

Notes from the May 2020 meeting of the Hamilton, NY, Town Council (5.14.20)

Following guidelines established to protect against the spread of the coronavirus, the Hamilton Town Council convened remotely, via Zoom, the evening of May 14, 2020, for its regular monthly meeting.

During public comments to open the meeting, Chris Rossi reported on activity of the committee charged with recommending updates to the Town's zoning regulations. Rossi said the committee is "making progress," with a recent focus on models for housing density. The zoning committee is tentatively scheduled to meet with the Town Council following the Council's next monthly meeting, June 11.

Highway Superintendent Luke Dowsland reported on activity of the highway crew since it returned to work April 20 following a coronavirus furlough. Notably the crew has completed all the preparatory work to pave Morse Road, including grading, laying fabric, and installing limestone crusher run. Town of Sherburne loaned equipment to support the project. Paving will be scheduled when the ground becomes warmer. The project qualifies for reimbursement under the NYS Consolidated Highway Improvement Program ("CHIPS").

The highway crew was called on twice to sand roads due to unseasonal snows in late April and early May. Still, an overall mild winter resulted in significantly fewer plowing runs this year than in the two previous winters – 100 runs in 2019/20 compared with 151 runs in 2018/19 and 148 runs in 2017/18.

Bookkeeper Brynley Wilcox detailed receipts from Madison County for snow and ice removal (\$3,400, with another \$4,000 anticipated), sales tax revenues (\$104,500 in the first quarter of 2020, pre-coronavirus, "...good news, *for now*"), and payments for interest and penalties (\$1,600). Wilcox said the Town has booked a grant of \$37,500 from NYSERDA (NYS Energy Research and Development Authority) to support the Town's geothermal project.

Town Clerk Sue Reymers and her assistant Elisa Robertson have been working remotely during the coronavirus lockdown, and Reymers explained the trials and successes of adapting operations to serve the public. She is working with a contractor on improving and updating the Town's website and hopes to unveil the revisions in about three months.

Peter Darby is the Council's liaison with Southern Madison County Ambulance Corps. He shared SOMAC's call data for the first four months of 2020, which reflect a decline in the number of calls in March and April with students away and most residents staying home due to coronavirus. Support through the CARES Act (\$7,500) and the Payroll Protection Program (\$75,000) should help SOMAC through the resultant decline in revenue. Darby said that 30 new volunteers (drivers, paramedics and EMTs) had responded to SOMAC's outreach, enabling full staffing for all timeslots.

Mary Dinski, the Council's representative on the board of the Partnership for Community Development, said PCD has raised \$103,000 to date in support of its program of grants to help local small businesses weather the impacts of the coronavirus shutdown. Supplemented with additional

funds from Community Development Block Grants, PCD in May announced grants averaging \$5,000 each to 30 small businesses in the Town of Hamilton. PCD is also providing counseling and assistance to small businesses as they navigate government assistance programs. And PCD hosted a well-attended Zoom meeting between local business owners and Congressman Anthony Brindisi.

Work is progressing on the Town Office Building with the Town Council placing a high priority on having it open as soon as possible. How the coronavirus shutdown will affect the Town's budget is a matter of ongoing concern, with revenues from sales tax and casino operations certain to decline.

Reporting on the County Legislature, Supervisor Eve Ann Shwartz said that, proportionately, Madison County has suffered by far the greatest loss of sales tax revenues of any county in the state due to the virus. She said that the County is pushing to reopen as soon as possible, but predicted the process will be slow, noting a need to increase testing.

The next monthly meeting of the Town Council is scheduled June 11, location to be determined.

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