

## Village of Lansing

MINUTES of a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Lansing held on Thursday, October 12, 2023, held at the Village of Lansing 2405 N. Triphammer Road.

PRESENT: Mayor Ronny Hardaway; Trustees Susan Ainslie, Wolfgang Bullmer, Carolyn Greenwald, Drew Riedl; Code/Zoning Officer, Mike Scott; Clerk/Treasurer Jodi Dake.

Roll Call: Susan Ainslie, Wolfgang Bullmer, Drew Riedl, Carolyn Greenwald (zoom), Ronny Hardaway

Zoom: Carolyn Greenwald

Mayor Hardaway called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 12:01pm. Hardaway stated that the DPW was taking some personal time so they would not be attending today's meeting. Dake read Courtney's report.

### **Courtney's Email Report**

*We have almost completed the Nor Way storm project. We lack topsoil seed and mulch.*

*We hope to get the pond bridge replaced with a culvert to allow access to the other parts of the trail with equipment. We met Mike and Brent to discuss its true function and it was determined to not have a storm water function.*

*They are nearing completion of the sewer main on the Cayuga Heights Road (CHR) benefit project. The main work for the upcoming month is to complete plantings, grading and the rest of the services to the residence.*

Hardaway told everyone that the CHR project would not be completed until next spring.

Scott reported that the Planning Board had David Beer come in. He's hoping to finish the reviews and hopefully agree on a site plan next month. Goetzmann was not at the last meeting because he thought there was not a meeting since it was a holiday.

Aleks Mergold came back to discuss what the Planning Board would like to see before getting into a developers' conference. The amount of water consumption will need to be determined to make sure it can be supplied or if the infrastructure will need to be updated. Mergold is working with Brent Cross at the Village of Cayuga Heights (VCH) on sewer units. A traffic study is needed to see how 230 units will impact the Bomax/Warren Road intersection. After Alex gets this information, he will come back to the Planning Board. The Planning Board would like to see some work force housing here. Riedl asked if there was a definition for work force housing. Bullmer recommended that we come up with more precise data and convert it into dollars per month. He feels we should not talk about "work force housing" but instead use median income. Below is a summary of the research Bullmer did on this subject which he emailed to all Trustees:

## ***Wolfgang Bullmer's Contribution to the Affordable/Workforce Housing Discussion (10/14/23)***

### ***Definitions:***

*The terms of affordable housing and/or workforce housing are widely used in relation to the Area Median Income (AMI).*

*There are numerous definitions of income statistics. For this discussion it is important to define the methods of calculating the median income and the average income to avoid confusion in the discussions. All used income numbers are gross income numbers.*

***AMI:*** Area Median Income. This value represents the threshold between the lower 50% and the higher 50% of all considered income values for a specific area (for clarification: if there are 1500 households in a statistical sample, 750 are below the median and 750 are above the median).

***Average income:*** This value is calculated as the total amount of all incomes in a specific group divided by the number of individual incomes in that group.

*The difference between AMI and average can be substantial depending on the income distribution in a defined area.*

### ***Affordable housing:***

*Is typically used in relation to the income bracket of less than 60% of AMI.*

### ***Workforce housing:***

*Is typically used in relation to the income bracket between 80% and 120% AMI.*

*Workforce housing is a somehow misleading term, as a lot of employees are outside the defined income bracket and need to be considered as part of the workforce. A better term may be "moderate income housing".*

### ***Discussion and models:***

*The definition of affordability is extremely complex and can only be accurately defined by looking into the details of expectations, lifestyle, income levels, social environment and personal needs among other factors.*

*The AMIs in the area are showing substantial differences. For the purpose of this discussion AMIs were taken from one source (incomebyzipcode.com) to be somehow consistent. There are other sources with different numbers on the internet, but the numbers are very similar to the examples below.*

#### ***AMI/area:***

<i>Tompkins county</i>	<i>\$ 64,260</i>
<i>Town of Dryden</i>	<i>\$ 72,211</i>
<i>Town of Lansing</i>	<i>\$ 83,438</i>
<i>Village of Cayuga Heights</i>	<i>\$ 98,563</i>
<i>Village of Lansing</i>	<i>\$ 79,875</i>
<i>14850 Zip Code</i>	<i>\$ 58,846</i>

*For a more detailed discussion the numbers would need to be specifically adjusted to a specific area zip code or defined area and the number of people per household.*

*The AMI is fluctuating widely over time as there are numerous factors, which can influence the value (opening/closing of businesses, migration to other areas in the US, shifting of demographics, etc.)*

**Model calculation** for affordable rent in the moderate-income housing bracket:

AMI: **\$58,846** (14850 Zip Code)

Threshold level: **80%** (lower end of the bracket; the lower end should always be used for affordability discussions instead of a range)

Applicable income value:  $\$58,846 \times 0.8 = \mathbf{\$47,076.80}$

Assuming 30% Taxes and fees brings the available income to **\$32,952.96**

As there are several expenses which are not really variable because they cover basic needs like transportation, communication, clothing, etc. this assumed value needs to be deducted from the net income. Assuming \$800/month for these expenses brings the value to **\$23,352.96**.

Assumed that the percentage of the available income for housing should not exceed 50%, we are now arriving at **\$11,676.48**.

Which translates into a monthly rent of **\$973.04**.

For comparison the fair market monthly rent in Ithaca is \$1,187 for a studio, \$1,487 for a two-bedroom apartment and \$1,998 for a four bedroom apartment.

### **Conclusion:**

*The only fact I know for sure is that the absolute numbers used above are wrong, as they are based on estimates, extrapolation and information from individuals which might or might not be accurate.*

*However, I also know that they are good enough and as close to reality as needed for this discussion. They definitely show the challenge with housing in our area, which we can see in the market and by a lot of employees commuting from other areas rather than living directly in the area.*

### **Recommendation:**

*As the whole topic of affordable/work force housing is fairly complex and at times confusing and misleading and greatly changing over time and depending on the applied assumptions, we as the Village of Lansing officials should probably change our discussions regarding housing projects from an income and rental cost focus to a more market-based focus.*

*This would include discussions about the targeted market segment (low end, mainstream, high end, luxury), number of units, size of the apartments in sq ft., amenities, targeted occupancy rate, landscaping amongst others.*

*The final rent will be dictated by the target profit rate for the developer and the market conditions. To discuss these numbers at the initial stage of a project puts unnecessary stress on us as well as on the developer. To my point above the only thing I know for sure is that the numbers will be wrong.*

*The write-up represents my personal opinion and needs to be interpreted as such.*

*It should not be understood as a guideline or proposal for a direction of Board topics but for discussion purposes only.*

*Wolfgang Bullmer*

Hardaway stated that the county did some workforce housing studies. Hardaway will get those resources from Deborah Dawson

Scott hopes Mergold will come up with a definition on his own and give us numbers.

Bullmer stated that to put this into perspective, you must make \$35/hr. to get there. We should come up with a number to see if they can make it work.

Dake did not think the Village has the power to tell them what they can charge for rent. This would be a question for our attorney. Hardaway stated that the real estate in this area is not the norm because of the colleges. This is a good starting point for discussion on this subject for both Boards.

Greenwald added that in addition to providing needed housing, the project may have another advantage in that the building will have a use. Housing is a good use. We need to ask ourselves if we want to consider the PDA. There are other uses what could go in there if it doesn't become a PDA and would that be something we want. There are options and opportunities. Scott stated that with the current zoning, a building can be 45 feet high. Having a 4-story building go in is nothing special, it can already be done with the current zoning. Scott would like to share Bullmer's information with the Planning Board also. Greenwald stated that there are pros and cons to this.

Scott stated that the Planning Board is still working on the Solar permit. They are trying to create a short but thorough law. Riedl stated that there shouldn't be any issues as far as Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) is concerned. Greenwald wants to start looking at the law. She is concerned with how long this is taking. Mike will send it to the Trustees to look at. The Planning Board is in agreement with the Solar Array Law but there are some minor wording changes needed and we need to make sure it is not repetitive. Hardaway is concerned with adding turmoil to the finalization of the document. He thinks we should read and note significant issues. This is a rough draft. Greenwald is happy to wait until Mike Bakers version is ready. Scott stated that they hope to wrap it up at the November Planning Board meeting.

Cayuga Medical is looking to start opening in a month and a half. They have 5 different sections which will be opening at different times. In the mall there is also a dentist office going in the old Victoria's Secret space. A permit was issued for Habitat for Humanity at 4 Dart Drive. Next year they plan to start 8 Dart Drive.

Scott hopes to go out and check stormwater facilities next week.

Dake stated that it has been a little crazy this week trying to get caught up after being on vacation. The October water billing went out so there are a lot of payments coming in. Back in September Dake moved most of our reserves and General Savings to 6-month CDs at a rate of 5%. (\$5.9M) Interest previously was .05% to .08%.

The Board clarified that they would like to have lunch at the Volunteer Recognition on Sunday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Board approved the email that Dake will send on Friday. Dake will ask everyone to respond by the following Tuesday so we know how much food we will need.

Dake stated that at the last meeting the Trustees talked about the NYCOM Conference and had questions which she would like to answer for them. Riedl had met the Commissioner of Human Resources for Tompkins County at NYCOM. Dake explained that there are many mandatory things that are required by the State when you hire an employee, and they do this for all of Tompkins County. Tompkins County has the central online site for submitting applications for all municipalities, writing Job Descriptions, filing the information with the State, prequalify applicants before they are put on an eligibility list, we send them annual payroll certification where they check to make sure who we hired actually went through the correct process.

Dake stated that Riedl also brought up the Town having two tax rates and the Town of Lansing does have a budget for Town only and Town and Village, but the rates are the same. Mayor Hartill used to look at this. It has to do with income sources. One example is local sales tax is received by both the Village and the Town and the Town's goes to town only budget. The Village receives around \$800,000 in sales tax revenue. Taxes paid by residents go to the town and are used for such items as justice, dog, marriage license, recreation, parks, library and historian, John O'Neill used to go to Town meetings but currently no one is going. Dake feels we do need to look at the Town Budget.

Another question was Fund Balance Policy, we do not have an official policy. Riedl had been told that we should have a 3-month reserve. Dake questioned which three months since summer expenditures are usually more than winter expenditures. Currently what we do is look at unappropriated fund balance from previous year and use that as appropriated the next year. There are a lot of factors that go into this. We look at what projects got done and not done. Riedl asked if anyone ever questioned our fund balance. Dake stated that our sewer reserve was very large, and the State did question it. We explained to them that we were saving for the sewer expansion to the Town of Lansing, and they were fine with that. They want to know you have a plan. We are unique in that the village saves for projects instead of borrowing money. This saves us the interest on loans. Dake stated that there is so much that goes on in the Village and if anyone has any more questions, she is happy to answer them.

Another concern was what happens if we lose critical staff. Dake stated that when she first started, she overlapped with the previous clerk for almost a year. There are a lot of things that are done daily, some monthly, quarterly and yearly so there is a lot to the Clerk/Treasurer position. Dake plans to do the same when she retires. If something should happen unexpectedly the Town of Lansing and other area municipalities also use the Williamson Law Book (WLB) programs and could help. WLB would also come train a new person. Since there is only one clerk/treasurer we have checks and balances. We have a Trustee that does the bank reconciliations, and we have an outside accounting firm do an audit every year. Other municipalities are there to help all departments. Also, NYCOM is only a phone call away and they have a lot of training on their website.

Hardaway introduced Casey Mastro. Mastro works for New York Power Authority (NYPA) and is Ithaca-based. Mastro works on advising municipalities on moving toward clean energy in a resource efficient manner. He is here to discuss possible uses for our \$5,000 NYSERDA grant.

Mastro is an electrical engineer and bases all his decisions on data. His mission is to help public entities make clean energy decisions. Clean Energy Solutions is not for profit organization that helps others reduce greenhouse gas. He is here in an advisory role to help the Village make good decisions.

Hardaway stated that we submitted an application, and we need to write a letter of commitment to say what we want to do with the money.

Mastro's initial recommendations would be:

- A. Consider hiring help to lay out a capital plan for greenhouse gas reduction.
- B. Building energy-new heating/air in old office.
- C. Look at building stock and how energy can be upgrade.

Mastro stated that he has not talked with the village since 2017 when he was going around promoting LED lighting. The Village has already done upgraded to LED lighting.

Riedl stated that other possibilities are solar, EV charging stations, EV vehicle purchases or building upgrades. Dake stated that the heating/AC system in the old office will need to be upgraded so she thinks that may be a project to consider. Mastro feels energy efficiency upgrades would be the biggest bang for our buck. He feels this is the beginning of any decarbonization plan.

Mastro stated that the \$5,000 could be used for a study. Riedl asked if the IRA would apply here. The US Treasury Department creates the guidelines, but they are not clear yet. The direct pay is still unclear.

Dake reminded the Trustees that as we reduce the amount of energy used in the whole Village, we get less utility tax. In the past we used to receive around \$130,000 a year but now it is around \$40,000 a year.

This is just the beginning of a discussion. Mastro will be available for any help we may need in the future.

Mastro feels that an energy efficiency approach is the best value for the Village.

Hardaway stated that we have made our residents aware of programs that would help them find energy efficient upgrades.

Dake stated that when this new administration building was built, we did look at efficiency issues. Dake stated that she would hate to see the Village waste money on a study. We have such a smart board that is already looking at these areas.

There was some discussion on solar. Detailed utility analysis should be done for free before

entering into a Request for Proposal (RFP). The village is not interested in large scale solar. We would rather plant trees instead of solar panels.

Hardaway stated that Mastro has raised some good points. Mastro lives in Freeville and is happy to talk about any energy issue. His mission is to help statewide entities make databased energy decisions that are beneficial.

Bullmer asked why Sunday rates were charged on voucher 118 for Finger Lakes Enviro-Tech LLC. for the removal of sewer chemicals. Dake stated that Sunday hours were charged for the fire that occurred due to a chemical spill on Sunday 7/2/23. Hardaway stated that they were sewer chemicals that had been stored a long time again and not disposed of. Hardaway stated that he has asked Courtney to keep better track of all stored chemicals and make sure we know where they are all located and make sure they are disposed of properly. It was a costly mistake. Ainslie asked if there is an inventory. Dake stated that they do have a book with all the data sheets. She was unsure if they went through it annually. Hardaway thinks this could be a good thing to do in the winter. They have provided data sheets for the administration office. The Board does not want to see this happen again and wants to be proactive not reactive. Riedl asked for clarification on the TG Miller Invoice. Dake explained how it gets classified to jobs and comes out of different funds.

Greenwald reported that she joined the Town of Lansing Trail Committee. They will be meeting every other Tuesday. The first meeting is next Tuesday. Greenwald suggested that since Ainslie attends every Planning Board meeting that the rest of the Trustees take turns covering the Town of Lansing meetings. Greenwald thinks there is a benefit to having one person because issues go over multiple months She does not think that we need two people to attend the Planning Board meetings. Dake stated that Trustee O'Neill used to attend all town meetings. The Board decided to have Ainslie attend all the Planning Board meetings for the next year and the remaining trustees will each take a quarter where they attend Town meetings. Hardaway will do this quarter and Dake will assign the other quarters. Hardaway stated that the meetings are online so they can be watched from home. Dake suggested that the Trustees attend in person so that they would be able to ask questions and the Town Board would know a village representative was attending. Greenwald also thought actually attending the meeting would be better to build a relationship. Dake will call the town and see if they have an email list for receiving an agenda.

#### **Resolution #6999- Abstract of Audited Vouchers**

Be it RESOLVED, that Abstract of Audited Vouchers No. 5 for the General Fund, in the amount of \$366,834.92 is hereby approved for payment, and

Be it RESOLVED, that Abstract of Audited Vouchers No. 5 for the Sewer Fund, in the amount of \$1,022,683.54 is hereby approved for payment, and

Be it RESOLVED, that Abstract of Audited Vouchers No. 5 for the Water Fund, in the amount of \$215,716.90 is hereby approved for payment, and

Be it RESOLVED, that Abstract of Audited Vouchers No. 5 for the Trust & Agency Fund, in the amount of \$900.00 is hereby approved for payment.

Trustee Ainslie moved that the foregoing Abstract of Audited Vouchers resolutions be adopted, and Trustee Hardaway seconded the motion. A vote was taken:

Mayor Ronny Hardaway-Aye  
Trustee Wolfgang Bullmer-Aye  
Trustee Carolyn Greenwald-Aye

Trustee Susan Ainslie-Aye  
Trustee Drew Riedl-Aye

Buller attended his first Joint Youth Commission meeting. The Learning Web seems to be the least favorite agency. Hardaway stated that the leadership at the Learning Web has been downhill over the last few years.

Riedl had nothing to report.

Ainslie reported that CWIO is interviewing candidates and hopes to hire someone in January. Ainslie emailed the newsletter to the Trustees.

Hardaway stated that in January 2024 the sewer rent charged by Village of Cayuga Heights (VCH) will be increasing by 16%. Dake stated that village residents would not see this increase until their April 1, 2024, bill. They are starting to get estimates for Phase 3 so we can expect more increases down the road. Dake stated that the village budgets for TG Miller to do I&I investigation to see where we may have issues. Hardaway will ask Courtney or the VCH for the reports. One issue in the village is The Shops at Ithaca Mall because they do not know what goes in or what comes out. We think we have eliminated a lot of it with the bypass we did around the mall, but we cannot completely confirm that. Hardaway stated that there are meters on our lines going into VCH. Hardaway stated that there is an online reporting system that he has access to that shows all the meters that go to the VCH plant. He monitors this and will start sharing the monthly reports with the Trustees. Dake thought it would be interesting to see what that is compared to what we are actually billing. Dake explained the previous sewer moratorium and the history of how residents were charged for sewer. We have no alternative for sewer disposal since the State will not allow any more sewer treatment plants in this area. The Town of Lansing tried, and the State would not let them open another plant.

Motion- To Adjourn

Trustee Riedl moved for adjournment. Trustee Bullmer seconded the motion. A vote was taken:

Mayor Ronny Hardaway-Aye  
Trustee Wolfgang Bullmer-Aye  
Trustee Carolyn Greenwald-Aye

Trustee Susan Ainslie-Aye  
Trustee Drew Riedl-Aye

The meeting was adjourned at 1:55pm.  
Jodi Dake, Clerk/Treasurer