

Village of Lansing

MINUTES of the Board of Trustees Meeting held on Monday, November 4, 2024, in person at 2405 N. Triphammer Road and via Zoom Videoconferencing/Teleconferencing.

PRESENT: Mayor Ronny Hardaway; Trustees: Susan Ainslie, Wolfgang Bullmer, Carolyn Greenwald, Kathleen Yen; Clerk/Treasurer Jodi Dake; Attorney Natalie French. Public in attendance at the meeting- Former Mayor Donald Hartill

Zoom: Susan Piliero, Planning Board member Lorraine Capogrossi

The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm.

Hardaway thanked all the fire departments that bravely participated in battling the brush fire along East Shore Drive on Friday, Nov. 11th, including all Tompkins County Fire Departments, plus nearby fire departments, including Genoa, Locke, Homer, Cortlandville, and Virgil along with New York State Forest Rangers. Several responders suffered minor injuries or exhaustion from their efforts, and he wished them a speedy and complete recovery.

Also, Hardaway thanked our DPW staff who worked until around 3:30 in the morning responding to a water main break at Pembroke Lane and Cayuga Heights Road. The break was caused by the volume and force of the fire-fighting water usage.

Today, Lynn Leopold, John Courtney, Chris Zavaski, Deborah Dawson and Hardaway met with Jonathan Negley, Angela Hinickle, Andrew Stadler from the Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation Department to determine if, and how, the Soil & Water Department could assist with public and private repairs to the ground cover in the burned areas along East Shore Drive. Damage was not as severe as the online photos suggested. It was mostly burning leaves, however, some trees were damaged. Tompkins County is looking into hydroseeding the area. The hope is that volunteers will help Leopold reposition some of her old fallen trees to help with erosion. Hardaway thanked everyone involved on behalf of the Village.

Hardaway opened the public comment period.

Hartill stated that he was here because of the fire. He thanked the neighbors and firefighters. The fire came within 50 feet of a house at the end of Twin Glens Road. There were four fires all together. It is unclear what caused the fire. One rumor was that it was caused by a muffler dragging and sparking. The response was really impressive. There were three trucks stationed at the end of Twin Glens Road and three or four on Cayuga Hills Road. We have had half the amount of rainfall in September & October. We were very fortunate because this could have been much worse.

Hartill stated that the sewer line is in on Cayuga Heights Road, and he hopes to hook one of his property up before the end of the year. They did a very nice job on both the infrastructure installation and paving of Cayuga Heights Road.

Motion - To Close the Public Comment Period

Hardaway made a motion to close the public comment period. Bullmer seconded the motion. A vote was taken:

Mayor Ronny Hardaway-Aye
Trustee Kathleen Yen-Aye
Trustee Carolyn Greenwald-Aye

Trustee Susan Ainslie-Aye
Trustee Wolfgang Bullmer-Aye

The next item on the agenda was to approve the minutes from October 7, 17 & 21, 2024. Greenwald was not present for the October 7th meeting but zoomed in on the 17th & 21st.

Motion - To Approve the Minutes from October 7, 2024

Hardaway made a motion to approve the minutes. Ainslie seconded the motion. A vote was taken:

Mayor Ronny Hardaway-Aye
Trustee Kathleen Yen-Aye
Trustee Carolyn Greenwald-Abstain

Trustee Susan Ainslie-Aye
Trustee Wolfgang Bullmer-Aye

Motion - To Approve the Minutes from October 17th & 21, 2024

Hardaway made a motion to approve the minutes. Ainslie seconded the motion. A vote was taken:

Mayor Ronny Hardaway-Aye
Trustee Kathleen Yen-Aye
Trustee Carolyn Greenwald-Aye

Trustee Susan Ainslie-Aye
Trustee Wolfgang Bullmer-Aye

Proposed Local Laws for Exemption Limits

The Trustees had previously discussed increasing the exemption limits for low-income senior/disability and veterans. French has drawn up three proposed laws.

Resolution #7102- To Set the Public Hearing on Proposed Local Law D (2024) - Amendment of the Village of Lansing Code-Chapter 129 “Taxation”, Article II “Senior Citizens Tax Exemption” for Monday, November 18, 2024, at 7:35pm

Hardaway made a motion to set the public hearing. Bullmer seconded the motion. A vote was taken:

Mayor Ronny Hardaway-Aye
Trustee Kathleen Yen-Aye
Trustee Carolyn Greenwald-Aye

Trustee Susan Ainslie-Aye
Trustee Wolfgang Bullmer-Aye

Resolution #7103- To Set the Public Hearing on Proposed Local Law E (2024) - Amendment of the Village of Lansing Code-Chapter 129 “Taxation”, Article III “Alternative Veterans Tax Exemption” for Monday, November 18, 2024, at 7:40pm

Hardaway made a motion to set the public hearing. Ainslie seconded the motion. A vote was taken:

Mayor Ronny Hardaway-Aye
Trustee Kathleen Yen-Aye
Trustee Carolyn Greenwald-Aye

Trustee Susan Ainslie-Aye
Trustee Wolfgang Bullmer-Aye

Resolution #7104- To Set the Public Hearing on Proposed Local Law F (2024) - Amendment of the Village of Lansing Code-Chapter 129 “Taxation”, Article IV “Disabled Persons with Limited Incomes Tax Exemption” for Monday, November 18, 2024, at 7:45pm

Hardaway made a motion to set the public hearing. Ainslie seconded the motion. A vote was taken:

Mayor Ronny Hardaway-Aye
Trustee Kathleen Yen-Aye
Trustee Carolyn Greenwald-Aye

Trustee Susan Ainslie-Aye
Trustee Wolfgang Bullmer-Aye

Sewer Rents

The next item on the agenda was to set a public hearing to increase the sewer rents starting January 1, 2025.

Resolution #7105- To Set the Public Hearing on Proposed Local Law G (2024) - Amendment of the Village of Lansing Code-Sewer Rents for Monday, November 18, 2024, at 7:50pm

Hardaway made a motion to set the public hearing. Bullmer seconded the motion. A vote was taken:

Mayor Ronny Hardaway-Aye
Trustee Kathleen Yen-Aye
Trustee Carolyn Greenwald-Aye

Trustee Susan Ainslie-Aye
Trustee Wolfgang Bullmer-Aye

Yen wondered if Jay Franklin, Tompkins County Assessment, would be attending that meeting. He is not planning to. If there are any questions, they can be sent to Dake and she will get them answered by Franklin.

Sewer Plant Expansion

Hardaway stated that this past Tuesday, Hardaway and Ruth Groff, Town of Lansing Supervisor, met with Linda Woodard, Village of Cayuga Heights (VCH) Mayor, Brent Cross, VCH engineer,

and Rich Robinson, VCH Trustee who oversees the Village of Cayuga Heights Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) for the VCH Board to discuss the possible expansion projects for the WWTP. The Town and Village of Lansing and the Town of Ithaca are the only ones that currently have major developments. Hardaway emailed the Trustees documents provided by VCH so that the Trustees could have a discussion on the WWTP expansion. Hardaway couldn't answer detailed questions behind the slides, or the sewer fund debt figures provided by VCH. This discussion was meant to raise awareness of the issues, possible solutions, and potential cost of the WWTP expansion.

Hardaway also created a spreadsheet that calculates the approximate percentages of the Lansing's contributions to the monthly VCH WWTP flows. He also created a table of gallons and percentages if we add the proposed new-development sewer units. Hardaway stated that these numbers are not scientifically accurate, but they give us an idea of the Lansing's proportional contribution to future VCH WWTP expansion projects' cost.

The Trustees begin the discussion on how they would like to proceed with supporting/planning for the upcoming projects.

Currently, the plant exceeds its daily maximum flow on occasion. There was a period of time when there was a moratorium. The projects that they presented were creating a Remington Road bypass at a cost of \$2M to divert flow to the City of Ithaca WWTP. The other project was to expand the VCHWWTP by buying the property next to it. VCH wants the other municipalities to help with this purchase. It would cost approximately \$10M to build the additional facility. They are looking for input from all the municipalities involved. Kline Road can divert some sewage to the City of Ithaca WWTP. The main thing VCH would like to do is reduce I&I. In the Village we look for I&I and resolve the I&I quickly if we can. The Village found some I&I issues on Dart Drive when installing the new sewer line and resolved about a dozen issues.

Hardaway stated that we would not pay for another bypass on our own like we did with the Kline Road Bypass. We paid for the whole Kline Road Project so that we could get more sewer units at the time with the expectation that we would get reimbursed, which never happened. The Kline Road Bypass is benefiting everyone in the system. It is estimated that the Lansing's are 50-60% of the total flow.

Dake explained that the VCH sets the sewer rate and the municipalities outside of VCH pay one and a half times that rate. This is how they pay for everything. We do not pay VCH for different projects, VCH pays for them out of the sewer rates. Hardaway thinks that may change with the current projects being discussed.

Greenwald asked if there were state or federal grants that would help pay for upgrades. Hardaway stated that there are only grants for disadvantage communities. There are no federally recognized disadvantage communities in Tompkins County.

Hartill stated that the City of Ithaca WWTP is also overflowing periodically. I&I is the real problem. VCH has the oldest system and the biggest problem. They want help in resolving the long-term solutions to the problem.

Hardaway would like to keep building up our sewer reserve fund. We need assurances that whatever solution we come up with will solve the problem.

Hardaway wondered if opening the Kline Road Bypass would cost less than building the Remington Road Bypass. To send sewage to the City of Ithaca WWTP it would cost 3 times more than processing it at the VCH WWTP. The City of Ithaca WWTP is also in financial trouble. Originally, the Kline Road was supposed to be open all the time. Now they monitor extreme weather and open the Kline Road bypass only when needed.

Hartill stated that Kline Road only drains part of Cayuga Heights and not any of the Village. Remington Road Bypass would divert the flow from the Lansings.

Dake asked if both plants have issues, then why wouldn't you increase the size of the VCH WWTP so they could process more. Greenwald feels that increasing the volume that could be processed would be better than a bypass solution.

Hartill suggested having a campaign to save water. I&I is an ongoing problem.

Hardaway suggested to them that we should work on multiple path solutions all at the same time. However, this gets expensive. The long-term solution is to expand both plants. The City of Ithaca claims that they still have the capacity to take our overflow. Hardaway is unsure if this is true. The City of Ithaca is also looking into expanding. Hardaway wanted to prepare the Board and have them start thinking about this as we head into budget season.

Greenwald asked if there is anything more we can do for I&I repairs. It is in the budget, but should we do more to find I&I.

Mayor Woodard is looking into a company that will set up a more accurate system of meters. This is very expensive. It costs \$250,000 for a month to set up extra meters and monitor where the flow is coming from. Hartill stated that you can also do a partial of that. For example, Teledyne has meters for \$5-6,000. With these you would have a clue as to where the I&I is coming from. Hartill stated that we know the manhole by Taco Bell is problematic, but we never managed to get a meter in there. There are key places where we can start. Greenwald thinks this seems affordable and a good place to start. The least expensive thing to do is an informational campaign.

There are also illegal connections where run off should go to the storm system, but they have it illegally connected to the sewer system. French wondered if the sump pump certificate program in the VCH is successful. Every house that is sold in the VCH has to have their storm discharge system checked. Hardaway has not heard if the program is successful or not. Greenwald feels this would be a good thing to do in the Village. People don't realize that they can't have their roof drains going into the sewer.

Dake explained that the sewer charge is based on how much water is used. The sewage is not metered as it leaves your house.

Ainslie stated that in the long term there needs to be a new addition to the plant. VCH WWTP is looking into buying the property that is for sale right next to their plant. It is a very steep property and not very desirable. During budget time we will look to increasing our reserve funds so we will be able to contribute more if needed.

Ainslie stated that this is not a new issue. This has been going on for 30 years. We need to keep our infrastructure up to date.

This was just the start of the discussion. As Hardaway gets more information, he will let the Trustees know. We need to be prepared for the future increases.

Ainslie asked if there were minutes from these meetings. Hardaway has never seen minutes for the group of six. Ainslie would like to know what is going on with the group of six.

Hartill stated that he will help in any way he can.

Mayor's Comments

Hardaway stated that tomorrow is Election Day so go and vote. If anyone is interested in signing up for Tompkins County Siren they can sign up online at smart911.com or by texting "siren" to 77295. They keep the public informed about such things as road closures or emergencies. Dake suggested that the VOL get involved in informing them of things that will take place in our village.

Hardaway stated that the Tompkins County Director of Emergency Response will send out notices if there is an evacuation order.

General Comments

Yen and Bullmer had nothing to report.

Ainslie stated that Youth Services is looking at how they spend their money and what programs produce results. By the end of 2025 they plan to have a comprehensive plan on how the money is spent on youth services throughout the county. Homeless youth services are available for those 18-25 years. CWIO had a presentation, and they have minutes online.

Greenwald stated that the Comprehensive Plan Committee met. Greenwald is happy with the number of residential responses we received but the number of business surveys we received was low. Businesses will be asked in person in hopes of getting more responses. The residential surveys had written comments regarding small infrastructure issues that she will put together for the next staff meeting. She hopes we can take care of the small things.

Greenwald added that the Town of Lansing Trail Committee is working on a draft RFQ for the comprehensive trail plan. That has gone through a couple of different drafts.

Adjournment

Motion- To Adjourn

Hardaway motioned to adjourn. Ainslie seconded the motion. A vote was taken:

Mayor Ronny Hardaway-Aye
Trustee Kathleen Yen-Aye
Trustee Carolyn Greenwald-Aye

Trustee Susan Ainslie-Aye
Trustee Wolfgang Bullmer-Aye

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33pm.

Jodi Dake, Clerk/Treasurer