

**ULSTER TOWN BOARD WORKSHOP**

**MARCH 5, 2007 AT 7:00 PM**

**CALLED TO ORDER BY SUPERVISOR WOERNER, CHAIRMAN**

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

**ROLL CALL BY CLERK**

TOWN COUNCILMAN CRAIG ARTIST

TOWN COUNCILMAN DAVID BRINK

TOWN COUNCILMAN JOEL B. BRINK

TOWN COUNCILMAN ROCCO SECRETO

SUPERVISOR NICKY B. WOERNER

**Town of Ulster Softball League.**

Councilman Secreto reported that the Town has taken over the Orlando St. Softball Association and that it will now be known as the Town of Ulster Softball League. Mr. Donald "Fritz" Genter is the softball director. Timmy Lukaszewski, Jeffrey Primo and Santiago Cruz will be the board members. The league will run three to four nights a week. Thursday, there will be a Women's League. The league will be run by itself. The only thing the town will charge for is field maintenance and insurance. Friday night, he will talk to the recreation commission about the Softball Park fees. The fee charged to rent that field will be \$125.00 per day. Having the lights turned on will result in a higher charge. Any league that uses the park will be required to have insurance.

**Selective Insurance**

Supervisor Woerner reported that there are several outstanding Selective Insurance bills dating back to the year 2000 for deductible reimbursements for insurance claims that amount to \$28,564.69. Supervisor Woerner suggested that, at the next meeting, the bills be paid through the unappropriated fund balance.

**HUD Public Hearing**

Supervisor Woerner opened the public hearing at 7:15 PM for the 2007 Application for funding East Kingston Water Service and a Town Senior Center.

Mr. Mark Blauer, the town grant writer, stated that this HUD Hearing is to solicit suggestions on public projects. These ideas are then reviewed by the Town Board and a decision is made on what to pursue. The Town Board is currently considering applying for a grant to allow free lateral water connections, for low to moderate income qualified families, in the East Kingston Water District similar to the Glenerie lateral grant. Another idea being explored is building a Town Senior Center. The primary focus is on the lateral connections.

Mr. Robert Barton – Stated concern about building a senior center. He thought that if it is done, there should be a user charge to pay for the building's upkeep and services.

Mr. Michael Berardi, County Legislator – Is in favor of the lateral grants assistance to East Kingston.

Mr. Mark Blauer stated that the Town would like to apply for both projects. He estimates that \$120,000.00 will be needed for the East Kingston Water lateral grant and the remaining could be applied for the senior center.

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Supervisor Woerner stated that East Kingston is their first priority.

Mr. Brian Cahill, County Legislator – Stated he will offer a letter of support as a County Legislator if it will help.

Supervisor Woerner closed the public hearing at 7:26 PM

Supervisor Woerner announced that another HUD hearing will be held March 19, 2006 at 7:45 PM.

Supervisor Woerner opened up the proposal to merge the duties of the Tax Collector's Office with the Town Clerk's Office.

Mr. Robert Barton – Is in favor of any cost savings that can be afforded the town tax payers.

Mrs. Cookie Chandler – Inquired what the duties of Tax Collector are. Are there any job descriptions?

Supervisor Woerner – The Town Clerk and Tax Collector can answer those questions. There are no written job descriptions.

Mr. Jason Cosenza, Ulster Town Clerk – Submitted a statement.

Mr. John Morrow – Is in favor of a committee to review the proposal to study the issue. He feels there are several options that can be explored. He feels the town could be run more business like.

Mrs. Cookie Chandler – Was a plan submitted to the Town Board on how it will be worked out? Is there paperwork on it.

Supervisor Woerner stated that the proposal is on file in the Town Clerk's Office.

Mr. George Lucente – Is not in favor of the proposal. In the past, it was reviewed not to be feasible and feels the same would hold true.

Mrs. Tina Carpino – Feels there might be cost savings, but currently the clerk's office is an open office where people can come in and do research. There might be a need for a sterile environment to handle the money. There might be a records management issue.

Supervisor Woerner stated, as a point of information, the Town Clerk's Office does handle a large amount of money.

Mr. Michael Berardi, County Legislator – Inquired if there was any cost savings between the Water Department and the Tax Collector's Office when the water bills were being generated. Supervisor Woerner stated that the water bills are being generated by the water department.

Mrs. Chis Hendrick, Tax Collector – Feels that her role as Tax Collector was as a manager, performing all the overhead, reporting and deposits while the part-timers collected the money. Her concern is tracking of the money. She feels that, by putting the offices together there will be a cost savings as both offices collect money. She feels the office can be setup with software to do

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the job and the Town Clerk can be more of a manager. Furthermore the job duties can be reassigned.

Karen Markisenis – Is in favor of the proposal and establishing a committee to investigate it further. She feels it should be thought out more.

Mrs. Louis Buppenhiem – If the town takes credit cards, then the town would have to pay fees (merchant fees)?

Supervisor Woerner – At the Association of Town's Conference, there was a vender that offered a no fee credit card program to the towns.

Fred Wadnola – Feels that the Town Board should form a committee to look at it more closely to review the figures to see if there is going to be a cost savings with personnel, phone lines and renovations. Recommends having some hard facts.

Mr. John Morrow – Asked if this is a true cost savings, and if there is a \$20,000 savings will it be passed onto the residents or will it just shift to another line as a slush fund.

Mrs. Carol Bauer (Deputy Town Clerk) - Feels that the additional duty would eventually lead to another full-time deputy clerk position. Doesn't think it will offer a cost savings.

Supervisor Woerner closed the hearing at 7:53 PM

Mrs. Karen Raskoskie – Suggested that the senior center be used with a current building that can be refurbished, that is architecturally valuable, rather than building another building, to keep the area beautiful.

Supervisor Woerner opened the public hearing for extending the terms of offices from two years to four years for the offices of the Town Supervisor, Highway Superintendent and Town Clerk at 7:55 PM.

Mr. Robert Barton – Is in favor of the Town Clerk and Highway Superintendent. Is not in favor of the Town Supervisor getting a four year term. He feels that if the supervisor does a good job, he/she will get re-elected. It is the most important job in the town.

Mrs. Lois Buppenheim – Is in favor of the four year term for supervisor. Feels it is needed to allow more time to get things done. The current two-year term is too short.

Mr. Mark Keyser – Is in favor of the four year term. A person comes in for two years. How can anything get done? Feels it is a smart thing.

Mrs. Karen Markisenis – Feels a four year term is a good idea. As soon as someone is elected, then the fundraising begins. If a four year term is good enough for the President of the United States then it should be good enough for our Town Clerk and Supervisor.

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Mr. George Lucente – Is not in favor of a four term for the Town Supervisor. He is in favor of the four terms for the other positions. He feels if a supervisor does a good job, then he (she) will get re-elected.

Mr. Gene Rios – He feels this is a bi-partisan effort and a four year term is good. He further expressed that the supervisor position should pay more. There is a lot of activity in the town with business and the residents and a four term in those positions would be best.

Mr. Walter Hendrick – Is in favor of the four year term because it will be result in fewer months of looking at yard signs. It takes a lot of time to get out the vote and if you are in office it takes time from doing the office work. The onus then falls on the elected officials with the four year terms to perform and there is no excuse.

Mr. Robert Barton – If the four year term is made for the supervisor, then the supervisor position should be made a full-time job and have mandatory office hours.

Mr. John Morrow – Stated that the supervisor job should be full-time on paper and be paid more similar to the private sector. He requested that the position be separated on the ballot so people can choose each position individually rather than as group. He further requested that it be put up at the general election and the terms take effect for the 2010 election so the position is separated from the person in it.

Mr. Lois Buttenhein – Suggested a posted time for the public to be able to speak to the Town Supervisor.

Mr. Brian Cahill, County Legislator – Agreed that the proposed position should be separated on the ballot to allow people to vote and that the positions should be full-time positions.

Mr. Mike Berardi – He pointed out a quirk in government. The Town Board, by resolution gives authority to the Town Supervisor to handle the day to day affairs of government. If the Town Board does not, then you have a supervisor in office for four years that is in a lame duck situation.

Mr. Frederick J. Wadnola – Is in favor of the ballot allowing people to vote on the individual position and allowing the term to be effective for the 2010 election so people can vote on it based on the position and not the person.

Supervisor Woerner closed the public hearing at 8:14 PM

Supervisor Woerner appointed Councilmen Craig Artist and Rocco Secreto as a committee to review the Town Clerk and Tax Collector merger.

Councilman Joel B. Brink motioned to hire the following people:

Lois Lapinski as a full time court clerk (civil service) at \$10.82, effective March 19, 2007

Suzanne Platte-Bigelow as a part-time court clerk with no benefits, at \$8.50, effective March 6, 2007

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Kati Palmatier as a part-time court clerk with no benefits, at \$8.50, effective March 12, 2007  
2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilman Secreto  
A Roll Call Vote was taken – All Ayes

**The Floor was open for public comment –**

Mr. Robert Barton – What is the status of the EPA agreement and where is the money coming from?

Supervisor Woerner – The money is most likely coming from the next budget, but a decision has not been made. It will have to be paid in one sum and an extension was given to 2008.

Mr. John Morrow announced as chair of the Comprehensive Plan Commission that a workshop meeting was going to be held on March 6, 2007 at 5 PM. On March 19, 2007 the committee plans to publicize a draft copy of the master plan that will also be available at the Town Library and Town Web Site. On April 2, the Town Planner will give a presentation.

Councilman Secreto – Does the plan include recreation?

Mr. John Morrow – There were a lot of things talked about. A survey was sent out. It will include building houses with communities that include recreation and stores. There was talk about sidewalks, rail trails etc.

Mr. Mike Berardi, County Legislator – Suggested reviewing what the Town of Red Hook did in putting aside a portion of their mortgage tax for recreational purposes.

Supervisor Woerner stated that the money comes from the same pool of money so it makes no difference. He suggested that the town establish a recreation fee schedule as new development is coming into the area to serve this purpose.

Uncle Brian Cahill thanked Councilman Secreto for his work on a successful biddy basketball league that his nephews enjoyed.

Supervisor Woerner pointed out that the biddy basketball was done without any expense to the taxpayers. It was all done with donations.

Frank Almquist – Requested that the committee that was formed to study the Tax Collector & Town Clerk merger include two citizens to allow a citizen's perspective on things.

Mrs. Pat Metzger – Expressed concern about the sidewalk situation (snow not being removed) during the recent snowstorm.

Supervisor Woerner stated that he had sent a memo to the Town Highway Superintendent to remedy the situation, as it was his responsibility to keep all the sidewalks clear.

Mr. Renno Budziak – Thanked John Morrow for his work on the Comprehensive Committee. He suggested that the Town consider participating in the Greenway program and that the Town Board should invite them to give a presentation.

Mrs. Lois Buttenhein – Suggested that the Town issue fines for having the town clean up the sidewalks as it may be cheaper for business to have the town do it at cost.

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Mr. John Morrow – Suggested the Town consider joining the Greenway. There is a lot of money (grants) available for improvement and there are several levels of involvement.

Mrs. Heather Cosenza – Inquired about the status of her request for a school crossing guard for Crosby School at Fairdale Ave that was submitted in January.  
Supervisor Woerner stated he had reviewed the request and there were no budgetary problems. It is just a matter that had to be brought before the board. He requested Councilman Joel B. Brink create a posting and that Councilman Artist and Secreto interview people.

Supervisor Woerner motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 PM

2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilman Joel B. Brink

All Ayes

Respectfully Submitted by  
Jason Cosenza, RMC FHCO  
Ulster Town Clerk

March 5, 2007

Ladies and Gentleman, Members of the Board:

I agree that there is several cost saving opportunities that exist within the Town of Ulster budget. I am in favor of positive change; however we must take the time to examine these opportunities. This decision needs to be based on the level of care and quality of service for the public while fully realizing the fiscal and legal ramifications. This is first opportunity I have had review the plan and provide feedback.

The current proposed cost savings estimate is incorrect for the following reasons;

- Elected officials do not receive unemployment insurance from the fed or state
- The FICA expense was overstated.
- The budget line item for Part Time Clerk's Wage is \$8,000.00. Past records show approximately \$5,000 was spent. Enter into the line item code.
- Increased costs to modify the existing workspace and phone system were not considered.
- What determines the proper stipends for the position of the Tax Collector? In the 2007 Budget, the Tax Collector requested a raise (Line item AA1330.100 Tax Collector).

The Town Board needs to evaluate all options thoroughly. The proposed cost savings could further be eroded by additional unconsidered budget issues. Is twelve days enough to consider a change of this scope? I would suggest that an independent committee review the proposal to ensure accuracy and that the town receives the best efficiency of a merger.

I have further taken the liberty to explore several issues for improvement of service:

- A \$15 M tax warrant, one of the largest in Ulster County, opens an opportunity to take credit cards. A local law, ordinance or resolution authorizing the town to enter into an agreement with a financing agency would be required. It would have to be studied further to see if it would be economically feasible to do so when comparing risks, vender fees and user surcharges.

- I would suggest that the Town Board eliminate the \$1 charge for reprinting tax bills.

As the current Town Clerk, as person who has served for nearly 10 years, I look forward to continuing my role with the increase responsibilities if the Town Board decides to merge the offices.

Jason Cosenza, RMC FHCO  
Ulster Town Clerk