



MINUTES
TOWN BOARD
TOWN OF OSSINING
FEBRUARY 23, 2021
REGULAR MEETING
7:30 P.M.

THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING ONLY
Pursuant to Governor's Executive Order 202.1 dated March 12, 2020

SUPERVISOR
Dana A. Levenberg

COUNCILMEMBERS
Elizabeth R. Feldman Gregory G. Meyer
Jackie G. Shaw Northern Wilcher, Jr.

I. CALL TO ORDER-PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE-ROLL CALL

The Regular Meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Ossining was held on February 23, 2021 via video conference, pursuant to Governor's Executive Order 202.1 dated March 12, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Supervisor Dana A. Levenberg. Members of the Board present were: Councilmembers Jackie G. Shaw, Elizabeth R. Feldman, Northern Wilcher, Jr., and Gregory G. Meyer. Also present were Town Counsel Christie Tomm-Addona, Budget Officer Victoria Cafarelli, and Deputy Town Clerk Martha C. Quituisaca.

Supervisor Levenberg said the following: This week, the United States reached a very sad milestone--500,000 lives lost to COVID-19. That amounts to an average of nearly one death per minute in the past year. We are hopefully rounding the corner on the pandemic, but it is important for us to pause and recognize the sheer loss we have experienced as a nation in the past 12 months. Please join me for a moment of silence to acknowledge the many beautiful lives we have lost this year.

II. COVID-19 UPDATE

Supervisor Levenberg said the following: Tonight I am pleased to introduce the Westchester County Executive, George Latimer, as we stream live to Facebook to hear a COVID-19 update from the County. My staff and I have had the opportunity to join County Executive Latimer and his team for weekly updates since the first case was identified in Westchester one year ago. We have been very grateful for his leadership during these trying times both in the COVID-19 response, and other areas of County government, from police reform, which is still on-going, to pulling off an election season like no other, to ensuring the County as a whole is working towards its housing goals and remains a welcoming place for all who wish to live here. With that, I'll turn the Zoom mic over to you County Executive Latimer. Thank you so much for stopping by Ossining!

Westchester County Executive George Latimer provided an update on the COVID-19 pandemic. We are nearing our first full year of living in the COVID-19 pandemic. We have learned a lot about the disease over the past year. As of today there are currently 6,200 active COVID-19 cases. We have seen a continuous decrease of active COVID-19 cases over the past few weeks. There was a rise of COVID-19 cases during the fall and holiday season. We have not seen a spike in COVID-19 cases after the Super Bowl. We are currently at a foot race with COVID-19 and the vaccine for it. There is currently not enough vaccine product to satisfy the demand. There are no COVID-19 vaccine appointments due to there not being enough vaccines. We have been opening up

different groups to sign up for the vaccine. There are different vaccination rules for different states. The Westchester County Center has been the biggest place to get vaccines in the county. We are working to compile a list of homebound individuals in an attempt to set up a pop up vaccination center.

Councilmember Feldman asked what type of marketing is being done to promote the vaccine. Westchester County Executive Latimer said that New York State is trying to figure out how to promote the vaccine to populations that are reluctant to receive it. Councilmember Feldman also asked what people with mobility issues should do to get help when arriving at a vaccination center. Westchester County Executive Latimer said that they should call ahead to notify staff that they need help.

Supervisor Levenberg asked why some people are reluctant to receive the vaccine. Westchester County Executive Latimer said that some people believe that they will not get COVID-19 and are willing to gamble not taking the vaccine.

Councilmember Feldman asked if people who recently got COVID-19 should get the vaccine. Westchester County Executive Latimer said that they are learning that people who have had COVID-19 within 90 days should not receive the vaccine.

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Supervisor Levenberg said the following:

Well it snowed yet again yesterday, and we are grateful again to our Highway, Parks, and Cemetery teams who leap into action at the first sign of winter weather creating issues on our roads. There does not appear to be any snow in the forecast for the next week or so – knock on wood – so we can all take this time to make sure our driveways and sidewalks are clear. The Ossining Volunteer Fire Department would like to remind residents that you should always clear snow from fire hydrants so crews can reach them quickly in an emergency. Their mantra is “second count, dig them out” which is fun and catchy—even if it doesn’t exactly rhyme.

Tonight – on a different zoom - the Town of Ossining partnered with Sustainable Westchester and several other local organizations, to share information about how to lower your heating and air conditioning bills all while using clean energy. We co-hosted a similar session in January and we are excited so many people are interested in coming on board. The webinar wrapped up just before this meeting began and it covered financial incentives available, the grid rewards app, the carbon tracker app, as well as other green and money saving solutions for your home, as well as a chance to speak with certified contractors. If you are interested in learning more about the EnergySmart Homes program, you can watch the livestreamed recording of the meeting on Facebook. You can also contact Sustainable Westchester by calling 914-242-4725, ext 122, or visit their website at sustainablewestchester.org.

Tomorrow the Ossining School Board will be honoring Francine Vernon for her distinguished service to the Ossining community. We are please to join the School Board in recognizing Mrs. Vernon, as she is known throughout Ossining, with a proclamation in her honor, and by naming Saturday, February 27, 2021 “Mrs. Francine Vernon Day” in the Town of Ossining. Francine is a lifelong advocate for children and youth development programs. She has served the school board, the Ossining Community Action Program, works for the Westchester Library System, and has helped many other organizations. She also is a member of the Town’s Community Equity Task Force. We are proud to show our appreciation for Mrs. Vernon tonight, tomorrow, and every day, and I look forward to getting the physical version of this proclamation to her after the ceremony!

The Ossining Public Library is hosting AARP's Tax-Aide program again this year. Tax assistance is available every Thursday by appointment only. To make an appointment, call the library at 914 810-3384 and be sure to leave your full name, phone number, and the best time to reach you in your message. In order to make the appointment, volunteers will be calling you back to ask a couple of questions, explain new COVID-19 protocols, and help you prepare for your in-person appointment. If you are uncomfortable meeting in person, the AARP is also providing no-contact tax preparation via email.

The Ossining Parks Habitat Stewards are leading a guided Forest Species ID walk at Ryder Park on Saturday. Meet at 10am at Ryder Park Pond, which is by the lower lot and baseball fields, to learn how to identify the trees on the park's woodland trails. Register for the program through the Recreation Department's Community Pass program. A link to Community Pass is available on the Town's Parks and Recreation page of our website. Be sure to wear your snow boots and dress warmly.

Saturday is also a Spanish language session for the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative. These sessions are a chance for community members to weigh in on local policing. I encourage everyone to participate and make your voices heard. The Collaborative is an initiative required by Governor Cuomo in response to calls for social justice. Police Departments across New York State must review their policies and adapt based on community feedback, before submitting their plans for change on April 1st. You can find information about this program on the Village of Ossining website.

On a sweeter note – pun intended – Sugaring Days are back at Teatown. The Warren Sugarhouse is one of the oldest structures at Teatown and it is used to produce maple syrup. You can join in on the fun every weekend through March 20th. Tours are limited to families for 20 minutes each, due to COVID safety protocols. You can register for this fun program on the Teatown website – www.teatown.org -- or through their Facebook page.

And rounding back to where we started our meeting, on a final, very sad note: starting this week, we will begin to pass anniversaries of events caused by COVID-19. In fact, it was at our meeting this week last year that we mentioned preparation for the pandemic for the very first time. This will be an incredibly difficult and painful time for many families, and I encourage everyone to seek out help if you need it. Ossining is home to some amazing support organizations and non-profits. Additionally, government offices at the county and state level are managing information helplines that can connect you to emotional support services, healthcare resources, and much, much more. We have all been through so much this past year, it can feel very overwhelming, but hopefully, we have turned the corner on this virus and will be soon getting back to some normalcy. You can call 1-844-863-9314 for mental health counseling through New York State. If you need other resources, or need to be connected with a particular service, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 914-762-6001 or by email at dlevenberg@townofossining.com.

Councilmember Shaw announced that students from Ossining High School will be doing the Vita Program and offering free tax preparation help on Mondays. Please call 211 Mondays to see if you qualify, make an appointment, and get more information.

IV. DEPARTMENTAL REPORT

Tax Receiver Holly Perlowitz spoke about the following:

2020 Town Tax Bills

- **Thus far we have collected 99.1% of the warrant**

2020/2021 School Tax Bills

- Collection went really well in January with continuing the increase in use of the web to make payments. Taxpayers were grateful for the options we had to pay and were astounded when we were open during the blizzard and the Saturday before in anticipation of the blizzard.
- The Saturday hours were well received and I plan to continue them for the last Saturday in each collection month – I think taxpayers felt very accommodated by this action.
- So far we have collected 97.6% of the school tax warrant – which is slightly ahead of last year which was 97.4% at this time.
- Delinquent letters went out last week and we are certainly getting payments in as a result of the letters going out. The impact is getting more taxpayers to sign up for our alerts as so many just forgot!!!

Delinquent tax liens-provided you with a detailed schedule

- Our “seriously” delinquent taxes – meaning we have a lien on the property amounts to \$1,695,839.59 – of that amount 71% are the 2020 liens which have a very high probability of having payments received by the end of the year.
- We are having some success with liens being redeemed on commercial properties with Ossining Land paying off in January – that was \$575K and I am expecting Research Center to pay off on Friday – and that is \$545K.
- Two commercial properties that have liens are
 - Red Lion Apartments 52K
 - Paradise Heating – 68K

Both are also delinquent on their 2020 taxes (not yet liens) too

- We have 13 parcels under payment plans – but really 10 taxpayers as one taxpayer has 4 properties. Taxpayers are complying with the payments and are very grateful

So take-aways:

- Our Collections on 2020 warrants are in really good shape
- And we have made good progress on collections on Liens – especially with the Research Center which will pay off on Friday—I will confirm that when it happens!
- We are always seeking to make payment of taxes easier for our taxpayers and to provide them with any information needed as soon as it is requested.

TOWN TAX OFFICE COLLECTIONS
OUTSTANDING TAXES AS OF 02/23/2021

	TOTAL WARRANT	OUTSTANDING TAX RECEIVABLES	COLLECTIONS	% OF WARRANT COLLECTED
2020 TOWN AND COUNTY	\$ 32,009,083.76	\$ 288,802.89	\$ 31,720,280.87	99.1%
2020/2021 SCHOOL/LIBRARY TAX WARRANT	\$ 114,078,417.50	\$ 2,772,246.87	\$111,306,170.63	97.6%
TOTAL 2020 WARRANTS	\$ 146,087,501.26	\$ 3,061,049.76	\$143,026,451.50	97.9%
DELINQUENT TAX LIENS				
2016		8,146.59		
2017		57,603.49		
2018		160,941.70		
2019		264,661.67		
2020		1,204,486.14		
TOTAL DELINQUENT TAX LIENS		1,695,839.59		
TOTAL OUTSTANDING TAX RECEIVABLES		\$ 4,756,889.35		

Councilmember Feldman asked when properties will be put up to auction. Tax Receiver Perlowitz said that they are in the negotiation state so far.

V. LIAISON REPORTS

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

VII. BOARD RESOLUTIONS

A. Approval of Minutes—Regular Meeting – February 9, 2021

Councilmember Shaw moved and it was seconded by Councilmember Feldman that the following resolution be approved.

Resolved, that the Town Board of the Town of Ossining hereby approves the February 9, 2021 minutes of the Regular Meeting as presented.

Motion: Carried

B. Approval of Minutes—Special Meeting – February 16, 2021

Councilmember Feldman moved and it was seconded by Councilmember Shaw that the following resolution be approved.

Resolved, that the Town Board of the Town of Ossining hereby approves the February 16, 2021 minutes of the Special Meeting as presented.

Motion: Carried

C. Approval of Voucher Detail Report

Councilmember Feldman moved and it was seconded by Councilmember Shaw that the following resolution be approved.

Resolved, that the Town Board of the Town of Ossining hereby approves the Voucher Detail Report dated February 23, 2021 in the amount of \$544,885.24

Motion: Carried

D. Appointment – Highway Department

Councilmember Shaw moved and it was seconded by Councilmember Feldman that the following resolution be approved.

Resolved, that the Town Board of the Town of Ossining hereby appoints Alicia Santucci, Ossining to the part-time position of Office Assistant (Automated Systems) in the Town of Ossining Highway Department at an hourly rate of \$18, effective February 23, 2021; and be it further

Resolved, that this appointment is temporary for a period of 90 days and a probationary appointment of Ms. Santucci to the position of Office Assistant (Automated Systems) is subject to Ms. Santucci's completion of the written civil service exam and approval of Westchester County Civil Service.

Supervisor Levenberg said the following in regard to the resolution: Alicia Santucci has been working with the Town part-time for over a year now, but she wasn't quite in the right title in the eyes of Civil Service. We are happy to be making that correction tonight, and are quite sure she will pass the civil service exam with flying colors very soon. Alicia also pinch hits for the Cemetery and Parks departments as well, and we are very grateful to her for her hard work on behalf of our taxpayers and families with loved ones buried at Dale Cemetery!

Motion: Carried

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE TO BE RECEIVED AND FILED

Councilmember Feldman moved and it was seconded by Councilmember Shaw that the following resolution be approved.

Resolved, that the Town Board of the Town of Ossining hereby accepts the following correspondence:

- Ecogy Energy Maryknoll Solar Resolution of Approval – 12/16/20
- Parth Knolls Revised Resolution of Approval - 1/20/21
- Town Planning Board Minutes- 1/20/21 and 2/3/21

Motion: Carried

IX. MONTHLY REPORTS

Councilmember Feldman moved and it was seconded by Councilmember Shaw that the following resolution be approved.

Resolved, that the Town Board of the Town of Ossining hereby accepts the following monthly reports for the month of January 2021:

- Town Building Department

Motion: Carried

X. VISITOR RECOGNITION

Visitors shall be accorded one (1) four (4) minute opportunity to speak

XI. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:30 P.M., Councilmember Shaw motioned to adjourn to Executive Session for personnel, advice of counsel, and contracts and Councilmember Feldman seconded.

Motion Carried: Unanimously

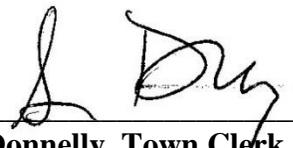
At 9:01 P.M., Councilmember Feldman motioned to leave Executive Session and Councilmember Shaw seconded.

Motion Carried: Unanimously

At 9:02 P.M., Councilmember Feldman motioned to adjourn the Regular Meeting and Councilmember Shaw seconded.

Motion Carried: Unanimously

Approved:



 Susanne Donnelly, Town Clerk