**REGULAR MEETING, TOWN OF COLUMBUS, April 10, 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

**April 10, 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

**Supervisors Report by Diane Scalzo:**

* Deposits and transfers for the month were reviewed.
* Building permits issued.

**Board of Health:** We received an updated schedule of county rabies clinics through the end of the year.

**REVIEW OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES:**

March 13, 2025

Motion was made by Jane and seconded by Gretchen to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2025 meeting.

Discussion. Correction of the following:

* On the top of page 4, “comments made” should be replaced with “questions asked”. The sentence will now read: “The attorney was contacted regarding some of the questions asked at the BESS Public Hearing.”
* Judy stated that any number ten or under should be written out in words. Clerk will change that in the minutes for both March meetings, and keep in mind for future.

4 Ayes. 1 absent

Motion carried and minutes were approved with noted changes.

March 31, 2025

Motion was made by Gretchen and seconded by Judy to approve the minutes of the March 31, 2025 Special meeting.

* Discussion. Clerk will write out any numbers ten and under.

4 Ayes. 1 absent

Motion carried and minutes were approved with noted changes.

**Communications**:

* The Assessor has sent the dates he is available to discuss 2025 Tentative Assessments; and advised that the Board of Assessment Review will meet for tax grievances on June 3, 2025 from 4pm to 8pm.
* Diane presented the following:
  + April 22, there will be a poverty program at Colgate.
  + Airport Day will be June 14 from 8-3
  + Chenango County Soil and Water grants are due May 30, and can involve streams, culverts, water quality, and outdoor recreation. A 25% funding match is required. Discussion on potential funding for Norton Park.

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

* Update on equipment repairs for trucks 12 and 15, and grader.
* Heavy rock, gravel and crusher run were installed on sections of Larchar Rd
* Difficulty in acquiring stone materials.
* They have finished cleaning up winter tree damage on all the roads.
* They have been brooming the roads and will continue once broom repairs are complete.

It will take many passes around town to remove the silt and clay left behind by the sand.

* He has been contacting property owners regarding upcoming work being planned this year.
* The last of the 2024 CHIPS expenses were submitted.
* Crushed stone has been hauled in for the Balcolm Hill Rd paving project.
* He has turned in another quarterly FEMA report.
* They started on summer hours on April 1st.
* Discussion on road names, since Clerk was contacted by 911 about Maltzen Sheridan Rd confusion. Kevin will get Liz the official list of Columbus road names.
* Kevin presented the **284 Highway Agreement** for Board Approval. This agreement can be modified throughout the year if needed, depending on real life situations.

The document was signed by the Highway Superintendent, Town Supervisor, and the three Board Members present at the meeting.

Clerk will make copies of the signed 284 document for Kevin and Diane.

The complete 284 Agreement is included at the end of these minutes.

**Dog Control Report –** Carol picked up two dogs last week on New Turnpike Rd in Columbus, and was able to locate their owners & return to their New Berlin home without needing to transport to the SPCA, avoiding a charge to Columbus.

The formal complaint we had received from a resident regarding her neighbor’s loose dogs was withdrawn, due to the neighbor resolving to better control his dogs.

**Committee Reports:**

**Park Committee**  by Jane Prohaska :

* Bob Huot would like to make a $1,000 donation to Norton Park. He would like the original walking path through the woods to be named: “The Aldrich, Kinne, Senn Trail”. Discussed trail names.
* The Girl Scouts are willing to make signs for trees and trails, and help clean up the park and trails. There will be a meeting at the park on Monday at 5:30 with the Girl Scout leaders.
* The ground is still very wet. Stall mats and mulch for the swing area will be done as soon as the ground allows.
* There are only two park reservations so far.

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

* Discussed landscaping needs around office. She will contact Troy Stegman from Norwich once Kevin has removed the poor shrubs.
* Mailbox replacement.
* Railings work.
* Lexi will contact Bruce Jacquay about the nuisance woodchucks under the building.

**Legal & Finance** by Diane Scalzo

* Discussed open positions in the upcoming election and concept of town dissolution.
* It was decided that Diane will contact the town attorney to discuss the situation.

Diane moved **Resolution #34 – 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

**Therefore, be it resolved** that adjusting journal entries be made to increase A1680.4 Data Equipment Contractual $1,100.80 and decrease A1220.4 Supervisor Contractual $1,100.80; increase A1640.1 Building Custodian $439.63 and decrease A1620.16 Building Maintenance Staff $439.63; increase A2397.1 ConnectALL Grant Revenues $231,462.01 and increase ConnectALL Grant Account Receivable $231,462.01.

* 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 – nothing to report

**ConnectALL Fiber Broadband**

* Discussed using the empty fiber spools as a possible marketing plan to promote and raise awareness of the broadband project. The spools are four-foot and eight-foot diameters. Jane will contact UV School and the Girl Scouts.
* Kevin will be digging a hole for the 8x12 communication hut behind the building.
* Anticipated start time for the broadband service is August.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**SPCA –** The Association of Towns had a recent webinar on potential new higher state standards which would legislate the care for dogs and cats. It has passed both houses, has not yet been signed by the governor, but is expected to into effect in Dec. 2025. The SPCA’s delay in submitting town contracts is likely due to these new standards. It is hoped that we will have a new SPCA contract by the end of May. There will be new training required for DCOs.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Hazard Mitigation Plan Update**

* Gretchen made a motion which was seconded by Judy to identify the Supervisor as the primary contact and the Highway Superintendent as secondary contact. The Highway Superintendent will continue to be the Flood Plain Administrator.
* Discussion: Diane asked that the board consider replacing her as Hazard Mitigation contact, since she will not be running for another term as Supervisor.
* All Ayes. Motion passed.

**Application for BESS Projects**

* Gretchen made a motion, seconded by Jane, to accept the BESS Application form.
* Discussed and reviewed the form.
* All Ayes. Motion passed.

Diane moved **Resolution #36 – 2025 Update to Town of Columbus Schedule of Fees and Fines/Penalties**

**Whereas** the Town Board has previously reviewed and updated the Schedule of Fees and

Fines/Penalties, which incorporated the changes previously recommended by the Town of Columbus Planning Board, and

**Whereas** the Town Board has recently adopted Local Law #1-2025 Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), and

**Whereas** the Town of Columbus Schedule of Fees and Fines/Penalties requires an update to include application fees for Battery Energy Storage Systems, and

**Whereas** the Town of Columbus Planning Board has reviewed and recommended the following addition to the Fee Schedule: BESS 600 KW to 1 MW - $2,500 plus $700 per acre and BESS greater than 1 MW and up to 25 MW - $5,000 plus $700 per acre;

**Therefore, be it resolved** that the Town Board approves the addition of section G. Battery Energy Storage Systems to the Schedule of Fees and Fines/Penalties, with the fees identified in this resolution, as recommended by the Columbus Planning Board.

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

Diane moved **Resolution #35-2025 Appointment of Park Groundskeeper**

**Whereas**, the town park requires mowing, equipment maintenance and other related work, and

**Whereas**, the Highway Superintendent has the necessary skills and experience to provide this service, and

**Whereas,** the Highway Superintendent is willing to undertake this assignment;

**Therefore, be it resolved** that Kevin Cross, Highway Superintendent, is appointed park groundskeeper for 2025.

* The motion was seconded by Jane.
* Discussion: $2,000 per year paid over six months.
* Roll call vote:
  + D. Scalzo Aye
  + J. Prohaska Aye
  + A. Wilcox Absent
  + G. Robinson Aye
  + J. Lowe Aye
* Motion carried and Resolution passed.

**Planning Board members**

* Gretchen made a motion which was seconded by Jane to appoint Chris LaRose as a full Planning Board member with a term to expire 12/31/2029.
* Discussed.
* All Ayes. Motion passed.
* Jane made a motion which was seconded by Gretchen to appoint Jennifer Simons as a full Planning Board member with a term to expire 12/31/2028.
* Discussed.
* All Ayes. Motion passed.

**EMS discussion:** Jane brought up thetopic of the EMS compromise which had been discussed at budget time. Equipment or training could be appropriate. The Village of New Berlin should be asked about their needs. Diane will contact Peter Lennon to set up a meeting with him and Jane.

**REVIEW OF EXPENDITURES**:

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

GENERAL FUND – Abstract #4, Vouchers #75 - #114 for a total of $233,014.79

HIGHWAY FUND – Abstract #4, Vouchers #49 - #60 for a total of $28,090.33

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

All Approved.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:29 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.

**284 AGREEMENT**

**2025 AGREEMENT FOR THE EXPENDITURE OF HIGHWAY MONEYS,**

**SECTION 284 of the Highway Law**

Agreement between the Town Superintendent of Highways of the Town of Columbus, of Chenango County, State of New York and the undersigned members at the Town Board.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 284 of the Highway Law, we agree that moneys levied and collected in the Town for the repair and improvement of highways, the revenues from equipment rentals, reimbursement for snow and ice removal and other charges for services, the reappropriated funds, and the CHIPS and other State aid for highways, shall be expended as follows:

**1. GENERAL REPAIRS** – The sum of **$150,800.00** shall be set aside to be expended for basic work and general maintenance and repairs upon **47.10** miles of town highways, including sluices, drainage ditches, culverts and bridges having a span of less than five feet, tree and brush removal, board walks, sidewalks that are the responsibility of the Town, emergency activities as such are authorized by the Town Board, and other activities involved with the care, upkeep, and maintenance of highways and bridges of the Town.

**2. PERMANENT IMPROVEMENTS – HIGHWAYS:** The sum of **$\_164,000.00**  shall be set aside to be expended for the permanent improvements of Town Highways.

The Town Highways that are intended to be improved include:

1. On the highway known as \_Balcolm Hill Rd\_\_ commencing at \_\_State Route 80\_\_& leading to \_\_New Turnpike Rd\_ **,** a distance of  **1.10**  miles.
2. On the highway known as \_\_Columbus Hill Rd\_\_ commencing at \_\_Fusch Rd \_& leading to \_\_Barnard Rd\_ \_\_**,** a distance of **\_\_1.19\_\_\_\_\_**  miles.
3. On the highway known as \_\_Hardscrabble Rd\_\_\_ commencing at \_\_\_Bingham Collins\_\_\_& leading to \_\_Sherburne Town Line \_**,** a distance of **\_\_.59\_\_\_\_\_**  miles.
4. On the highway known as \_\_Winton Rd\_\_ commencing at \_\_\_State Rte 80\_\_& leading to \_New Turnpike Rd\_\_\_**,** a distance of **\_1.73\_**  miles.
5. On the highway known as \_Sheridan Hill Rd\_\_\_ commencing at \_\_New Turnpike Rd \_\_\_& leading to \_\_Sherburne Town Line \_\_\_**,** a distance of **\_1.36\_\_** miles.
6. On the highway known as \_Fusch Rd \_commencing at \_Columbus Hill Rd\_& leading to Barnard Road\_**,** a distance of **\_\_1.17**  miles.

Executed on the 10th day of April, 2025 and signed by Kevin Cross, the Superintendent of Highways; Diane Scalzo, the Town Supervisor; and Jane Prohaska, Gretchen Robinson, and Judy Lowe, Town Board members.