

**Town Board Workshop Meeting**

**July 6, 2023**

A regularly scheduled Town Board Workshop meeting was held in person at the Esopus Town Hall, 1 Town Hall Way, Ulster Park, NY. on Thursday June 6, 2023, at 7:00 PM with the following persons in attendance:

**Supervisor Danielle Freer  
Councilman Kathie Quick  
Councilman Jared Guess - Absent  
Councilman Evelyn Clarke  
Councilman Laura Robinson**

**Also in attendance Mark Jaffee, Director of Planning, Zoning and Code Enforcement,  
Roxanne Pecora, Planning Board Chair and Daren DeKoskie, Planning Board Vice Chair**

**Recording Administrator Holly A. Netter, Town Clerk, RMC**

**4 ways to give public comment:**

In person at meeting

Phone – 845 331 0676 and leave a voicemail

Email – [lreynolds@esopus.com](mailto:lreynolds@esopus.com) with subject line “Public Comment” and meeting date

Mail – Town of Esopus PO BOX 700 Port Ewen, NY 12466

**SUPERVISOR FREER OPENED THE WORKSHOP MEETING AT 7 PM AND PROCEEDED WITH THE PLEDGE TO THE FLAG.**

**SUPERVISOR FREER OPENED THE PUBLIC COMMENT.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT – none**

**SUPERVISOR FREER MADE A MOTION TO CLOSE PUBLIC COMMENT. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COUNCILMAN KATHIE QUICK AT 7:02 PM. ALL MEMBERS PRESENT WERE IN FAVOR: MOTION CARRIED.**

**Planning Board Updates and Discussion**

Supervisor Freer welcomed the Planning Chair and Vice Chair and said the Board recognizes it is a busy time and there are a lot of projects on the Planning Board table. The Board wanted to check in to see if there are any resources needed from the Town Board. Also, to make sure they are working well with the Building Department and have what they need from that

perspective too. She asked them to give an update where they are and the status of the Planner and Attorney.

Chairman Roxanne Pecora and Vice Chair Daren DeKoskie attended the meeting to give updates from the Planning Board. They confirmed they are looking for a new planner as well as a new attorney; both individuals resigned. Chairman Pecora said she was advised by council not to discuss any personnel related questions without being in executive session.

*\*\* A motion was made by Supervisor Freer to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing particular personnel work history. It was decided that the discussion would be broad in scope and would be held in public session, tabling specifics regarding the attorney and planner. The motion was tabled.*

Daren DeKoskie said they are looking for a new planner and attorney. They sought out several planners/firms and a new attorney. Chairman Pecora said we have hired a Planner and an Attorney which will be formalized at the next Planning Board meeting.

In terms of resources, there seems to be some issues with the code itself. There is a “stir” in town with some of the applications before the Board, and the signs stem from town code.

Supervisor Danielle Freer contacted Matt Rogers, the consultant who worked with the Town on drafting their Comprehensive Plan, as well as Shannon Harris and Jared Guess, who were key stakeholders in those meetings. Supervisor Freer is arranging to have Matt attend an upcoming meeting to provide a refresher presentation on the Comp Plan to the public and any Board/Committee members that are interested. Supervisor Freer is hoping this will help explain how zoning and codes fall out of a newly developed Comp Plan.

Daren Dekoskie added that he was part of the initial stakeholders of the Comp Plan, and it went from a group of 10 individuals to 20 people. He said it led to a code which residents are now unhappy with. Supervisor Freer said she hears both sides of things. The whole town had input in the plan. Daren suggested not reopening the whole code. Supervisor Freer put the rumor to rest and said the Board is not looking at reopening the code. The first step is getting realigned on what the code is so the Planning Board can use the plan as a road map when projects come to their table.

Roxanne said that’s not the issue. The problem is the code that was adopted is different or is not what people wanted or realized. She continued to say changes can be made to the code and amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, which is the recommended way to go. Then you can update your zoning code. Supervisor Freer said we can get there if we need to, but she said she is hearing two sides of the story. Some people love the Comprehensive Plan, they were part of it, they say let’s go, why haven’t we been doing it faster. The other side is we have people who have been around forever, and do not want to see any change or development. We are not unique in that sense it is seen in every single town.

Supervisor Freer said a lot of work went into that plan, let's get in a room, workshop it and if it means getting into things that are not working, that is ok.

Daren recalls that Matt was very open to suggestions, and it grew into more than what it needed to be. There are several inconsistencies that we need to look out for.

Daren said Mark Jaffee found inconsistencies and he has been asked to track them. They may not be defined well enough in the code.

Supervisor Freer said we are not unique, other towns are having issues as well. After covid, people's minds were somewhere else and we need to get back on the right track.

The Planning Department has several items in front of them from small lot line adjustments to large scale developments.

Mark Jaffee has been working on getting the Municipality Public Portal online making the information regarding all Town projects accessible to the public, enabling the public to track the progress and status of all town projects. Everyone is looking forward to getting the portal up and running.

The Planning Board has 6 pre-submissions. Mark asked the Board if they should stop taking applications to allow the Planning Board to catch up. Mark said they are getting more applications, but the Planning Board is loaded. He also gave an update that the pre-application process is being held in the office, in person and is no longer on zoom.

Roxanne said the whole agenda depends on how fast the planner can get on board. The attorney will be brought up to speed by Kyle Barnett, so that will not be an issue.

The Planning Board said they have been loaded before. Additional meetings or late meetings can be held; they have handled it in the past. That is an option, the Planning Board did it in the height of development.

Roxanne said we (Planning Board) manage the agenda so it's what the Planning Board feels they can handle, or the planner can handle. Supervisor Freer said you do understand that you should be working hand in hand with Mark on the development of the agenda. Roxanne replied yes right now it depends on the planner.

George Cuney asked for clarification. Has the Planning Board retained a new planner and attorney? Roxanne said they took an informal poll at the suggestion of the attorney, and they are officially onboard, and they will formalize the appointment at their next meeting. Cuney also asked, does that mean the July agenda is on target? Roxanne said she is unable to answer that right now.

Supervisor Freer thanked them for coming in and reminded them the Board is here to help, lets keep the lines of communication open.

**Port Ewen Fire Department Easement Discussion Mike Dauner, Clark Mains, Scott Sammons**

The Port Ewen Fire Department (PEFD) has made a formal request for an easement on town property so they can build an above ground retention pond for the new Fire House on 1 Town Hall Way. The plans that were originally presented for approval called for an under-ground storm water system. Since then, costs have risen, and they are looking to save money on the building cost by requesting an easement of approximately .27 acres of town property. The retention pond location was not clear from the documents that were submitted to the Board. However, Mike described the easement area would be where the wood guardrail ends.

The question of whether they needed the full .27 acres was asked. Mike replied it is the size they felt comfortable with. Once they know the location of the retention pond, they could probably adjust the easement at that time, but they thought it was needed.

Councilman Quick asked how close is the retention pond to Heavenly Valley? Mike said the stone wall borders the Heavenly Valley parcel buffer zone to the Four Sisters Lane. Mike described the retention pond to go between the roundabout (where the wishing well sits) and run at an angle around the roadway. When asked to clarify Mike said the easement would go right up against the guardrail. The retention pond has not been designed yet; they are waiting for the easement before designing and placement. Mike was unable to say whether the retention pond would begin at the wishing well corner or not. Mike alluded to concerns Town Clerk Netter may have in relation to events (marriage services) that take place in that area. Town Clerk Netter said she was not worried about the events space but was concerned about the future needs of the town. If the property is given for use as a retention pond, what happens if the road needs to be widened. Currently two vehicles cannot pass each other in that area. Buses have a difficult time navigating the tight area and the Sheriffs use it as their exit and entrance; there have been instances of close calls. Mike said he can't say how close to the round about it would be and if it would be to the corner or not. He can ask the engineer to see where the pond would be situated.

There is no room on their property for the retention pond, that is why the initial plans had an underground system. The cost concern not only stems from the construction of the underground system but also in the maintenance. They were asked how much money it would save to have the retention pond vs the underground system. Mike was unsure but said he heard as much as \$100,000; the easement is more affordable. No one seemed to know the exact location of the retention area or how it would look. Mike Dauner said he would follow up and get clarification and have the engineer mark out what it looks like. The PEFD hopes to get the voters for referendum to sell off the three properties located in the center of town on Legion Court and Broadway once the bids come back.

Questions were asked relating to the fire whistle and whether it was needed. The PEFD have been having discussions in house about how they will handle it; what types of calls will trigger the sirens. They are trying to meet the public and fireman's needs. They are dispatched on pagers which work off the phone lines and the cell phones work off the cell towers. If they do not have power, there is no way of alerting everyone. The siren is necessary because regardless of outages they can manually push a button and can get the firefighters to the firehouse even if they don't know where they are going until they arrive there. Options may be limiting the number of rings from 10 to 3 or 5. Clark Mains said they would like to do away with it, but it is a matter of public safety and is a necessity.

Supervisor Freer will share the Town Attorney's changes with the Fire Department. The PEFD will share the feedback with the attorney and get their engineer's design and location of the retention pond. Mike also confirmed the maintenance will be the responsibility of the Port Ewen Fire Department.

Supervisor Freer thanked them for coming to explain it to them.

#### **JUSTICE COURT BAILIFF APPOINTMENTS**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY SUPERVISOR FREER TO HIRE ERNEST OSTERHOUDT AND EDWARD F. CHOMICKI III AS COURT SECURITY OFFICERS AT THE RATE OF \$25.00 PER HOUR. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COUNCILMAN LAURA ROBINSON. ALL MEMBERS PRESENT WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.**

#### **LIAISON LIGHTNING ROUND**

**Councilman Quick:**

#### **ZBA (ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS)**

A variance was requested for property on Legion Court. The variance will be discussed at the ZBA meeting on 07/18/2023. Definitions regarding "character of a neighborhood" continued to be discussed.

There was some confusion regarding the site application procedure and referring process. The Building Inspector checks the submission to be sure forms are completed. If it is a large project that disturbs more than an acre of land, it is sent to the Planning Board. The Planning Board hires a Planner (an expert with land use laws) who reviews the information provided as to its accuracy and what needs to be done to meet the town code, other state laws and whether it is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

## **ASSESSOR'S OFFICE**

The Town of Esopus Assessment Rolls for 2023 have been completed. All exemptions were considered. Everything was sent to the County by July 1. The tax rolls are available in the Assessor's Office and the Town Clerk's Office. The process went smoothly. Any tax SCAR (Small Claims for Assessment Review) must be turned in by July 31, 2023.

## **WAB Waterfront Advisory Board**

The Waterfront Advisory Board has been reviewing the updated version of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan. Members of this board voted to send it to the New York State Department of State for review. Scenic Hudson presented some of their plans and ideas for the Black Creek area.

**Seniors** - had an ice cream social at Freer Park and the Bruderhof helped serve the seniors. The seniors also have a trip to the Erie canal planned for August 9<sup>th</sup>.

## **Evelyne Clarke:**

### **Environmental Board**

The Environmental Board is working on a pollinator garden in Connelly and trying to work within their budget. The count for the Carix Frankii needs to be done. Councilman Kathie Quick said the count was already done but the area was mowed before they got there. They need to coordinate and make sure the count is done prior to the mowing next year. There needs to be clarification regarding whether the mowing is done by Central Hudson or the Town. There are less because they can't positively identify once it was mowed. Supervisor Freer said there was a Scenic Hudson contact who was inquiring about it, and she will share his contact info with Councilman Quick. Climate smart task force work is moving along. Evelyn is spearheading the EV Charging Stations. Laura Petit is tying up loose ends for the Greenway grant and needs to gather time sheets for in-kind services and receipts for money that has been spent.

Councilman Evelyn Clarke asked if we are working with Emergency Management with the County. Supervisor Freer said yes, they are working on Hazzard Mitigation Planning and the Emergency Preparedness Expo at Ross Park on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Environmental Board also wants to be involved in that expo.

Honey Bee Jubilee, September 17<sup>th</sup>, Laura Petit is working on getting vendors for that.

7/22 Repair Café at the Ascension Church

**Councilman Robinson:**

**Parks & Rec** – Getting ready to hold their first Movie Night on July 22<sup>nd</sup> at Ross Park; 8:30 pm. The Croods, New Age will be shown. They have one food truck for the event at this time. Pickleball court, gaga pit and basketball hoops are done. The Town has been awarded a \$50,000 ARPA grant from the County for Cas Landi Park in St. Remy for new playground equipment.

Councilman Robinson asked what we are doing about the grass on Broadway, there is a lot of complaints on how it looks. Supervisor Freer said we can crack down through code enforcement to get it rectified. Councilman Clarke said the area across the street from the Riverview Cemetery is also an eye sore and needs to be sent a notice to mow.

**Supervisor Freer:**

**Highway Department** Paving was pushed back due to rain. Work to be done in St. Remy, Horton Lane and Prospect St. The roads have already been milled and they will start paving July 11<sup>th</sup>. The paving on 9W and Broadway will start 7/10 as a result of the Central Hudson work that was done in the fall.

**Water & Sewer Department**

The agreement will be voted on by the County on 7/18 regarding the Ulster County APRA Water Infrastructure grant that we got in April for the water control panel at the water plant. Once we have the agreement, we will share it with our attorney and by the end of August or beginning of Sept. we should be able to get started on that project.

However, they told her the process for getting the money for the park will bring us to October or November of this year. Supervisor Freer said they can still plan and make sure we are ready to go. This was a heads up that the process will take some time at the County level.

**Transfer Station** - working on the compactors.

**Economic Development Committee, EDC** is continuing to meet and brainstorm with new members. They are really excited for the Comprehensive Plan update so they can get a better understanding of what the EDC is supposed to be doing. They are eager to go out and help bring new businesses to our town that align with our Comprehensive Plan. This is a proactive approach to go out looking for businesses that our town wants and needs vs reacting to what is coming to the table.

**Miscellaneous - CHPE, Tighe & Bond**

Supervisor Freer went to Albany last week to meet with the Public Service Commission (PSC) to discuss Esopus' position on CHPE and to share with them our concerns and what the peer review report from Tighe and Bond lays out. The meeting was collaborative, they are willing to come in and speak to the public to talk about what the project is, as well as working with Esopus on their emergency plan. Supervisor Freer said both of those meetings will spark some interesting conversations. The lines of communication are open.

We made a Motion in March to contract with Tighe and Bond to do the peer review of the study; \$30,900. However, they are starting to go over, and we need them for more consultation. Supervisor Freer is looking to increase the contract by \$5,000. The good news coming out of the PSC meeting is that they are most likely going to reimburse the Town for the peer report and some possible legal fees up until a certain point. They are negotiating that now. Supervisor Freer is very hopeful that they understand the need for that. As a reminder, Esopus is taking this on since the Hudson 7 couldn't. If we can get this money back it would be great.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY SUPERVISOR DANIELLE FREER TO INCREASE THE TIGHE & BOND PEER REVIEW SERVICE CONTRACT, PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ON 3/2/23, FOR THE PROPOSED CHAMPLAIN HUDSON POWER EXPRESS (CHPE), BY THE AMOUNT OF \$5,000. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COUNCILMAN KATHIE QUICK. ALL MEMBERS PRESENT WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.**

**UPCOMING KEY DATES – MORE INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE:**

- 7.8 Esopus Basketball Inc. Summer Clinics Begin (every Saturday in July); \$5 sessions.**
- 7.20 Next Town Board Meeting**
- 7.22 Family Movie Night at Ross Park hosted by Parks & Recreation at 8:30pm “Croods: A New Age”**
- 7.22 Esopus Repair Café at Ascension Church hosted by Environmental Board**
- 8.4 Next Town Board Workshop**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**SUPERVISOR FREER MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COUNCILMAN LAURA ROBINSON AT 8:00 PM. ALL MEMBERS PRESENT WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.**

*Respectively Submitted,  
Holly A. Netter  
Town Clerk, RMC*