

MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 6, 2022 MEETING OF THE TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF POUND RIDGE HELD AT 179 WESTCHESTER AVENUE, POUND RIDGE, NEW YORK, AND VIA ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE, COMMENCING AT 7:00 PM

PRESENT: SUPERVISOR KEVIN HANSAN
COUNCILPERSON ALISON BOAK
COUNCILPERSON CARLA BRAND
COUNCILPERSON DIANE BRIGGS
COUNCILPERSON DANIEL PASCHKES

ALSO

PRESENT: TOWN ATTORNEY WILLIAM HARRINGTON
TOWN CLERK ERIN TROSTLE
DEPUTY SUPERVISOR LES MARON

I. CALL TO ORDER OF REGULAR MEETING

Supervisor Hansan called the meeting to order at 8:01 pm.

II. CALLS FOR EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Boak, seconded by Councilperson Paschkes, all voting aye, to call for an Executive Session at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, December 7, 2022, to discuss a legal matter.

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Brand, seconded by Councilperson Boak, all voting aye, to call for an Executive Session at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, December 13, 2022, to discuss a personnel matter.

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Fire District will be holding a commissioner election and bond vote from 1:00 pm to 9:00 pm on Tuesday, December 13, 2022, at the firehouse, at 80 Westchester Avenue. All Pound Ridge residents are eligible to vote.
- The Pound Ridge Community Church will host its annual cookie walk from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm this Friday and Saturday, December 3 and 4, 2022.
- The Pound Ridge Garden Club's annual mailbox decorating contest continues through December 20, 2022. Email a photo of your decorated mailbox to the address on the garden club website. Prizes will be awarded in both youth and adult categories.
- Director of Finance Steven Conti announced that Fios Internet is now available in the Town Park.
- The public hearing on proposed leaf blower legislation will continue at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, December 13, 2022.

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IV. MINUTES

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Boak, seconded by Councilperson Paschkes, all voting aye, to approve the minutes of the October 11, 2022 and November 10, 2022 Town Board meetings.

V. PUBLIC HEARING – 2023 Preliminary Budget

Director of Finance Steven Conti presented an overview of the 2023 Preliminary Budget. He noted that the proposed tax levy is \$12,186 under the tax cap and that a significant portion of apparent increases in appropriations actually reflect grant funding for various projects.

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Paschkes, seconded by Councilperson Boak, all voting aye, to open the public hearing on the 2023 Preliminary Budget

Resident John McCown asked how it is possible to create a budget when the last available audited financial statements are from 2019. He noted that it is difficult to identify ARPA funds in the budget and stated that he would like to see the budget be more transparent. He asked for information on the audit timetable and questioned significant increases in spending for IT and professional fees.

Supervisor Hansan responded that resolving delays with audits is a priority. Auditors are scheduled to be at the Town House during the week of December 12 to complete the 2020 audit. They will begin work on the 2021 audit in January. The current plan is to publish 2020 and 2021 audits by March 31, 2023.

Supervisor Hansan also explained that some apparent increases in IT spending actually reflect allocation of ARPA funding to one-time expenses such as a rollover to more modern tax software. He noted that even grant-funded projects such as the planned Town Park shelter require additional expense for legal and engineering fees.

Resident Leah Benincasa questioned a reference to \$386,000 allocated to open space acquisitions. Councilperson Paschkes explained that that amount is to be added to the fund for acquisitions, which currently contains approximately \$3 million, and clarified that the Open Space Acquisition Committee is not authorized to make expenditures, only to recommend purchases to the Town Board, which has the final say regarding the acquisition of open space parcels.

Resident Nick Cianciola asked for an explanation of increased allocations for professional services for the Town Board. Supervisor Hansan indicated that the additional funding would be used to hire Public Sector HR Consultants to provide human

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resources consulting, which will include addressing issues raised by Covid, as well as various other personnel-related issues that have not been addressed.

Mr. Cianciola also asked how funds in the waste water professional services/contract line would be used. Councilperson Boak explained that those funds would be spent on testing for bedrock depth, which would determine whether the Old Pound property would be suitable for a possible wastewater project. Supervisor Hansan explained that undertaking the testing would be necessary to make the town eligible for future infrastructure grant funding.

Mr. Cianciola then asked about increased spending for software in the Receiver's office. Mr. Conti said that the software currently in use is almost twenty years old and noted that the rollover would be a one-time expense. Supervisor Hansan explained that the change will make it possible to provide enhanced services, such as online access to tax information.

Mr. Cianciola asked what the increase in spending for shared services represents. Mr. Conti indicated that it reflects the cost of replacing three aging computer servers that are at the end of their lifespan with one new server and migrating some data to the cloud.

Mr. McCown pointed out that it would be helpful if spending related to grant-funded one-time projects could be more clearly identified. Supervisor Hansan agreed and thanked him and Mr. Cianciola for calling attention to ways in which the presentation of budget data could be improved in the future.

Resident Calli Hayes asked whether the town was being advised about hardware and software purchases. Supervisor Hansan explained how these purchases are researched.

Resident Dick Schlesinger asked whether numbers are available for a possible wastewater project. Councilperson Boak explained that numbers are not yet available but that there will be more information in the spring. Mr. Schlesinger asked what value such a project would have for residents as opposed to business owners. Councilperson Boak said that a wastewater project would increase residential real estate values. Councilperson Paschkes emphasized that there would be opportunities for public input before any decisions on such a project could be made. Councilperson Boak also noted that a wastewater project would be necessary to realize resident preferences documented in a recent survey for additional dining options and would also prevent impending environmental problems related to failing septic systems in the business district.

Resident Deborah Damascus expressed concern about unintended consequences of a wastewater project that could result in overdevelopment. Councilperson Paschkes

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stated such development would be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Councilperson Boak noted that more information on wastewater will be presented to residents during 2023.

Mr. McCown questioned proposed expenditures for communications equipment. Supervisor Hansan responded that the increase reflects grant funding for traffic calming devices. Mr. McCown then asked whether the budget reflects spending for a new email system, and Mr. Conti replied that that would be part of the previously discussed replacement of aging servers.

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Boak, seconded by Councilperson Paschkes, all voting aye, to close the public hearing.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Supervisor

1. Adopt proposed 2023 budget

RESOLUTION 190-22

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Brand, seconded by Councilperson Briggs, all voting aye, on the following:

RESOLVED, that the Town Board hereby adopts the proposed 2023 budget.

2. Ratify decision to hire Nicholas Agoglia

RESOLUTION 191-22

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Paschkes, seconded by Councilperson Boak, all voting aye, on the following:

RESOLVED, that the Town Board hereby ratifies the decision made in executive session to hire Nicholas Agoglia as a full-time Police Officer at an annual salary of \$90,000.00 effective January 1, 2023.

3. Ratify decision to hire Annie Burnham

RESOLUTION 192-22

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Boak, seconded by Councilperson Paschkes, all voting aye, on the following:

RESOLVED, that the Town Board hereby ratifies the decision made in executive session to hire Annie Burnham as a full-time Intermediate Account Clerk at an annual salary of \$70,000.00 effective January 1, 2023.

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4. Ratify decision to hire Marie Lazaro

RESOLUTION 193-22

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Boak, seconded by Councilperson Briggs, all voting aye, on the following:

RESOLVED, that the Town Board hereby ratifies the decision made in executive session to hire Marie Lazaro as a full-time Office Assistant at an annual salary of \$52,500.00 effective January 1, 2023.

5. Authorize Supervisor to sign contract with Public Sector HR Consultants

RESOLUTION 194-22

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Paschkes, seconded by Councilperson Briggs, all voting aye, on the following:

RESOLVED, that the Town Board hereby authorizes the Supervisor to sign a contract with Public Sector HR Consultants to provide human resources consulting services during 2023.

B. Town Board – Authorize issuance of redemption certificates

RESOLUTION 195-22

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Boak, seconded by Councilperson Briggs, all voting aye, on the following:

WHEREAS, in the year 2012, the Town of Pound Ridge commenced a proceeding to enforce the payment of delinquent taxes and other lawful charges that had accumulated and become liens against certain property; AND

WHEREAS included in this proceeding of delinquent taxes was the property designated as Block 9816, Lot 37.2, owned by John A. Vernon, a/k/a 16 Colonel Sheldon Lane, Pound Ridge; AND

WHEREAS the Town of Pound Ridge and John A. Vernon, as owner, negotiated a payoff agreement concerning the unpaid taxes owed on or about May 18, 2018, which was thereafter amended by agreement dated July 19, 2021 (collectively the “Payoff Agreement”); AND

WHEREAS the Town Board passed resolutions approving the Payoff Agreement; AND

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WHEREAS John A. Vernon has paid to the Town the sum of \$238,642.50, which represents all taxes, interest, costs, and penalties due under the Payoff Agreement; AND

WHEREAS John A. Vernon has requested that the Receiver of Taxes issue redemption certificates with respect to all tax liens covered by the Payoff Agreement; AND

WHEREAS the Receiver of Taxes has requested confirmation from the Town Board in the form of a formal resolution confirming full payment of the Payoff Agreement and authority to issue to John A. Vernon the requested redemption certificates; THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY

RESOLVED that, in the light of John A. Vernon's payment in full, the Town of Pound Ridge Receiver of Taxes is authorized to issue to John A. Vernon redemption certifications for tax liens for the years covered by the Payoff Agreement.

C. Town Clerk – Ratify decision to hire temporary part-time records clerks

RESOLUTION 196-22

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Boak, seconded by Councilperson Paschkes, all voting aye, on the following:

RESOLVED, that the Town Board hereby ratifies the decision made in executive session to hire Amanda D'Arcy, Kristen Petrillose, and Laurel Wines as temporary part-time records clerks at a salary of \$23.68/hour.

D. Planning Board – Authorize return of unused escrow

RESOLUTION 197-22

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Briggs, seconded by Councilperson Paschkes, all voting aye, on the following:

RESOLVED, that the Town Board hereby authorizes the return of an unused Planning Board escrow in the amount of \$1,472.50 to Taylor Deupree and Tina Chan, of 63 Old Stone Hill Road, Pound Ridge.

E. Conservation Board – Accept resignation of Jodi Elkins-Desforges

RESOLUTION 198-22

Board Action: Motion by Councilperson Briggs, seconded by Councilperson Boak, all voting aye, on the following:

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RESOLVED, that the Town Board hereby accepts the resignation of Jodi Elkins-Desforges as a member of the Conservation Board.

F. Assessor – Review possible changes to tax exemptions for senior citizens and persons with disabilities

Assessor Diane Briganti described changes recently adopted by Westchester County to increase tax exemptions for senior citizens and persons with disabilities and to allow senior citizens and persons with disabilities to reduce their income by the amount of unreimbursed medical and prescription drug expenses in order to qualify for tax exemptions. She reported that the county is asking that municipalities pass a local law adopting such changes or similar ones at a local level. If the Board takes such action in 2023, it would be reflected in the 2023 assessment roll and thus would impact the budget starting in 2024.

Ms. Briganti noted that only twenty residents have currently been deemed eligible for the senior citizen exemption and that none have been deemed eligible as persons with disabilities. She believes that implementing the changes adopted by the county at the local level would decrease tax revenue by approximately \$45,000.

The consensus was that replicating the changes adopted by the county would help seniors and others facing financial challenges and thus would be desirable. Because doing so will require passing a local law and thus will require a public hearing, the matter was tabled until January.

VII. ADJOURNMENT: There being further no business to come before the Board, Supervisor Hansan adjourned the meeting at 9:40 pm.

Erin Trostle, Town Clerk
Dated at Pound Ridge, New York
December 8, 2022
Updated February 1, 2023