**County of St. Lawrence, State of New York, 94 Main St., Colton, NY 13625**

Present: Ronald Robert, Town Supervisor Councilpersons: Lisa Fisher

Kevin Hawley, Highway Supt. Jacob Poste - Absent

Darren Richards, Code/Safety/DPW Supt. Stephen Knight

Jennifer Cole, Town Clerk Kevin Beary

Meeting Attendees: Nancy Robert, Matt Planty, James Wright, Brent Cole, Matt LaRock, Rick Perkins, Mike Schwartfigure, Andrew Cochran, Grace Hawley, Justin Johnson, Jay Martin, Ed Fuhr, Aaron Johnson, Holly Sharlow, Jacqueline Johnson, Chad Dennis, Jeff Tubolino, Kirke Perry, Shelley Rayner, Andrea Malik, Kerry Cochran, Eric Gustafson

Zoom Attendees: Dennis Eickhoff, Peggy Shea, Mary Jane Watson, Judy Fuhr, Cynthia Hennessy

Supervisor Ronald Robert opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6pm, as scheduled.

Motion #1

**Adopt the Meeting Agenda**

Ms. Fisher made the motion to adopt the agenda for this meeting, seconded by Mr. Knight.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

Motion #2

**Approve February Regular Town Board Meeting Minutes and March 6 Special Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Fisher made the motion to approve the minutes for the February regular town board meeting and the March 6, 2024, special meeting, seconded by Mr. Knight.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

Motion #3

**Authorize Bank Recon, Transfers, & Bills in Warrant #3, 2024**

Motion made by Mr. Knight, seconded by Mr. Beary to authorize payment of bills labeled Warrant #3, complete a budget amendment, and a transfer as indicated below.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

General Fund ……………………………………………………………………………$145,512.22

Highway Fund …………………………………………………………………………… 117,163.35

Library Fund …………………………………………………………………………… 3,313.09

Colton Light ……………………………………………………………………………… 1,745.25

Sewer Fund #1 …………………………………………………………………………… 5,901.10

Water Fund #1 …………………………………………………………………………… 67,209.86

Outside Fire Protection…………………………………………………………………….. 37,500.00

TRANSFERS:

**Courtesy of the Floor:**

Ed Fuhr spoke to the board members stating he is hoping progress is being made on the union contract negotiations. Mr. Fuhr reminded the board that they have a great team of workers, and they should be taken care of.

**County Legislators Report:** Rick Perkins

We had 34 resolutions.

We had 9 modifications to the budget.

We had 13 Agreements/ Contracts to be signed.

We had a resolution authorizing the filling of 13 vacancies positions.

We had a resolution proclaiming March 1st, 2024, as “FIVE HOUR FREE (FROM SOCIAL MEDIA) FRIDAY” in St Lawrence County.

We had a resolution reappointing the Medical Consultant and Nurse Practitioner for the Public Health Dept.

We had a resolution urging Governor Hochul to double the amount of funding for critically needed aging services for the 2024-2025 NYS budget so that older adults may age safely in place.

We had a resolution setting a date for a Public Hearing on proposed local law B (no.) for the year 2024, “rescinding all previous Ethics Laws and Amendments and adopting the St Lawrence County Ethics Law”.

We had a resolution adopting local law A (no.) for the year 2024 rescinding local law no. 7 for the year 1994“Banning Dangerous Weapons in County owned buildings &amp; vehicles”.

We had a resolution calling on the United States Congress to pass the Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act

(H.R.6929/S.3565).

We had a resolution offering retiree health insurance coverage for employees in unrepresented titles.

We had a resolution establishing a Health insurance premium payment policy for St Lawrence County retirees and eligible

Employees.

We had a resolution authorizing pay adjustments for the Medical Director and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) physician for the St Lawrence County Correctional facility.

We had a resolution, Proclamation, recognizing the 100th Birthday of Mrs. Elanor Randall Cunningham.

We had a resolution urging Governor Hochul and NYS Legislature to restore and increase CHIPS Highway funding.

We had a resolution authorizing the purchase of an Airboat for St Lawrence County and modifying the 2024 budget for the County Administrators office.

**Engineer Report:** Jeff Tubolino

Transfer Station

Since the last Town Board meeting the following items have been worked on.

1. Interior and exterior door hardware is complete.

2. Interior and exterior electrical wiring, receptacles, and switches are 95% complete.

3. Exterior lighting is complete.

Major items that still need to be completed under contract include:

1. Operator building general, electrical, and HVAC work.

2. Office HVAC and Plumbing work.

3. Signage at entrances.

4. Site restoration.

There are some items for discussion on the attached updated Project Budget.

Mr. Tubolino explained that on the original plans for the transfer station upgrades there was an interior door. It somehow was deleted from the project and a window was put in its place. CEO D. Richards strongly recommends changing the internal window to a door for practical reasons.

Motion #4

Mr. Knight made the motion to approve the quote from Whitton Construction LLC for the demo of the existing window and replace it with an industrial inner door, in the amount of $7,007.50, seconded by Mr. Beary.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

Councilman Kevin Beary asked Mr. Tubolino about the special inspection cost of $10,000.00 from Atlantic Testing Labs. Mr. Tubolino explained that ATL gave a worst-case scenario on the testing and that the testing came in under the amount quoted. Mr. Beary asked for a cost breakdown of the stone veneer base siding and why wasn’t metal used as it’s more cost-effective? CEO D. Richards explained that the veneer will hold up better than metal over time.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements

We received NYSDEC approval on 3/11/2024. We have been coordinating contract insurance requirements with the Town’s agent. The project will be advertised for bidding in the North Country News on March 22, 2024. The bid opening will be at 10 am on April 15, 2024.

Water Treatment Plant

Instrumentation Improvements: Waiting on pricing for the well pump controller with alarm notification capabilities, flow paced chlorine feed system, flow meter, and online chlorine residual analyzer.

Pedestrian Improvements

No updates.

**Dog Warden Report:** Mike Gilbo

Nothing currently.

**Bookkeeper/Assessor Report:** Shelley Rayner

Bookkeeper

* The new AFR, which replaced the AUD, was completed, and submitted on time before February 29, 2024. I will be supplying Jenn with a copy to be put on the town’s website.
* PERMA workman’s comp conference this year is scheduled for May 9th & 10th. The conference and meals are all paid for by PERMA.

Motion #5

Mr. Knight made the motion, seconded by Ms. Fisher, to approve Ms. Rayner to attend the upcoming PERMA conference scheduled for May 9th & 10th.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

Assessment

* Taxable status date is 03/01/2024, no changes after that date for 2024.
* I’m following up on all building permits, including new homes in 2024.
* L.O.A. (level of assessment) – Assessments compared to sales was at 100% due to the reevaluation done previously years ago. The LOA started dropping in 2019. In 2023 it dropped to 96% and for 2025 it is predicted to drop to 87%. Colton’s has only dropped to 3% currently. Not as much as other towns in the surrounding area. The state will eventually start calling it our equalization rate. The town board can decide if a reevaluation is necessary for Colton.

**BTI Report:** Andrea Malik

* Stream treatments began March 5, 2024. This is the earliest start date in the history of the program.
* The new crew, Mike and Alexis, are doing a great job. They are both very fast learners and very enthusiastic.
* Anna, my experienced crew member returned, initially part-time as she exits another job then will be full-time. She is actively seeking full-time employment with benefits. But it is good to have her back for as long as she is available.
* I just received the mosquito permit from DEC. I anticipate starting that program in early April, after we get the first round of streams treated.
* I’ve used the E-Bike a few times and love it! When I can use it, it saves a lot of time.
* The hourly rate for first year crew members was approved at $20/ hour. The rate for experienced crew has not been adjusted. As it stands now, a first-year crew member makes more than a 2nd-5th year crew member.

Current pay rate for BTI crew:

1st year 2nd year 3rd year 4th year 5th year 6th year 7th

($15.50) $16.75 $17.75 $18.75 $19.75 $20.75 + %

$20.00

PROPOSED PAY RATE

$22.00 $23.00 +%

Andrea is concerned with employee morale in her department. As the pay scale is set now, a returning employee would be making less than a new inexperienced employee, people may not come back to work due to this.

* Also, in case we are short-staffed I would like to be able to hire a non-certified crew member at $18/ hour, to help monitor and assess streams. They would need training but do not need to be certified to do this. This is something we have done a few times in the past. It may not be necessary, but I would like to have this option.

Motion #6

Mr. Knight made the motion, seconded by Ms. Fisher, to approve BTI Supervisor A. Malik to hire a non-certified crew member at $18.00 per hour if necessary to help her with her program.

Ayes 3

Noes 1 Beary

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

Councilman Beary then stated that the board should take care of all salaries now. The increase in salaries hasn’t been taken care of this year due to the union contract that has yet to be finalized, meaning all employees are affected by the longer wait and additional meetings. Councilman Beary stated that it is not proper or efficient to piecemeal the increases and strongly suggests the Board resolve the salary issue as soon as possible. Due to the Judge’s approximate 30% raise in salary this year, adjusted to be comparable to other Justice salaries in the area, and the ethics of office due to such, additional heated conversations took place between Councilman Beary and Supervisor Robert. Councilwoman Fisher intervened by asking both Councilmen to “please calm down” and comments from the audience stated discomfort and a hostile environment due to the actions of the two Board members. This comment was met with additional hostility from the audience to “leave or shut up”, at that time County Legislator Perkins stated that the meeting had become hostile and uncomfortable for everyone, and that the behavior was unnecessary.

**Code Enforcement/DPW Report:** Darren Richards

Transfer Station

Currently we only have one change order for the transfer station that is significant. There is a window in between rooms in the main transfer station building which was intended to be a door. It was switched somehow between the renderings and when the structural engineers designed the building. It wasn’t caught until the non-bearing wall was erected. We all had the opportunity to catch this oversight. Nonetheless, for smooth operational work to occur at the transfer, it should really be a doorway access to that room. I recommend that a change order gets approved. Our next two significant installations at the transfer will be the compactors and the paving.

Water/Sewer

The wastewater upgrades are going out to bid this Friday. Hopefully the numbers will be within budget. We are currently working on the variable speed drives at the well site. Hoping to have CEC pay for this energy saving endeavor through a grant. The project could be as high as 17,000 and the grant could cover 10,000. More to come as this develops.

Building and Grounds

The Town Clerk, her Deputy, Karen Bage and I worked on a archive grant for a shared service endeavor with Pierrepont with total of 142,000 to digitize our records so we can be transparent and efficient on our records keeping. Rink has been converted for lacrosse and softball so the school teams can practice and be competitive within section 10. Good job to the crew to switch over the rink so fast. Clarkson is committing to building the bridge on the Morgan Road property. We began moving some stones and preparing for the cribbing of the bridge. Our goal is to stay completely out of the seasonal stream, but a silt fence will still be installed as a cautionary step.

Mr. Richards provided a quote from Penn Power Systems for generator upgrades and maintenance in the amount of $3,962.71. Requesting permission from the board to move forward with this quote.

Motion #7

Mr. Beary made the motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to accept the quote from Penn Power Systems in the amount of $3,962.71, for generator upgrades and maintenance.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent – 1 Poste

Motion carried

Mr. Richards also provided the board members with a copy of the Town of Colton Climate Action Plan for Government Operations. The purpose of this plan is to address climate protection, establish energy savings, and align overall goals with NYS’s Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act which requires a reduction in GHG emissions of 40% by 2030. Counselman Beary had concerns with this plan and its adoption. He feels it is unrealistic, expensive, and not practical, sighting page 2 of the plan – “reduction in emissions and reduce reliance on fossil fuels”. Mr. Richards explained that nothing is forced in the Climate Action plan. The conclusion of the plan for TOC states that we have a goal of 20% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030, not 40% as sought by NYS.

Motion #8

Mr. Knight made the motion, seconded by Ms. Fisher, to adopt the Town of Colton Climate Action Plan for Government Operations.

Ayes 3

Noes 1 Beary

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

Safety

The cameras are being installed from March 20th to March 22nd at the transfer station and rink. These upgrades are instrumental in safety and security. PERMA had a facilities safety inspection tour, and it went very well. Kudos to the highway and DPW crews to prepare all the buildings cleanliness-wise. Multiple conferences this spring for water, wastewater, MSHA, Dig safe, and Codes classes all pertain to safety enhancements. The pedestrian sidewalk and safety meetings are in the middle of their survey as well.

Code Enforcement Office

Returning from Codes Class, I am completely certified for another year. We have had seven permits to date with 5 more permits this week coming. It’s starting to get busy for another building season.

**Highway Report:** Kevin Hawley

* We have had a break on snow and ice since the last meeting. The crew has been out patching, cutting brush and picking roadside litter.
* The 2 pickups I found on Auctions International are in near perfect condition. The crew is happy with them.
* We have not had much of a chance to use the Ventrac sidewalk plow but the few times it has been used it performed well
* I expect to have my chips letter by mid-April, so I hope to have my summer road work plan finalized including our agreement to spend highway funds for the April meeting.
* I had one bill over my spending limit, United Forestry, in the amount of $4,332.42. I would like the board’s permission for approval of this bill.

Motion #9

Mr. Knight made the motion to approve the United Forestry bill in the amount of $4,332.42, seconded by Ms. Fisher.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

**Library Report:** Dennis Eickhoff

Nothing at this time.

**Planning Board Report:** Kirke Perry

The planning Board met on Tuesday, 03/19/2024. We had one Conditional Use application. CUP-02-2024 for David Hurlbut, for property on Arbuckle Lane, Colton, for an event space. The permit was denied because it was not an allowed use for that zoning district. His next move is to go to the ZBA.

We also had a request from the ZBA for our opinion on an area variance for Lee Akin at 395 Arbuckle Pond Rd. We did not have any objections to the variance.

The plan to hand out flyers to residents at the transfer station for our walk ability survey did not pan out. We are going to try again this Saturday. We have had 164 responses as of the 11th. A modified survey has now been released to the students at the school, so we should get more responses from that.

Our next meeting is April 16th.

**Town Clerk Report:** Jennifer Cole

* Archive Grant – “Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund”
  + Submitted application March 11, in accordance with the deadline.
  + Currently, Brittney and I have attended approximately seven training sessions in preparation for this grant and improving record management systems going forward.
  + If approved, we’ll seek additional training resources to ensure execution of the LGRMIF grant is aligned with all grant guidelines and procedures.
* Clerk’s Office
  + Town Audits took place and were successfully completed for all departments in February. Brittney and I have been working on hiring an accounting firm for the town clerk checkbook for research on prior years. Currently waiting for the accounting firm for final communications and contract.
  + The DEC is implementing a paper licensing system that will take affect August of this year, tags will also be able to be emailed instead. Tags will be printed on plain, letter size paper.
* Tax Collector Update
  + Processed approximately 1,686 payments for approximately $4.1M.
  + Second notices will be sent out at the end of April, if the Town is to establish a fee for these notices, we need to notify SLC by March 21. Fee options are $0, $1, or $2 – I recommend $0 and ask the Board for a motion of approval.

Motion #10

Mr. Beary made the motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to send out second land tax notices at no extra fee.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

* FOIL Officer Update
  + Since 02.21.2024, 1 request has been submitted. Of requests received year to date, 1 is currently open.
* Solar Eclipse 04.08.2024
  + Safety Precautions: Port-a-potties – have been ordered. Garbage cans – DPW is taking care of. Public awareness? Water? First aid – stations – fire department?
  + The Town website has been updated with a message to residents notifying them of the event, posts will be made on the Facebook page closer to the event.
* June-teenth…. Our town board meeting is scheduled for that day. Do we need to adjust the board meeting for June? Board members agreed to continue with the current schedule for the June 2024 town board meeting.
* NYS Town Clerk Conference is scheduled for April 21st-24th in Albany. Some of the classes being offered this year are: Special elections, Cyber threat resilience, NYS Retirement, Clerk minutes, NYS DEC, NYS DOS, Cemeteries, Clerk basics, Cyber security, FOIL, NYS Assessor Assoc., Harassment training, NYS Archives, Resolutions/Motions/Local Laws, Reporting to the NYS Comptroller. I would like the board’s permission to attend this educational conference.

Motion #11

Ms. Fisher made the motion, seconded by Mr. Knight, to approve Mrs. Cole attending the 2024 NYSTCA conference, April 21-24, 2024, in Albany.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

**Correspondence:**

None.

**Unfinished Business:**

* Union contract – meeting on March 21st at 9am. Councilman Beary suggested town board members take no salary increase.
* Sidewalk project – currently one bid from Mark Fisher; hoping to get more bids soon. Supervisor Robert would like to start this project in April.
* Independent Auditors – Councilman Beary suggests hiring an independent auditor for TOC. Councilman Knight is in full support of this. Mrs. Rayner spoke up and suggested the board wait for budget time to add a line for auditing. Board members would like to get quotes. Town Clerk J. Cole to email the AOT for guidance.

**New Business:**

* Flagpole out front of town hall. Supervisor Robert would like the flagpole moved to the opposite side of the town hall’s front lawn. Currently the flag is getting tangled on the large pine tree next to the town hall. Subject tabled for next meeting.
* Town Clerk office hours. Supervisor Robert stated that he has gotten several complaints from residents about the town clerk’s office being closed on Friday. Town Clerk J. Cole stated that she has attempted to be open on Fridays several times in the past with barely any traffic. Tax season is the busiest season for the clerk’s office. It was attempted in January through March of 2022 and again January through February of 2024.
* Keyboard Specialist for the Supervisor rate of pay and hours. Supervisor Robert suggested $19.00 per hour, eight hours per week, to be paid out of A1220.13, effective March 6th, 2024.

Motion #12

Mr. Knight made the motion to hire Laura Richards as the keyboard specialist for the supervisor at $19.00 per hour, maximum of eight hours per week, out of line A1220.13, effective March 6th, 2024; seconded by Ms. Fisher. Councilman Beary requested that his statement be on the record that the keyboard specialist for the supervisor is not needed and is a waste of taxpayers’ dollars.

Ayes 3

Noes 1 Beary

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

**Announcements:**

None

Motion #13

Mr. Knight made the motion to move the meeting to executive session at 7:29pm, seconded by Ms. Fisher.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

Motion #14

Mr. Knight made the motion, seconded by Ms. Fisher, to move from executive session back to the regular meeting at 7:51pm.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

\*\*\*\*\*No results of executive session\*\*\*\*\*

**Adjournment:**

Motion #15

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Knight made the motion to close the regular monthly meeting at 7:52pm, seconded by Ms. Fisher.

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Absent 1 Poste

Motion carried

Meeting minutes get approved at the following/next month’s town board meeting.

Meeting minutes by Colton Town Clerk Jennifer Cole.