a never- ending battle keeping up with the repairs on Truck 12.
- Supervisor Newvine instructed Highway Superintendent Durham to go that route with Truck 12, and try to trade it in.
- Highway Superintendent Durham reported he would pursue getting rid of Truck 12 with Auction International, and would do this when the new Plow Truck comes in. He reported the highway uses Truck 12 as little as possible and it only had less than 8,000 miles put on it last year.
- Covid-19 exposures within the highway department are a continuing concern for him and he asked the board how to handle exposure concerns. Supervisor Newvine reported they will continue to handle potential exposures case by case using existing procedures and guidelines.
- He has a concern of getting a Covid-19 positive case again at the highway department which limits the number of drivers to plow the roads. Supervisor Newvine stated the Town has a meeting scheduled for Wednesday with the Town of Edwards to remedy that kind of situation.

Supervisor Newvine reminded Highway Superintendent Durham that the highway department should have their own supply of PPE and requested him to prepare a list of the supplies needed for the Town Clerk when he is low.

COUNCILPERSONS

Councilperson Bishop:

- Reported the roads have been looking good.
- Reported he has concerns of the wings on the plow trucks getting caught.

Councilperson Andrews:

- Asked if he and Councilperson Bishop would qualify to drive the Plow trucks for the Town, if it became necessary, as they both have their CDL licenses. Supervisor Newvine stated that they were both insured by the Town and could be used to drive the plow trucks if the need arose.
- Asked the status of the Town Hall, and if it was still closed. Supervisor Newvine reported that the Town Hall is now re-opened with the conditions of anyone entering the Town Hall having to have their temperature taken upon entry and needing to wear a mask. He reported social distancing guidelines and sanitizing surfaces in between visitors has been in place and the recommended guidelines will continue to be followed. He asked to have the information updated on the Town website, social media and on the news. Town Clerk Gale reported the Town of Fowler website stated the Town Hall would resume operation of normal hours beginning on Monday January 11, 2021.

Councilperson Simmons:

- Reported Kinney Drugs are starting to give COVID-19 shots to 75 years and older persons beginning on the 14th.
- Reported the Town of Fowler had a donation of food items that were picked up over the weekend. The board is working on setting up some kind of food program for the people in the Town of Fowler. She will give more information after the board determines how the food program will be offered to Town residents.
- Reported the SOS Program had received a \$100.00 donation that was mailed in with a tax payment the other day. She reported she had sent a thank you note and the Town continues to receive many thank you cards for the SOS (Support Our Seniors) deliveries.
- Reported the Town of Fowler Ethics Committee held their annual organizational meeting today prior to this evening's board meeting. A letter of resignation was received from Lillith Griffith, Ethic Committee Chairperson, effective immediately. Supervisor Newvine read the resignation letter aloud. Councilperson Simmons reported that they will need to find a replacement and she has someone, that she will call.

Councilperson Cleveland:

- Shared some advice on COVID-19 that he thought would benefit the highway department, of wearing safety glasses as an added precaution which is now recommended by the CDC.

Supervisor Newvine:

- Reported he has received a few complaints on the roads being slippery and the trucks getting out to take care of the roads a little late.
- Reported it was good to have newly elected Councilperson Cleveland on the board this evening.
- Wanted to thank Dave Spilman Jr. from the Town of Gouverneur, for the donated food items that were mentioned earlier. He reported Mr. Spilman receives a lot of the items from Kinney Drugs and he has decided to help the Town of Fowler.
- Reported there is a meeting scheduled Wednesday January 13th, 2021 at 3:00PM with the Town of Edwards to work on getting set up with a plan of the 2 Towns sharing duties for each other if they find themselves in need amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Reported the Town of Fowler Emergency Plan is being worked on and that Bookkeeper Finnie has a template for the Town of Fowler to use to get going on the plan, which needs to be in place by April 2021.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Dick Clement reported he had received a call that you could now sign up at the hospital to receive a COVID-19 shot for 75 year and older persons.
- Tim Knowlton reported he had spoken to Jake Weldon about a blessing box for the Town Hall and they would get one built when the Town decides what they want.

The next regular scheduled board meeting will be on Monday, February 8, 2021 at 6:00PM at the Fowler Town Hall and will include the Audit of the Court, Town Clerk, and Bookkeepers books.

A motion was made by Councilperson Andrews seconded by Councilperson Cleveland to audit the bills. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

The bills audited for the General and Highway Fund were December 2020 remaining bills # 479 to # 481, with a total of \$803.31 and January 2021 bills # 1 to # 10 with a total of \$42,683.77.

With no further business, on a motion of Councilperson Simmons, seconded by Councilperson Andrews, the Organizational meeting was adjourned at 6:33PM. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Tami Gale; Town Clerk