

**MINUTES BOOK\*\*TOWN OF COEYMANS**  
**January 9, 2020 – Town Board Meeting – 7:00pm**

**A Town Board Meeting was held Thursday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 7:00pm at Town Hall, 18 Russell Avenue, Ravena, New York**

**PRESENT:** George D. McHugh, Supervisor  
Daniel D. Baker, Councilman  
Kenneth C. Burns, Councilman  
Zachary S. Collins, Councilman  
Brandon L. LeFevre, Councilman

**ALSO PRESENT:** Cindy L. Rowzee, Town Clerk  
Scott Searles, Highway Superintendent  
Daniel Contento, Officer in Charge  
James Peluso, Attorney to the Town  
John Cashin, Code Enforcement Officer  
Craig Apple, Albany County Sheriff

Audience (80+), Media (6)

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Supervisor McHugh opened the meeting and asked Bill Tryon to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. He stated that a full Board was present.

### **Public Announcements**

Supervisor McHugh announced that Town Offices would be closed Monday, January 20, 2020 in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Councilman Baker thanked all levels of law enforcement for their service on behalf of the Town and Town Board in honor of Law Enforcement Appreciation Day.

### **Presentation**

**Albany County Sheriff – Coeymans Substation/Memorandum of Agreement** – Supervisor McHugh stated that first would be the presentation by Sheriff Apple, followed by Public Comment and then to the resolution as the Sheriff had another meeting. He then stated that this would be a Municipal agreement about working together with our County law enforcement to increase public safety, share resources and provide the Sheriff's office with a more permanent presence in Ravena and Coeymans. With this plan we would increase the local patrols from 5 dedicated to 9 dedicated patrols a day and be able to move \$280,000 into contingency to pay for Police 2019 budget deficiencies and 2020 budget deficiencies for the Town. He also said this is about addressing crime and any criminal element that may exist or travel to our Town and Village. He stated that this was not about dissolving the Coeymans Police Department. It is not about writing more tickets to generate more revenue for the courts and it is not about harassing law abiding citizens. Supervisor McHugh then asked Sheriff Apple to speak.

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Sheriff Apple stood and thanked the Town Board for the invitation to the meeting. He stated that the Sheriffs have had a presence in Town but the biggest hindrance is that the closest station is in Clarksville. He stated that with this agreement there would be a temporary sub-station at the old firehouse until arrangements could be made for a more permanent space. He stated that there would be a dedicated 2 cars per shift for a total of 6 patrols a day as well as a lot of other resources they are offering the Town. He stated that there are two SROs at the school and that is working out great. He stated that he does not care about tickets and would rather give warnings and they would not be here to harass people. They are here to have high visibility, lower crime and increase community policing and public safety.

Officer in Charge Contento stated that this is a way to save on his budget just for giving them some office space. He also said that they are working on cooperation with the Sheriff's department.

Supervisor McHugh stated that after the election that he and Councilman Baker had met with Sheriff Apple to let him know they wanted to work with them and all governments. It was at this time that the conversation came around to how a substation would benefit the Sheriff's Office and how Coeymans would benefit from more police coverage. They met again with Officer in Charge Contento and talked about the budget and ways they could help the Coeymans patrols and save on the budget. He stated that with this plan not a single officer has lost their job but there would be less patrols for part-time officers at a savings of \$280,000. This money would go into contingency to be used for other things or the police if necessary and we would be getting more for our Albany County tax dollars. He then opened the floor for public comment.

**Public Comment**

**Mr. Scott Rudolph of Bethlehem** who is a former EMT for the Ravena Rescue Squad stood and spoke against this plan stating that the part-timers counted on those hours and asked why Mayor Misuraca was not involved in these discussions. He asked for more information on the Main St. incident that had happened a few days before. He stated that in his experience as an EMT with the Paramedics that when someone called in sick the local Rescue Squad was not notified. He wanted to know what would happen when someone calls in sick from the Sheriff's and wondered if this would be the first agency pulled? Mr. Rudolph stated that the Coeymans Police are very helpful when he gets on a scene, they help with carrying equipment. He said that the people from the Sheriff's Department do not do that. He knows that there is a difference in qualifications and that the Sheriff's Deputies are not here all the time. He stated that the problem here was that we had not had proper consistent leadership since Chief Giroux. He questioned the title of Contento as Chief of Police and the amount of time he had been an Acting Chief. He mentioned that he had given the police and sheriff's department tips on local illegal activities and nothing had been done about it. Mr. Rudolph stated that it was good police work for them to pull you over and that we should not be complaining about it. He mentioned some issues at the Ravena Rescue Squad. He also feels that the Sheriff's Department is trying to replace the Coeymans Police Department and the Ravena Rescue Squad. He was worried that something was going to happen due to these concerns.

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Councilman Baker thanked Mr. Rudolph for his concerns and stated that he was the one who had contacted the Albany County Sheriff's Department, not the other way around.

Supervisor McHugh stated that part-timers leave, that even he used to be an officer here in '86 and that they do leave and move on and a lot of them go and work for Sheriff Apple. He stated that Mayor Misuraca had been consulted and that he had spoken with other members of the Village Board on this issue. He also stated that Chief Contento was appointed on January 1<sup>st</sup> as the Police Chief and that a test was ordered for the Chief of Police position on January 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mr. Rudolph asked how many patrols were usually here. Sheriff Apple stated that there were usually 1 or 2 but they were not dedicated.

Mr. Rudolph stated that they were already here and so this is not a significant increase.

Sheriff Apple stated that as these were dedicated they could not be pulled.

Mr. Rudolph then asked if the Paramedics were dedicated.

Sheriff Apple responded that the Paramedics were more of a shifting and so if one was needed in a certain area they were pulled from another place. Their placement was more fluid.

**Ms. Barbara Tanner of Ravena** stood and stated that as an Ex-Police Chief's wife she knows that they cannot always call people back to let them know what it going on. She also took offense at some of the things that had just been said regarding the Police Chief and Rescue Squad.

**Ms. Cynthia VanKempen of Ravena** stood and stated that she was in favor of the Sheriff coming down and wanted to thank and support the local police station as well. She wanted to know more about what would be done about the group causing havoc in the Village, citing two incidents, one from near her house about a month ago and then the more recent one on Main Street.

Supervisor McHugh said he hoped this was the first step by increasing to 9 patrols a day. Sheriff Apple stated that he is working closely with the Coeymans Police Department and has heard complaints. He stated that the Sheriff's Office will dedicate what they need to in order to end this. He stated that he would work with Children and Family Services to see if there is anything they can do to help and would work closely with the Police.

**Ms. Beth Hazelton of Bethlehem** stood and stated that she is an RCS School taxpayer. She said that she is heartbroken to hear of words like lawlessness and thugs used to describe what is going on down here. She feels that the problem is that the State of New York does not support Law Enforcement. She does not think that bringing in the Sheriff will fix the problem. She cited an incident involving 200 people at Crossgates Mall this summer where no one was arrested where the police were hamstrung. She feels the \$280,000 would be better spent in staying with the local police. She mentioned some of the community outreach that the local police had done.

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**Mr. AJ Gonzalez of Selkirk** spoke in support of Sheriff Apple. He stated that he thinks we have an opportunity here and asked if this agreement is based on reducing the Coeymans Police force. Sheriff Apple stated that it was not. Mr. Gonzales then stated that we have the opportunity to do some community policing, not just road patrols. He also feels that the Sheriff can give some real support to the local law enforcement. He stated that we can move slowly and phase this in and still give support to our local law enforcement.

**Mr. Michael Case of Troy**, a police officer with the Coeymans Police Department, stood and spoke on his own behalf. He spoke about the disadvantages of a career in law enforcement and how recent laws are affecting the job of a police officer. He stated that they put their lives on the line every day, not because of the pay or the benefits, but because they want to make the world a better place. He spoke of how rewarding this career is and how important it is to be in the community and get to know the residents. He stated how they are trying to become role models for the youth in the community. He asked the Town Board to reconsider this move as the part-time officers would have a harder time taking care of their families, going from 4-5 shifts per week to 1. He spoke of his expenses as a part-time officer, a high deductible, expensive health care plan through the state, no paid time off, no sick time and hospital bills from when he was sick last year. He stated that the Coeymans Police Department has gotten younger and there is more drive. He mentioned a few of things that they have done to be part of the local community. He knows this boils down to dollars and cents but he feels this department can make the community better if it had the appropriate staffing and an efficient budget and the support of the Town Board and community. He asked the Board to re-examine the budget and give the department the staffing that it needs and asked that the agreement be put to a public vote. He asked them not to forget what our officers have done for our community.

**Mr. Kent Pugliese of Coeymans** spoke about living on Route 144 from Bronk Rd. to the northern Town line. He listed the dangers that are present; no sidewalks or street lights, a narrow road, bus stops, truck route, bicycle riders, motorcycle riders and a 55mph speed limit. He stated that it is a safety issue and a quality of life issue. He asked that the Town Board work on getting the speed limit lowered to 45.

Supervisor McHugh stated that Route 144 is a state highway and pulled out a letter where the state had said the reduction is not warranted. He is going to ask for help for this from our State Senator Amedore and Assemblyman Tague to see if they can help convince DOT to lower it.

Mr. Pugliese stated that the report is flawed as it did not encompass enough area or variations in time throughout the day. He also mentioned that the Town had to be the one to request the change.

Councilman Baker stated that they would have Officer in Charge Contento and the Sheriff get patrols out there and that Supervisor McHugh will get this process started.

Mr. Pugliese stated that every single day the traffic is different. Some days there are only a few cars that go by and other days it is non-stop traffic.

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**Mr. Bill Sadowski of Coeymans** stood and spoke against having the Sheriff come in. He feels that we should use the money to help solve the issues by putting another patrol on the road or having more full time officers.

Supervisor McHugh stated that there were issues with the budget, a couple of large bills that were not paid in 2019 and that the Police Department was \$75,000 over budget for 2019. He stated that he was looking for ways to fill some holes as well as the need to put some money back to the Highway budget that was taken out and the Dog Control Officer was taken out. He stated that the money was moved to contingency and if the need was there they could use it for the Police Department.

Mr. Sadowski mentioned that the Sheriff already usually had 2 patrols per shift down here but they were just not dedicated so this would actually be less patrols, not more.

Supervisor McHugh stated that he hoped the reduction in the Police Department is temporary, not permanent. He stated that the budget does not have a lot to do with the Sheriff. He stated that from 2019-2020 the Police budget went up by \$140,000 so the \$280,000 reduction is really only a \$140,000 reduction from last year.

**Mr. Bill Kapusta of Coeymans** stood and spoke in support of both the Police Department and the Sheriff's Department. He was wondering if a tax increase next year could refund the Police Department. He stated that he was fine if the taxes were raised if he got more for his money.

Supervisor McHugh said that it was too early to tell. He wants to see how the revaluation comes out and feels that we may see more assessment on industrial and commercial properties. Until he sees where the revaluation comes out it is hard to say one way or the other.

There was discussion about what the Police Budget was a few years ago versus now.

**Ms. Sara Pruksima of Coeymans** stood and asked about the Poop Sender issue that happened in November. She stated that she feels that there needs to be justice after dealing with the harassment and that no one should have to deal with those attacks. She spoke against the shift cuts for the Coeymans Police Department and hoped the investigation into the November incident would continue.

**Mr. Steven Shook of Ravena** stood and asked Sheriff Apple if there would be a bigger budget for sending the cars on a dedicated basis.

Sheriff Apple stated that since he had already been sending some cars down here it was basically a trade-off.

**Ms. Judith Wines of Albany** who is the director of the RCS Community Library stood and spoke in support of the Coeymans Police Department. She stated that they have had a lot of interaction with the Coeymans Officer's and they will just drop by to see how things are going.

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The Sheriff's patrols have never done this. She is concerned about the future of seeing the Police as part of the community and seeing the officers that we all know and that the kids know.

**Mr. George Langdon of Coeymans** stood and spoke about being part of the administration who made significant cuts to the police station. He mentioned that calls with medical need would have to go back and forth between local dispatch and county dispatch, especially with medical issues. He stated that they had found that most of the dispatchers were children of Town employees and were making more than the Police Officers. They felt that cutting dispatch was a wise way to save 5% of the Town budget. He spent some time as Police Commissioner and knows how hard the scheduling is, especially of the night shift and having officers on duty by themselves. He feels that having the Sheriff here is a great solution for providing backup.

**Ms. Donna Pasquini of Coeymans** spoke in support of the both the Coeymans Police and the Sheriff. She stated that the Sheriff as backup is great and nice that it will cost us nothing. She is happy that the Sheriff will be here to provide backup.

**Mr. James Rarick of Coeymans** stood and stated that he was blown away by everyone's concern with politics and money. He stated that there have been issues in our schools that are trickling down to our town. He hopes the Sheriff can help get control over the situation. He thinks this is a great thing.

**Ms. Marissa Tutay of Coeymans** stood and asked if there was a way to keep the part-timer's hours so that they don't get cut. She also stated that the Sheriff's SROs in the school have made connections with the students and she hopes that they can make that same kind of connection with the Town Residents.

**Mr. Brent Hotaling of Ravena**, stood and spoke his concern over the Coeymans Police being a training force. He also spoke about an investigation into police forces and how the history of an officer in one force is not transferred to another. He also stated that he appreciates the Sheriff coming down to help out.

Councilman Burns spoke about how our police could be considered a training force. He stated that they pay their own way through school and then we give them training as a police officer and then many of them get a job with Bethlehem or Albany.

**Ms. Phyllis Shook of Ravena** stood and asked for a promise to have the money come back if it is found to be feasible.

Supervisor McHugh said sure but that at this point he does not have a great handle on the budget but he will look into it.

Ms. Shook again asked if the promise was there that they would consider putting it back.

Supervisor McHugh said absolutely.

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**Ms. Patricia Grogan of Coeymans** thanked every police officer here. She knows it is a thankless job. She thanked the Town Board for trying to make change and to work with the community. She stated that where she lives they have had to call the police a couple of times and both times Bethlehem Police made it first but both Coeymans and the Sheriff were there. Unfortunately the Coeymans Police were called away and so it is good that they can work together.

**Mr. William Stewart of Ravena** was here because he was concerned. He thanked the law enforcement and stated the need to support them and the administrators in the schools and the school teachers.

**Mr. John Lopinski a former resident** heard this story on the news that morning and was concerned the Sheriff's department was going to take over the Police Department. Knowing the whole story he thinks this is a good idea. He put out a call for volunteers for the fire departments and police department. He stated that Sheriff Apple does his job and is the best Sheriff we have had. He thanked the Town Board for not taking the Police Department away.

**Ms. Kristin Herrick of Coeymans Hollow** asked if we could have the agreement with the Sheriff and keep the officers too. She stated that it seemed like something the tax payers would be willing to pay for.

Supervisor McHugh stated that we are not losing police officers, we are just cutting two shifts for now. We are stuck with the revenue we have until 2021. He stated that he is going to institute a 90 day spending freeze and they will look at putting some money back into the police budget if they can.

Ms. Herrick stated that she has had a positive experience with both departments. She also said that she feels that having a strong community police force as well as the Sheriff presence would be the best solution.

**Mr. Daniel Beeman of Coeymans Hollow** stated that he is a new resident and has no issue with the Sheriff but has watched them take over the police and the EMT from the hill towns. He thinks it is important to keep our small town feel and to keep our own police. He stated that he understands we have staffing and budget issues but wants to make sure we don't lose out ability to care about each other.

Supervisor McHugh stated that the Sheriff and some of the Deputies have deep roots to our community and Councilman Collins stated that the SROs also help with ties to the community.

At this point the public comment period was closed and Supervisor McHugh moved on to the following resolution:

**Resolution #042-20 – Authorize Supervisor to Execute Agreement with Sheriff**

On motion of Supervisor McHugh, seconded by Councilman Collins, the following resolution was: APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT – SO MOVED

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**WHEREAS**, the Town Board is committed to Public Safety for the protection and benefit of all Town and Village residents, property owners, and business owners; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town Board has negotiated an Agreement with the Albany County Sheriff's Office, whereby the Albany County Sheriff's Office shall provide two (2) dedicated Sheriff Patrol units to service the Town of Coeymans on a twenty-four hour basis each and every day of the year in exchange for a Sheriff's Substation to be located at 18 Russell Avenue, Ravena, New York;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Town Board of the Town of Coeymans does hereby authorize the Town Supervisor to execute a Memorandum of Agreement on behalf of the Town of Coeymans with the Albany County Sheriff's Office to memorialize this Agreement. Said Agreement shall be for a term of five (5) years, with an effective date of January 6, 2020.

At 8:27pm Supervisor McHugh and Sheriff Apple signed the agreement before continuing on with the rest of the meeting. Most of the media left after the agreement was signed.

**Approval of Minutes**

**Motion to Approve Minutes**

Councilman Baker made a motion to accept the minutes as presented from the December 23, 2019 Town Board Meeting, seconded by Councilman Burns.

APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT – SO MOVED

**Old Business**

**Gedney Hill Tower** – Councilman Baker stated that they were still working on restoring Highway communications. He stated that power had been restored to the service container and that Michael Bryant of Pittsfield Communication will come the next week to restore communications. They have been borrowing radios for the Highway department from Albany County but we should be up and running by the next meeting.

**New Business**

**Property Maintenance Code Update** – Supervisor McHugh stated that he had gone on a ride along with Code Enforcement Officer's Cashin and DeBacco. He stated that the current code does not always have the teeth it needs to enforce anything so he has tasked the Building Department to come up with a proposal to amend the property maintenance code. They will bring the information to the Board next month to see if there are any changes that they may want to make.

**Speed Limit on State Route 144** – Supervisor McHugh stated that this was discussed during public comment and reiterated that he feels that the speed limit should be lowered to 45mph from

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the Bethlehem town line down through the industrial area. With more industrial coming in the highway will be even more dangerous. He will be reaching out to DOT as well as our State Assemblyman and State Senator.

Councilman Baker said that he thinks it is a great idea and the wind had been taken out of his sail when he had called the last time.

**Curfew** – Supervisor McHugh stated that this was something the Village had talked about but he seems to think it would be an issue enforcing the curfew. After speaking with Officer in Charge Contento he is not sure if the curfew is the right answer.

Officer in Charge Contento stated that a curfew would be a local law that only carries a fine and is hard to enforce if the people do not have the money to pay it.

Councilman Baker stated that he didn't want to move away from this topic yet. He then referenced the incident on Main St. and said we need to make a change and do something.

Supervisor McHugh stated that he has asked the Mayor to put this on a joint Village/Town Workshop Meeting Agenda that is scheduled for Jan. 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Resolutions**

**Resolution #043-20 – Amend Resolution Establishing 2020 Holiday Observances**

On motion of Councilman Baker, seconded by Councilman LeFevre, the following resolution was: APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT – SO MOVED

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Town Board of the Town of Coeymans does hereby set the following corrected holiday dates for 2020 for employees not covered by union contracts. Holiday schedules for covered employee are pursuant to active agreements in force.

July	3 <sup>rd</sup> - Independence Day (Observed)
November	3 <sup>rd</sup> - Election Day
November	11 <sup>th</sup> - Veterans Day

**Resolution #044-20 – Administrator of Public Access Pay Rate Increase**

On motion of Councilman LeFevre, seconded by Supervisor McHugh, the following resolution was: APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT – SO MOVED

**WHEREAS**, the Town Board of the Town of Coeymans, does hereby have an agreement with Mid-Hudson Cablevision to provide public access programming directly from the Town Building located at 18 Russell Avenue, Ravena, New York.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Town Board of the Town of Coeymans does hereby appoint William Horton as the Administrator of Access for the purpose of

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coordinating programming and overseeing individuals involved in the telecasting of approved programs, at a rate of \$75.00 per televised meeting, effective January 1, 2020.

Supervisor McHugh stated that Mr. Horton had been doing this at the rate of \$50 per meeting for 20 years and this was his first raise in that time. He thanked Mr. Horton for continuing to do this.

**Resolution #045-20 – Appoint Member of Emergency Management Committee - Traver**

On motion of Supervisor McHugh, seconded by Councilman Collins, the following resolution was: APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT – SO MOVED

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Coeymans, Village of Ravena, Emergency Management Committee has an Emergency Management Plan to be implemented at the time of specific incidents of events which may result in severe or extensive damage, loss of property, casualties, deaths and/or disruption of the normal everyday routine of our specific geographic area; and

**WHEREAS**, the success of this plan depends on the cooperation and coordination of a number of individuals and organizations;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Town Board hereby appoints Henry Traver, Village of Ravena Public Works Foreman, to the Emergency Management Committee, effective immediately, for a period ending December 31, 2020.

Supervisor McHugh stated that it was brought to his attention that Deputy Mayor Bailey was on the list and as he was not seeking re-election the Village had asked that Henry Traver be put on the committee in his place.

**Upcoming Meetings and Workshops**

Joint Town/Village Board Workshop – January 13<sup>th</sup> – 6pm  
Town Board Workshop – January 16<sup>th</sup> – 7pm  
Village Board Meeting – January 21<sup>st</sup> – 6pm  
Town Board Meeting – January 23<sup>rd</sup> – 7pm  
RCS CBA Breakfast Meeting – January 23<sup>rd</sup> – 7:30am at Finke Equipment

**Public Comment**

Supervisor McHugh then opened the floor for public comment.

**Mr. Kent Pugliese of Coeymans** stood and asked if the town owns a speed checker.

Officer in Charge Contento stated that we do not.

Mr. Pugliese then asked if we can ask the Sheriff or possibly look into the purchase of a permanent solar powered one on a telephone pole.

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**Mr. William Kapusta of Coeymans** stood and asked for some clarification on the appointments for the Emergency Management Committee since it is a 1 year appointment.

Supervisor McHugh stated that the appointments for the rest of the committee members had been made at the Organizational Meeting on January 1<sup>st</sup>. He believes that Steve Payne was appointed for the Coeymans Hollow Fire Company.

**Mr. William Stewart of Ravena** stood and asked for some more information on the reassessment.

Supervisor McHugh stated that the state suggests doing a reassessment about every 5 years when the equalization rate starts to drop. He said that the state will recommend when it should be done.

**Ms. Patricia Grogan of Coeymans** thanked them for opening up the meetings and making it a public forum again.

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**Motion to Adjourn**

On motion of Councilman Baker, seconded by Councilman LeFevre, the Town Board Meeting was adjourned. APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT – SO MOVED

Time – 8:45pm

*Respectfully Submitted,*



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*Cindy L. Rowzee, Town Clerk*