

SPECIAL TOWN BOARD MEETING

Town of Ulysses

May 21, 2014

Audio of the minutes are available on the website at ulysses.ny.us.

The meeting was held at the Jacksonville United Methodist Church on Trumansburg Road in Jacksonville.

PRESENT:

Supervisor- Liz Thomas

Board members- John Hertzler, Nancy Zahler, Dave Kerness

Clerk- Carissa Parlato

Environmental Planner- Darby Kiley

ABSENT:

Rich Goldman

OTHERS PRESENT:

13 community members

Notice of Town Board meetings are posted on the website and clerk's board.

Ms. Thomas called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

This meeting was held as a topic-specific version of the forum that had been originally scheduled for April 12.

Four main issues relating to Jacksonville were slated for discussion:

1. Water district- management & quality
2. Code enforcement
3. The pilot food scrap recycling (composting) program
4. Historic preservation

WATER DISTRICT- management and quality:

Fred Dean, who works at the Town's Highway Department, has been the interim Water District Operator since Mr. Austic's passing in April. Dick Coogan, Mr. Austic's Deputy Operator, has been helping with the transition.

Michael Boggs, a Jacksonville resident who works in a water-related field at Cornell, has offered to work with the town engineer to develop a model of the district to help determine the best solution for the high TTHMs/chlorination by-product levels.

Ms. Thomas recently met with Bolton Point to get an estimate on what it would cost for Bolton Point to take over management of the district. The other option is for the town to hire a new operator who would work under the Highway Department Superintendent. Either option will be more expensive than the current system and the Highway Department is recommending that Bolton Point would be the best option due to their expertise.

One option for lowering the TTHM levels is to install a mixer or aerator to keep the water moving and prevent TTHMs from forming. This will cost about \$96,000 and last for a finite amount of time.

A longer term option would be to connect with the Village of Trumansburg's source of water. That water is considered to be "fresher" as it comes from a well rather than surface water, and has different and lower requirements for chlorination. This project is estimated to cost about \$800,000. The town has been working with Tim Steed of Hunt Engineering. Mr. Steed feels confident that the town will qualify for grant funding to help engineer the connection to the village's system.

As a short-term solution, Mr. Dean has been flushing the system to keep TTHMs low. The most recent TTHM test showed 62 micrograms/liter. The state mandates that levels average no more than 80mcg/liter on an annual running average. The town tests the water at the most stagnant part of the system, where levels are bound to be highest. Most users' water has levels that are well-below that amount.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

Ms. Hillmann expressed concerns over working with the village based on negative past experiences.

Mr. Boggs explained his tasks in more depth.

Ms. Thomas mentioned that the lifespan of a water meter is about 20 years, and the majority are currently about 10 years old. This is another cost to plan for as there is currently not enough in reserves to pay for replacement.

Ms. Thomas closed the discussion by saying that the town will not make a final decision until the model is completed and all options and costs have been explored.

CODE ENFORCEMENT:

Ms. Thomas clarified the town's current inspection policies: as per state law, commercial properties and housing structures with three or more units are inspected every two years. Single family and two-unit properties are only inspected in the case of a complaint or visible issue.

Ms. Thomas described the code enforcement process:

If the code enforcement officer receives a complaint or sees an issue, the resident is given a notice of violation, with approximately 30 days to respond. If the resident does not respond, they are given a 2nd notice and sometimes a site visit or phone call. If they still do not respond or comply with the notice of violation, a court appearance ticket is issued. If they don't appear, another appearance ticket is given. Once they do appear, they may be fined up to \$200/day (NYS limit) until the issue is rectified. The amount of the actual fine is at the discretion of the town justice. If they don't appear in court, they can also be sent to jail.

In response to concerns raised by Jacksonville residents, the Town Board has asked its attorney to draft a proposed, more stringent new law for the board's review. This proposal will include

giving the town the power to remediate a property and bill the owner as a last resort. If the owner does not pay, the bill would be re-levied onto their tax bill.

Residents raised questions about whether and how the town would be able to pay for these clean ups or repairs, and who would decide what level/style of repair would be made. What if the town decides an elaborate fix is necessary and it is beyond the means of the property owner? If a property owner had the expenses added to taxes and still did not pay, how would the town recoup the expenses?

There was general agreement that current fines that are unpaid should be re-levied onto the tax bill, which is not possible with the existing code enforcement laws, but would be if a new law were approved. There was sentiment that if a property owner knew that fines would be re-levied that may help expedite action on problem properties.

Ms. Thomas pointed out that increasing code enforcement beyond the current guidelines will require more staff time and resources.

Residents discussed their frustrations with current landlords that provide almost uninhabitable residences to renters.

Ms. Zahler would like to make sure that low-income housing is accessible and sanitary in Jacksonville and suggests looking into grants for repair and weatherization. Resident Sue Roenke shared that Better Housing of Tompkins County is currently offering a 100% funded home improvement program for low income home owners. She will provide information for the Town to post on its website.

PILOT FOOD SCRAP RECYCLING (COMPOSTING) PROGRAM:

Many Jacksonville residents have received a green bin with rodent and odor-proof bags to put their food scraps in for curbside pick-up. The scraps will go to Cayuga Compost. The program aims to reduce solid waste, as well as garbage truck traffic to the landfill at Seneca Meadows. Anne Korman, a Jacksonville resident, attends the food scrap program meetings. Residents who are not a part of the pilot can take their food scraps directly to Cayuga Compost on Agard Rd. A question was raised about how long the pilot will run, how success will be determined and when a decision will be made to offer the service countywide.

OTHER:

Andy Hillman, former City of Ithaca Forester and current Ulysses Board of Zoning Appeals member, passed on information via Ms. Thomas regarding grants for trees along roads. Many trees in the hamlet were removed years ago when roads were widened. Residents seemed interested in having more trees in the hamlet.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION:

The Town of Ulysses and Village of Trumansburg are working together on a historic inventory this summer, scheduled to be completed by fall.

Ms. Thomas offered that in addition to the national and state historic landmark programs, municipalities can institute their own historic preservation programs.

Historic designation of a structure may qualify it for funding. This could be helpful to some Jacksonville properties. It will be necessary to create an advisory committee to begin drafting a local program.

OLD CHURCH/ MEETING WITH EXXON:

Ms. Thomas and Ms. Zahler met with representatives from Exxon/Mobil. Exxon/Mobil ordered a structural evaluation of the old church and will share the assessment with the town. The building appears to be in poor condition.

The corporation seems willing to negotiate and is not planning to tear down the structure.

The DEC (Department of Environmental Conservation) considers the spill ticket closed; saying there is no further health risk from the spill.

The annual town/county taxes for the seven properties owned by Exxon/Mobil equals about \$1800. The total assessed value of the properties is about \$140,000.

There are several factors to consider in moving forward such as the cost of renovation, who would take ownership, what the space could be used for, etc.

REVITALIZATION:

Ms. Zahler is willing to work with interested folks on helping envision the future of the hamlet. A sign-up sheet was circulated to collect names of those interested.

While there was general interest in revitalization and interest in preserving the church if possible, there was no consensus on the best use of the facility. The ideas of affordable housing and a park and ride lot were mentioned as possible elements of a plan to use all seven of the properties currently owned by Exxon/Mobil. One resident cautioned that any plan for a renovated church needs to be financially sustainable.

ADJOURN:

With no other topics suggested from the audience, Ms. Thomas made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:59pm, seconded by Mr.Kerness.

Respectfully submitted

by Carissa Parlato

5/28/14