

Notes from the June 2020 meeting of the Hamilton, NY, Town Council (6.11.20)

As they have since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, members of the Hamilton Town Council convened via Zoom June 11 for their regular monthly meeting.

Christine Rossi, who heads the Town's Zoning Update Committee (ZUC), has presented the Council with three models for residential density. She asked that members of the Council review the proposals prior to a joint meeting of the ZUC and Town Council on June 16 (7pm via Zoom). Work on the zoning document is progressing, she said, and there is a possibility that the draft will be ready for the Council's review by the end of July.

As a member of the Hamilton Climate Preparedness Working Group (HCPWG), Rossi has also been coordinating the Town's application to be certified as a Climate Smart Community. She reported that in May both the Town and the Village of Hamilton were certified at the bronze level. She credited Town Clerk Sue Reymers and members of the Town's office staff for their work providing documentation for the award. In addition to providing recognition of efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build local climate resilience, certification qualifies municipalities to apply for grant funding in support of future initiatives. Rossi said HCPWG will next focus on a municipal climate action plan, mapping ways in which the Town and Village can "become more climate resilient and reduce our carbon footprint." A recent \$5,000 grant from the Second Nature Climate Acceleration Fund will help finance the development of the climate action plan. As it has in past years, the Town Council committed \$500 in support of HCPWG.

Highway Superintendent Luke Dowsland detailed his crew's activities maintaining the Town's roads, including preparations to chip seal both Bonney Hill Road and Morse Road later in the month. The Council discussed at length how best to finance the scheduled replacement of Town highway equipment, given the anticipated loss of revenues due to the pandemic.

Bookkeeper Brynley Wilcox accounted for income to the Town, including sales tax revenue, interest, and penalties received from Madison County; a \$25,000 gift from Colgate University that will be applied to the Town Office project; and a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) from Good Nature Brewery. Wilcox is supplying documentation for the Town's 2019 audit.

In addition to her many ongoing responsibilities coordinating the Town's business, Clerk Reymers is leading the work on the Town's new website. She reported that the design phase is complete, and anticipated that the balance of work will take about three months.

In the course of his work during May, Codes Enforcement Officer Mark Miller issued five orders relating to property maintenance violations, an uptick that Supervisor Eve Ann Schwartz speculated might reflect on the economy during a pandemic.

Council member Peter Darby reviewed monthly statistics for the Southern Madison County Ambulance Corps (SOMAC). Notably, with Colgate closed due to the coronavirus, calls for assistance continue to be down, and Darby said there were almost no calls in May related to COVID. \$75,000 from the federal Payroll Protection Program and a \$7,500 grant from the Central New York Community Foundation are helping to meet SOMAC's operating costs.

Mary Dinski, the Council's liaison to the Partnership for Community Development, said PCD and the Village of Earlville have been selected to be part of Cornell's Design Connect program, through which students and their professor will engage residents in a redesign of the Village park, including the skate park, playground, and walking trail.

After conducting a required environmental quality review, the board unanimously introduced a new proposed local law "To Provide for the Securing, Repair, Removal or Demolition of Unsafe Buildings and Structures." The law, the main purpose of which is "public health and safety," said Shwartz, will be the subject of a public hearing via Zoom on July 9.

Shwartz reported that a state of emergency is still in effect for Madison County, and the committees of the Board of Supervisors are meeting via Zoom. The county office building is open by appointment, with 150 employees still working from home.

The next monthly meeting of the Town Council is scheduled July 9 at 6:30 p.m.

Submitted by Jim Leach