

Here are my notes on the Town Board Meeting of Monday, May 19th 2008:

Meeting called to order at 7:10 PM by Roy Brown. All Board Members present.

Minutes of prior meeting: Jerry Smith had some amendments for the minutes that were not substantial but rather were stylistic or to clarifying. Motion to approve minutes as amended. Approved.

Motion to approve **audited Bills**. Approved

Written communications to the Board from the Town Clerk: None were received.

Department Reports:

Highway Report given by Joe Hull, Deputy Highway Supervisor: Heavy roadwork being done. Culverts, ditches, shoulders. Mowing has begun. Maintenance: working on the new office space in the Highway garage. [Note: new front loader recently purchased was parked near lot for all to admire.] **Sewer:** No problems, or complaints. Pump Station# 2 has preventive maintenance. Recent figures: 31,000 gallons per day.

Police Report by Roger Rekow: 227 hours worked of which 119 were paid for, balance volunteer. 2 Auto accidents, 1 criminal mischief, 2 Road Hazards, 2 disorderly persons, 1 911 hangup call, 1 resist arrest, 1 assist Fire Dept, 7 Civil cases.

Parks Dept. Michael George: Yard sales on Sat May 17 went well. Next Park Department meeting is June 2nd anyone who wants to participate is welcome. Wednesday May 21 there is a meeting about a 10-year plan for facilities development at 7 PM. Call for details. Town was contacted by the Sheriff's Dept. to see if they wanted to participate in a work-release plan for non-violent, low-risk inmates to work in the parks under supervision by the Sheriff's Dept. personnel. Asks if Town Board is interested. Answer from Board Members is yes, but need a few more details. He will get back to the Sheriff's Dept. for further conversation. **Re June 28th:** fireworks are on track. Joan Snyder mentions that there are still some volunteers needed for certain things—Parking security, help for the stand. From 3 PM to dark. Call if interested & willing to help.

Economic Development: Corrine Curry reports: the einhorn building (former piano store) will be made available for the cost of utilities only for the town to use for project such as Art Center where artists and craftspeople can display their works.

Cooperating with the Columbia County Arts Council on this effort. Central Market building has hopes for new interest. All contacts being followed up. Committee is holding public forum on June 19th at 7 PM about possible ideas for business opportunities. Corrine asks for the town Board to consider taking over responsibility for ownership & maintenance of business signs at corner of Main St & Rt. 9G. After brief discussion about useage fees and control of signs the Board approves the motion made by GraceAnn Lamberta to do so.

Hazard Mitigation Committee report by Jerry Smith: The group is still in process of putting together the details of a plan to recommend to Board.

Rezoning Committee: Joel Craig reports: They have met twice since the last Board Meeting and are working on identifying all the discrepancies, conflicting or vague language. They are trying to resolve some definitions of certain roadways and have asked the Highway Supervisor to help them in this effort. The RFP should go out in June to seek a professional Planning Consultant.

Keep Farming: No meetings, no report.

Police Policy Manual: Roy Brown reports that no decisions have been made yet but that the public will be kept informed as to status.

300/400 Anniversary Event Planning: Roy Brown asks Jerry Smith to take on the task of being the Co-Chair of the Town's project and to be the liaison between the Town Board and the Committee. Right now there is a Steering

Committee led by **Dorothy Montague** who reports about the meeting held on May 9th at which they determined that the goal would be to increase the understanding of Germantown residents about the history and development of the town through the celebratory events & activities held throughout the two anniversary years. Outreach efforts are being made to the Schools, the History Department, the Library, the churches, the Garden Club, the PTSA, local artists and other interested individuals. Also trying to involve other towns, County & State. The Resolution (passed at last meeting) to participate in State organization had not been sent in yet as it was awaiting all the signatures of the Town Board members. Roy Thanks Dorothy.

Code of Ethics: Roy Brown says Attorney (Jason Shaw) is reviewing draft for recommendation to Board.

New Business: Roy comments on two NY State initiatives, the State "Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness" and the NY State "Property Tax Commission". On the first one, they will review it for ideas that

could be implemented in Germantown. Roy says they are already “going down that path” in terms of seeking cooperative efforts with other communities in certain areas but are open to any new ideas that could be adopted. Jerry Smith asks if there are any supporting funds from the state for any of the steps that could be taken. Not sure, probably not. The Property Tax Commission’s report has not been issued from Albany yet.

Gun Violence Letter: Roy comments that this is from a group asking for Town support for endorsing the micro-inscription of identifying numbers on ammunition, guns. Jerry Smith had just heard some discussion about this on the radio today. Board members generally opposed to idea, saying that the law is a “band-aid” and not really effective. Board does not support letter. No motion made.

Change to Policy Manual Regarding Time-off Requests: Roy asks Board to approve changes in details on the form to make the request and approval process more effective.

Joan Snyder moves: Approved

Joel Craig brings up an **Historic Preservation Grant** that he had researched and asks the Board to consider it for approval for the next meeting as the deadline is at the end of June. Board will consider.

Supervisor’s Report; Roy Brown: Memorial Day May 22nd, event will begin at the Veterans’ Memorial at 9:15 then the parade will leave at 10:15 from the Cemetery and end up at Palatine Park.

Meeting set for June 12th at Town Hall about what municipality can do about rising fuel costs. Assemblyman Pete Lopez will attend.

Supervisor Brown still continuing meeting about the possibility for an Assisted Living facility in cooperation with the Reformed Church. They have visited two more sites. “Still testing the waters” about the possibilities.

Letter received from the Overington family about the success of the annual “Riversweep”, the all-volunteer effort to clean up the Hudson shoreline. They thanked the Highway Department Supervisor, Rich Jennings and his family and the other Hwy Dept Staff who helped the clean-up by providing the trucks to carry away the 3 loads of trash that was collected from the shore.

Frances Szasz was re-appointed as the Germantown representative to the Columbia County Environmental Management Council. Motion Approved.

Public Comment:

George Bennet spoke on behalf of naming the island in the Hudson (see last month's notes) after a long-time Shad fisherman Emmet Nack. Roy Brown told him that there may be something else coming up that would be an even better remembrance to Mr. Nack, but couldn't discuss the details yet.

Larry Osgood spoke: He volunteered to do the copy editing for the manual after the final contents had been determined. The existing language is somewhat poorly written in terms of grammar, style.

Kay Abraham spoke: She noted that the Board approval or even consideration of the Police Policy Manual was to be done at the next meeting. She said it would be appropriate and beneficial for there to be a way for the public to make comments about the draft for the Board Members to consider prior to the next meeting. She asked for the best way to make sure that comments were properly received and given to each Board Member to consider. Roy Brown said comments should be sent to him and he would forward them on to the Public Safety Committee which is charged with making the final recommendations to the Board. She said that there were probably many small issues that are worth mentioning about the contents but the primary one in her mind was that in the discussion of the requirements for training in several areas there should also be training about constitutional rights such as free speech and civil liberties. [It is not clear if the Board Members themselves will have an opportunity to discuss the Draft among themselves before voting on it.]

Arthur Schiff spoke: He says that the board should implement a policy of a public comment period on all important matters such as the Police Manual and the forthcoming proposal for changes in the rules governing the Ethics Committee. By so doing, the public would be satisfied that their views would be heard and the board would have the benefit of hearing from the people. It is done in many jurisdictions and would end the kind of disputes we have had in this town. And we would not have to FOIL for such information, it would appear on the Town web site.

On another matter, Arthur comments that Roy Brown is our representative to the County Board of Supervisors and asks that he provide a brief report to the Germantown residents about any significant actions or proposals by the B. of S. Roy says he will include any information in his Supervisor's Reports.

A high school student "Josh" spoke: Says "The Police Manual is "Top Secret" and shouldn't be made public" nor should there be any discussion about its contents. It would jeopardize the police if information is revealed.

Kay Abraham spoke from her seat, asking that the Attorney respond about why the Police Manual was not “Top Secret”.

Jason Shaw speaks and says that the Police Manual is a public document. There is nothing in it that would warrant it being kept secret in response to a Freedom of Information request. There is nothing that would jeopardize the police officers or would impede an investigation. “It is a pretty generic document.”

Student asks if there’s nothing secret in there, why he couldn’t get a Police Policy Manual when he tried getting one from the State Police or the County Police offices. Mr. Shaw says that those Policy Manuals have much more detailed and specific information in them. The town manual is a generic local document and is not the same at all.

Virginia Sibbison speaks and says that she knows that the Town Board must “walk a fine line” about what information to share with the public but that in most cases it is best to give the public the information they need to understand what is going on.

A student says “We elected you to the Board and we trust you .You don’t have to explain anything to just anybody who wants to know something. You decide”

Dorothy Montague speaks: Town Board should make sure that the young people understand that there is a Sunshine Law and that there is a value in open government.

No more comments—meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM

Corrections, comments welcome. Kay Abraham 537-5404