

TOWN OF BETHANY

SPECIAL TOWN BOARD MEETING

01 JULY 2020

Supervisor Hyde opened the July 1, 2020 Town Board Meeting at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a prayer offered by Councilman Embt.

*****Please note that this meeting is being held outside of Executive Order 202.1. The Town of Bethany is not technologically equipped to hold virtual meetings and therefore, must meet in person to conduct essential business. The public is welcome to attend however, facial covering and social distancing regulations must be adhered to.**

Town Officials in Attendance were:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| Carl Hyde, Jr., Supervisor | Jeffrey Fluker, Councilman |
| Timothy Embt, Councilman | Daniel Street, Councilman |
| Diane Fowler, Councilwoman | Debbie Douglas, Town Clerk |
| Barbara Czworka, Highway Superintendent | |

Attendees to the meeting were:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| Jeff Wolak | Sandy Fluker |
| Susan Best | Lowell Best |
| Phil Sortore | Ray Ladd |
| Mel Davis | Thomas Douglas |
| Chris Krtanik | Maud Charpin |
| Gary Donnelly | Jim Phillips |
| Deb Donnelly | |

RESOLUTION #31-2020 RECINDING FURLOUGH AND LAYING OFF OF HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES

WHEREAS, Genesee County has stopped all distribution of sales tax to the Town; and

WHEREAS, the Town must address the unanticipated reduction of its finances; and

WHEREAS, the largest portion of the Town’s budget is the Highway Department; and

WHEREAS, the Town offered to place the Highway Department on furlough and the Highway Department employees declined the furlough; now on

MOTION of Councilwoman Fowler which has been duly seconded by Councilman Street, now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Bethany hereby lays off three of the Town’s Highway Department employees indefinitely effective July 1, 2020 in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement between the Town of Bethany and Teamsters Local 264.

Motion **PASSED** with the following Roll Call Vote:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Supervisor Hyde – Yes | Councilman Fluker – Yes |
| Councilman Embt – Yes | Councilman Street – Yes |
| Councilwoman Fowler – Yes | |

2021 Budget Discussion (Also please see previous minutes for more details about the loss of Sales Tax Revenue from Genesee County)

- The Supervisor provided a budget summary showing what the town tax rate would be by cutting salaries by 10%, lowering budget lines where possible and using some of the appropriated fund balance.
 - o The current tax rate is \$3.713457/\$1,000. The town tax rate for 2021 with the cuts and using a portion of the town's savings would be \$8.393390/\$1,000. This is approximately \$.60/\$1,000 lower than the example presented at the June 22nd meeting where no cuts were made.
 - o Adding to the burden, Genesee County is projecting a tax increase of approximately 10%.
- The Board authorized Supervisor Hyde to send a postcard to each taxpayer in the Town of Bethany letting them know of this situation and encouraging their participation by contacting the County Legislature and attending meetings. The postcards should be arriving during the next few days.
- What cuts could be made (these items were discussed during the June 22nd meeting and were reiterated for those who were not at that meeting) –
 - o Supervisor looked into having outside entities perform assessment, code enforcement and zoning duties. Genesee County will not take these duties over. The Town of Batavia would be willing to perform these duties however, they would expect payment in the same amount that the town is currently paying in-house. There is nothing to gain by moving these services. There would be negative impact by having personnel who are unfamiliar with Bethany and less personal service.
 - o Elected official's salaries cannot be cut during their term of office. Elected officials could however submit in writing their willingness to take a pay cut. Pay could then be lowered.
 - o Justice Court costs the town approximately \$30,000 per year. Some of that loss was recovered when the Town Prosecutor was hired.
 - Supervisor looked into sharing of court facilities with another town. This however would cost more money. Rental fees would have to be paid for the facility. The town has a facility in place. Judges and clerks would have to be paid mileage to travel to a different court.
 - Another option would be to eliminate one judge and clerk. The only way this could happen would be to wait for a judge's term to expire or for a judge to resign. Eventually court could be eliminated altogether using this method. Cases would be divided among neighboring towns. Bethany could elect to request a portion of the fines collected but would then have to pay a portion to the State. They could also elect not to be paid any fine revenue and there would be no cost to the town.
 - o The Highway Fund has already taken a hit as the Governor elected to retain 20% of the CHIPS funding for this year which is approximately \$15,000 for Bethany.
 - Sand and salt are being mixed in a 3:1 ratio to save money and stretch the salt. The roads will not melt away as quickly but will still have some grit for stopping.
 - Highway Superintendent noted that there are no funds for overtime when snow plowing starts.
 - There is about \$220,000 to get through until the end of January when taxes have been collected. Mill Road has to be finished this year so that the money invested in it last year is not wasted. That cost is approximately \$130,000. The CHIPS funding that the Town does receive (about \$78,000) will pay for a portion of the cost.
 - Bethany was on track to pay off the equipment BAN this year (a year early) however, that has been put off. The plan to buy a third truck next year has also been put off.
 - It is likely that the town will not sign the Snow and Ice Removal and Mowing contract with Genesee county this year. It would eliminate the

need to take care of 21 miles of county roads and allow for the elimination of one highway employee. With the weather being the variable dictating whether the town makes, breaks even or loses with these contracts, it is difficult to take the risk during the current situation. The elimination of one highway employee would save the town approximately \$82,000.

- Many of the line items cannot be cut as they pertain to Social Security, retirement, insurance, etc.
- The town has approximately \$400,000 in savings. This money could be used to supplement the budget to lower the tax rate but because there are no revenues to put back into the savings, it wouldn't take long to deplete this resource and there would be no money for emergencies. For every \$100,000 dollars cut from the budget the tax rate is lowered by approximately \$1.00.
- A resident asked if the entire state was in the same situation as Genesee County. It is not. Other counties do not share sales tax however, they have a lower county tax rate which offsets the higher town tax rate. In our case, the county is not going to lower their tax rate and the town has been put in the position of having to make a dramatic increase. The Board is of a mind that the county will not share tax revenue with towns and villages at any point in the future.
- The town does not have any other revenue coming in other than taxes.
- All positions remaining are essential or mandated.
- Tom Douglas, CEO/ZEO told the board that his line items totaled approximately \$14,000 and asked the Board to do whatever they needed to do to cut his lines to \$10,000 making a 33% cut to his budget. Supervisor Hyde asked him to put that in writing for his records.
- Attendees were asked to review the budget documents and feel free to ask questions and make suggestions. Let the board know what you are willing to live with. Everyone was asked to let their friends and neighbors know about the situation and encourage them to attend meetings to let the Board know their thoughts.

Adjournment

A **MOTION** was made by Councilwoman Fowler, duly seconded by Councilman Street, to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m. The motion **PASSED** with All In Favor.

BY ORDER OF THE
BETHANY TOWN BOARD
DATED: July 2, 2020

Respectfully Submitted,

Debbie L. Douglas
Clerk