**REGULAR MEETING, TOWN OF COLUMBUS, Feb. 13, 2025**

A Regular Meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Columbus, County of Chenango

and the State of New York was held at the Town Courtroom, 4340 State Hwy 80 in Columbus on

**Feb. 13, 2025**

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Diane Scalzo, Supervisor, with the Pledge of Allegiance; and the Clerk called the roll.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Diane Scalzo Supervisor

 Jane Prohaska Board Member

Judith Lowe Board Member

Gretchen Robinson Board Member

ABSENT: Alexis Wilcox Board Member

RECORDING SECRETARY: Elizabeth Vermeulen Town Clerk

ALSO PRESENT: Kevin Cross Highway Superintendent

OTHERS PRESENT: Emma Golden Town Resident

**Supervisors Report by Diane Scalzo:**

* Deposits and transfers for the month were reviewed.

**Board of Health:** Nothing to report.

**REVIEW OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES:**

Jan. 9, 2025

Motion was made by Jane and seconded by Gretchen to approve the minutes of the Jan. 9, 2025 meeting.

Discussion. Correction of the following errors:

Pg 1 “Bond Council” should be corrected to read “Bond Counsel”

Pg 5 Resolution #1 remove an extra “s” to read: “the 2025 regular meetings of the Town Board will be held at the Town of Columbus Court Room at 6:00 PM on the second Thursday of each month.”

4 Ayes. 1 absent

Motion carried and minutes were approved with noted changes.

**Communications**:

* Email regarding Veteran’s exemptions
* Information received from NY Association of Towns with priorities for 2025.
* Local elections will be held this November.

**Dog Control Report –** No report

**Planning Board Report** – No report. There are currently 2 open seats.

**Public Comment**: Emma Golden expressed concerns about the road conditions on New Turnpike Rd and had questions about the Broadband project. She will meet with Diane for more information on the fiber project.

**Highway Superintendent’s Report by Kevin Cross**

* Update on equipment repairs
* He will be rating each road; a rating of 7 or above can be oiled and stoned every 5 years.
* Buell Fuels did not switch us over to the winter blend as expected.
* Personnel: a new employee will be starting on Feb 14.
* Requested the purchase of a hydraulic tree shearer which would help with tree work in the town’s right of way. Safer, faster, and more efficient than their current process; and will work well with our excavator. He has researched several different units and is recommending the OMEF unit B1400 at a price of $17,830, as the most economical unit for our needs. He described the unit and explained the specific budget accounts to fund this purchase.

Jane made a motion to approve the Highway Department purchase of OMEF Tree Shearer model # B1400 to be purchased and delivered at a cost of $17,830. Budget accounts for the purchase to be as follows:

 DA5130.2 Equipment Purchases $8,000

 DA5110.43 Dust Control $4,000

 DA 5110.46 Road Surface Material $5,830

* The motion was seconded by Jane.
* Discussion.
* Roll call vote:
	+ D. Scalzo Aye
	+ J. Prohaska Aye
	+ A. Wilcox Absent
	+ G. Robinson Aye
	+ J. Lowe Aye
* Motion carried.

**Committee Reports:**

**Park Committee**  by Jane Prohaska – A resident would like to make a donation for the park; Jane will meet with him to discuss details. Also, the local Girl Scout troop is interested in working at the park to label trees, clean up the trails, and create mile markers on the walking path.

Diane moved **Resolution #26 – 2025 Review Regulations for the Use of Norton Park - 2025**

**Whereas**, Norton Park provides an opportunity for all members of the community to enjoy a beautiful outdoor setting, and

**Whereas**, Norton Park offers particular facilities for rent, and

**Whereas**, Norton Park also offers other features that can be enjoyed by others without reservation or rental fee, and

**Whereas**, Norton Park is subject to the laws of the Town, County and State of New York, and

**Whereas**, the regulations necessary to clearly define guidelines for appropriate use of the park as well as reservations policies and procedures, and

**Whereas,** the existing Norton Park Regulations have been reviewed and determined by the Town Board to be appropriate;

**Therefore, be it resolved** that the Town Board approves and adopts the Regulations for the Use of Norton Park for 2025.

* The motion was seconded by Jane.
* Discussion.
* Roll call vote:
	+ D. Scalzo Aye
	+ J. Prohaska Aye
	+ A. Wilcox Absent
	+ G. Robinson Aye
	+ J. Lowe Aye
* Motion carried and Resolution passed.

**Infrastructure, Buildings and Facilities** by Judy Lowe

* We are waiting for a quote from Nick to install the new snow deflector for the chimneys. The snow deflector over the office door has been working well.
* Looking into carpet contractors to complete the work in Kevin’s office and cover the hallway ramps.
* The thermostat rebate of $50 each was received.

**Legal & Finance** by Diane Scalzo

* No questions by Board members on financial reports distributed.

Diane moved **Resolution #27 – Budget Modifications and Adjusting Journal Entries**

**Whereas**, budget modifications are required from time-to-time to ensure adequate budget funding for

necessary expenditures, and

**Whereas**, adjusting journal entries are required from time-to-time to correct prior entries for accuracy,

and

**Whereas**, sufficient funds are available in the budget to make the modifications, and

**Whereas,** the particular expenditures are necessary for appropriate administration of town needs;

**Therefore, be it resolved** that budget modifications be made to reflect the actual grant award total, to decrease A2397.1 ConnectALL Grant Revenues $489,569, increase A8780.1 Broadband IMP PS $101,448, decrease A8780.2 Broadband Imp Equipment $256,767 and decrease A8780.4 Broadband IMP CE $334,250;

**Resolved** that the 2025 budget be modified to reflect 2024 broadband improvement expenditures:

decrease A2397.1 ConnectALL Grant Revenues $94,409.27, decrease A8780.1 Broadband IMP PS, decrease A8780.2 Broadband Imp Equipment $9,262.50 and decrease A8780.4 Broadband IMP CE $54,926.77.

**Resolved** that adjusting journal entries be made to increase ConnectALL Grant Revenues Receivable $681.35 and increase A2397.1 ConnectALL Grant Reimbursement $681.35.

* The motion was seconded by Gretchen.
* Discussion:
* Roll call vote:
	+ D. Scalzo Aye
	+ J. Prohaska Aye
	+ A. Wilcox Absent
	+ G. Robinson Aye
	+ J. Lowe Aye
* Motion carried and Resolution passed.

**Public Health & Emergency Preparedness** by Gretchen Robinson

* Gretchen has not yet met with Matt at the County regarding the County’s EMS plan.
* Diane mentioned that there are several students from Colgate working with the County’s Homeless Coalition, in connection with their “Economics of Poverty” class.

**ConnectALL Fiber Broadband**

1. Bond Anticipation Note - Funding through NBT Bank $4.5 million at 3.95% interest
2. Communication Hut – 8x10 structure which will be owned by the Town of Columbus; Sherburne Fiber will own the electronics; the Town of Columbus will own the fiber. Bids for the construction of the hut will be opened on 2-14-25 at 2pm.
3. Intermunicipal Agreement

Diane moved **Resolution #28 – 2025 Approval to Sign Intermunicipal Agreement – Update to Resolution #70 - 2024**

**Whereas**, the Columbus town attorney Robert McKertich, a partner in the law firm Coughlin &amp; Gerhart

has consulted with the Town of Sherburne attorney regarding an Intermunicipal Agreement by and

among the Town of Columbus and the Town of Sherburne and the Village of Sherburne and the

Sherburne Area Local Development Corporation (SALDC) pursuant to a New York Empire State Development

Grant, and

**Whereas**, the Parties have developed a formal relationship commencing upon the submission of the

Grant Application and to continue in duration through the completion of a fiberoptic infrastructure

upgrade project, and

**Whereas**, the Parties are committed to working together to achieve the goals of the Project pursuant to

the Grant Agreement and this Agreement, and

**Whereas**, the Parties desire to enter into this Agreement to establish terms and conditions by and

among the Parties, including but not limited to, payments and reimbursements pursuant to the Project,

the Grant Agreement and the Guaranty, and

**Whereas,** the Parties mutually desire to enter into this intermunicipal agreement pursuant to New York

State General Municipal Law Article 5-G providing for terms and conditions by and among the Parties

pursuant to the Project, the Grant Agreement and the Guaranty;

**Whereas** the Empire State Development agency has determined that an additional section 10.10

Compliance stating that “SALDC, Columbus, Sherburne and the Village agree, jointly and severally, to

operate and maintain the Project infrastructure under their respective control in accordance with all

applicable federal and state requirements, rules and regulations governing the Municipal Infrastructure

Program administered by ConnectALL, including but not limited to the terms and conditions of the

relevant Grant Disbursement Agreement must be added to and included in the Intermunicipal

Agreement, and

**Whereas**, town attorney Robert McKertich has determined that the Intermunicipal Agreement is ready

for Board approval and Signature;

**Therefore, be it resolved** that the Town Supervisor is authorized to sign the updated Intermunicipal

Agreement.

* The motion was seconded by Jane.
* Discussion:
* Roll call vote:
	+ D. Scalzo Aye
	+ J. Prohaska Aye
	+ A. Wilcox Absent
	+ G. Robinson Aye
	+ J. Lowe Aye
* Motion carried and Resolution passed.

4.ConnectALL Marketing Plan is required under the grant. There will be Informational sessions at the Sherburne American Legion. Subscriber enrollments are important. Discussed the possibility of using the fiber spools as part of the promotion.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Sanitary Law –** Since the Town does not have a sanitary engineer and County Codes enforces state laws and not local laws, the Board had decided to repeal the town’s existing local law. The attorney reviewed our previous local laws. Diane distributed the attorney’s draft of the proposed local law to repeal the previous law. We will need to hold a public hearing.

Motion by Gretchen to set the date for the public hearing for Local Law #2 of 2025 which will repeal Local Law #2 of 2012 entitled “Town of Columbus Sanitary Regulations” on March 13, 2025 at 6pm prior to the regular monthly meeting.

* The motion was seconded by Jane.
* Discussion:
* Roll call vote:
	+ D. Scalzo Aye
	+ J. Prohaska Aye
	+ A. Wilcox Absent
	+ G. Robinson Aye
	+ J. Lowe Aye
* Motion carried and Resolution passed. The clerk will have the Legal Notice published and posted.

**Clerk Audit** was conducted by Jane and Judy. Judy stated that the town clerk and tax collection records were clear and accurate.

Gretchen made a motion, which Judy seconded, to approve the clerk audit. All Ayes, 1 absent. Passed.

**Justice Court Audit** was conducted by Jane and Gretchen. Gretchen stated that the Justice’s records were very organized and clear.

Jane made a motion, which Gretchen seconded, to approve the justice audit. All Ayes, 1 absent. Passed. The Justice audit gets sent to Albany.

**Oaths**

Gretchen made a motion, which Jane seconded, to make the following appointments:

Susan LaFever as Deputy Town Clerk

Arthur Roush as Deputy Highway Superintendent

Theresa Anson as Court Clerk

Jen Simons as Alternate Planning Board member

All Ayes, 1 absent. Passed. The clerk will distribute the Oaths

**BESS Local Law**

Jane made a motion, which was seconded by Gretchen, to set the date for the Public Hearing on the Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) Local Law on Feb 24, 2025 at 5:30pm.

All Ayes, 1 absent. Passed. The clerk will have the Legal Notice published and posted.

**Recruiting Bonus Policy**

Diane moved **Resolution #29 – 2025 Highway Department Employee Recruiting Bonus Plan Policy**

**Whereas**, it is the goal of the Town of Columbus to hire and retain qualified Highway Department

employees, and

**Whereas**, hiring and retaining qualified Highway Department employees has been a challenge for the

Town of Columbus as well as most other towns in Chenango County, and

**Whereas**, the work done by Highway Department employees is critical to maintaining Town roads as

well as insuring the safest possible navigation during inclement weather, and

**Whereas**, employees of the Highway Department take pride in their work and the impact they make in

the community, and are well positioned to recognize that same work ethic in others, and

**Whereas,** a referral by a Highway Department employee that results in the hiring and retention of a

qualified individual will be a benefit to the Town of Columbus;

**Therefore be it resolved**, that the Town Board approves and adopts the Highway Department Employee Recruiting Bonus Plan Policy for 2025;

**Resolved**, that the 2025 Recruiting Bonus will be set at $500 for the hire of a qualified Highway

Department employee;

**Resolved,** that the Highway Superintendent establishes the criteria in writing for a qualified Highway

Department employee which will include at a minimum a CDL license, clean driving record and negative

drug screens;

**Resolved**, that $250 will be paid in the payroll check that includes the date that the new Highway

Department employee begins working;

**Resolved**, that the Highway Superintendent determines the satisfactory completion of the Probationary

Period and relays that determination in writing to the Town Supervisor;

**Resolved**, that the remaining $250 is paid in the payroll check immediately following the new

Employee’s successful completion of the Probationary Period.

* The motion was seconded by Gretchen.
* Discussion.
* Roll call vote:
	+ D. Scalzo Aye
	+ J. Prohaska Aye
	+ A. Wilcox Absent
	+ G. Robinson Aye
	+ J. Lowe Aye
* Motion carried and Resolution passed.

Since discussion on this bonus policy had begun in January, Gretchen made a motion to recognize the referral from Arthur Roush and deem it eligible for the Highway Department Employee Recruiting Bonus.

Jane seconded the motion. All Ayes, 1 absent. Passed.

**REVIEW OF EXPENDITURES**:

Motion to Pay bills made by Jane and seconded by Gretchen. All Approved.

GENERAL FUND – Abstract #2, Vouchers #23 - #52 for a total of $308,508.08

HIGHWAY FUND – Abstract #2, Vouchers #15 - #29 for a total of $18,612.36

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Gretchen and seconded by Judy. All Approved.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Vermeulen, Town Clerk

NOTE: The Audible recording of the Town Board meeting is available from the Town Clerk as a FOIL request.