

SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE VILLAGE OF HIGHLAND FALLS

April 26, 2021

A special meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Highland Falls was held at the Senior Center, 15 Drew Avenue, Highland Falls, New York on April 26, 2021.

The purpose of the meeting was to hold the sixth budget meeting for FY21-22.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor D'Onofrio at 4:30P.M.

Members present were:

Mayor Joseph E. D'Onofrio
Trustee Brian Aylward
Trustee James DiSalvo (4:42pm)
Trustee Melanie Guerrero
Trustee Gary C. Phillips

Also present were:

Village Clerk, Regina M. Taylor
Village Treasurer, Ralph Walters
Police Sergeant, Jason Torpey
News of the Highlands Editor, Mary Jane Pitt
(7) Community residents, Cindy Modlin 30 Michel Rd. , M/M Ned Kopald, 98 Roe Ave., Sean Vaugh 1 Wyandotte Ave, John Walter 25 Cozzens Ave., Jeff Gathers
TOH Ambulance Captain, Edward Falta 427 Main Street

Mayor D'Onofrio introduced the Village Treasurer, Ralph Walters to open the meeting at 4:30p.m.

Mr. Walters reported to the Board that at the meeting on the 27th of February a Laborer position for \$37,000 was taken out of A5110.0100 and put into A5010.0100 which took the line A5110.0100 from \$250,000.00 to \$213,000.00 in the tentative budget. Mr. Walters reported that at the April 17th meeting he was directed to take \$65,000 out of the A5010.0100 for a foreman position and \$37,000.00 from A5110.0100 and this would help cover the cost of the truck needed in the DPW. Mr. Walters explained that the \$37,000.00 was already taken out, therefore, only \$65,000.00 is the amount towards the truck. Mr. Walters explained that this leaves \$45,000.00 to come from surplus or increase taxes to cover the vehicle.

Mr. Walters recapped that at the March 9th meeting, the Main Street Revitalization Fund A7210.0420 was decreased by \$20,000.00, the DPW Vehicle Reserve Fund was increased \$10,000.00 and the Police Vehicle Reserve Fund was increased \$10,000.00. Mr. Walters commented that he had not made any adjustments to the benefits lines yet because he is waiting for final salary adjustments. Mr. Walters reported that the \$110,000 needed for the DPW vehicle could come the \$65,000.00 out of A5010.0100, approximate benefit decrease of \$25,000.00 and \$57,000.00 out of A3120.0100, to unfund the 9th police officer position. Mr. Walters cautioned the Board that the 9th position that has been funded but not filled has probably helped in the overage in the overtime line in past years.

Mayor D'Onofrio commented that the Sergeant is currently looking to fill only one of two open spots.

Trustee Guerrero commented that she would like to reduce the total communication budget of \$281,104.00. Trustee Guerrero commented that she would agree to a full-time administrative position in that department for providing some of the community services that this department handles.

Trustee Guerrero asked what Contingency is used for. The Treasurer responded that it is used for unforeseen expenses. Trustee Guerrero agreed to leave that line as is.

Discussion was held on the Village using the County 911 system for dispatching. Trustee Guerrero commented that she would like the budget to reflect that the communications department would be eliminated and that the Board is committed to doing so. Trustee Phillips responded that he would like to look into it what eliminating the department will mean. Mayor D'Onofrio reported that he is prepared to send a letter to the county that the Village would like to participate in the 911 system. Mayor D'Onofrio

commented that he is in favor of keeping one person in place to facilitate the office work and community services that are provided.

Trustee Guerrero motioned to proceed with a letter to the county for the Village to participate in the County 911 system.

The motion was seconded by Trustee Aylward and on a roll call vote, the results which follow:

Trustee Guerrero – Aye

Trustee Aylward -Aye

Trustee Phillips – Nay

Trustee DiSalvo – Nay, with the record stating he would like more information on what the 911 system will provide.

Mayor D’Onofrio – Aye, with the record stating he would like to participate in the system, but would like to find out what does that entail.

Mayor D’Onofrio declared the motion carried.

Trustee DiSalvo followed up with the comment that if the Board decides in six months to eliminate the department, the money that remains in the budget will go to surplus at the end of the year. Trustee DiSalvo commented that the fiscally responsible thing to do is fund the department in the budget for one year.

Mayor D’Onofrio responded that he would send out the letter and ask for a sit down with the Mr. Allen Wierzbicki and Officer in Charge Jason Torpey.

The Board took no action to remove the total communications line in the budget. The adopted budget will show the same as the tentative.

Discussion was held on the salary of the part time detective. The Village Treasurer remarked that the stipend of \$3,355.00 was already agreed upon to be removed from the A3120.0100 Police Salaries line.

Mayor D’Onofrio commented that maybe the Board could look at funding a Part-time Chief and a Part-time Deputy Chief. Mayor D’Onofrio commented that it seems to be working in the Town. It was noted that policing in the Village is a lot different than policing in the Town.

Trustee Guerrero responded that the Police Salary A3120.0100 could be reduced if two part-timers are in the chief’s slot as opposed to a full time chief with benefits.

Trustee Guerrero commented that every reduction she suggests seems to be a fight. Trustee Guerrero commented that debt is going up and will double soon with the water project next year.

Trustee DiSalvo responded that every municipality carries debt and always will in order that infrastructure projects can be done.

Trustee Guerrero responded that she wants to see the people’s money spent wisely and for the Village to not take on more debt.

Trustee DiSalvo commented that we don’t borrow for operations, but big projects cannot be budgeted for.

Treasurer Walters recapped to this point and commented that more research will be done before any changes will be made to the dispatching department or Chief’s position and that the Police Salary line will be left alone. Treasurer Walters commented that the water main project and associated borrowing will not affect taxes. Mr. Walters explained that the borrowing affects the water fund and not the General fund.

Trustee Guerrero remarked that leaving everything the same is not getting a commitment to make significant change. Trustee Guerrero questioned if \$9,600.00 for foot patrol was needed. OIC Jason Torpey responded that it does go towards community policing and used in the summer time. Mayor D’Onofrio commented that he’s been told it’s hard to get part-timers to come in for walking patrols.

Mayor D’Onofrio motioned to take \$9,600.00 for walking patrols out of the Police Salary line A3120.0100.

The motion was seconded by Trustee Guerrero and unanimously carried.

Mayor D’Onofrio updated the Village Board that he had given Sergeant Torpey permission to use the Chief’s vehicle as Officer in Charge.

Mayor D’Onofrio updated the Village Board that the Department of State has granted a one year extension to complete the reorganization study.

Trustee Aylward motioned to approve a request from the W.P. Parents Club to hold a Class of 2021 Afghan Sale Fundraiser in Municipal lot #2 from 7:00a.m. – 5:00p.m. on Friday May 21st and Saturday May 22nd and the use of six parking spaces in the lot, in which to set up.

The motion was seconded by Trustee DiSalvo and unanimously carried.

A memo was submitted to the Village Board from the auto mechanic regarding the condition of one of the trucks. No action was taken at this time.

Mr. Sean Vaughn, 1 Wyandotte Ave, came before the Board to discuss a softball league seeking permission to use Roe Park. Mr. Vaughn explained that he lives next to the ball field at the park and shared complaints he had regarding the usage of the field by this team. Mr. Vaughn asked the Board to consider monitoring and managing the usage of the field by this league, before a license is issued. Mr. Vaughn complained that they use it every Sunday for hours, play loud music, urinate near the field, and leave trash all around when they leave.

Mr. Ned Kopald, 98 Roe Park, also spoke to the Board with complaints about the league. Mr. Kopald remarked that this league does not follow the social distancing rules or mask requirement currently in effect, violates the prohibition of alcohol at the field and plays loud music for 6-7 hours every Sunday. Mr. Kopald remarked that he believes most of the players are from out of town and this prohibits our local residents from using the field.

Mayor D'Onofrio responded that the request for the permit from this league will be addressed at the regular Village Board meeting to be held on Monday, May 3rd at 7:00p.m. in Village Hall.

Trustee Phillips motioned to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Trustee Guerrero and unanimously carried.

The special meeting closed at 6:37P.M.

Regina M. Taylor, Village Clerk