

Hamilton Town Council Notes from the March 2020 Meeting (3.12.20)

An economy-sized bottle of hand sanitizer the most prominent feature at the table, Hamilton's Town Council convened at the Hamilton Village Courthouse March 12 for its regular monthly meeting.

Harvey Kliman, representing the Southern Madison Heritage Trust, opened the public comments. Laura Caughlan of the Partnership for Community Development (PCD) is helping SMHT apply for a grant through the State's Dairy Transitions Farmland Protection Initiative. Kliman explained that, under the grant, New York State would purchase the development rights for open farmland on two local farms. The funding would underwrite the succession of family farms while ensuring that open land can be preserved in perpetuity, with SMHT holding and monitoring the conservation easement. By unanimous vote, the Council agreed to write a letter in support of the grant process.

Speaking from the gallery, Hubbardsville resident Chris Rossi asked about the Town's plans in regard to the novel corona virus, COVID-19. Supervisor Eve Ann Shwartz described the precautions being taken in Town facilities, and said the Town is following protocols established by the Madison County Health Department. Residents can link to the County health department from the town web page, or by going to www.madisoncounty.ny.gov/2479/Coronavirus-COVID-19.

Highway Superintendent Luke Dowsland reported that Town crews have been taking advantage of mild weather to begin spring clean-up and prepare for future culvert replacements. They plowed and sanded 14 times in February, using 500 yards of sand/salt mix and 10,000 gallons of homemade brine, well under the budget allotment for salt. The Town anticipates holding an open house April 16 where the public can learn more about the new geothermal installation at the town garage.

Bookkeeper Brynley Wilcox reported \$37,600 received from the county for plowing from mid-January to mid-February, with another \$15,000 in payments pending. The Town's share of County sales tax revenues for the fourth quarter of 2019 was \$109,400, up 4 percent over the comparable period in 2018. Other income included a \$12,500 clean energy grant from NYSEERDA (NYS Energy Research and Development Authority), and an \$86,000 annual allocation from Colgate University. The Town's decision in February to join the federally-insured NYCLASS investment pool is already paying dividends, earning \$1,400 in interest in the first 20 days.

Town Clerk Sue Reymers reported on the status of approximately a quarter million dollars in grants awarded and requested to support construction of the new Town Office Building. Council member Peter Darby said Colgate has committed \$25,000 in support of the Town Hall project. Darby also praised the efforts of Codes Enforcement Officer Mark Miller providing oversight of the Town Hall project, in addition to his normal workload monitoring construction and codes compliance.

Supervisor Shwartz said PCD had won an additional \$350,000 grant to support local business development. Council member Shari Taylor reported on the enthusiasm generated for the "Earlville for Earlville" development effort, including front-page coverage in the *Oneida Dispatch*. Colgate Professor Jessica Graybill and her students are surveying residents for the project amongst other data gathering.

Speaking for the Zoning Update Committee, Rossi provided an interim report and anticipated a meeting between her committee and the Town Council in April.

The Town's application to New York State for certification as a "Climate Smart Community" was returned for clarifications and additions and can be resubmitted in April. Rossi, who is coordinating the Town's application, is optimistic about certification.

The Council unanimously passed a resolution authorizing an assessment update for the 2021 assessment roll to comply with Section 305 of the State Property Tax Law. The last town-wide reassessment of real property was completed in 2011.

Prior to adjourning to executive session, Supervisor Shwartz commented on the state budget process and a recent public meeting on that topic with Senator Rachel May.

Submitted by Jim Leach (not a member of the Town Council)