

Town Board Minutes
May 11, 2009

At a Regular Meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Cambridge, duly called and held the 11th day of May 2009 at the Town Hall, the following were present:

Supervisor JoAnn Trinkle
Councilwoman Carol Imhof
Councilman Joel Nichols
Councilman Ted Berndt
Councilman Frank Ziehm

Others present: Town Clerk Sally Eddy, Highway Supt. Eric Shaw, Code Enforcement Officer LaVerne Davis, Dan Severson, Carl Trinkle, Ashleigh Farrell, Dick Sutherland, Bob Hamilton, Lou Imhof, Dan Schmitt, Robbie McIntosh, Terry Hamilton, William Watkins, Henry & Harriet Peabody, Gerald Skiff, Alex & Rani Bass, Cassie Fedler, Jim Buckley, Dan Thomas, Paul Gruber

Supervisor Trinkle called the meeting to order and immediately led in the Pledge in Allegiance to the Flag.

Minutes

Councilwoman Carol Imhof motioned, seconded by Councilman Frank Ziehm, to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the April 13, 2009 meeting and approve them as mailed by the Town Clerk with no corrections or additions.

Vote: 5 – Ayes 0 – Noes

Public Hearing

At 7:32 PM, Supervisor Trinkle opened the public hearing on Local Law #2 of the Year 2009 – A local law establishing an alternative date for the meetings of the Board of Assessment Review for the Town of Cambridge. Since Assessor May Ellen Hill-Pierce is employed by three other assessing units, it's impossible for her to attend each assessing unit's Board of Review meetings if all are held on the same date. Therefore, the Town of Cambridge hereby establishes, by local law, that the meeting date for the Board of Review for the Town of Cambridge to be the first Thursday of June.

Resident Dan Schmitt suggested the Board of Review (BAR) have earlier hours rather than the usual 4:00 PM – 8:00 PM. thinking it would be less tiresome for the BAR members if the hours were broken up. He also suggested the BAR set up appointments with those who wish to grieve their assessment making it more convenient for the public so they do not have to sit through the whole evening waiting their turn.

After receiving all comments, the hearing closed at 7:34 PM.

School Budget

Cambridge Central School District Superintendent Dan Severson was present to talk about the proposed 2009 – 2010 school budget. The \$17,590,071 budget with cuts of \$500,000 will result in a 0% increase in taxes over last year. According to Mr. Severson, the district received the stimulus money but state aid has been frozen. However, with the stimulus money ending in two years, the taxpayers could be hit hard in the future. So cuts were made now and the fund balance is being built up to help off set future budgets. Mr. Severson credited the teachers union for giving back \$68,000 which enabled the saving of 5 CSEA jobs that would have been cut.

A question and answer time followed.

Mr. Severson reviewed the proposition attached to the budget. He said voters will be asked to vote on the purchase of 2 sixty-six passenger buses and 2 eight passenger vans. The purchase is 90% eligible for state aid and will cost the taxpayers \$4500 for the next five years. He stated the district does not currently own a van. The vans would be used to transport smaller groups of students to activities rather than using the big buses which is the present policy.

Mr. Severson reminded everyone that the school budget vote is on May 19 from 12:00 PM – 9:00 PM at the new bus garage.

Supervisor Trinkle and the Board thanked Mr. Severson for attending the meeting and for the open discussion on the proposed budget.

Supervisor's Report

1. The monthly financial reports were reviewed and commented upon.
Councilman Ziehm motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Imhof, to accept the General and Highway Financial reports for the month of April 2009.
Vote: 5 – Ayes 0 - Noes
2. Supervisor Trinkle remarked that the Tour of the Battenkill Pro/AM bicycle race that was held in Cambridge the week end of April 18 – 19 was a success. There were a few things that needed to be ironed out but that's not uncommon for an event of that size.
3. Announced that the Cambridge Balloon Festival will be held the week end of June 5 – 7.
4. Thanked every one who participated in spring clean up day.

Town Board

Councilman Ted Berndt reported he spoke with a representative from Senator Little's office regarding the status of the funds coming from the Senator to help implement DSL in the town. He was told the funds are in committee waiting to be released.

In addition, Mr. Berndt stated that 775 reusable shopping bags containing an energy efficient fluorescent light bulb and recycling literature have been delivered to homes in the town. He has about two dozen bags left to distribute. He thanked the Greenwich Citizens Committee, Hannaford Supermarkets, CTI Agri-Cycle, Cambridge Central School Honor Society and Student Council and several residents for their contributions in making this Earth Day initiative a success.

Planning Board

Secretary Sally Eddy reported the Planning Board met May 7 and addressed the following matters:

1. Held a public hearing and granted Final Approval to Sam & Polly Scully for a 2.789 acre minor subdivision on Belle Rd. to convey to their son Jonathan to build a house thereon
2. Granted Preliminary Approval to Don Jepson for a minor subdivision on Stump Church Rd. Currently, Mr. Jepson's house and his mother's house are both located on the same parcel of land which totals 59.5 acres. He is proposing to separate out his house with 18.63 acres. A Public hearing is scheduled for the June meeting
3. Peter & Pauline Grimes own 43.8 acres on Cobble Rd. Last month Pauline presented a sketch plan for a 2 lot subdivision and, now, she wants to increase it to 3 lot. The subdivision will involve a total of approximately 25 acres. The sketch plan was approved and she was directed to proceed with the survey.
4. Several months ago Tad Smith approached the board for a one lot minor subdivision of a 32.5 acre parcel owned by his brothers Kenneth and Brett Smith located on Stevenson Rd and County Rt. 60. Tad presented a survey for a 8.68 acre subdivision on which he plans to build a house with access

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from Stevenson Rd. He was granted preliminary approval and a public hearing will be held at the June meeting.

5. Gerald Moppert owns a 7.5 acre parcel on Cobble Rd. He presented a sketch plan to subdivide out the house and buildings on approximately 1 acre to sell to the person who is currently renting it. The sketch plan was approved and Mr. Moppert was directed to proceed with the survey.

Highway Superintendent

1. The Defensive Driving Course, as well as the CPR and First-Aid Course were attended in the month of April. On this coming Wednesday, the 13th, we will be attending our yearly 8 hour refresher course for MSHA which is required.
2. We screened and drew 1300 yards of gravel.
3. Brush and debris were cleaned up on several more roads.
4. The air conditioner compressor failed on the tractor and was replaced at a cost of \$1,972.54. Capital Tractor did the repairs and had to make three trips to the garage. New lines were installed and it had to be recharged.
5. The brakes on the loader developed a chatter, the air conditioner quit working and a circuit board had to be replaced. The cost was \$959.64. A new cutting edge was also purchased for \$695.
6. Necessary repairs were made to the trucks and equipment as needed or when they developed.

No Code Enforcement Report

No Assessor Report

Communication

Supervisor Trinkle received a letter from NYMIR, the town's insuring agent, informing her that NY State has doubled the surcharge on motor vehicles from \$5 to \$10 per vehicle.

Unfinished Business

Grievance Day Change – Local Law #2

Councilman Frank Ziehm motioned, Seconded by Councilwoman Carol Imhof

Be it Resolved, that the Town Board of the Town of Cambridge does hereby adopt Local Law #2 of the Year 2009 establishing the first Thursday in June as the meeting date for the Board of Assessment Review to hear complaints on property assessments.

Vote: 5 – Ayes 0 – Noes

New Business

The Board agreed to participate in the Memorial Day Parade which will be held in the Village of Cambridge on May 25 with kick off at 10:00 AM. Also, Councilman Nichols suggested that, in reference to the Open Meetings Law, it be advertised that the Town Board will be meeting together to march in the parade.

County Report

Supervisor Trinkle stated that on Friday, May 15, the County Board of Supervisors will be voting on Local Law A of 2009 – A law holding the parents accountable who knowingly permit their underage children and friends to consume alcoholic beverages in their property.

Supervisor Trinkle acknowledged that Robert McIntosh has been appointed to the County's Solid Waste Recycling Committee and that Ted Berndt has been appointed the County's Industrial Development Agency.

Privilege of the Floor

Cassie Fedler asked about FEMA money in relation to the reimbursements for cleanup from the ice storm damage.

Supt. Shaw responded that he has been told \$35,000 is coming from FEMA and \$9,000 from SEMO for now. More is expected at a later date.

Gerald Skiff asked the Board if they were aware of the contract that CTI Agri-Cycle, a composting site located on Belle Rd, has been awarded by the NYS Office of General Services for cafeteria waste, paper goods and utensils generated from the Empire State Plaza? He learned about it through the internet. None of the board members knew about it and Mr. Skiff asked when was the Board going to start keeping track of the company?

Councilman Berndt stated that the last time there was a complaint geared toward CTI –Agri-Cycle DEC came the next day and inspected the site.

William Watkins said that DEC only looks at the site where the compost is being mixed and not at the six feet of paper sludge that being spread on the fields.

Farmers including Jim Buckley, Dan Thomas, Henry Peabody, Dan Schmitt and Cassie Fedler complained about the notices they received from Assessor Mary Ellen Hill-Pierce correcting the errors she discovered on the tax roll. Last month, the Assessor reported she found 19 silo exemptions given when, in fact, the value of the silos was not included in the farmer's total assessment. To correct the error, she removed the exemption and notified property owners. She also found mistakes in the calculation of the agricultural exemptions regarding woodlots. Several were granted when they should not have been. She removed the erroneous exemptions and notified the property owners. The elimination of the exemptions will result in higher taxes for the property owners. They questioned the work she is doing and asked who checks up on her. She was accused of being out of control and not an advocate for the town.

Supervisor Trinkle responded that it's the job of Washington County Real Property Tax Office to check on the assessor.

Dan Schmitt did, however, credit the new assessor with just trying to correct mistakes made by the previous assessor. But he went on to say that when the reval was done the methodology used to compute farm land was all wrong. He said they (the reval company) knew it, but they did it anyway. Now, with the correction of the woodlot exemption, the worst land is assessed as the best land. It's not the people, it's the system they work with. It's severely flawed and we need real property reform.

William Watkins stated the Brownell Road Property investigation has been turned over to the NYS Attorney General's Office for further examination.

William Watkins asked Superintendent Severson about the reported swine flu case. Mr. Severson stated that Washington County Public Health Office called him and confirmed that a student did have the swine flu. Mr. Severson did not know the pupil's name or grade. So far, it's the only case in the county. The student is

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doing fine and is recovering at home. The school is taking all the necessary inside measures to prevent the sickness from spreading.

Audit Bills

The following bills were presented for audit and approved for payment:

General # 72 – 84 \$3,750.10

Highway #48 – 62 \$15,328.85

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was moved and carried to adjournment at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sally B. Eddy
Town Clerk