

TOWN OF HIGHLAND  
REGULAR TOWN BOARD MEETING  
MARCH 12, 2024  
ELDRED TOWN HALL

PRESENT                   SUPERVISOR JOHN PIZZOLATO  
                                  COUNCILMAN JIM AKT  
                                  COUCILWOMAN KAITLIN HAAS  
                                  COUNCILMAN TOM MIGLIORINO  
                                  COUNCILPERSON LAURA BURRELL

Also present,             Attorney to Town Steven Mogel  
                                  Town Clerk Susan Hoffman

Supervisor calls meeting to order -7:02 pm  
Flag Salute  
Roll Call – all present

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Received and read a report from Yulan Fire Department  
Received and read report from Highland Fire Department  
Received and read report from Highland Ambulance Service  
Received and read a resignation letter from Barryville Exterminating

The board discussed various issues related to communication, conflict resolution, and maintenance in the Town of Highland. The supervisor emphasized the need for productive communication among board members, while Highway Superintendent highlighted the efficiency of the town's crew in addressing power outages. The supervisor also proposed switching to ADP for more efficient payroll management, while Councilwoman Haas raised concerns about addressing wage disparity between town departments. The board also discussed the appointment and attendance concerns of Larry Fishman, the Zoning Board of Appeals Chairman, who is unable to attend meetings due to being out of state.

The town council discussed various matters, including hiring and payroll recommendations, community service initiatives, and emergency management updates. The Supervisor sought approval for the Personnel Committee's recommendations, while Councilwoman Haas inquired about payroll reports and the bookkeeper assistant position. Councilwoman Haas emphasized the importance of clear communication plans, while the Supervisor highlighted the need for

improved coordination between emergency services and the public. Highway Superintendent stressed the need for a centralized system to manage disaster relief efforts, and Attorney emphasized the importance of social services.

Send highway department license info to board members who requested it

Draft resolution to advertise sealed bids for stone and gravel

Put Roebling Bridge sponsorship info out on table

Send ARPA fund usage totals to Comptroller's office for verification

Transition payroll from Paychex to ADP with no interruption

Post town cleanup date as May 18

Draft correct verbiage for Fishman's remote participation in ZBA

Get estimates for senior center interior painting

Replace UV water purifier at Town Hall

Get an estimate for handicapped toilets and drain snaking at Town Hall

Sponsor Roebling aqueducts event by March 20 for community celebration of 170th anniversary.

Town Clerk requests approval to attend the 42nd annual New York State towns clerks' convention in Albany.

The supervisor discusses ARPA funding for town expenses, including highway department needs.

The supervisor presents a list of expenses for the town, including computer and recording equipment, workman's comp, and office furniture.

Councilman Migliorino questions the estimate of \$5,000 for office furniture, seeking clarification on the estimate.

The Supervisor discusses the need for durable desks for the Senior Center, mentioning that the current particleboard desks are prone to combustion and that they are applying for a Lowe's Gable grant to fund the purchase of more durable desks.

The Supervisor also mentions that they will work with local tradesmen to make repairing the Senior Center part of BOCES curriculum, regardless of whether they receive the grant.

The Supervisor suggests using surplus funds to cover service contracts for generators.

The Supervisor proposes using ARPA funds to purchase a generator and service contract, with the option to use surplus funds if necessary.

The group discusses the feasibility of using surplus funds for office furniture and service contract costs, with Councilwoman Haas expressing concerns about taking from the general surplus.

The supervisor expresses gratitude to Frank Monteleone for providing an accurate generator size reading for the town highway shop.

The town will now keep the cleanup date separate from the UDC river cleanup to accommodate second homeowners, with permits available on May 18.

The supervisor proposes switching from paychecks to ADP to improve reporting and customer service, with a grace period for migration.

The board agrees to move forward with the change, allowing migration without payment interruption.

The supervisor discussed the importance of conflict resolution in a changing community, suggesting the board submit proposals to work productively with colleagues they may have differences with.

The Highway Superintendent mentioned electrical problems with the trucks and that the fleet is mostly back up and running except for one vehicle that needs to be returned to the dealer.

Town board members request proof of licensing for all members.

The town negotiated a five-year contract with the highway department, increasing wages by 4% in 2024 and subsequent years.

The Supervisor emphasizes the fairness of the contract and the importance of considering the needs of all town departments.

Councilman Akt raises concerns about the town's ability to attract and retain employees due to unequal pay and a lack of competitive wages.

Councilwoman Haas raises concern about the ability of the negotiation committee to sign contracts without board approval.

Attorney Mogul requests to review the contract again before approval, citing concerns about compliance.

The Supervisor discusses the town's budget and the need for transparency in the application process, including making materials available to the public and providing recordings of meetings.

Councilperson Burrell updates the group on web technology, including the purchase of a plugin for automatic system error updates and the recommendation to purchase Adobe PDF for town computers.

Councilman Migliorino received calls from the Town Clerk regarding issues with the town's buildings, including no power in the clerk's office and I had to call another electrician who found a bad 50-amp breaker. Herman Wyss was away on vacation.

The Supervisor announces an opening on the planning board and invites interested members of the public to submit a letter of interest.

The Supervisor is making a motion to reappoint Larry Fishman to the Zoning Board of Appeals for another five-year term. The motion was rescinded until further discussion.

Councilwoman Haas discussed the law regarding remote participation in meetings, citing the opinion of prior counsel that a member's absence due to illness is a significant factor to permit remote participation.

Chairman Fishman was contacted by an attorney from the Committee on Open Government who disagreed with this view, leading to a discussion among board members on whether Snowbird status would be a sufficient factor to permit remote voting.

Attorney Mogul expresses concern about the chairman's remote participation in board meetings, citing legal and ethical implications.

Many board meetings occur during these months (May-October/November), with some remote meetings held due to legal entanglements.

The Board discusses reappointment of Zoning Board of Appeals Chairman, with some members expressing concerns about potential legal issues.

The Supervisor praises Larry Fishman's institutional knowledge and ability to navigate the Zoning Board of Appeals, suggesting he should be involved in decision-making processes.

Councilwoman Haas raises concerns about Mr. Fishman's appointment date and lack of up-to-date information, potentially impacting on his participation in meetings.

The chairman's oath of office was undetermined, leading to reappointment discussion.

Board members struggle to communicate and share information, leading to confusion and concerns about governance.

**Motion by** Councilperson Burrell reappointing Larry Fishman as Zoning Board of Appeals Chair having Larry preside and vote in meetings remotely, seconded by Councilman Migliorino, discussion, motion carried. Councilwoman Haas and Councilman Akt voted No.

**Motion by** Councilman Akt to go into Executive Session at 8:07 pm for the purposes of personnel for the code clerk, insurance class coverage review and consulting with counsel under attorney client privilege, seconded by Councilwoman Haas, motion carried. Councilman Akt had left Executive Session.

**Motion by** Councilperson Burrell to come out of Executive Session, seconded by Councilwoman Haas, motion carried at 9:06 pm.

Speak with the bookkeeper directly to provide council members with requested payroll reports.

Define job structure, timeline and pay rate for bookkeeper assistant position by next meeting.

Meet with an insurance provider to review the town's coverage.

Submit beautification grant application to Sullivan 180.

Finalize and extend job offers for code clerk and planning/zoning board secretary positions.

Draft emergency response protocol and chain of command.

Draft contract for St. Anthony's to serve as warming/hygiene center.

Coordinate with county reps regarding warming center insurance and compliance.  
Install shower at St. Anthony's warming center.  
Share emergency contact info publicly.  
Identify and assist at-risk residents.  
Organize St. Patrick's Day parade.  
Host the first Comprehensive Plan community meeting on April 16.  
Take inventory of cell towers in town.  
Attend county presentation on expanded cell service.  
Committee discusses hiring for two positions, including planning and zoning board secretary.  
Candidates for code clerk and planning and zoning board secretary positions are being considered and offered jobs.  
Andy Boyer and the team organize river cleanup events in April, seeking volunteers and grant funding.

The Supervisor and Councilman Migliorino are working on a warming center project with Father Richard, including securing insurance and finding funding.

Councilwoman Haas clarifies that the American Legion building is not a warming center, but they did offer showers during storm times.

The Supervisor discusses plans for a new community center with emergency services, including a commercial kitchen for meals and internet access.

The committee was formed to seek grants for pollinator habitat, signage, and cultural enhancements along the byway.

The Supervisor updates the board on the St. Patrick's Day parade, including private floats, live music, and face painting.

Legislator Louie Alvarez will drive the Sullivan County Sheriff's Corvette in the parade, and horses will also be part of the event.

The Supervisor discusses whether the closure of Park Road from Airport Road to Park Road will be shorter, allowing for alternative routes like Crystal Lake Road or Irishtown Road.

Councilwoman Haas how will residents on Park Road will be notified of the parade and closure, with emergency services available for those who need it.

The Supervisor encourages the public to share information about neighbors who may need help or emergency services, emphasizing the importance of community involvement in addressing issues.

The insurance committee is meeting on February 22nd at 2pm to review coverage and address concerns, and the public are welcome to attend or share information.

The Supervisor mentions a grant proposal for beautification projects in Highland, with a motion to authorize the town supervisor to sign the application.

The committee discusses the grant process and public comment is requested.

Councilwoman Haas requested payroll reports three times, but still hasn't received them.

The Supervisor clarified that the bookkeeper position was created at the organizational meeting, but the budget and pay rate were not established.

Councilwoman Haas discussed the importance of having a protocol in place for emergency situations, such as power outages and natural disasters, and how it should be tailored to the specific needs of the town.

The Supervisor and Councilwoman Haas have been working on a protocol for emergency response, including working with local emergency services and basing it on past storms and power outages in the area.

The Supervisor and Councilwoman Haas discussed the challenges of communicating during a power outage, including the lack of real-time outage information and the difficulty of connecting with emergency services without cell service. They also discussed the importance of having emergency services buildings in low-service areas with extenders to provide connectivity during natural disasters.

The Supervisor acknowledges the complex issue of HOA restrictions on short-term rentals, with no clear solution.

The Supervisor encourages community members to share their thoughts on the 10-year comprehensive plan during a public comment session on April 16th.

Councilperson Burrell provides advice on payroll transfers and incident review training, suggesting doing it mid-quarters for more accurate tax calculations.

The Supervisor mentions the importance of social services for identifying and helping residents in need, particularly those with extended care requirements.

The Supervisor updates the list of residents who may need help and encourages the public to provide additional names if they have any.

The Supervisor met with Arch Lopes, a Kingston-based company providing fiber optic Wi-Fi throughout the county and learned they are taking inventory of cell towers and will present to the legislature in April.

Residents are concerned about losing phone service during power outages.

## Resolutions

**Motion by** Councilperson Burrell to approve the usage of the ARPA Funds, seconded by Councilman Migliorino, discussion, motion carried.

### ARPA FUNDS

• Highway Lifts	\$83,727.18
• Koinonia Nature Camp	\$30,000.00
• Generator for Highway Department	\$51,000.00
• Computer/Recording Equip. for Digitizing Meetings	\$500.00
• Supervisor Computer	\$1,000.00
• Workman's Comp for Ambulance	\$ 4,800.00
• Computers for Tax/Bookkeeping Office, Servers	\$10,000.00
• Office Furniture Clerk's/Bookkeepers Office	\$ 5,000.00
• Total Assigned	\$186,027.18
• Total Funds Available	\$186,418.00
• Difference	\$391.00

**Motion by** Councilman Migliorino to advertise for sealed bids for Crushed Ledge Stone and Processed Gravel. Sealed bids will be accepted at the Town Highway Shop, 719 State Route 55, Eldred, NY or by mail to the Town of Highland Highway, PO Box 66, Eldred, NY 12732 until 11:00 am on April 8m, 2024, seconded by Councilman Akt, discussion, motion carried.

**Motion by** Councilman Akt to authorize the Town Clerk to attend the NYSTCA Conference in Albany, NY on April 21-24, seconded by Councilperson Burrell, discussion, motion carried.

**Motion by** Councilperson Burrell to authorize the usage of the ARPA funds in the amount of \$186,027.18, seconded by Councilman Migliorino, discussion, motion carried.

**Motion by** Councilperson Burrell to approve Stephenie Helm for three days a week as the Code Clerk and Mallory Greenfield for the Planning/Zoning Clerk at the same rate as the previous clerk, seconded by Councilman Migliorino, discussion, motion carried.

**Motion by** Councilperson Burrell to authorize the Town Supervisor to sign the Sullivan 180 Beautification Grant application in the amount of \$5000.00 with input from the committee, seconded by Councilwoman Haas, discussion, motion carried.

**Motion by** Councilman Migliorino to approve the budgetary transfer made to the 2023 general budget in the amount of \$4,236.93 as amended, seconded by Councilwoman Burrell, motion carried.

**Motion by** Councilman Migliorino to pay the Highway Abstract # 2-2024 in the amount of \$25,998.57 for claims #16 to 30, seconded by Councilperson Burrell, discussion, motion carried.

**Motion by** Councilman Migliorino to pay General Abstract # 2-2024 claims #43-72 in the amount of \$24,196.17, seconded by Councilperson Burrell, discussion, motion carried.

**Motion by** Councilperson Burrell to pay Eldred Street Lights claims # 2-2024 in the amount of \$140.35, seconded by Councilman Migliorino discussion, motion carried.

**Motion by** Councilwoman Burrell to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Migliorino discussion motion carried all ayes.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Hoffman Town Highland Town Clerk  
March 12, 2024

DRAFT