

From Kay Abraham:

Town Board meeting, Monday, January 28, 2008

Here are my notes on this meeting:

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM [Note: meetings are now scheduled at 7PM, changed from 7:30 as in the past.]

After approving the minutes of December Board Meeting and the January Reorganization meeting and approving the payment of audited bills the Board went into Executive Session for 20 minutes. Upon return Town Clerk, Charlene Diehl, read a letter from Linda Griffin resigning as Court Clerk. Charlene also reminded public of the Primary Election to be held on Tuesday, February 5th from noon to 9:00 PM.

Jerry Smith made a statement, beginning with thanking those who helped him win election, and wishing Anthony Cidras well. He wanted to express his concern —on which he ran his campaign— about the need for more open government.

His first concern was the approval process for audited bills. He discovered that the Board Members were given a printout of all the proposed payments prior to the meeting so they could go over the details. The members sit in the meeting hall and go over the list individually with no discussion among themselves, but in the room open to any members of the public who might arrive. He had concerns about the auditors and the bookkeepers being the same, but was assured that fell within the common practices of towns.

He would like letters to the Board to be distributed to each of them prior to the meeting.

He would like to receive written reports from the various Department heads and from Committee chairpersons.

He was given information about the Inter-Municipality Agreement just prior to the meeting.

He would like to have information about the make-up of the various Committees and any new vacancies and appointments in advance of any changes or new appointments.

He refers to School Board's practice of having public comment on any agenda item at the beginning of the meeting. He feels this would be good to implement at Town Board meetings.

He reminds Town Board of the desirability of having Workshops for Town Board to discuss upcoming agenda items and complex issues for consideration.

Reports from Department Heads:

Sewer, Maintenance heads absent, no report

Highway Supervisor, R. Jennings was absent but had given a report to Joan Snyder who reported:

He requested the Germantown share of the funding available for the purchase of a used paving machine. (Details below under the Inter-Municipality Agreement.) Resolution asked for approval. Any Questions? Jerry Smith asked what was done to assure that the used machine was in good condition. Reply from Roy Brown that all three hwy supvrs. (Germantown, Clermont & Livingston) had checked it out. Jerry satisfied. Motion approved. All Ayes. All three towns need to approve purchase.

Police Department: Roger Rekow reported 157.5 hours worked in December; total for 2007 was 2212.0 hours. Local activities in Dec: 14 traffic violations, 1 parking ticket, 1 criminal mischief complaint 1 road hazard, 1 alarm report, 1 abandoned vehicle, 1 trespass, 1 domestic property, 1 Environmental Protection, 1 Child Protection Services

Department has 2 positions open and recommends filling them with one hired police officer and one who will be unpaid. (Police officers who have passed the examination and become certified must keep up their certification while awaiting full employment. In this case, the officer will serve as a

volunteer in order to keep his certification in effect while waiting for a job to open.) The recommendations are: Christopher Bleau (paid) and Paul Robinson (unpaid). Discussion ensues, headed by Jerry Smith who asks that such recommendations come with a little more information about the candidates for the Board before they are asked to approve positions. Smith says he does not think that the Board should be part of the selection process, just that he would like a little more background information about the people chosen. Motion to hire passed. All Ayes

Joan Snyder reports: She is on the committee following through on the grant for planning an After School Program in Germantown. The committee made two field trips to schools in the area that have programs running now. They visited the Hudson Middle School (grades 5 through 8) and the Red Hook Elementary School (grades K through 5) They found the implementation of the programs very valuable in forming a concept that would work well in Germantown.

Committee Reports:

Keep Farming: Has not met yet in 2008. No report

Revitalization: ditto

Sidewalk: ditto

Old Business:

Parking Law Resolution: This establishes the town's authority to tow parked vehicles that impede snow removal, when a snow emergency is determined to exist. "New Law has gone through all the hoops to make it legal, including a public hearing." Resolution passed. All Ayes. Jerry Smith tells audience that there will be notice signs put up for the benefit of anyone who might not be aware.

Inter-Municipality Agreement This is an agreement that has been in effect for many years but has been reviewed and now up for continued approval by the three towns, Germantown, Clermont and Livingston, It provides for the cooperation and sharing of highway personnel. A second Agreement was proposed to reflect the sharing of the purchase of the Paver referred to above in the Highway Department's report. It spells out the allocation of costs of, maintenance and repairs to the shared equipment. Paver will be housed at the Town Garage of Livingston. Livingston will also insure it. Joan Snyder asks how insurance issues will be addressed among the towns: liability, accidents, etc. Jason Shaw, Town Counsel, said he will discuss and clarify the different town's shares of costs. Jason Shaw, says this second agreement could easily be framed as an addendum to the primary agreement and doesn't need to be separate. He will draw up language.

Codifying Town Laws: presentation by Bruce Cadman. His company has codified the town laws of Hudson, Chatham, Kinderhook and Canaan, among others in Columbia County. They gather up all documentation of a town's laws and ordinances, however amended over the years, and will review all existing laws for accordance with State laws. Documents are compiled into a coherent form, both in printed and electronic versions, available for all to access and be certain they are up-to-date. In their initial research, they will identify conflicting wording, inconsistencies and gaps in municipal laws and make recommendations for corrections to the town. Town Counsel would have review of final recommendations. Changes and corrections will be incorporated into the final product. Cost to town? About \$10,000. to \$15,000 which can be spread between two fiscal periods to lessen the impact on the town.

Germantown's 300th Anniversary:

Jerry asks that some consideration begin about what the town will do to celebrate its anniversary. Begin throwing out ideas to think about. Involve the History Committee and perhaps the Parks Commission?. Roy asks Jerry to take initiative in this area.

Appointments to Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals;

Roy explains that there are new appointments to be made but that there is some confusion about the length and definition of the terms to be served. Over the past 10 or so years, what with mid-term resignations and interim appointments, there has developed a lack of clarity about terms to be served.

They are doing the diligent research to straighten it out and the information will be available by the next meeting. (Feb.) Nevertheless, appointments need to be made. To the Planning Board: Ellen Epstein and Kerrie Abela. To the ZBA: William Muirhead and Donald Westmore. As Chair of the Planning Board: Ellen Epstein.

Joel Craig was appointed Chair of the Re-zoning Committee.

Appointments approved: all Ayes.

Ethics committee;

Joel & Jerry had been told at the Government Training Course for the newly elected they had attended in Albany that an Ethics committee should have 5 members, However, there is no requirement for that number and a review of near-by towns shows many small towns to have just 3. Craig & Smith agree it's Ok.

New Maintenance Supervisor:

The Sewer Department has been split. The State said that it needed two full time personnel in order for things to be done right. "Anthony Cidras applied for the job. Of those who applied he was clearly the most qualified" and was recommended to be hired. Resolution passed All Ayes.

Supervisor's Report:

Advises public that the Columbia County Civil Service job postings are on the wall of the Town Hall for anyone to read and apply for. Also the Col. Cty. Dept. of Public works has posted 3 part-time positions.

Roy is reviewing the Board Member representation on various committees and will come with suggestions at the February meeting.

The next scheduled Town Board meeting will be on Monday, February 25th at 7PM. L This is another change from the usual "Third Monday" because of a Holiday conflict. Please Note.]

An "Open Forum" meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 6th. This is the first of quarterly meetings the Town Board is setting to provide the public with the opportunity to speak their mind to the Board Members.

Public comment:

Mark Scherzer asks about a letter he sent on January 8th inquiring about the status of the Police Code of Conduct, and notes that his letter was not included in the "Correspondence" section of the meeting. It's 9 months now since the March 28th Town Board meeting and yet there seems to be no resolving the issue of police conduct nor any change in the Code itself. Asks if there is a real commitment to improving the Police Department. Asks just why we have a Police Department in Germantown when other nearby small towns have none.

Roy asks Roger Rekow to respond. R.R. says the draft of the changes in the Manual is in the hands of the Sheriff's Department and they are still waiting. "They're not treating it as a priority" up at the Sheriff's Dept.

Jerry Smith speaks as a member of the Safety Committee and says that the wording about when police can or should attend a town meeting had been changed, and hopefully improved, so that actions such as what had happened in March would not happen again. That draft is before the

Sheriff. Board members urge Roger Rekow to try to press the Sheriff's Dept to move on the Code of Conduct part of the manual as soon as possible.

Larry Osgood speaks: He mentions the State is preparing for the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the Hudson River and perhaps we can piggyback on some of their planning. Recommends Bard Professor Christopher Lindner as a resource for ideas about Anniversary since he is an expert about the Palatine Germans who migrated to the area. Larry asks about the request for a list of employees and their salaries that was asked for at the prior town meeting. Roy apologizes for the delay in getting it for this meeting, but will have it for the next meeting.

Ellen Epstein asks about what is the real role of the Board in hiring Police officers? Can the Board clarify it.?

Dorothy Montague speaks. Asks about Ethics Committee. What are the appropriate issues to be referred to the Ethics Committee? It has met so seldom over the past years. She believes the public is largely unaware of its existence and vague about its function. Also asks for support for the implementation of a thorough Code Review.

Cindy Smith asks about the possibility of holding executive sessions before the beginning of the regular meeting to lessen waiting time for the public. Also questions the Board members going through the bills to be paid—can this be a violation of the Sunshine Act? Was told that since the Board members don't discuss bills among themselves it's OK. Jason Shaw appears not to have any problem with the way it is done.

Faythe Smith speaks. She is a member of the Ethics Committee and says they seldom met because so few cases were referred to them. Cases can be referred by the Town Board or any member of the public who has a concern.

Betty Aherens asks about why a new position was made for Sewer Maintenance. Was told that "We had one person trying to do a two person job."

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM

ANY corrections welcome. KAY