

Town of Albany Minutes

January 16, 2023

The Town Board met at the Town Hall with Abel Schultz, Scott Roth, Grace Spangler, Shannon Sheflin present, Doug Lawrence arrived mid meeting. Craig Roth, Dennis Nussbaum, Bruce Gardiner, Joe Eisch, Jim Sterr, Jody Sterr, Deb Cline, Ron Krupke were also present. The Pledge of Allegiance was shared. Proof of posting was verified in four places and on the website.

Approval of meeting minutes: A motion was made by Scott Roth and seconded by Abel Schultz to approve the Three December Meeting Minutes. Motion carried 2-0.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer reported:

\$723,279.32 in Checking Account
\$92,364.72 in Savings Account
\$66,919.61 in the Building Account
\$11,886.35 in the Reassessment Fund
\$78,442.66 in the Machinery Account
\$112,936.19 in the ARPA Account.

Scott Roth made a motion to approve the treasurer's report, Abel Schultz seconded the motion. Motion carried 2-0.

Assessor: Bruce Gardiner attended the meeting to answer questions from the board and public. The prior Gardiner Appraisal was his brother and sister in law's company, he worked with them for several years, had his own accounts he serviced and now is the owner of the company. Bruce has three office staff and four assessors including him. Prior Gardiner Appraisal had 100 accounts they serviced, and Bruce will have 69ish accounts. Bruce has worked with Brooklyn, South Wayne, City of Darlington, Exeter, Hebron, Whitewater, and many others within Lafayette and Grant County; he has done hundreds of Board of Reviews and Hearings. Bruce mentioned he has good relationships with the Clerks he works with as well as the taxpayers.

Public Input: Dennis Nussbaum stated that it is important that Bruce Gardiner start establishing a relationship with the residents now, the process prior was mucky, and not transparent. Dennis said providing explanations for why there are changes in property values is important and wanted to know if there was a criteria they used to determine the values, and that criteria should be shared with the residents.

Bruce Gardiner replied to Dennis stating that Linda Gardiner did do an educational meeting prior to the revaluation and information was on the Township Website for the public. Abel Schultz said that there was an educational meeting prior to the revaluation and he, Dean Houlberg, and Greg Gardiner were present at the educational meeting and in the future need to do a better job of letting residents know and letting residents know what their rights are at the open book.

Bruce Gardiner stated that Open Book and Board of Review happens every year, and there are times that the values provided and how they got there can be complicated, and it is hard to explain. Bruce stated that every 10-15 years they do a field study of a county, a sales analysis of the properties and information is then updated in the system.

Shannon Sheflin asked Bruce why the revaluation process took so long, the assessment date was as of January 1, 2023, but the revaluation process went until November of 2023. Bruce answered that there were a lot of municipalities going through a revaluation, it is hard to find help and everyone that is on the team has to be certified, so getting people certified also takes time, but mainly more work than people to do it caused the process to take longer than normal.

Bruce stated that he has ideas on how to make revaluations go quicker by putting residents in alphabetical order and if they own multiple properties, do all the revaluations for a residents multiple properties at once, it will allow more to be done in a day.

Shannon Sheflin stated that many of the residents' concerns were that their property values went up, and mill rate went down, but what happens when the mill rate goes up, their property values are high, and the market crashes. Bruce replied that assessments would remain the same if residents do not make any improvements to their properties. When property values are high, the mill rate is lowered, when property values are low, mill rate is raised. Some other facts Bruce supplied were construction grade is the hardest to assess, any variable improvements to a property will increase the value. Solar panels are exempt from value. Property value will go down if there has been damage to the property or structures are torn down. Assessors look at the market every year and look at the trends.

Dennis Nussbaum asked about the legality of letting the assessor into the house. Bruce stated that you could still attend the Board of Review if you did not let the assessor into your house. Assessors have to use the best information they have, they will talk to the building inspector, and he said the best assessments are the ones you do not have to assume. People will call out improvements you have made to your property, and then it is up to the resident to disprove it.

Grace Spangler asked if the board signed the Gardiner contract for \$6400 what is included. A copy of the contract was provided stating all that is included with the rate.

Dennis Nussbaum asked if Bruce plans on meeting with the Township Board monthly and Bruce said he did not, but he is happy to attend a Town Board Meeting or anyone is welcome to contact him via email or phone. Bruce said that Jill helps him, and Dennis Nussbaum and Shannon Sheflin said that they did not receive great feedback regarding Jill as an assessor. Jill had provided inconsistent information, or could not answer questions asked of her.

Joe Eisch stated that the explanations provided at Open Book were all over the board and were very inconsistent, and in a small town people talk and share information and that is where a lot of frustration came in.

Bruce Gardiner provided his phone number for everyone 608-778-2566.

Abel Schultz made a motion to approve Bruce Gardiner as the Town of Albany Assessor and seconded by Scott Roth. Motion carried 2-0.

Website: Jody Sterr will update the website with Bruce's information as Assessor.

Planning Commission: No updates/meeting.

Roads and Driveway Permits: Roads look good with the weather, have not had any complaints and a few compliments. Ron Krupke stated that the County has a plan right now for \$10,000 for 10 days of work or a few days for \$2500. Nine other townships signed up for the plan. Ron stated he cannot do the trees by himself, and not sure, if the program will be available next year, so it is a good plan if we have it in the budget. Abel Schultz stated that it is in the budget to do the work. Abel Schultz made a motion to move forward with the \$10,000 for 10 days of work program through the county and to take it out of the roadwork budget. Scott Roth seconded the motion, motion carried 2-0.

Ron Krupke said Green County will just bill us, but will ask if there is any paperwork required to sign up for the plan. Ron plans on working on a five-year plan for what roads they will be working on in the future.

Abel Schultz said there are two TRIP funds available, Zurfluh Road TRIP fund, we can move it one time, and the other fund is for the west end of Purinton Rd. Scott Roth said once Ron puts together the five-year plan, then the Board can decide how to use the TRIP funds. Abel Schultz said he would like to have the bid forms out by Mid-February to receive better pricing. Bids need to go out to private contractors, the County could get the contract but they have to be under private contractors by 10%. Ron Krupke will talk to Eric with Green County to get a list by February's Board Meeting.

Building Inspector: Nothing to report. Grace Spangler is gathering information about Ryan Lindsey as a possible other Building Inspector option.

Insurance: Abel Schultz asked Ron Krupke if he had a chance to review the equipment listed through insurance. Ron said he talked to Craig. Shannon Sheflin said that Rural Mutual sent over an audit that needs to be filled out by the beginning of February. Grace Spangler said Craig with Rural Mutual would come in and talk with the Board about our policy. Ron Krupke will invite Craig to the February meeting.

Library: Scott Roth said the Library Board met last week, Eileen is no longer on the board, and they are looking for a village resident for the board. Roxy will become the new Library President, Scott will become the Secretary. The Library is buying some new items for the media room, and Scott stated that the Library is happy the Township approved their requested funding.

Recycling: The contract came, Doug Lawrence said that the Village has full control over the recycling center and we should send something to get out of the contract for next year, we do not have any stake in the landfill. Abel Schultz asked if our residents would still be able to take items to the landfill if we get out of our contract. Shannon Sheflin said that Doug should call them and ask them to send us a copy of our signed contract, because most likely one does not exist, therefore we would not be bound to anything. In addition, if a contract does exist then we put together a plan to exit the contract for next year. Doug Lawrence will reach out to see if we have a signed contract or not.

Clerks Position: Grace Spangler stated that Dean Houlberg was not interested in taking over the Clerk position. Grace Spangler asked Jim & Jody Sterr, Jim stated they would not be here for the September meeting, but would be willing to be appointed and take over as Clerk. The roles, responsibilities and details will be worked out amongst the group in a different meeting. Will have Jim Sterr sign Oath of Office papers, Grace Spangler stated the sooner we make the transition the better. Scott Roth made a motion to appoint Jim Sterr as Township Clerk and seconded by Doug Lawrence. Motion Carried 3-0.

Email will be: Clerk@townofalbany.com, Shannon Sheflin will contact Green County with Jim's information. Doug Lawrence will pick up a mailbox so all mail will come to the Town Hall instead of Clerk's personal addresses.

Jim Sterr appointed Deb Cline as Deputy Clerk. Grace Spangler stated that Deb Cline would be paid \$15.00 per hour plus \$35.00 per meeting attended. Deb Cline accepted appointment to Deputy Clerk.

Town Hall Update: Shannon Sheflin said the building is complete, just a few minor things to finish up. Shannon stated that now that we have an American Flag hung, the electrician TJ did fix the exterior lights, however the one on the North side of the building did not seem to be working again, so TJ will come back out to check it. The new door should be arriving anytime now, and Shannon gave Mark the door vendor Abel's information for when he is ready to install the door. There will be new locks, so we will need to be sure the Planning Commission gets new keys. Doug Lawrence said the generator needs to be registered and should test it.

Abel Schultz asked how the Board felt about renting out the Hall now that it has been renovated, he had inquiries, and Shannon Sheflin stated she had inquiries as well from Shauna Navarro for meetings. Grace Spangler said it probably was not something we wanted to get into, as someone would need to be responsible for opening the building, closing the building, the cost of electricity, liability, etc. Doug Lawrence said that we should allow people to rent the building, as it is a public space. The board will ask Craig at the February meeting what the insurance policy says.

Payment of Bills: Scott Roth made a motion to approve the bills, Abel Schultz seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

Fire/EMS: Scott Roth said the EMS meeting was postponed to next month. Shannon Sheflin stated that she met with Danny Mueller from the Fire Department regarding an Emergency Plan for the Township. Abel Schultz and Shannon Sheflin attended the Emergency Preparedness Meeting in Green County in December, from that meeting and discussion with Danny, Shannon Sheflin put together a preliminary Emergency Plan for Township and will email to the Board to take over.

Doug Lawrence asked if it was possible to change the night of the Township Board Meetings. Our meeting is the same night as the Green County meeting and the Fire Department. Board decided they would move meetings to the 2nd Monday of the Month and will start after the February 13th meeting.

Next Meeting: February 13 and March 11.

A motion was made by Abel Schultz and seconded by Scott Roth to adjourn. Motion carried 3-0.

Shannon Sheflin