

MINUTES BOOKTOWN OF COEYMANS
February 8, 2024 – Town Board Meeting – 6:00pm**

A Town Board Meeting was held Thursday, February 8, 2024 at 6:00pm at Town Hall, 18 Russell Avenue, Ravena, New York

PRESENT: Stephen Donnelly, Supervisor
Linda S. Bruno, Council Member
Stephen J. Schmitt, Council Member
Ronald Hotaling, Council Member
Michael J. Stott, Council Member

Absent:

ALSO PRESENT: Candace McHugh, Town Clerk
Richard C. Reilly, Town Attorney

Supervisor Donnelly called the meeting to order and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. Supervisor Donnelly asked that the record reflect that all members were present.

Announcements: Senior Projects of Ravena is holding their 2nd annual Superbowl Square Fundraiser. Please contact Lakken at the center for more information.

Approval of Minutes: The following minutes were approved:

-January 25, 2024 – Town Board Meeting

Council member Stott made a motion to accept the minutes for January 25, 2024 Town Board Meeting and Council member Hotaling seconded the motion.

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

Old Business:

A discussion was held regarding Resolution #010-24 which designates the official paper of the town. Warren Dews from the Ravena News Herald spoke on behalf of their paper. Mr. Dews stated he has sent all his contact information to the board members. Council member Schmitt received concerns from a department head regarding the inability to get a public notice posted in a timely fashion. Council member Schmitt also stated a department head and the Supervisor have tried calling Mr. Dews with no return call. Mr. Dews stated he did speak to Supervisor Donnelly but did not receive messages from anyone else. Mr. Dews would like to know how to move forward since his paper covers this market more than anyone else. Supervisor Donnelly stated the board will need to discuss this further to see what the best solution is. The Town Clerk asked for the cut off time for the next paper. Mr. Dews stated it is the end of the day the Wednesday before the next publication. They can get digital ads posted sooner to their media outlets. He feels as though the law explains we can use digital media as a main source. The

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Town Clerk suggested the board verify this with the Association of Towns. Town Attorney Rich Reilly said he will confirm with the Association of Towns as well. Council member Schmitt asked if the board was comfortable with making a decision at this point. The Supervisor stated he is in favor of using a local paper but needs to know that their ads will be placed timely as well as calls returned. Council member Hotaling said he didn't feel a decision could be made at this moment. The board agreed to consider it and discuss further.

A discussion was held about resolution #019-24 regarding how so and how much the grant writer Nicole Ambrosio should be paid. Council member Stott asked for clarification if MJ Engineering writes grants for the town. Supervisor Donnelly said they do but there are several engineers they could look at. Council member Bruno feels MJ knows our town very well. Council member Schmitt is not aware of any grants Ms. Ambrosio produced for the town during her last employment with the town. Supervisor Donnelly stated Ms. Ambrosio has had several email conversations according to recently reviewed emails with the previous Supervisor. He feels the amount of \$14,000 is a good deal for a grant writer compared to what he has seen. Council member Schmitt asked where this amount came from. Supervisor Donnelly stated Ms. Ambrosio requested \$15,000 and he offered \$14,000. Council member Hotaling said the money should be moved to personnel services from contractual before we consider authorizing the pay. Supervisor Donnelly asked if anyone else has come up with another grant writer. Council members Schmitt and Bruno felt as though MJ Engineering is a better option. Council member Schmitt asked to be informed of what grants Ms. Ambrose brought in. Supervisor Donnelly said the recent water front grant (GIGP). He was corrected by Council member Bruno that she was not the one that spearheaded the water front work. Council member Bruno feels it is a gamble while Supervisor Donnelly feels the opposite. Supervisor Donnelly made a motion to move forward with a resolution to pay Nicole Ambrosio \$14,000. The council was confused as to what was being brought forth. The resolution was not seconded by anyone therefore it was tabled.

A motion was made by Council member Stott to amend resolution #020-24 to reflect the term end for Mr. McGuire to be December 30, 2030. Council member Hotaling seconded the motion.

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

Discussion: Supervisor Donnelly asked to discuss the formation of the Conservation Advisory Council resolution. Council member Hotaling stated this is the first time he has seen this but does see some changes he feels should be made. Supervisor Donnelly read aloud some emails he had received from people interested in participating in the Conservation Advisory Council should it be revived. Council member Stott read information he found on the NYS DEC website regarding a CAC. He feels as though the participants should be vetted by the town board. Supervisor Donnelly feels this is a good opportunity to get youth members involved possibly. Richard Reilly explained the resolution in front of them was taken from the previous CAC

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formation resolution, the confidential Secretary just updated the dates. Supervisor Donnelly asked if it was possible to pass this resolution at this time. Council member Stott stated he was not comfortable and would appreciate more time to research this. Mr. Tryon asked to speak from the audience and was granted the floor. He asked for the board to be cautious when moving forward and felt sometimes there was such a thing as too much government. He feels as though advisory committees sometimes become another level of government.

A discussion was prompted by Council member Schmitt in regards to the status of the purchase of the Church. He asked the Supervisor if he had any updates. The Supervisor stated the church is currently under contract for \$10,000. Town Attorney Reilly gave a summarization of the process to this point. He has seen no movement on the part of the church or the town since the signing of the contract. He feels as though the church may be uncertain on how to proceed on this matter.

Council member Schmitt asked for an update on the Article 78 Appeal filed by the Town. Town Attorney Reilly explained the appeal has been filed and perfected. There is complexity in the decision to step away from the appeal since so many parties are named within the appeal itself. He has been in contact with PB/ZBA attorney Bill Keniry regarding this matter.

Council member Schmitt asked the Supervisor to explain why he decided to eliminate the position of Deputy Supervisor and why there was no money in the budget for that position. Supervisor Donnelly stated his decision was purely pragmatic money wise. He asked if there were any duties or responsibilities specifically laid out for the Deputy Supervisor that Mr. Schmitt was aware of. Mr. Schmitt explained he has met with the department heads and unions regarding contracts and tried several times to connect with the Supervisor. Supervisor Donnelly felt the position was purely ceremonial and was not aware of any specific duties assigned to the Deputy Supervisor. Council member Schmitt asked then why was he asked to hold this position and why did they pass the resolution. The Supervisor stated he did not realize that there were no additional duties assigned to this position and was following along with past templates for organizational meetings. Supervisor Donnelly felt as a tax payer, which he stated he is, he would question why \$3,500 was being allotted to this when anyone could be assigned to it. Council member Schmitt read section 42 from Town Law:

§ 42. Deputy supervisor. The town board of any town may at any time establish the office of deputy supervisor. The deputy supervisor shall be appointed by the supervisor to serve at the pleasure of the supervisor, and in case the office of supervisor becomes vacant any deputy supervisor in office at the time such vacancy occurs shall continue to serve until the successor of such deputy supervisor is appointed. If the supervisor shall fail to appoint a deputy supervisor within five days after the establishment of the office or within five days after a vacancy occurs in the office, the town board shall have power to appoint such deputy supervisor.

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Council Member Schmitt asked the board what they felt about having a deputy Supervisor as he felt is seemed very clear at the Organizational meeting that one was wanted. Council member Schmitt stated the five-day expiration period has passed for the Supervisor to appoint a new Deputy and the decision is now up to the Town board.

A motion was made by Council member Hotaling to reappoint Council Member Steven Schmitt as Deputy Supervisor as was originally done during the organizational Meeting held on January 1, 2024. Council member Stott seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was asked for:

Stephen Donnelly	<u>Yes</u>
Linda Bruno	<u>Yes</u>
Michael Stott	<u>Yes</u>
Ronald Hotaling	<u>Yes</u>
Steven Schmitt	<u>Yes</u>

All Town of Coeymans Council members were in favor.

New Business:

Chief Fiscal Officer: Council member Schmitt asked where the funds for the chief Fiscal Officer Stipend of \$15,000 was coming from. Supervisor Donnelly stated the Supervisors budget needed to be amended to move his stipend and the Deputy Supervisor’s stipend of \$3,500. Council member Schmitt reviewed the lines within the Supervisors budget and proved the amount for the Deputy was included in the amount. Supervisor Donnelly stated these numbers were different from what he was told by his business manager. He suggested Council member Schmitt email the business office regarding these numbers. Council member Schmitt feels as though the Supervisor doesn’t have an understanding of this budget and he is concerned as a tax payer. Supervisor Donnelly feels as though he does have a good understanding of the budget.

Public Comment:

Barbara Tanner lives on Ridge Road. She asked the lawyer if we had a timeline on the church contract. He stated there is not a timeline and the church has not yet retained an attorney. Mrs. Tanner asked the Supervisor how much we have spent on the appeal for the second time. He suggested emailing the Supervisor’s office to get that information. Mrs. Tanner asked what plan B would be for Town Hall. Supervisor Donnelly said he has a plan but cannot speak about it since real estate properties are involved and it needs to happen in executive session. Mrs. Tanner also felt Supervisor Donnelly owed council member Schmitt an apology for the way he handled the vacating of the Deputy Supervisor meeting. She felt it was embarrassing and rude. Mrs. Tanner felt the News Herald deserves a second chance as the official paper.

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William Stewart lives on Old Ravena road. He has heard from other churches that the process to sell such a building is a long and detailed. He does prefer the News Herald as our official paper as well. Mr. Stewart spoke of how great he believes the Town is and feels our town is fortunate with the business tax base we have.

Warren Dews reminded the Supervisor he has a section of the paper for use to give town updates. Mr. Dews would like to interview the board members to give the community a chance to learn about them.

Matt McCauslin owns property within the Town. He stated he feels the long energy appeal has to stop. He is very pro-business for our community and always encourages new business. He feels the board needs to promote business as much as possible as long as it doesn't cause a detriment to the community.

Bill Tryon spoke again and said he was impressed with the board and appreciated the discussions. He agreed with Mr. McCauslin's comments on being pro-business as long as it does not affect the community base in a negative way.

Motion to Adjourn to Executive Session was made by Council member Donnelly for matter related to ongoing litigation and contractual matters which was Seconded by Council member Hotaling- APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT – SO MOVED

A Motion was made to Adjourn Executive Session by Council member Schmitt and seconded by Council member Stott- APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT – SO MOVED 8:40p.m.

A motion was made by Council member Hotaling to adjourn the Town Board Meeting which was seconded by Council member Stott- APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT – SO MOVED 8:40p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


Candace McHugh, Town Clerk