

July 20, 2016

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING OF THE TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF THURMAN HELD JULY 20, 2016 AT THE TOWN HALL, 311 ATHOL ROAD, ATHOL, NEW YORK, COMMENCING AT 7:00 P.M...

PRESENT: Mrs. Evelyn Wood, Supervisor
Mrs. Gail Seaman, Councilwoman
Mr. John Youngblood, Councilman
Mrs. Susan Shepler, Councilwoman
Mr. Michael Eddy, Councilman

RECORDING SECRETARY: Jeanie Sprague, Town Clerk

OTHERS PRESENT: Thomas Birdsall, Assessor; Susan Baker, Assessor

The Meeting was called to order by **Evelyn Wood, Supervisor**

PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

ROLL CALL

The purpose of the meeting tonight is to hold two Public Hearings. The first on “Proposed Local Law # 1 to Replace Elected Assessors with a Sole Appointed Assessor” and the second on “Proposed Local Law #2 the Tax Levy Limit Override for Fiscal Year 2017”.

Supervisor Wood wanted to bring up that we had received two letters for the Public Hearing and asked the board if they would like them read or just to say if the letter is for or against the local law(s).

The board discussed it briefly.

Supervisor Wood stated the consensus is to adhere to the policy we have in place regarding correspondences. We will begin with the first proposed local law.

READING OF THE NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED LOCAL LAW #1

TOWN OF THURMAN NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING PROPOSED LOCAL LAW TO CHANGE TO A SINGLE APPOINTED ASSESSOR

NOTICE is hereby given that the Thurman Town Board of the Town of Thurman will conduct a public hearing on proposed Local Law #1 of 2016, “A Local Law to Replace Elected Assessors with a Sole Appointed Assessor”, on Wednesday July 20, 2016 at 7:00 pm at the Town Hall, 311 Athol Road, Athol, New York. At that time, all interested parties will be given the opportunity to be heard.

July 20, 2016

By the order of the Thurman Town Board

Jeanie Sprague, Town Clerk

Town of Thurman

July 13, 2016

Published July 14, 2016

Supervisor Wood wanted to remind everyone that they can speak one time on each local law for three minutes, to direct the comments to the board and please state your name to make it easier for those that are keeping track.

The following people spoke on the First Proposed Local Law:

FOR: Mr. and Mrs. Russell Hubert (letter); Ruth Keller; Rose Slemp; Bill Keller; Marilyn Hoy-Youngblood; and Steve Wood

AGAINST: Sally Wallace (letter); Richard Kline; Kathy Templeton; Jean Coulard; Keith Parent; Lorrone Dibble; Barbara Farrell; Joyce Eddy; Mary Eddy; Cynthia Hyde; Jim Mosher; and Michael Eddy

SPOKE: Gary Martin; Winefred Martin

Public Hearing on Proposed Local Law #1 “A Local Law to Replace Elected Assessors with a Sole Appointed Assessor”, was closed at 7:30 p.m.

READING OF THE NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED LOCAL LAW #2

TOWN OF THURMAN NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING PROPOSED LOCAL LAW TO OVERRIDE TAX LEVY LIMIT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017

NOTICE is hereby given that the Thurman Town Board of the Town of Thurman will conduct a public hearing on proposed Local Law #2 of 2016, “Tax Levy Limit Override for Fiscal Year 2017”, on Wednesday July 20, 2016 at 7:00 pm at the Town Hall, 311 Athol Road, Athol, New York. At that time, all interested parties will be given the opportunity to be heard.

By the order of the Thurman Town Board

Jeanie Sprague, Town Clerk

Town of Thurman

July 13, 2016

Published July 14, 2016

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The following people spoke on the Second Proposed Local Law:

FOR: Winefred Martin; Rose Slempe; Gary Martin; and Marilyn Hoy-Youngblood

AGAINST: Sally Wallace (letter); Richard Kline; Bill Keller; Barbara Farrell; Mary Eddy; Joyce Eddy; Tom Beadnell; Keith Parent; Kathy Templeton; and Ruth Keller

SPOKE: Matthew Seaman

Supervisor Wood called the Sheriff at 7:38 p.m.

Supervisor Wood called a recess at 7:38 p.m.

Supervisor Wood called the meeting back to order at 8:25 p.m.

Warren County Sheriff K.W. Smith made an announcement. "I just want to make an announcement. I'm here just as a presence folks. It is at the request of Supervisor Wood that people remain calm and speak one at a time, all right, and I will be at the back."

Public Hearing on Proposed Local Law #2 "Tax Levy Limit Override for Fiscal Year 2017" was closed at 8:36 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: On a motion by Councilwoman Shepler, seconded by Councilwoman Seaman the meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 Ayes ~Youngblood, Wood, Seaman, Shepler

Respectfully Submitted:

Jeanie M. Sprague, Town Clerk

August 1, 2016

July 14, 2016

Sherman Town Board

We are unable to attend the Public Hearing.

We are in favor of changing the local law to allow for a single appointed assessor for the town of Sherman.

Mr. & Mrs. Russell Hubert
54 Lakes Road
Sherman

To: Thurman Town Board

Open Hearing 7/20 Sole Assessors & Tax Cap Resolutions

My parents bought our Thurman property in 1954 when I was 10 years old and chose to retire here seasonally in 1976. My husband and I chose to retire here year round in 2009. Both generations of our family have paid whatever taxes were asked of us and to do our best to participate in and contribute to our town.

We know that we are “newbies” and “flatlanders” to those who have lived here for generations and who have struggled to survive in this beautiful and challenging land. We are reminded that there is, and has always been a carefully protected and nurtured culture of, what newer residents refer to as, “The Old Boys Club.” **Property assessment and taxation stand out as just one of the most glaring reflections of which club you are in - Old Boys or Flatlanders.**

For my home, the assessors like to hike the property with camera and measuring tape, looking for improvements which might be taxable. For us, they assess a crumbling foundation of an uninhabitable cabin for it's “**potential**” value to a **hypothetical someone else** in the **distant future**. Confused?? Come On !! In the interest of disclosure today, they have carefully point out that my father built a 10 x 14, zero amenities, 1750 replica log cabin without a building permit 35 years ago. We have always paid the taxes on it. And, I do understand that property rights is a hot button issue.

For others in Thurman, a pig or a few chickens in the back yard qualifies as a “farm” code and reduces the tax rate. Some pay **zero** taxes for the past several years on a two story house built around 2013 for which they are assessed as a “**vacant lot**”. Apparently the building is an **illusion** to our assessors. And, other Club members enjoy the benefit of additions, garages, dormers, trailers etc without showing up on their assessments as available to the public.

In addition to the social tension created by unfair assessments , there is the ongoing struggle to meet the budget needs of the town. We face ever increasing unfunded mandates imposed by King Andrew, ridiculous small tax caps, poor job growth and poor income growth, an aging population, difficulties with local infrastructure, costly climate events (Irene), yearly rising health and retirement insurances for town employees, increasing utility costs, youth who deserve more support from us, business and second home investors who want a town with internet and will pay significant taxes to be here, etc. **So, I believe it is reasonable logic to say that our assessment and tax collection is intimately tied to our budget and the question of a tax cap override.**

In Summary:

1. I want a fairly applied, standardized assessment structure and one that is publicly understandable.
2. I will pay my tax contribution **AND** I expect everyone else to pay his/her share also - be it small or large.
3. I want a sole assessor who is from outside the town, who appreciates small town rural living and who does not have connections to the town.
4. I don't expect my taxes will go down but I know that a number of tax assessments will go up and that there will be lots of appeals and screaming bloody murder.
5. **SO BE IT !!**
6. The current unfairness in tax assessments feeds the longstanding fighting in this town and makes the budget more difficult than budgets are anyway.

Respectfully submitted for the record --- Marilyn Hoy-Youngblood

Mary Eddy
P. O. Box 9
Athol, NY 12810

July 20, 2016

I am in favor of retaining the 3 elected assessors.

This issue has come before the public about 5 times. It has been rejected by the voters each time.

An appointed assessor is for a 6 year term. Even if the taxpayers don't believe the appointed assessor is doing the job fairly and efficiently the assessor can not be removed. Termination can only happen because of an illegal act.

The advantage of 3 assessors is each parcel can be discussed among the three to determine a fair assessment.

The current assessors have lived in town. They know the people and are acquainted with the real estate lands in Thurman. They know many who may be qualified for an enhanced Star exemption because of low or fixed income. The current assessors call the Star recipients at the beginning of the year to remind them when the forms need to be filed. When the due date is near the assessors call again as a reminder to those that haven't filed.

The current assessors will notify veterans that they may qualify for an exemption.

There are taxpayers in Thurman that have exemptions for forest management. When the land is lumbered the landowner is to pay the town a percentage of the logging stumpage. How easy it is for the landowner to forget that stipulation? The current assessors know when a piece of property is being lumbered and remind the owner of their agreement with the town to pay the stumpage to the town or county depending on whether it is in the Fisher Act or the Forest Act.

Before the current assessors were voted in, Town of Thurman did not receive any of these revenues from the Fisher Act or the Forest Act.

The valuation and equalization rate is at 100%. On par with Warrensburg, which is our school district taxes as well.

There is no guarantee that an appointed assessor will not miss any changes, additions or improperly assess the real estate. Appointment of an assessor does not assure competent performance.

If a person feels that there are parcels other than their own in Thurman, that are not fairly assessed, they can go to the assessors, point it out and discuss it. That is what you call working together for fairness to all.

Accusations without verification and saying "as far as I can tell" (as a Saturday assessor), is distasteful and irresponsible.

The Thurman citizens should be allowed to vote on the issue of retaining 3 elected assessors or having a sole appointed assessor. Otherwise, this administration is taking one more item away from the Thurman Citizens. Another nail in the coffin of Thurman Democracy.

Mary Eddy

Please attach to minutes

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Sales Tax Revenue Thurman received from the County

| | Adopted budget | Actual Received |
|------|----------------|-----------------|
| 2010 | \$320,000.00 | \$328,648.00 |
| 2011 | \$320,000.00 | \$358,124.00 |
| 2012 | \$320,000.00 | \$376,812.00 |
| 2013 | \$340,000.00 | \$397,295.00 |
| 2014 | \$350,000.00 | \$399,402.00 |
| 2015 | \$360,000.00 | \$392,330.00 |

Mary Eddy

Please attach to minutes

Mary Eddy
P. O. Box 9
Athol, NY 12810

July 20, 2016

I believe there is No need for the Tax Cap Override for next year 2017.

Sales Tax Revenues received from the County for the last 6 years, added together has been an additional \$242,611.00 over the anticipated revenue amount in the adopted budgets.

That is quite a nice slush fund the town has received over the expected budget revenue.

We have heard time and again, "no increase in taxes". Why raise taxes now?

Each year the county worries about not receiving a percentage of increase in sales tax but at the end of the year the sales tax seems to continue to grow.

After the NYS audit in 2008, Thurman had over \$800,000.00 of unencumbered savings.

Don't you think \$242,611.00 would be enough to pay the increases for minimum wage and health insurance that this board would have you believe is the reason to pass the 2017 Tax Cap Override?

Or could the actual reason be the \$274,000.00 the Town of Thurman has expended for the 30 or so residences for Whitespace internet? The lawyer, judge and court costs are not in the \$274,000.00. No grant reimbursement has been received. That money, at this point, is totally out of the Thurman checkbook or taxpayer pockets.

When the government **has more** - They **spend more**.

Case in Point: This year at the New York City local government annual meeting and training school the cost of the hotel rooms, for Each night, ranged from \$272.00 for a singles room to \$522.00 for the Executive Suite. The Supervisor from Thurman chose the Executive Suite, the most expensive room, for a total of \$1,566.00 for 3 nights. Plus \$44.60 room service for a cup of tea and a cup of soup.

Is that the best use of Thurman taxpayer dollars?

Or

Is this what entitlement looks like?

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To the Thurman Town Board and Tax Payers:

7/20/2016

Going from 3 assessors whom have great knowledge of the town and over 25 years of experience and classes is wrong. Going to one out of town assessor with no knowledge of the town is a bad idea, although we all know that you Ms. Wood will do what you want.

Over riding the Tax cap? We all know that you have spent over \$280,000 for White Space with not one penny of reimbursement from the grant. Robbing Peter to pay Paul catching up? You are out of money and cutting down on items like Medical insurance and our Cemeteries is wrong, while you give a raise to a recycling worker. Now with pending Law Suits over the Salt contamination you need more money for lawyers. The answer for the cut back on Assessors.

Not all of us are dumb Ms. Wood, those of us that do not bobble our heads constantly in agreement with you. Know that you are dancing around the loss of the \$280,000.

Please attach this with the minutes


Thank You,

Sally Wallace

Reasons for Keeping Three Assessors

Town of Thurman, Warren County

1. Current assessment role is the most fair and accurate that it has been in history.
2. The current 3 assessors are doing more work for a lower hourly wage than an appointed assessor would or could.
3. An appointed assessor would most likely be a part-time employee of the town and as such will require health insurance and other benefits. The current assessors receive no compensation beyond their part-time salaries.
4. These assessors have added a substantial amount of real property to the tax rolls that was not previously on the tax role. That meant that the other residents of Thurman were paying the taxes on those properties.
5. The State of New York's Board of Equalization and Assessment recently completed their assessment of 57 properties in the Town of Thurman. The Town assessors challenged the State's findings on 27 of those assessments and were successful in getting 18 changed. The savings to Town residents under the STAR Program amounts to over \$30,000 per year in school taxes.
6. The current 3 assessors are intimately familiar with the Town's properties. A new assessor will take time to learn the Town and the taxpayers will pay for this learning curve.
7. During the recent State appraisal the State assessor told our assessors that they were the best 3 person assessment team that they had ever worked with.
8. Sharing an assessor with a neighboring town from within the same school district will place Thurman at a disadvantage. There will be no incentive for a shared assessor to challenge state appraisals and any unfair burden in school taxes will not be corrected. A single assessor can not fairly represent two masters.
9. This issue has been before the voters multiple times in the past. They have rejected it each time. Bringing it up again is insulting to the voters and is a bold display of arrogance on the part of our politicians. It suggests that they know better than the voters.
10. Elected assessors are residents of the Town and have the Town's best interests at heart. An appointed assessor may or may not be a resident of Thurman.



Joyce Eddy Please attach to minutes