

Town Board Meeting
September 5, 2023

In Attendance: Mark Smith – Town Supervisor Arnold Stevens – Councilman
Pete Hoskins – Town Councilman Jean Comstock – Town Clerk
Gene Arsenault – Town Councilman (via Zoom)

1. Pledge of Allegiance – led by Lily Gaechter
2. Call to Order the Regular Town Board Meeting – at 7:11PM
3. Approval of the August 15, 2023 Minutes –
RESOLUTION # 23-170
Mr. Hoskins made a Motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of August 15, 2023 and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Stevens. With the following Board Members present voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried. Ayes – 4 (Smith, Hoskins, Stevens, Arsenault); Nays – 0
4. Motion to move to Executive Session. Supervisor Smith indicated that the TPCC Lease Agreement is still in Confidential Draft form and cannot be discussed in public per the Town Attorney.
RESOLUTION # 23-171
Mr. Stevens made a Motion to move to Executive Session at 7:15PM and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Hoskins. With the following Board Members present voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried. Ayes – 4 (Smith, Hoskins, Stevens, Arsenault); Nays – 0.
5. **RESOLUTION # 23 -172**
Mr. Stevens made a Motion to adjourn the Executive Session at 7:29PM and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Hoskins. With the following Board Members present voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried. Ayes – 4 (Smith, Hoskins, Stevens, Arsenault); Nays – 0. Executive Session – Supervisor Smith – no decision – no resolution, too many holes and questions in the Contract; we will bring it back at the October 3, 2023 Board Meeting; we will have further discussions and get additional legal advice.
6. Town Board Discussion
 - Water Meters – Supervisor Smith – trying to understand EDU's, sinks and toilets in each home, I can't understand this; that's not how we're built right now; only fair way is with water meters; had some research done - approximately \$550,000 to put in (approx. \$60/year per home); I was planning on at least \$1,000,000; just asking if we want to discuss this; Mr. Hoskins – is \$60 at \$1,000,000, Supervisor Smith – yes; Supervisor Smith – how do we pay for this? Small commercial loan over 20 years; Mr. Hoskins – more modern and efficient, more fair, based on consumption, better ability to research water conservation; Mr. Stevens – it's a can we've kicked down the road for a long time; I would like to explore further possibilities; Mr. Arsenault – I'd like to go ahead and research this; Supervisor Smith – I'll go ahead and reach out for funding; Mr. Hoskins – are there options for the meters? Supervisor Smith – yes, buying in bulk would save us money. This would lead into the purchase of water clerk software. Mr. Hoskins – owner could use more or less; Supervisor Smith – water meters do exactly that; Supervisor Smith – hopefully have some numbers for the October 3, 2023 Meeting.
 - Update on Zoom – Resolution 22-103 – Zoom for public bodies, have to have a physical quorum; the other Zoom was for the outside to Zoom in, between today and last meeting it's time for a decision to be made; if we're keeping it we need to update equipment or not do Zoom any longer;

Mr. Hoskins – we need to have the transparency and have it available; Supervisor Smith – we need to open this to the floor for input; Mr. Arsenault – what is the investment? Supervisor Smith – I don't know at this point; Mr. Arsenault – I'm in favor of continuing with Zoom and researching new equipment.

- Update on Town Hall – drawings available for all to look at; get a more visual of the process; Needham Risk Management came to Wevertown to do some research – there is mold on the lower level; not necessarily on the other floors; should be getting results back by early next week; the only thing I need to know is that it's safe to have Judge Cavanagh and the Court there; Safety Officer will go tear a piece of the wall and see what the mold level is; there is water coming in the South side of the building; Ernie – the south side and east side; there is standing water almost constantly as well as ceiling tiles, rusting the support ceiling; the boiler room itself is another story – it's really, really bad. Supervisor Smith – some work to be done there; it's coming in through the bottom of the foundation – they would have to excavate around the foundation as well as through the inside; could potentially seal and be done, not sure at this point; when we get the results I'll let the Judge know.
- EMS Tax District – Supervisor Smith – one of the first people I met when I came on board was Joe Connelly; we had a discussion on the critical importance of the emergency squad; original idea is to bring them to the Town; it's not feasible at this time; other towns have better insurance and pay than we offer; 20-21- as a base line - \$232,000/ per month per person \$727; 23 - \$251,000 – in talking with Joe to offer a competitive package it's about \$180,000 – that would raise the tax levy; looking at response time in Town as well as mutual aid; having been on that side in the Army – they would give anything to not have someone die; \$172 is not a lot to ask for; we should budget this money and maintain and provide emergency services to our community; Mr. Stevens – what impact does this have with Minerva; Mr. Connelly – I need to go there and ask for more money as well; we have a separate contract with them; 15% of our call volume, \$150,000 from them; need to keep proportions up; Mr. Hoskins – Minerva would have to up their input as well; Mr. Connelly – they've been pretty receptive; how is this being dealt with employees; Mr. Connelly – last service in the County to not offer paid employees; we just don't have the people in the Town to do this; Mr. Hoskins – if we do what we're proposing will it be competitive? Mr. Connelly – competitive in providing top care as well as getting other employees; \$70,000 will provide for health insurance; \$30,000 for raises to reward experience; that will help retain and bring in others; Mr. Hoskins – is this going to be enough? I would rather make sure we don't error on the wrong side; Mr. Connelly – I do; it's been 9 years since I came to you for an increase; Mr. Ashline – can the County or the State help; Supervisor Smith – I've talked with the County on numerous occasions and the answer is “no” and I don't know why; Supervisor Smith – re: insurance for a pool of insurance and for some reason no one can get a straight answer on this; at some point I think this needs to change; hoping that 2025 we may see a change; Supervisor Smith- I'd like permission to add this to the budget for this amount; Mr. Hoskins – I'm all for it; Mr. Stevens – all for it; Mr. Arsenault – I'm fine with it also; no one has been more conscientious than Joe has been over the years; Supervisor Smith – I'll work this into the budget.

7. Resolution to Purchase Software for water payments – Supervisor Smith – OSC came up with a list of things we need to address – auditing, payments, etc.; current water clerk resigned; software includes billing, auditing, transactions, penalties - \$5,000 was what the Water Clerk was making; Williamson will allow for the sewer district to come on board when the time comes; Mr. Arsenault – when does the Clerk get a raise? Mr. Stevens – give her a stipend; Supervisor Smith – this will be a stipend; Mr. Hoskins – water district or Town? Supervisor Smith – district.

RESOLUTION # 23 - 173

Mr. Stevens made a Motion to approve the purchase of the Water Clerk software and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Hoskins. With the following Board Members present voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried. Ayes – 4 (Smith, Hoskins, Stevens, Arsenault); Nays – 0.

8. Resolution for the rental of a new copier at Town Hall – office and public use - \$160/month; can network it as well; lowest price of all that were researched; Supervisor Smith – can I get Motion?

RESOLUTION # 23 – 174

Mr. Arsenault made a Motion to approve the rental of a new copier at Town Hall and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Stevens. With the following Board Members present voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried. Ayes – 4 (Smith, Hoskins, Stevens, Arsenault); Nays – 0.

9. Resolution to Purchase Playground Equipment at the Scout Hall – Supervisor Smith - PPP in the equipment line there is enough money; Mr. Hoskins – new equipment closer to the field and much better equipment.

RESOLUTION # 23 – 175

Mr. Stevens made a Motion to approve the purchase of the new playground equipment at the Scout Hall and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Hoskins. With the following Board Members present voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried. Ayes – 4 (Smith, Hoskins, Stevens, Arsenault); Nays – 0.

10. Resolution for replacement of fence at Ski Bowl Park Playground – Supervisor Smith – there is a partial fence there; chances of kids running into the parking lot, etc; will make it safer for all; and in light of the reevaluation of safety throughout the Town; Siena Fence was the lowest bid not to exceed \$8,500. Mr. Hoskins – I’m all for safety, but black chain link fence is not that nice to look at, maybe down the road we could have a nicer fence; Ms. Nettle – double your money now and get a nicer looking fence at this time; Mr. Konis – spend the money now and do it right, you want a nice looking park; Supervisor Smith – even if it’s a temporary thing, we need to get it done for safety concerns; pretty is nice but safety is more important; we can revisit next year; we can re-use this fence elsewhere.

RESOLUTION # 23 -176

Mr. Hoskins made a Motion to approve the purchase and installation of the fence at the Ski Bowl playground, not to exceed \$8,500 and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Arsenault. With the following Board Members present voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried. Ayes – 4 (Smith, Hoskins, Stevens, Arsenault); Nays – 0.

11. Resolution to change spending limit for PPP Director – Supervisor Smith – currently at \$299, it just slows down what he can purchase; if he needs to purchase a part over \$299 he’d have to wait for a meeting to approve; let’s raise it to \$999.

RESOLUTION # 23 – 177

Mr. Hoskins made a Motion to approve the increase in spending limit for PPP Director to \$999 and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Arsenault. With the following Board Members present voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried. Ayes – 4 (Smith, Hoskins, Stevens, Arsenault); Nays – 0.

12. Resolution for Loan to Capital Water Fund – Supervisor Smith - need to carry us over until we get reimbursement; \$89,000 bill needs to be submitted and paid, then we will get reimbursed; we’ll be talking to Municipal Solutions to help us budget better.

RESOLUTION # 23 – 178

Mr. Hoskins made a Motion to approve the loan to the Capital Water Fund to pay the \$89,000 due and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Stevens. With the following Board Members present voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried. Ayes – 4 (Smith, Hoskins, Stevens, Arsenault); Nays – 0.

13. Committee Reports – no reports.

14. Warrants – Supervisor Smith – can I get a Motion to approve/accept the Warrants?

RESOLUTION # 23 -179

Mr. Stevens made a Motion to approve and accept the Warrants and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Hoskins. With the following Board Members present voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried. Ayes – 4 (Smith, Hoskins, Stevens, Arsenault); Nays – 0.

General Fund:	\$ 24,250.76
Highway Fund:	\$ 408,545.55
Sewer District Project:	\$ 19,310.18
Library Fund:	\$ 338.80
Water District:	\$ 20,981.53
Trust & Agency:	\$ <u>1,123.20</u>
TOTAL	\$ 474,550.02

15. Privilege of the Floor

- Cheryl Gillespie – Chair of TPCC Board – thank the Board for bringing the Lease to the next meeting; it would be a strong benefit to the Town; Supervisor Smith cannot discuss the lease agreement at this time – it’s in Confidential Draft form with both party’s attorneys working on it.
- Donna Welch – lease to a not-for profit organization; it’s important to keep this in the Town; proposed lease reduced costs for the Town; our goal was to simply and reduce costs to the Town and tax payers;
- Mindy Preuninger – important to get our point across to all; without a long term lease it won’t work for the Town or TPCC; serving the community is first and foremost, we need the long term lease, we can get better funding; funds could help with capital improvements; I’m sure we can all work through them together; we have a very engaged Board as well as volunteers.
- Janet Konis – TPCC- for a while now I’ve been saying that TPCC is owned by the Town and the Town laws are not being followed regarding signage; re: Joe Connelly – sorry you have to come and ask for money, it should be more; they should be making at least \$20-25/hour; it’s sad; we can put up fences and not think of the EMS people; wondering about 255 Main Street – how much did we dish out and how much did we get back; how much money did the Town spend on the water district; Capital Fund for sewer district – has any money started coming in; water lines, sewer lines, water meters – now you’re taxing us again; Assessor – what days does she work for us; do we pay her, how much do we pay her? Does she work for us? How do we pay good employees \$15/hour; PPP Director – check the work being done before we offer raises; Mr. Arsenault – you’ve served the Town well but you haven’t been here in years; Mr. Stevens – you have a sign in your yard, all the time – no permit for this sign, it’s illegal, maybe it’s time you both resign; get off the Board if you’re not going to do what’s right for the community.
- Kevin Bean – I chatted with Mark today – TPCC lease – please be sure to take a look at the gift agreement carefully before any decisions can be made; the Board should know this is a legally binding agreement.
- Deborah Cunningham – Trustee of TPCC Board – I’m in favor of the lease between the Town and TPCC; we’ve received a few grants; we’re good at getting grants, however we found a great opportunity with another organization but we did not have a lease with the Town; looking to get more resources with having this lease; the Board’s vision is another reason for the lease to go through.
- Jim Jetson – a year ago I was here discussing the water district improvements; before we get more loans and sources can we use that bond? Joe Connelly – I applaud you for being in our community; your leadership and being in the forefront, we all need to appreciate what he does; I applaud the Board for their decision made today.

- Don Preuninger – thank all of those who came out to support TPCC; hope you can all come back at the October 3, 2023 Meeting to support it again; the lease is a benefit to TPCC and the Town; hope you'll vote positive for us.
- Kelly Nettle – as I see and hear about the support for TPCC – thank you to all of you for your years of hard work keeping it viable; budgets not followed through with; having a full time director is needed, it's hard to keep personnel here when you don't own the building; it offers all of your children terrific opportunities as well.

16. Supervisor Smith – with no one else for Privilege of the Floor could I get a Motion to adjourn.

RESOLUTION #23 -180

Mr. Hoskins made a Motion to Adjourn the Town Board Meeting at 8:36PM and moved its passage with a Second Motion from Mr. Stevens. With the following Board Members present voting in favor of the Resolution, it is carried. Ayes – 4 (Smith, Hoskins, Stevens, Arsenault); Nays – 0.

Prepared by:

Jean M. Comstock

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Town Clerk

**The Next Town Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 3, 2023
at 7:00PM at Tannery Pond**