

A Town Board work session meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Lewisboro, Westchester County, New York, was held on September 26, 2023, at 7:30 p.m. at the Lewisboro Town House, 11 Main Street, South Salem, New York.

PRESENT:

Supervisor	Tony Gonçalves
Council Members	Andrea Rendo, Mary Shah, Richard Sklarin, Daniel Welsh
Town Clerk	Janet L. Donohue
Absent	None

Also attending was the Attorney for the Town Gregory Folchetti, Maintenance Employees Shawn Johannessen and Joel Smith, Highway Superintendent Peter Ripperger, and Comptroller Nisha Singh.

Approximately 2 residents/observers attended the live meeting and approximately 7 participated via Zoom.

Supervisor Gonçalves called the meeting to order at 7:30p.m.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

Supervisor Gonçalves noted the exits to be used in the event of an emergency.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Supervisor led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD I

A total of 3 residents spoke.

OAKRIDGE WATER PROJECT

A resident read the below statement:

" Hello neighbors. My name is Erica Agro. I live in Vista. I am a member of a committee formed by the Town to represent the Oakridge Water and Sewer district.

My husband Gene and I moved here in March of 2018. We fell in love with Vista but were warned off the area by caring residents who told us that the Water District had been neglected by the town and consequently the water quality was poor and the electricity went out nearly every other week. We were dismayed to learn it was not an exaggeration.

In 2020, I created a community group to arm residents with the facts so we could mobilize and press our elected officials to address these issues. What ensued was as an onslaught of

challenges to our town board. Harsh but true criticisms of their handling of the issues at Oakridge.

We were met with indifference and inaction by the previous leadership, but we would not be deterred. This could have been a story about how poor conditions became worse or how nothing has changed, but it's not.

I am here tonight to offer hope and praise for our water district. Before I list the accomplishments of the Town Board, I want to recognize Robin Gersten and Jeff Holbrook, tireless fighters for Oakridge and Conant Valley respectively, Tyler Post of VRI, Robert Flores of Delaware Engineering, and Tony Gonçalves, Town Supervisor.

Tony took up this mantle, unpopular as it was, before he was supervisor, and became the advocate our water district needed. There is more work to be done—but I am incredibly proud of Tony, our water committee, and my neighbors, for not giving up.

Now, onto the Board's accomplishments.

With respect to the Oakridge Water District

- In May of 2021 PFAS-mitigation design and construction plans were submitted to the Westchester County Department of Health*
- The process of securing their approval was iterative and arduous but the Town Board persisted*
- The Westchester County Department of Health approved Delaware Engineering's plans and specifications for our upgraded water plant on August 8th of this year*
- In a critical parallel effort, the town applied for a federal EPA grant in April 2021 and a New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation Water Infrastructure Improvement Act grant in November of 2021*
- Our project was awarded both an EPA and an EFC grant in April of 2022 in the amounts of 1.8 and 1.16 million dollars respectively*
- We have received approvals from both the EPA and the EFC to start the bid process and Delaware has already prepared the requisite bid specifications*
- The Town Board authorized going to bid for the plant upgrade project at the September 18th town board meeting. The bid request will be noticed and advertised this week.*

With respect to the distribution of our electricity:

- At the insistence of the Water Committee, the town met with NYSEG to identify opportunities to reduce outages in the Vista area and advocate for overdue upgrades to the attendant feeder circuit, Pound Ridge 455.*
- NYSEG listened. They embarked on a critical hardening of the infrastructure serving the areas of Vista and South Salem resulting in increased resiliency and reliability and fewer outages*
- They completely upgraded 9.6 miles of power lines serving 1,600 customers including upgrading the distribution system from a "single-phase" line to "three-phase" lines allowing for greater capacity*

- *They created self-tying loops to enable customers to receive electricity through multiple pathways*
- *NYSEG also conducted enhanced ground-to-sky tree trimming to address a multi-year overgrowth of trees, branches, and foliage, directly addressing the leading cause of power interruptions in our area*
- *They installed monitoring and recording equipment at our water plant and the Vista Fire Department to prevent harmful outages*

The people of Vista, with Tony's help, turned a story about neglect, about accepting defeat, and about a lack of advocacy, into a story about possibilities.

We still have so much to do--but let's take this opportunity to recognize how far we have come.

Thank you to my fellow Vistans and our supporters—our hamlet IS deserving of good things—and we are prepared to fight for them.”

Another resident stated that she feels different about the water issue at Oakridge and feels that it has not been improved. During polling of the board, Supervisor Gonçalves asked if she had any specifics on the quality of the water including any water tests, to get in touch with him.

HIGHWAY

John Winter, the incoming Highway Superintendent effective January 1, 2024, addressed the Highway Budget. He feels that it is a good budget but feels that they need more, especially in the paving area. He sees that the tree line is increasing and feels that is a great idea. He looks forward to working with everyone.

After the budget was presented Mr. Winter stated that \$110,000 for paving would be just for paving. However, if they needed to mill and pave the same number of roads it would be about \$170,000. He also mentioned that the repair line went down which he urged them to rethink because if the equipment and trucks cannot be repaired, then the employees will not be able to do their jobs. He also agrees with Mr. Ripperger that the CHIPS money should be looked at as “bonus” money instead of relying on this money.

BUDGET REQUEST HIGHWAY 2024 – Discussion (8:11 – 9:05 p.m.)

Highway Superintendent Peter Ripperger gave his final and 20th budget presentation (see attached). He stated that the line items with the red dots on the left have an increase and the green lines on the left they have no control over.

Mr. Ripperger asked for 2 trucks and again for a sweeper. He asked for an increase in the seasonal line to \$40,000 however it was reduced by \$10,000. He also requested \$100,000 for tree work, since there are so many ash trees that are dead and still need to come down however this line was reduced by \$20,000. After further discussion, the \$20,000 was added back in.

Road repair and maintenance went up \$30,000 to \$110,000 and the road resurfacing line and paving went up to \$500,000 from \$180,000. He is hoping that the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) will come in at \$300,000 however they won't know this number

until April of 2024. The mulch and debris removal line went from \$55,000 to \$90,000. There was discussion about whether to Bond or BAN for this money as the town will already be at the tax cap with salary increases. No decision was made on this.

The Board went through, and the equipment line was reduced by \$5,000 to \$125,000. They also reduced the salt line by \$20,000 to \$140,000.

Mr. Ripperger did suggest that the board look at a capital improvement line for equipment. The Board thanked Superintendent Ripperger for his final and 20th budget and thanked him for his many years of service.

BUDGET OVERVIEW – Comptroller (9:06 – 10:50 p.m.)

Comptroller, Nisha Singh went over all budget lines with the Town Board. It was discussed that the Building Department revenue would increase by \$200,000 to \$800,000. The Board did decide to increase this line by another \$25,000 and the Parks & Recreation revenue will increase by \$76,580. The interest line will increase by \$30,000. The sale of property will be \$170,000. Ms. Singh showed a reduction in the cable franchise fee by \$6,000 and an increase in cell towers line by \$5,000.

Ms. Singh has a 4% increase built in for the non-union employees. Councilwoman Rendo stated that she can only speak for herself, but she does not need a raise. The Board agreed that they would again this year, not take an increase in their salary. Councilwomen Rendo and Shah do not take the town's healthcare. They will discuss at a later date if they will forfeit their \$4,000 buyout. Councilwoman Rendo also suggested that the Supervisor decline a 4% raise and she is against the \$4,000 grant stipend line, and she was against this line last year. The board discussed this at length and this line was left in for now.

The assessor had a tax map line increase of \$25,000 however this was taken out as they will try to get some grant money from the county planning department.

The police budget had salary increases and a \$5,000 increase in the computer system line.

A plan review services line was increased by \$5,000 in the building department line.

Westchester EMS provides advanced life support services that the town pays for every year. This is shared with seven other towns. They want to add a fourth fly car. There are three different options and they will be coming in to talk to the board at the next meeting. If our town opts out of the fourth car, the budget amount will have a normal increase from \$274,000 to \$302,000. If we go with just a ½ of year with the new car the total would be \$326,457 and if we went the entire year, the total would be \$350,017. The Board will make a decision on this after the presentation is made at the October 10th meeting.

Ms. Singh stated last week that she was going to budget 15% for the employees healthcare, NYSHIP, however she is now reducing this to 12% and this is the highest line in the budget.

A few line items in Parks & Recreation were decreased after discussing with the Parks & Recreation Supervisor; day camp counselors were reduced by \$57, 800, lifeguards decreased by \$14,000, gate attendant & maintenance down by \$3,000, part-time leaders line was reduced by \$2,000.

The Composting line is listed at \$13,500. The recycling line is for a part-time person to be at the recycling center on Saturday's from 9 am – 12 pm at a wage of \$15.00/hour. There was an individual for several years, however, that person left, and it has been hard to replace her, so the Sustainability Committee has been volunteering and filling this void. Councilman Welsh suggested that these 3 hours be offered to the Highway Department staff as overtime. Councilwoman Rendo suggested the possibility of people needing to do community service.

After the changes were made, the current rate is at 8.44%, the tax cap is 2.57% and the difference is now 5.87%.

CLAIMS – Authorized for Payment

On motion by Supervisor Gonçalves, seconded by Councilman Sklarin, the Board voted 5-0 to authorize payment of the Town's bills in the amount of \$156,438.25.

POLLING OF THE BOARD

COMMITTEE OPENINGS

Please look on the website for committee openings under resources on the home page.

CARBON FOOTPRINT EVENT

Councilman Welsh attended a presentation in Hastings about the carbon concrete and was happy to see that our Building Inspector attended this event.

PARKS & RECREATION

There will be a new resident welcoming get together at Fox Valley on October 1st with hot cider, donuts and hot chocolate being served. More information can be found on their website.

OAKRIDGE WATER PROJECT

The Oakridge bid notice was sent to the paper and bids will be received until December 7, 2023. A pre-bid meeting will take place on November 16th on site at Oakridge.

MEETINGS – Dates Set

There will be a meeting on Tuesday, October 10, 2023, at 7:30 p.m. at the Town House, 11 Main Street, South Salem, New York.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – To Discuss Personnel Issues, Litigation & Real Estate

On motion by Supervisor Gonçalves, seconded by Councilman Sklarin, the Board voted 5-0 to go into executive session at 11:00 p.m. to discuss personnel issues, litigation & real estate.

On motion by Councilwoman Shah, seconded by Councilman Welsh, the Board voted 5-0 to come out of executive session at 11:41 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Supervisor Gonçalves, seconded by Councilwoman Shah, the Board voted 5-0 to adjourn at 11:42 p.m.

Janet L. Donohue
Town Clerk