

**State of New York
Albany County**

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

Deputy Supervisor Clayton led the pledge of allegiance and called the meeting to order at 7:03PM with the following roll call attendance: Councilmembers Doolin, Thiem and Vane were present also Town Clerk De Oliveira and Highway Superintendent.

Deputy Supervisor Clayton apologized for postponing the meeting and she also asked everyone to take a moment of silence for all the sadness and fighting in world as well as all of the families that are unable to be together.

ACCEPT MEETING MINUTES

Deputy Supervisor Clayton made a motion seconded by Councilmember Doolin to accept the meeting minutes from November 9, 2023, Deputy Supervisor Clayton & Councilmembers Doolin, Thiem and Vane all voting aye.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Deputy Supervisor Clayton wanted to discuss the recent letter to the editor in the Altamont Enterprise accusing her of destroying Town records which she assured residents is not true. She discussed the records retention schedule, and that correspondence only needs to be kept for one year.

Also, regarding the Tax Rate for 2024 The Town Board did publish a letter explaining the tax bills and history of the tax rates over the last 15 years, this will also be mailed out with the tax bills.

Town Hall had a recent closing due to a furnace replacement as well as additional issues being discovered upon repair including asbestos in the building. A new furnace has been installed, however there will be additional work that must be completed for abatement which will result in a second temporary closing. Deputy Supervisor Clayton wanted to thank John Dewey for his timely replacement and finding a furnace for the Town in a day and a half.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

Sean Lyons wanted to thank Anita Clayton for her years of service to the Town and reminisced on their first day working together when he was Town Supervisor in 2018. He thanked her for her passion and commitment to the Town and for her many years of public service.

HOMETOWN HERO PRESENTATION

Jennifer Lyons of the Celebration Committee presented plaques for the two new honorees for the year 2023 Douglas Anderson and Carl Warner. Plaques with photos of the Veterans and a short biography have been made up for the families as a keepsake. Reminder the time frame for banners for 2024 applications are accepted January 1- March 1, 2024.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Highway- Superintendent Bashwinger discussed that the town received the CHIPS money this week to reimburse for the paving that was completed. Edward Hampton a long-time employee of the Town has returned part time after retirement as a diesel mechanic, the Town is able to save a lot of money using our own employees for maintenance and smaller jobs.

Transfer Station- A new light has been installed by the large dumpster off Route 443, there have been a lot more electronics being disposed of. Superintendent Bashwinger wanted to mention again the idea of new tags/stickers to show residency. The current rate per ton at the Albany Landfill is \$72.

Library- Director Kathy Stempel pointed out that the library is starting to host open mic night. She stated the leftover construction grant money needs to be used and was interested in purchasing the UV water filtration system as well as possibly installing ADA compliant doors. Kathy wanted to thank Anita for their many wonderful years working together, and mentioned the good old days when the library was located at Town Hall.

Zoning Board of Appeals- Chairman Thomas Spargo told of the most upcoming meeting pertaining to the Hilltown Healthcare sign variance as well a large solar project on Canaday & Switzkill Road that is in the works. The project could provide the Town will expansive opportunities as well as benefit the power grid.

Planning Board- The Planning Board held a second monthly meeting on November 30, 2023, working to clear the docket for the end of the year. Chair Joesph Martin thanked the Town Board for the opportunity to serve the Town for the last five years as Chairman.

Parks and Recreation Board- Chair Mary Claire Ansbro stated that the park has been cleared and tables have been stored for the winter. She is looking forward to another great year and looking forward to also updating the Town Park usage forms with more specific details as well as setting dates for 2024 events.

OLD BUISNESS

Switzkill Farm Update

Deputy Supervisor Clayton stated that The Times Union recently published an article about the purchase of Switzkill Farm which came as big surprised to the Town of Berne. The Town legally cannot sell the property undervalued and the \$150,000 that was originally offered by the County was going to establish a partnership by returning the money originally invested by the Town. Unfortunately, the way the property was purchased and its current state the Town does not have the means to bring up to code- there is no septic, running water, multiple code violations, no way for firetrucks to reach the lodge or safely turn around. A local law or referendum would need to be passed; an auction is not possible as it would require legislation to avoid “park abandonment”. Deputy Supervisor Clayton urges residents to please voice their opinions on what to do with this property as there is no easy solution.

New Business

Discuss/ Approve New Furnace at Town Hall

Deputy Supervisor Clayton made a motion seconded by Councilmember Vane to authorize payment to John Dewey in an amount not to exceed \$6771.50, Deputy Supervisor Clayton and Councilmembers Doolin, Vane and Thiem all voting aye.

Discuss/Approve Payment to Cobleskill Stone for Gifford Hollow Road

Deputy Supervisor Clayton made a motion seconded by Councilmember Vane to make a payment to Cobleskill Stone which will be submitted to CHIPS for reimbursement in an amount no to exceed \$2223.53, Deputy Supervisor Clayton and Councilmembers Doolin, Vane and Thiem all voting aye.

Discuss/Approve Reimbursement to Helderberg Ambulance from Reserve

In 2022 The Town Board Established reserve funds one of which was established for Helderberg Ambulance, recently two bills were submitted including the purchase of stethoscopes and equipment for connectivity in the Ambulances to communicate with hospitals even in areas with no cell service. Deputy Supervisor Clayton made a motion to send payment to Helderberg Ambulance in an amount not to exceed \$16,126.32, Deputy Supervisor Clayton and Councilmembers Doolin, Vane and Thiem all voting aye.

Set Date for 2024 Organizational Meeting

Deputy Supervisor Clayton made a motion seconded by Councilmember Thiem to set the Town of Berne Organizational Meeting on Wednesday January 3, 2023 at 6:30 PM at 1360 Helderberg Trail with the regular monthly Town Board meeting to follow, Deputy Supervisor Clayton and Councilmembers Doolin, Vane and Thiem all voting aye.

Approve Full Time Hire for Highway Employee

Deputy Supervisor Clayton made a motion to approve the hire of Patrick Hannan as a full-time highway equipment operator, permanent, UNION operating engineer, civil service exempt at rate of \$24.51 per hour, Deputy Supervisor and Councilmembers Doolin, Vane and Thiem all voting aye.

Discuss/Approve Bills for Ambient Environmental for Air Quality and Abatement

During the furnace replacement at Town Hall Ambient Environmental was called in for air quality testing to ensure the safety of both Town Residents and employees. Deputy Supervisor Clayton made a motion seconded by Councilmember Thiem to pay the invoice in an amount not to exceed \$3605.00, Deputy Supervisor and Councilmembers Doolin, Vane and Thiem all voting aye.

Also, during the work being completed it was discovered that a asbestos was present in the basement of the Town Hall. Deputy Supervisor Clayton made a motion seconded by Councilmember Doolin to contingently pay up to \$30,000.00 as the Town is waiting for the proposals so when it is possible, we can move forward as quickly as possible, Deputy Supervisor and Councilmembers Doolin, Vane and Thiem all voting aye.

DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS

Deputy Supervisor Clayton made a motion to accept the Town Clerk's Financial Report from November 2023 seconded by Councilmember Vane, motion carried with the following roll call vote: Deputy Supervisor and Councilmembers Doolin, Vane and Thiem all voting aye.

Deputy Supervisor Clayton made a motion to accept the Building and Zoning's Financial Report from November 2023 seconded by Councilmember Thiem, motion carried with the following roll call vote: Deputy Supervisor and Councilmembers Doolin, Vane and Thiem all voting aye.

Deputy Supervisor Clayton made a motion to accept the Supervisor's Financial Reports from November 2023 seconded by Councilmember Vane including:

Board Packets

- Packet A – Abstracts

Abstract # 45 2023 \$15,840.71 (Vouchers 1165-1170) Regular Abstract 11/08/2023

Abstract # 46 2023 \$19,779.89 (Vouchers 1171-1194) Prepaid Utilities

Abstract #47 2023 \$47,021.35 (Vouchers 1195-1298) Regular Abstract 12/13/2023

Total Abstracts \$82,641.95

- Packet B – Budget transfers from 11/8, 11/30 & 12/19
- Packet C – Bank reconciliations
- Packet D – Cash balance report
- Payment of Bills

Motion carried with the following role call vote: Deputy Supervisor Clayton and Councilmembers Doolin, Vane and Thiem all voting aye.

Public Comment Non-Agenda Items

Lynn Warner Kerr asked about the possibility of putting together a community calendar including events from BKW Schools, Town of Berne Events and local Churches.

Councilmember Vane discussed the current set up of the Town of Berne having two separate boards- Celebration Committee as well as the Parks and Recreation Board. He mentioned the idea of combining the two boards and calling it “Parks and Celebrations.”

Michael Vincent had a question on the Sewer Plant with all the rain the last few weeks if there had been answers, none had been reported. He also wanted to thank Anita Clayton for all her hard work over the years and commending her great knowledge of so many parts of the Town.

Closing Words from Deputy Supervisor Clayton

Deputy Supervisor Clayton stated she has been working for the Town for 25 years, she attended hundreds of meetings for all different boards- Zoning, Planning, Town Board minute taking was her least favorite, but she did very much of it over the years.

She spent eight years as Town Clerk, and two years as Town Board member and Deputy Supervisor and was so happy she was able to meet and help so many wonderful residents. Anita Clayton stated that this was always more of a job to her, and it was an opportunity to serve her community. She also greatly enjoyed getting to know residents’ pets through dog licensing. She mentioned the hardships of having to issue death certificates to those she knew and loved.

December 19, 2023

Deputy Supervisor Clayton thanked Sean Lyons for the difficult 4 years they worked together, Dennis Palow for his friendship, Andrea Borst for 20 years working together keeping each other sane and watching our children grow up.

Deputy Supervisor Clayton thanked Kristin De Oliveira for walking into the Town Clerk position with no experience and doing a wonderful job. She thanked Randy Bashwinger and complimented all the progress and improvements he has made in the highway department. A big thank you to Jason Preisner for his dedication to the Town and always having the best interest for us.

Deputy Supervisor Clayton wanted to thank Brendan Hogan our IT technician for always being so helpful over the years, Cathy Shultes for her friendship and years as colleagues and helping her to find enlightenment and Mary Claire Ansboro for her friendship that is so dear. Deputy Supervisor Clayton also thanked the Town Board for tolerating her stubbornness and yelling, also thanked the residents and the community. Deputy Supervisor Clayton stated her only regret through all her years is that the word “politics” always gets in the middle and urged everyone to be the change and stop the fighting.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Deputy Supervisor Clayton wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and made a motion seconded by Councilmember Thiem to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried with the following roll call vote: Deputy Supervisor Clayton and Councilmembers Doolin, Thiem and Vane all voting aye. The meeting adjourned at **8:34 PM**.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristin De Oliveira, Town Clerk