

Highlights of the December 11, 2024

Town Board Regular Meeting

Summary

Oneonta Board Meeting Minutes (07:00pm)

- The meeting of December 11, 2024, of the Oneonta Board was called to order.
- Roll call confirmed the presence of Brett Holleran, Kim Fierke, Joe Camarata, Patricia Riddell Kent, and Randal Mowers.
- The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America was recited.

Supervisor Mowers shared his thoughts on Skylar's Contributions to Town and Community Development

- Skylar's departure from the town board is noted, with mention of his move and positive sentiments.
- Skylar's significant contributions are highlighted, including his dedication and involvement in various projects.
- His key roles in the West Oneonta water and sewer project and pro-housing initiatives are emphasized.

Community Development Assistance

- A community development professional provided guidance on housing, securing grants, and navigating zone changes.
- Assistance included work on student rentals, fee adjustments, pool design, and securing funding for park improvements.
- Support also encompassed splash pad design, parking lot upgrades, and website development.

Community Transition and New Board Member

- Discussion regarding acquiring an electric vehicle with support from a climate-smart initiative.
- Acknowledgment of a departing member and their contributions.
- Announcement of Joe Camarata as the newly appointed board member.

Hubbell Avenue Parking Dispute

- Temporary no-parking signs were placed on Hubbell Avenue.
- The signs are now confirmed to be permanent, impacting residents' parking.
- Long-term residents are contesting the permanent closure of parking on their street.

Street Parking Restrictions During Snowstorms

- Inquiry about street parking regulations, specifically concerning their permanence.

- The need for one-sided parking during snowstorms to ensure emergency vehicle access is highlighted.
- This parking restriction is a recurring practice, implemented to address safety concerns during inclement weather.

Highway Accessibility Issues

- Excessive snow accumulation (over 2.5 inches) impacts transportation and necessitates alternative arrangements.
- Parking on both sides of the street obstructs traffic flow, reducing it to one lane and hindering emergency vehicle access.
- The issue affects daily commuters and necessitates finding solutions to maintain highway accessibility.

Street Parking and Housing Development

- Discussion about winter parking issues and alternate parking solutions.
- Mention of a past fire incident and its impact on street access.
- Concerns raised regarding housing development and its effect on street parking due to the change from single-family homes to larger housing units.

Parking and Snow Removal Issues

- Limited parking availability caused inconvenience.
- Ongoing snow removal challenges for 10 years, requiring vehicle relocation.
- Involving authorities to resolve recurring parking and snow-clearing problems.

Highway Committee Meeting Scheduling

- A highway committee meeting is scheduled for the first Tuesday of January, specifically January 7th at 3:45.
- The meeting aims to discuss solutions regarding increased traffic due to two farmhouses.
- Alternative solutions are deemed impractical due to the permanence of the issue.

Resolving Meeting Scheduling Conflicts

- Concerns raised about meeting times and accessibility for all members.
- Discussion about past issues with meeting attendance and location.
- Proposal to adjust meeting times to improve participation and avoid previous problems.

Scheduling Challenges and Winter Road Maintenance

- Difficulty in scheduling meetings due to work commitments.
- Inquiry about snow plow adherence to ordinances during winter.
- Concerns about wider snowplows potentially posing risks to parked vehicles.

Street Parking and Winter Considerations

- Alternate side parking is in effect on River Street, Mondays through Saturdays.
- Concerns exist about street clearing during winter months and potential parking issues.
- A plan to address parking and street maintenance will be discussed at the next highway meeting.

Reynolds Property Addresses

- The main Reynolds building address is 680.
- Across the street, one rental property is located at 6810 Hubbel.
- Two other rental properties are nearby, with addresses possibly around 3.

Southside Community Updates

- An introduction from a pastor of the Southside West Lane church was given.
- Discussions regarding laundry payments for the water district are underway.
- Three community events are scheduled at the Excel Center on 8th street tomorrow.

Town Center Meeting Minutes

- A meeting was held at the cougars town center at 1 o'clock.
- February's agenda includes a student hosting program.
- Committee reports, including highway, water, and sewer, were discussed.

South Side Wedley Boundary Payment Adjustment

- A motion was made to change the Southside Wesleyan Church property designation from commercial to multi-family residential.
- This change alters the yearly boundary payment from \$1115 + \$275 to \$470 (\$235 per hookup).
- Questions arose regarding the proposal's approval and discrepancies in documentation dating back to 2014.

Uncertain Approval and Communication Breakdown

- Uncertainty exists regarding the approval of a proposal, possibly dating back to 2014.
- Communication issues are highlighted, with unanswered emails and unclear responses.
- Discrepancies exist in understanding decisions related to property closures.

West End Project: Data Analysis and Reporting

- Discussion focuses on maps, plans, and reports for the West End and potentially the East End.

- Concerns raised about the approval status and completeness of data, specifically regarding bond repayments.
- Questions arise about the inclusion of residential and non-residential data in the reports and charts.

Property Zoning Debate: Multi-family vs. Commercial

- A proposal for multi-family residential zoning per unit was presented.
- Concerns were raised regarding water hookups and usage compared to household consumption.
- The suitability of commercial zoning was also debated due to the property's characteristics.

Addressing Special Treatment Concerns

- A discussion regarding special treatment for a facility was held.
- Concerns were raised about creating a precedent by giving preferential treatment.
- A counter-argument was presented, citing past instances of reclassification.

Sewer District Water Consumption Discrepancies

- Water consumption data in a sewer district showed inconsistencies with historical usage.
- The classification of some properties, like commercial establishments, was inaccurate, leading to mismatched water consumption data.
- The issue involved identifying and correcting the categorization of approximately twelve properties to accurately reflect their water usage.

Bond Finalization and Budget Concerns

- Concerns raised about setting a precedent for future requests.
- Uncertainty regarding final bond amounts and their impact on the budget.
- Discussion about potential budget discrepancies between estimated and final costs, particularly for commercial projects.

Data-Driven Approach for Well Measurement

- A proposal to use meters on wells to gather empirical data for accurate measurement.
- Current reliance on counting flushes is questioned due to potential inaccuracies like water-saving toilets.
- The suggestion aims to establish a precedent based on evidence, ensuring reliable data for future decisions.

Commercial Usage of Restrooms and 501(c)(3) Status

- Concerns raised regarding the definition of 'commercial' use, specifically

concerning restroom access.

- Emphasis on differentiating commercial use from non-profit activities, particularly for 501(c)(3) organizations.
- Discussion about a potential conflict between a commercial designation and the non-profit status of a small organization.

Church Resource Utilization Analysis

- Low building usage observed from Monday to Sunday, except for a bible study on Tuesday.
- Minimal resource consumption noted, including water and utilities, due to low occupancy.
- Comparison drawn with vacant buildings facing similar low-usage resource consumption issues.

Property Payment Status and Categorization

- An inquiry regarding a payment due in January for 84 Lumber building.
- Bills for the property are not yet generated, so the payment won't be due in January.
- A report will identify the payment amount and determine if it covers the cost, regardless of whether the property is residential or commercial.

Zoning Classification and Land Use

- The zoning classification is irrelevant due to the intended use.
- Non-conforming uses, such as commercial in a residential area, are unfair and impractical.
- A proposal suggesting a 'not-for-profit' category is considered to avoid ambiguity and potential issues.

Reclassification of Assets After a Sale

- Discussion on reclassifying assets after a sale, specifically a church sold to a corporation.
- The reclassification depends on the new usage of the property, impacting factors like water usage and associated fees.
- A not-for-profit (NFP) number tied to water usage is suggested for the reclassified asset, increasing with higher water consumption.

Water Meter Installation and Land Acquisition

- Discussion regarding the installation of a water meter and its timeline, initially anticipated for January.
- Concerns raised about water usage, particularly comparing consumption between different properties.
- Land acquisition for water tank placement and road construction necessitated

further research into water usage patterns.

Categorization Challenges in Property Classification

- Uncertainty existed regarding the appropriate categorization of certain properties.
- Properties were initially classified as either residential or non-residential for five months.
- A potential solution involves adding a new category to accommodate properties that don't fit existing classifications.

Water Usage Tier Categorization

- Categorizing water usage into tiers based on consumption.
- Similar approach to city water categorization with varying amounts.
- Challenges in implementing due to current usage data limitations.

Water Usage and 501c3 Organizations

- Discussion about water usage and its potential impact.
- Concern raised regarding the classification of certain organizations as commercial entities and their water consumption.
- Suggestion to install water meters and revisit scheduling for a vote.

Meeting Conclusion and Next Steps

- A motion was withdrawn.
- A discussion regarding a potential conflict of interest was resolved.
- Further details will be discussed after the meeting.

Bond Payment and Water Usage

- A question arises regarding bond payment, its relation to water district benefits, and actual water usage.
- The current system aims for fairness in payment classification, avoiding grouping diverse commercial properties with varying water needs.
- The presence of a fire hydrant is highlighted as a key benefit.

Water Meter Bid Award and Insurance Review

- Insurance options are reviewed, with a suggestion to shop around every 4-5 years.
- A January visit is planned to anticipate bond payments.
- The water meter bid for Plains and Woodland water districts, with a 10% town match, was awarded to T and Kay Harrington for \$225,000.

Smart Water Meter Implementation

- Cellular-based water meters will be installed in the Woodland Water District.
- The new system allows for leak detection and usage monitoring.
- The T and K Harrington LLC bid was approved for the project.
- The budget includes costs for water meters and engineering, with potential adjustments based on project needs.

Smart Water Leak Detection System

- The system monitors water usage and alerts property owners of potential leaks.
- It helps identify excessive water consumption, potentially saving costs.
- Notifications are sent via a mobile application, allowing for remote monitoring.

Improved Meter Readings and Snow Ordinance Updates

- Outdated meters provide inaccurate readings, necessitating replacement for accurate measurements.
- A snow ordinance prohibits parking after 2.5 inches of snowfall to facilitate road clearing.
- Flyers will be distributed to inform residents about the snow ordinance and encourage cooperation.

Geothermal Water Pump Installation Report

- A water furnace heat pump, initially oversized due to COVID-related supply issues, was installed at the highway garage.
- The system utilizes a two-stage pump; currently operating on stage one.

Troubleshooting a Refrigeration System

- A heat pump shuts down due to insufficient flow when the system reaches the second stage.
- Adding an extra pump maintains constant flow, preventing shutdown.
- The issue was identified and a solution proposed by consulting Osterhoudt Refrigeration and contacting Lamont Engineering.

Project Completion and Accountability

- A project's subcontractor is no longer operational, preventing recourse.
- The HVAC system was subcontracted through a bidding process, similar to a previous water project.
- The project's design and execution were overseen, including a clerk of the works to ensure compliance.

Heat Pump System Diagnosis

- A heat pump, still under a 5-year warranty, is experiencing issues.
- The problem seems to be related to a low flow sensor and insufficient load, preventing the second stage from engaging.

- A solution involves adding an extra pump to ensure adequate flow and activate the second stage of the heat pump.

Heating System Repair and Ductwork Issues

- A geothermal load pump needs fixing; the estimated cost is \$4900.
- A mini-split unit in the break room has supply and return vents only 4 feet apart, causing inefficiency.
- The duct work is improperly configured; it needs to be redesigned and rebuilt, with larger return vents.

Troubleshooting Equipment Malfunction

- Equipment malfunction due to dirty filters and missing covers.
- Solution involves replacing filters, reinstalling covers, and obtaining additional supplies.
- Financial responsibility for repairs and potential reimbursement discussed.

Troubleshooting Temperature-Related Issues

- A reasonable approach is suggested for addressing a problem.
- A potential cost of \$5000 or \$6200 is mentioned, contingent on the success of a solution.
- The issue recurs when temperatures drop, and floor problems are linked to temperature settings.

Repairing Building Systems

- A motion was made to allocate funds for repairing an air handler.
- The air handler repair addresses issues with ductwork and ceiling grills in the break room, costing \$1300.
- Another issue, a key pump, requires separate consideration and funding.

Geothermal Pump Repair and Water/Sewer Project Update

- Approval of \$4900 repair involving a geothermal pump.
- Expected completion of repairs within three weeks.

Water and Sewer Project: A Long Road Ahead

- East End water and sewer project progressing; a presentation was reviewed.
- Proposed is a significant water and sewer extension project, the town having been promised grant funds of 4.2 million initially.
- The project aims to address water supply issues, particularly benefiting and ensuring public health and safety.
- Collaboration with the city is crucial for success, especially in low water situations, although recent storms have improved reservoir levels.

Pre-Approval Business Cost Analysis

- Contacting businesses to confirm cost feasibility before approving the request for quotation (rfq).
- Uncertainty remains regarding the exact costs; current estimations are speculative.
- Addressing the issue of failing houses and the need for connection to municipal water systems to manage sewage effectively.

Sewer Plant Upgrade Project Discussion

- Federal funding secured for sewer plant upgrade, requiring potential local contribution.
- A meeting with businesses is planned to discuss potential contributions and project feasibility.
- Preliminary cost estimates for different project plans (A and B) are available, considering potential additional funding.

Project Scalability Analysis: A Worst-Case Scenario

- Four sets of numbers represent best and worst-case project scenarios.
- Discussion includes potential project scaling back or phased implementation based on affordability.
- If worst-case budget constraints arise, alternative solutions like engineering changes are necessary; project completion is critical for business growth.

Financial Planning and Risk Assessment

- Current costs are potentially unaffordable for some businesses.
- A worst-case scenario analysis is proposed to determine cost limits.
- Exploring cost reduction strategies and retaining a significant portion of the budget are priorities.

Grant Funding Concerns for Water Systems

- Concerns raised about the discontinuation of grant funding.
- Discussion on the eligibility of different entities for similar grants, focusing on water resources.
- Uncertainty about funding for sewage treatment plans and municipal water systems.

Water and Sewage Infrastructure Concerns

- Concerns raised regarding water shortages at Fox Care Center, occurring three times in two years.
- A grant for sewage treatment plant is mentioned, but future funding uncertainty exists due to recent elections.

- Plans to contact businesses, including Emmon's Farms (recently acquired), to address water and sewer needs.

Pump and Sewer Issues

- A sewer pump malfunction occurred due to a flushed towel, causing service disruptions.
- The malfunction possibly originated from a nearby facility.

Facility Maintenance Issues

- Long-standing issues include mop heads and garbage disposal.
- Routine maintenance includes annual or biannual pumping.
- Recent problems include pump failure and communication loss due to low battery voltage from snow on solar collectors.

Water Level and Power Source Issues

- Water level dropped to a critical 17 feet, requiring immediate attention.
- Two additional batteries were acquired to address power outages caused by insufficient battery life.
- A solution for solar collector issues during snowy conditions is needed to maintain consistent power.

Power Solutions for Limited Sunlight

- Insufficient sunlight impacts system performance due to short days and lack of sufficient energy recovery.
- Proposed solutions include additional batteries for switching and extension cords for temporary power.
- A stationary generator with a propane tank is suggested as a potential longterm solution to address power needs.

Post-Snow Operations and Thanksgiving Appreciation

- Legal documents are finalized, awaiting recorded deed for town road servicing the Stewart's Plaza on 205/Oneida Street.
- Snow plowing operations were conducted, with a mention of coffee breaks.
- Thanksgiving Day work by road crews is acknowledged and praised for their dedication.

Public Safety Contract and Budget Concerns

- A public safety OPT contract is under review; a decision is pending.
- Delayed payments pose a risk to the contract, impacting essential bus services.

Dial-a-Bus System Changes and Costs

- A past transportation system, 'dial-a-bus', provided convenient travel.

- The system's cost is significant considering a decrease in ridership.
- The number of routes has also decreased over 15 years.
- Discussions involved route removals due to population decrease and negotiations.

Negotiating Infrastructure Maintenance and Sidewalk Maintenance Responsibility

- Highlighted was the City of Oneonta's river bridge plowing practices, with necessary work from the center of the bridge on the town side, to the potential implementation of sidewalks heading towards Home Depot.
- Sidewalk maintenance responsibilities were discussed, suggesting individual property owner accountability.
- Property owners should maintain sidewalks in front of their properties.
- An exception is proposed for a specific section of the bridge from Aldi's to the center of JFL Bridge, and mirrored with Speedway.
- A town-wide ordinance is suggested to define and enforce sidewalk maintenance responsibilities.

Town-Wide Sidewalk Ordinance and Snow Removal

- Concerns raised regarding the cost of sidewalk construction and maintenance.
- Uncertainty about final sidewalk design and snow storage solutions on the Southside.

Snow Removal and Storage Solutions

- Discussion on snow removal and its impact on sidewalks.
- Concerns raised about the cost and responsibility of snow removal.
- Proposal to designate snow storage areas and explore town-wide or area-specific solutions.

Sidewalk Maintenance and City Policies

- Existing sidewalks are in need of better maintenance.
- The City of Oneonta contracts out sidewalk repairs, resulting in additional administrative fees.
- Current practices involve high administrative fees, doubling the cost for homeowners.

Sidewalk Maintenance Responsibility

- Discussion regarding sidewalk maintenance responsibility.
- Question arises about who maintains sidewalks after 23 years, particularly on streets where the state initially installed them.
- The state's role in maintenance is unclear, with examples of situations where the responsibility falls on the town.

State Roadside Infrastructure Responsibility

- Discussion regarding responsibility for sidewalks alongside state roads.
- Historical context mentioned, noting changes in design and maintenance practices over 40 years.
- Uncertainty exists about who is accountable for the sidewalks' construction and upkeep.

Oneonta Town Pool Renovation

- A generous anonymous donation of \$185,000 was received.
- The donation will fund the construction of a new pool in the Town of Oneonta.
- Demolition of the old pool and construction of a new one will begin soon, and expected to be ready for the next season.

Highway Garage Lighting Issues

- Issues with failing lights in the highway garage are reported, possibly due to condensation.
- Lamont is investigating warranty options, and a silicone sealant is suggested to address water ingress.
- Issues with LED light placement and ventilation were discussed.

Personnel Planning and Open Positions

- Upcoming personnel changes necessitate the immediate recruitment process for open positions.
- The recruitment for specific roles should begin in April, with applications being sought.
- A 30-day shadowing period is planned for a new hire to replace the Town Codes Official to ensure a smooth transition, current official's departure date is August 15th.
- A new planning board chair was appointed, Reggie McGuinness.

Year-End Report: Property Assessments and Planning

- Discussion regarding debt resolution starting the new year.
- Code enforcement actions taken, including property assessments and condemnation of uninhabitable structures.

Shelter Approval and Scheduling

- A motion to approve a secondary shelter for a humane society was passed.
- Questions arose regarding fees and scheduling for the shelter, requiring further review.

Financial Discussion and Future Planning

- Concerns were raised regarding a fee structure imposed by SqSPCA.

–A discussion about future negotiations and potential support for a local organization was held.

Bills

–A vote was taken to approve the payment of bills.

Meeting Minutes Acceptance

–A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes from the November meeting.

–The minutes from the December 3rd special meeting, which included an appointment, were also added and accepted.

Contract Review and Project Authorization

–A pending contract for solar funding and insulation, valued at \$50,000, is under review.

–The review process will determine project authorization and subsequent design upgrades.

–Authorization is contingent upon contract closure this week and a subsequent review.

–Discussion regarding authorization for contract signing by Randy.

–Concerns raised about contract costs exceeding a certain limit (possibly \$50,000).

–Review of a contract between the town of Oneonta and another party.

Funding Agreement Review and Approval

–A funding agreement is discussed, involving a total of \$50,000.

–An upfront payment to a contractor is planned, with a \$34,000 return.

–Legal review and confirmation of monetary terms are required before final approval.

Meeting Scheduling and Confirmation

–An Organizational Meeting was scheduled, with a date of the 6th of January at 5:30pm, following the Public Safety Committee meeting.