

TOWN OF CONSTANTIA

MINUTES –SUPERVISOR MEETING – November 6, 2023

9:00 am Constantia Town Hall

Present: Frank Tomaino - Supervisor
Ronald Chapman, Richard Colesante, Thomas Moran, John Metzger– Council Members
Clare Haynes – Town Clerk
Warren Bader – Town Attorney
Dustin Clark, David Powers – Barton & Loguidice

CALL TO ORDER:

At 9:00 am Mr. Tomaino called the supervisor’s meeting to order with the pledge of allegiance.

PROPOSED LOCAL LAW:

Discussion on the proposed local law as suggested by Mr. Wheeler, Assessor for the town. This local law is to clarify how the Town will define income that can be used for the senior deduction. NYS modified what can be used, Oswego County followed suit. Mr. Wheeler gave the board the following handout:

Proposal to change how income is calculated, in relation to RPTL-467 (Senior Citizens with Limited Income) and RPTL-459c (Disability with Limited Income).

- 1) ***Didn’t the Town of Constantia just address this issue last year?*** *No. Last year, the town, as well as the county, decided to change the income level threshold. Not how the income is determined, or what is counted as income. It had been several years since the sliding scale had been changed.*
- 2) ***Why is this change needed now?*** *During its last legislative session, the NYS Legislature tried to simplify the process in which the income for Senior Citizen and the Disability Exemption was calculated. The law was changed so that the income for those exemptions was the Federal Adjusted Gross Income (FAGI). If the town does not pass the resolution, then income will simply be the FAGI of the applicant, and nothing else will be counted.*
- 3) ***Will the passing of this law affect any of the current recipients of those exemptions?*** *No. Everyone that qualified last year, even if the town does nothing, will still qualify again this year. It will however, open the exemption up to other taxpayers that would no longer be considered on limited income, which would ultimately mean more people would qualify, and cause a shift to those taxpayers that are not 65 years old.*
- 4) ***How does this impact the School Tax Relief (STAR) Program?*** *It has no effect on the STAR. This program is administered by the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance and has no direct impact on the local community.*
- 5) ***Here is a simple calculation example:*** *A property owner aged 65 receives the following as income; \$2,000 per month for social security, and \$3,000 per month for their IRA. That equates to \$60,000 per year. If the town does not change the way income is calculated, this taxpayer would be entitled to a 50% exemption on town and county taxes, because the taxable portions under federal tax laws would only be \$16,950.*

Ultimately, passing this local law does two things. First, it aligns with the way that the county will be calculating income for these exemptions. Second, it will help keep the exemption for those taxpayers that are on limited incomes and need assistance in order to afford their homes.

Mr. Moran is in favor of the law, he believes that sheltered income should be part of the equation. If this law is not passed, many more seniors will qualify as a result the tax burden will shift to taxpayers under 65 years of age.

The handout Mr. Wheeler supplied the board members caused more confusion. As there were additional questions the matter was tabled until the November town board meeting.

WASTEWATER:

Mr. Clark and Mr. Powers - B&L told the board there have been no new announcements awarding grants as of yet. They have been in touch with Ms. Ricci from EFC, who had encouraging news that the project will and does qualify for the BIL (Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Law) funding. B&L is working with EFC to help increase the score

of the project. The score of the project is very important with BIL which is extra funding that was not expended as expected. A list of projects is compiled, starting at the top of the list and continue down until monies are depleted. There are various reasons why a project might have a higher score but not able to receive funding at that time. ie, not shovel ready. Ms. Ricci told B&L that they are “not going anywhere” they are committed to this project and realize the need is there, but affordable is the issue.

When asked what kind of funding BIL has, Mr. Clark responded that it is generally grants up to 50% of the project. There will be some funding already received that will take away from the total amount that could be awarded. Mr. Powers offered that there can also be some additional hardship funding.

Mr. Colesante asked about the O&M charge, is there any data out there that indicates how much this might increase, could it double or triple over 30 years? Mr. Clark responded that they deal with 1st year charges because that is what the funding agencies require as there are so many variables. Mr. Colesante requested that Mr. Clark look at other districts with maybe 1/2 the number of grinder pumps to see what happened then can calculate from there. Mr. Colesante believes the people in the district need to know this information.

Discussion on short lived assets, it is important that the district continue to yearly add to money to this line in the budget. Mr. Mura a resident asked if inflation was added to short-lived asset when making their calculations. Mr. Clark is unsure if inflation was added as they are only required to consider the first year. Mr. Tomaino asked if short lived assets have already been set up in the calculations, yes it has. Mr. Moran has always objected to putting money away for future issues, let the people who need the items pay for them at that time. Mr. Moran used the water districts as an example, both have a large fund balance using the same principle.

Mr. Tomaino asked about alternatives, what if all funding is awarded, dropping the EDU charge back to what was originally agreed upon, do we have to go back to the residents? Mr. Clark believes that the district will need approval because the total amount to be expended has changed. \$39M to \$63M would alone push for board approval which is subject to a permissive referendum.

Mr. Tomaino had a nice conversation with Mr. Vigneault from DEC, he is very interested in the project and would like to see it succeed. Mr. Vigneault questioned if there is a possibility that the project could be phased in, Mr. Clark responded unfortunately there is no way to do this, the project was set as a turnkey project it must stay that way.

Mr. Tomaino asked if there was any way to get the information out to the people, maybe write a paragraph where the project stands. The monthly report is put on the website, not sure how else to get information to the people.

PROPOSED LOCAL LAW:

At 10:05 am Mr. Wheeler, Assessor was able to call into the meeting to answer questions on the proposed local law as mentioned above. Mr. Wheeler wanted to assure the board that he would never do anything that would harm the Town. Last year Mr. Wheeler had the Town increase the sliding scale to keep in line with the County. The State did increase their income limits, the County did not go along because it was higher than the median income of Oswego County. This new proposed law deals with the fact the State redefined what is counted as income for Senior Star. New this year what will be used is only the adjusted gross income. This new law will prevent people who have higher income from qualifying. After further discussion, the board members agree that passing the law will be in the best interest of the Town, Mrs. Haynes will get the information to Mr. Bader’s firm for the necessary documents.

HIGHWAY:

Mr. Woolridge could not be at this meeting and requested Mr. Tomaino bring up a request from the Constantia VFD to start plowing their driveway again this year. The Town did pave for the Fire Department in the past but stopped a few years ago. Mr. Moran would like to know why they are going backward, it used to be included in the contract, it has since been removed. Mr. Metzger believes governments should work together, makes sense to help them out. Mr. Metzger thinks there is a value to the work, maybe have the fire department reimburse the Town for the work. After discussion, Mr. Colesante made the motion to have the Constantia Highway Department plow for the Constantia VFD, seconded by Mr. Chapman.

Carried: Moran – No Chapman – Yes Colesante – Yes Metzger – Yes Tomaino – Yes

Mr. Tomaino asked Mrs. Haynes to make the necessary changes to the contract.

PUBLIC HEARING:

The public hearing on the 2024 Budget will be on November 9, 2023 at 6pm. Mrs. Haynes will get all contracts ready for review.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - ADJOURN:

At 10:23 am Mr. Metzger made the motion to go into executive session for an employee issue with litigation, seconded by Mr. Chapman.

Carried: Moran – Yes Chapman – Yes Colesante – Yes Metzger – Yes Tomaino – Yes

At 11:34 Mr. Colesante made the motion to reopen the supervisors meeting and with no decisions made during the executive session made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Chapman.

Carried: Moran – Yes Chapman – Yes Colesante – Yes Metzger – Yes Tomaino – Yes