

REGULAR MEETING – ATHENS TOWN BOARD- January 17, 2023

The regular meeting of the Athens Town Board was called to order by Supervisor Michael N. Pirrone, on Tuesday January 17, 2023, with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, at 7:00 p.m. at the EJ Arthur Elementary School at 51 Third St, Athens.

The following people were present: Supervisor Pirrone; Councilmember Michael Ragaini; Councilmember Shannon Spinner and Town Clerk Linda M. Stacey.

These people were also present: Financial Officer/Budget Officer Don Pierro; Assessor Dawn De Rose; Allison Dooley; Code Enforcement Officer Albert Gasparini; Lee Palmateer; Barb Trembacz; George Greiner; Chris and Carol Pfister; Paula Butler; Kris Garvey; George Stacey and Robert Brunner.

Councilmember Michael Ragaini made a motion seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner to approve the vouchers which were audited by the Board;

For 2022:

General Abstract #26, vouchers #622 through #629 inclusive for \$13,371.14.

Highway Abstract #26, vouchers #195 through #200 inclusive for \$866.63.

For 2023:

General Abstract #2, vouchers #9 through #27 inclusive for \$10,677.38.

Highway Abstract #1, voucher #1 for \$7,615.96.

Ayes-3 (Pirrone; Ragaini; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-2 (Brandow; Paluch) Abstentions-0

Councilmember Michael Ragaini made a motion seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner to approve the minutes of January 3, 2023's Organizational Meeting. Ayes-3 (Pirrone; Ragaini; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-2 (Brandow; Paluch) Abstentions-0

Assessor Dawn DeRose reported that Greene County Legislature has adopted Resolution No.409-22 increasing the Amount of income, by \$5,000, for the Senior Citizen Tax Exemption and for the Disabled tax exemption for persons with limited income with a sliding scale was adopted. She suggested that the Town Board adopt a similar resolution for the Town of Athens residents with the sliding scale, so we keep in line with the County.

Highway Superintendent John J. Farrell reported that tree work was finished on Indian Ridge Road Extension.

He reported that we are still waiting on NYS for the speed limit on Howard Hall Road.

There were 4 (four) snow events in December of 2022.

Trucks are washed between snow events.

The new Highway Employee took his CDL B road test and passed.

They started tree work on Sandy Plains Road.

Highway Superintendent Farrell has started working on the 2023 Road Agreement.

Code Enforcement Officer Albert Gasparini reported that there were 4 Building Permits for December of 2022.

There were 14 building Inspections.

1 Certificate of Occupancy.

3 Certificate of Occupancy Search requests.

1 Demolition Permit.

He is sending letters out to 18 property owners in the Sleepy Hollow area, to see if they are using their properties as short term rentals.

Mr. Gasparini also gave his Annual Report for 2022.

There were 62 building permits

1 Septic Permit

3 Demolition Permits

1 Certificate of Occupancy.

5 Certificate of Compliance.

82 Title Search Requests.

7 Short Term Rental Certificates

1 Fireworks Permit

16,098.32

100.00

700.00

100.00

358.60

8,440.00

1,600.00

100.00

Total amount of fees collected for Codes: \$27,497.13
 Total Building Permit Construction Costs: \$2,778,589.00

Financial/Budget Officer Donald Pierro reported that the 2022 Spending Plan is now 100% recorded and remains open for further adjusting journal entries. All Bank statements and Cash Reconciliations were completed for the month ending December 2022 and turned over to the outside CPA Firm with no exceptions. The singular Town of Athens debt instrument (Bonds Payable) shows a current balance of (\$566,857.70) for the Town Garage addition which runs through September 2032. The second half of Mortgage Tax for 2022 (\$97,553.04) was received in December. Mr. Pierro met with the outside auditor today for the 2022 year-end . The year -end process continues in earnest with a very good report anticipated.

Received notification from NYS Agriculture and Markets, that the Municipal Shelter Inspection Report was completed on 1/3/2023. It indicates that the dog shelter services were rated “Satisfactory”.

The Town received information from the Capital Bicycle Racing Club. They plan to hold its **Trooper David Brinkerhoff Memorial Race Series** in the Village of Athens, the Town of Athens, the Village of Cossackie, and the Town of Cossackie on April 22 and April 29. This will be the 18th time that they have held this race series.

Councilmember Michael Ragaini made a motion seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner to *appoint Eric Nelson as a Member of the Town Zoning Board of Appeals for a term of 5 (five) years from January 17, 2023 to December 31, 2027*. Ayes-3 (Pirrone; Ragaini; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-2 (Brandow; Paluch) Abstentions-0

Councilmember Michael Ragaini made a motion seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner to *appoint Eric Nelson as Chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term of 1 (one) year from January 17, 2023 to December 31, 2023*. Ayes-3 (Pirrone; Ragaini; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-2 (Brandow; Paluch) Abstentions-0

A resolution was made by Supervisor Pirrone to adopt the Established and Amended Employee Handbook, it was seconded by Councilmember Michael Ragaini, however Councilmember Shannon Spinner had questions. This resolution was held over for Executive Session.

On the motion of Councilmember Shannon Spinner seconded by Councilmember Michael Ragaini the following **RESOLUTION #2023-17** to set the Senior Citizen and Disabled Tax Exemption as a sliding scale for 2023 was adopted as follows:

Maximum Income Limit –	\$34,000.00	50%
\$34,000.01	\$34,999.99	45%
\$35,000.00	\$35,999.99	40%
\$36,000.00	\$36,999.99	35%
\$37,000.00	\$37,899.99	30%
\$37,900.00	\$38,799.99	25%
\$38,800.00	\$39,699.99	20%
\$39,700.00	\$40,599.99	15%
\$40,600.00	\$41,499.99	10%
\$41,500.00	\$42,399.99	5%

Senior Citizens living in the Town of Athens who are 65 years old or over will be eligible for these reductions in school taxes if their income level is \$42,399.99 or lower.

District residents with a disability whose income is limited by such a disability will be eligible for these reductions in school taxes, if their income level is \$42,399.99 or lower.

Anyone who is eligible for this exemption must contact their local assessor’s office (in the township they live in) prior to the deadline for filing of March 1st.

Ayes-3 (Pirrone; Ragaini; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-2 (Brandow; Paluch) Abstentions-0

Resident Lee Palmateer presented a resolution to the Board regarding Flint Mine Solar. After some discussion by the Board, this resolution was adopted:

On the motion of Supervisor Michael N. Pirrone seconded by Councilmember Michael Ragaini the following **RESOLUTION #2023-18** was adopted:

WHEREAS, the Greene County IDA proposes financial assistance for the Flint Mine Solar (“FMS”) power generation plant to be sited in the Town of Athens and Cocksackie;

WHEREAS, the proposal provides PILOT payments and Community Host Fees in amounts that increase annually by 1.5%, which is less than historic inflation rates and current 7% CPI rate of inflation, eroding the value of payments over time when adjusted for inflation;

WHEREAS, the proposal provides a roughly \$2,000,000 mortgage tax exemption;

WHEREAS, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (“IRA”) was signed into law in August of 2022, providing favorable tax credits and incentives for solar energy project like the FMS Project;

WHEREAS, insufficient support has been provided to the Town of Athens for a mortgage tax exemption, and the exemption is harmful to the Town and its taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the Town has insufficient security in the event of a default in payments;

IT IS RESOLVED THAT, the Town Board of the Town of Athens finds that (1) PILOT payments and Community Host Fees should increase annually over the life of the payment term by the prior year’s annual CPI inflation rate, (2) no mortgage tax exemption should be provided, and (3) the Town should have a security interest in the FMS project property to secure PILOT and Host Fee obligations.

Ayes-3 (Pirrone; Ragaini; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-2 (Brandow; Paluch) Abstentions-0

New Business issues:

Supervisor Pirrone and Mayor Serrago have discussed a suggestion from Town Councilmember Michael Ragaini, to consider the formation of a Joint Town-Village Citizens Committee to explore the issues, alternatives and solutions for the possible additions, improvements, and renovation of current and future business and workplace areas.

Supervisor Pirrone informed the Board that he was trying to set up a meeting with the Local Government Efficiency (LGE) Program, and Mr. Carl Ublacker, Local Government Specialist, to be informed of the program.

Public Concerns:

Resident Chris Pfister spoke on the appointment of Eric Nelson. He was happy to hear that Mr. Nelson was reappointed as a member and as Chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals. He feels that Mr. Nelson has a good grasp as to what comes before the ZBA and what needs to be done. He is good for the Board.

Resident Lee Palmateer informed the Board that Athens Generation’s Original Agreement, provides for 2024. It one of the Stipulations.

Conversations pertaining to utility companies within the Town began between residents. Concerns are that all residents are not fully informed of projects and various developments within the Town. It seems that utilities have had excellent sales during the last 20 years. Difficult to understand that the utilities haven’t been rewarded over the years. More people than ever are using electricity. The Town must be aggressive in protecting the Town’s and resident’s interest.

Councilmember Michael Ragaini made a motion seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner to go into *Executive Session to discuss the Employee Handbook*. Ayes-3 (Pirrone; Ragaini; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-2 (Brandow; Paluch) Abstentions-0 Time- 7:40 p.m.

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Councilmember Shannon Spinner made a motion seconded by Councilmember Michael Ragaini to adjourn the Executive Session and reconvene the regular meeting. Ayes-3 (Pirrone; Ragaini; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-2 (Brandow; Paluch) Abstentions-0 Time-8:00 p.m.

On the motion of Councilmember Michael Ragaini seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner the following **RESOLUTION #2023-16** to adopt the Established and Amended Town Employee Handbook for 2023. Ayes-3 (Pirrone; Ragaini; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-2 (Brandow; Paluch) Abstentions-0

As there was no further business to come before the meeting, a motion to adjourn was made by Councilmember Michael Ragaini seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner. Ayes-3 (Pirrone; Ragaini; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-2 (Brandow; Paluch) Abstentions-0

Meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.