

TOWN OF SENECA
PUBLIC HEARINGS AND REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
October 15th, 2024

Supervisor Wickham led the pledge of Allegiance and opened the Public Hearings at 7:30 pm.

Public Hearing #1- To start the evening off, Supervisor Wickham presented our first Public Hearing of the night which was for the 2025 Preliminary Budget. Supervisor Wickham stated that this year’s budget comes in at \$5,876,849.00. This is about \$4,000 higher than the 2024 budget. He added that Municipal Budgeting is a very difficult thing to do, primarily because of the Accrual Accounting idea that was discussed at the Budget Workshop. There are projects or items that get ordered in one year that may not happen until the next year or the year after that. The “carryover” tends to skew the numbers from time to time. Supervisor Wickham opened the floor and asked if there was anyone who had comments. A Town Resident asked how they get access to the preliminary budget and whether it needed to be FOILED as she couldn’t find it online. Supervisor Wickham stated FOILING it is one way and asked Bookkeeper Hilton if we could provide her a copy after the meeting. Bookkeeper Hilton said that she would get a copy for her. With no other comment, Supervisor Wickham closed this Public Hearing at 7:33 pm and moved on to the next one.

Public Hearing #2- The Supervisor presented our second Public Hearing for the SEQR on the Town of Seneca Zoning Law & Map update. He added that the SEQR is any environmental questions or concerns on our Zoning Law or Zoning Map Updates. The floor was open to anyone who had comments for or against this specific law. With no comments made, Supervisor Wickham closed the Public Hearing at 7:35 pm.

Supervisor Wickham looked for a motion to accept Part 2 of the SEQR for the Zoning Law & Map Update. The motion was made by Councilman Malyj and Seconded by Councilman Mosher.

The Supervisor then looked for a motion for Negative Declaration. The motion was made by Councilman Keeney and Seconded by Councilman Orbaker.

Public Hearing #3- Supervisor Wickham presented our third and final Public Hearing for the night which was for the SEQR for the Comprehensive Plan. The floor was open to anyone who had comments for or against the comprehensive plan updates. With no comments made, Supervisor Wickham closed the Public Hearing at 7:36 pm.

Supervisor Wickham looked for a motion to accept Part 2 of the SEQR for the Comprehensive Plan. The motion was made by Councilman Mosher and Seconded by Councilman Orbaker.

The Supervisor then looked for a motion for Negative Declaration. The motion was made by Councilman Orbaker and Seconded by Councilman Keeney.

The Regular Meeting of the Seneca Town Board, County of Ontario, State of New York was held at 3675 Flint Road, Stanley, NY 14561 on the 15TH day of October 2024 at 7:37 pm.

PRESENT	
Drew Wickham	Town Supervisor
Jason Mosher	Councilman
Jim Malyj	Councilman
Howard Keeney	Councilman
Jesse Orbaker	Councilman
Haley Eagley	Town Clerk/ Tax Collector
Shana Jo Hilton	Bookkeeper/Assessor
Jim Lawson	Highway Superintendent
Randy Coolbaugh	Water Superintendent

The supervisor noted that CEO Hoover and Historian Mastellar were necessarily absent for tonight’s meeting. A motion to accept the agenda was made by Councilman Mosher and Seconded by Councilman Orbaker.

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Supervisor Wickham said there were several changes to tonight's agenda:

1. Adding a conversation under Supervisor's Report regarding Water Budget changes.
2. Added 2 Communications: F. Notice of Public Hearing & G. Notice of the FEMA Flood Insurance Study
3. Removed Resolution #84-24 as the Amended Comprehensive Plan is not completed yet.

Supervisor looked for a motion to amend the agenda as explained and Councilman Orbaker made the motion which was seconded by Councilman Keeney. Privilege of the Floor was offered, and nobody wished to speak at this time.

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

Supervisor Wickham explained that after the Budget Workshop they had requested that Water Superintendent Coolbaugh work on some of the items on his budget. Mr. Coolbaugh worked on his budget and provided an update to that. The Supervisor noted that some of the changes were:

- Instead of a Utility Truck to replace the yellow van, they wanted to propose a trailer.
- Purchase amount of Meters decreased.
- Inventory parts required decreased.
- Repair Reserve was eliminated.

Supervisor Wickham asked if there were any thoughts or comments. Councilman Mosher asked why, overall, the appropriations went up by \$33,000 (as opposed to the version presented at the Budget Workshop). Supervisor Wickham explained that was because the Tank project got moved to next year as it is too late in the season to get it started. He added that this is an example of the "accrual accounting" that he was talking about earlier. This project is a part of the 2024 budget and the contract has been executed; however, the project won't get done or paid for until 2025- so the funds get carried over. This is what made it look like the appropriations increased for 2025. He explained that the goal was to get the budget to break even. If you take the tank painting project out of the number, it's very close to the goal.

Councilman Orbaker asked if all the materials listed on there is stuff that needs to be restocked and if it should be in this year's budget. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh said that it's all stuff that is needed for next year. Councilman Orbaker asked if he was fully stocked right now and Mr. Coolbaugh stated that he's getting low, but the items in his budget will replenish for work next year. Councilman Orbaker asked when he typically restocks, and Water Superintendent Coolbaugh stated that it is usually January. They stock up in the beginning of the year and don't restock until the next year.

Councilman Mosher asked if other meters are not available anymore (besides the cellular meters) and used his own home as an example. He was curious to know if the meter in his house is still available. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh stated that his meter will be obsolete in the next 4-5 years. Councilman Mosher then asked if there was a less expensive meter available than the cellular meters. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh stated that there may be, but we would have to change brands and go to another company. Councilman Mosher asked what the difference in cost would be and Mr. Coolbaugh stated he didn't know as that would entail changing the entire reading system and he hadn't looked into that.

Councilman Mosher asked if Badger only has cellular at this stage and Water Superintendent Coolbaugh stated that they are pushing more cellular than anything anymore and they're trying to get everyone over to cellular-based meters. Councilman Mosher followed up by asking if there was a less expensive version, other than cellular, that is offered by Badger because everyone may not want a cellular meter. Councilman Mosher stated that he is concerned about the overall cost when they start compounding this over the years, the initial cost and the ongoing fee per month, per meter. Over ten years that could be a lot of money. He added that he is led to believe that this cellular option is the only way to go. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh stated that Badger is pushing to switch over to the cellular based meters because they are trying to change the technology over.

Mr. Coolbaugh also added that this would allow people to get their readings a lot quicker and people would notice a leak much quicker. Instead of getting a reading once per quarter we would get it 4 times per day and we would save money in the long run.

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Councilman Orbaker said that \$200.00 per year for water is average for our homeowners and adding a \$350 meter with a \$12/annual cellular fee doesn't make much sense. He added that it is something that should be "offered" and not thrown into someone's house just because it is convenient. Councilman Mosher agreed and said that he likes the idea of offering it as an upgrade if they want to pay for the upgrade; but keeping it optional. We're trying to keep costs down and not just replace everything.

Water Superintendent Coolbaugh stated that the budget includes bigger meters, so he can finish off the bigger users that are in the system. Councilman Orbaker said that we should have just a standard meter option to replace broken meters for the people that don't want a cellular meter and don't want to pay for the upgrade. He said he isn't sure if that is an option but wondered why the Water Department isn't exploring that option to have available.

Water Superintendent Coolbaugh was asked if we were billing people for all the things we should be billing people for and then was asked who eats the difference in price between the regular meter and the cellular meter. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh stated that he wasn't sure.

A follow up question was asked of how many residential homes have been replaced with cellular meters. Water Superintendent Coolbaugh stated that roughly 120 meters have been replaced with cellular meters. Councilman Orbaker stated that he feels like a conversation should have been had about cost if people wanted to upgrade to cellular.

Supervisor Wickham stated he hears the board and would like to find a meter that is standard with the option of cellular where the optional upgrade would be paid for by the customer.

Councilman Orbaker asked one more question- he wondered about adding the \$12 annual subscription per cellular meter. He stated that it's concerning that an annual subscription was added to costs without board approval. Supervisor Wickham stated that the approval process did come through the budget process in prior years and Councilman Mosher understood that maybe they didn't dig deep enough and ask enough questions at those times.

Councilman Mosher changed over to the subject of the Utility Van. He said he knows they've gone around and around, but wondered if it was at all possible to stick with what they have until it breaks? He added that it's only worth \$2,000 if we sell it and wondered why we just don't push it until its life ends. Councilman Orbaker agreed, adding that especially with the new tires that we just put on it that costed a little less than what the entire van is worth.

Water Superintendent Coolbaugh stated that they can run it until it breaks down but if it does break down, they are out of luck on what to do after that (if this idea is entirely taken out of the budget). He added that it has been harder and harder to get parts for this van. Councilman Orbaker asked if there has been a part that he hasn't been able to find for this van yet. Mr. Coolbaugh stated that it is getting harder to find parts for it but confirming that he has been able to get the parts for it so far. Councilman Mosher thinks we should do away with the trailer idea that was put into the budget. He's more concerned with a Water Repair Reserve so that there is money in there for when things break.

Councilman Malyj said his only concern would be if the Van does break, it wouldn't just be replaced by a new trailer within the same day- it often takes a few days or longer to get things like that. Nothing is available on demand like it used to be. Councilman Orbaker agreed that this was a good point and asked if we could keep the trailer in as a placeholder only for if the van happens to break. They decided to keep the trailer in the budget as a placeholder for the possibility of the van breaking (not with the absolute intent to buy one right away).

Councilman Orbaker asked one last question if whether we are billing customers for everything we should be. Mr. Coolbaugh stated that he is billing everyone for everything they should be. Supervisor Wickham directed Water Superintendent Coolbaugh to put a policy together of what they charge the customer. Highway Superintendent Lawson added that this information is stated in the Water Law. He said that the law states that anything after the curb-stop should be billed to the homeowner except for the meter.

Councilman Mosher commented that he did see the PWMA's exercising the water valves, and he was happy to see that. Councilman Orbaker agreed that he also saw them and it was nice to see.

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Supervisor Wickham looked for a motion to approve the September 17th Regular Meeting and the October 1st Budget Workshop minutes. A motion was made by Councilman Orbaker and seconded by Councilman Malyj.

The communications were presented, and they are available to view at the Town Hall upon request.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING: Nixon Peabody and the Industrial Development Agency will be holding a Public Hearing for Global Common Ventures, LLC regarding the Digester project that was just approved with the Town Planning Board. The Public Hearing will be to describe the project and take public comments. This will be held in the Town of Seneca Public Meeting Room at 3675 Flint Road, Stanley, NY 14561 on Friday, October 25th, at 9:00 am.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

The Department Reports were reviewed, and the following additional comments were made.

SHG AMBULANCE

The Ambulance Crew was unable to make the meeting tonight. They sent a note that the Halloween Party at the Gorham Fire Department will be held on October 31st from 5 until 6:30 pm (before trick or treating). There will be games, costume contests, donuts, cider, popcorn, and more!

ASSESSOR

Supervisor Wickham asked Assessor Hilton how long it had been since we updated our soil worksheets. Assessor Hilton said that most of the worksheets are from the 1989 era.

Supervisor Wickham looked for the motion to approve the Town Clerk, Code Enforcement and Supervisor's financial reports. The motion was made by Councilman Orbaker and seconded by Councilman Keeney.

WARRANTS

RES. NUMBER	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSENT	MOTION	SECOND	
#81-24	Authorization to pay the 2024 Audited Vouchers	5	0	0	Councilman Malyj	Councilman Mosher	
				LIGHTING			
General \$45,586.81	Highway \$376,754.00	Water \$98,189.23	Sewer \$99.07	Water Capital \$0.00	Hall \$286.89	Stanley \$222.84	Seneca Castle \$236.65

NEW & OLD BUSINESS

RESOLUTION #	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSENT	MOTION	SECOND
#82-24	Approve Local Law #4-2024	5	0	0	Councilman Malyj	Councilman Orbaker
#83-24	Approve Local Law #5-2024	5	0	0	Councilman Keeney	Councilman Mosher
#84-24	Approve the Comprehensive Plan as Amended	PULLED				
#85-24	Adopting the Ontario County Hazard Mitigation Action Plan	5	0	0	Councilman Orbaker	Councilman Keeney

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Privilege of the Floor was offered, and nobody wished to speak at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilman Keeney made a motion to adjourn the October monthly meeting at 8:08 pm and that was seconded by Councilman Mosher.

Respectfully,

Haley Eagley
Town Clerk