

The regular meeting of the Athens Town Board was called to order by Supervisor Michael Pirrone, on October 16, 2023 at 7:00 P.M. with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag at the Athens Town Hall.

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

These people were also present: Attorney George McHugh; Financial/Budget officer Donald Pierro; Highway Superintendent John J. Farrell; Code Enforcement Officer Albert Gasparini; George Greiner; Karen Dudley; Tami Bone; Theresa Cardinale; Fran McCusker; Michael Campbell; Hailee Dickson; Becky Pine; Ann Pirrone; Mary Garvey; Patrick Doyle and Robert Brunner.

Supervisor Michael Pirrone reminded everyone present the Joint Village/Town Cleanup Day is scheduled for October 28, 2023 at the Town Highway Garage.

Councilmember Michael Ragaini made a motion seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner to approve the vouchers that were audited prior to the meeting.

General Abstract #19, vouchers #474 through #501 inclusive for **\$15,522.71**.

Highway Abstract #18, vouchers #161 through #191 inclusive for **\$20,932.81**.

Trust & Custodian:

ARX- Abstract #11, Voucher #14 for **\$1,800.00**.

Camp Catskill- Abstract #5, voucher #7 for **\$562.50**.

Deschaine- Abstract #6, voucher #10 for **\$337.50**.

Free Point Solar- Abstract #8, voucher #10 for **\$3,680.83**.

Ayes-5 (Pirrone; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Councilmember Michael Ragaini made a motion seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner to approve the minutes of **September 18, 2023**, as read. Ayes-5 (Pirrone; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Councilmember Shannon Spinner made a motion seconded by Councilmember Mary H. Brandow to **approve the minutes of the Budget Workshops of October 4th and October 12th, 2023** as read. Ayes-5 (Pirrone; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Councilmember Michael Ragaini made a motion seconded by Councilmember Mary H. Brandow to approve the **Town Clerk's Report for September 2023, as presented**. Ayes-5 (Pirrone; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Highway Superintendent John J. Farrell reported that the tractor is up and running. He will be ordering salt.

He also stated that he is aware of the Battery Disconnect procedure (written by Nymir), is being worked on. Most of the Highway equipment have been fitted with the battery disconnect, a few of the newer machines come already equipped with this.

Councilmember Paluch asked if the Battery Disconnects are audible and was told no.

John informed the Board members that the highway crew has been doing in-house training.

He is applying for a Grant from the Community Foundation for 2 cameras for each of the snowplows, the sweeper, and the other vehicles. There are 6 trucks. This is being done for preventative actions.

Code Enforcement Officer Albert Gasparini gave his September 2023 Report to the Board.

He reported that there were 5 new building permits.

He did 17 building inspections.

Building Permit Inquiries: He had Multiple Inquiries of parcels of land to build homes, Residential Solar Panels, Accessory Structure for a house.

Battery Energy Storage System (B.E.S.S.) looking at properties on Leeds Athens Road and West of Route 9W.

He had two inquiries about the reopening of the Old Green Lake Resort. One to open as a resort, one as a resort and small housing development on the undeveloped part of the property.

There were two Certificates of Compliance: one roof-mounted solar array and one a wraparound deck.

There was one Short Term Rental Certificate.

Violations: On-going.

1540 Leeds Athens Road, Violation of Property Maintenance Code of New York State, Chapter 3 General Requirements, 304.7 Roofs and drainage, 305.3 Interior surfaces. The next Court date is September 28,2023, at 2:00 P.M.

The landowner was fined \$800.00 and is seeking a building permit.

1030 Leeds Athens Road, the house has been vandalized and is vacant, and is Red Tagged as Dangerous and Unsafe. Owned by Wells Fargo Bank saying they would take care of it. No work has been started as yet: 10/13/23.

Discussion followed: (Attorney and Albert) Before any building permit is issued the owner needs to pay the fine. Make sure the electric is turned off, document and bill against owner. This is a danger to the public. The County needs to be notified.

Violation of the keeping of animals for Garry Owen Road. Chickens and a turkey were grazing on neighbor's property and going on the front and rear decks. Garry Owen took care of the matter.

The Board reviewed **Assessor Dawn DeRose's written Report.**

The office has processed the following: Town Permits:	2
Village Deeds:	4
Town Deeds:	18
Village Map Revisions:	4
Town Map Revisions:	4

They are continuing to update their files, adding pictures, verifying data, filing, collecting data on the Village and Town building for valuation for the 2024 assessment roll, including the Split/Merges, will be on going throughout the year.

The Village Sales range from \$150,000 -\$300,000. * Not including the conditional deeds.

The Town sales range from \$38,500 - \$500,000. * Not including the conditional deeds.

The renewals for the Agricultural and Non-Profit exemptions, which need to be filed with the Assessor's Office, on or before March 1st, taxable status. They plan to send out the renewals for the Senior Citizens along with the Persons with Disability with limited income. They are waiting for the last filed deeds from the County, which will be processed for the January Town/County tax bills.

Financial/Budget Officer Donald Pierro reported that all financial activity for January 1st through September30, 2023, has been recorded in the General Ledger with no exceptions.

The "B" Fund operates typically at a small operational loss due primarily to legal expenses for Article 78 proceedings. Currently there are three new Article 78 stemming from both Freepoint and Flint Mine Solar/ZBA.

An audit has been completed for Highway Union Medical Insurance compliance and are still awaiting a resolution from the Teamster Union. We have requested the Town Attorney work with us on the renewal of the expiring Highway Union Contract but have not yet scheduled any time.

The Summary of Cash and a Combining Balance Sheet are updated and attached to the rear of the monthly Statement of Activities report.

All Operating and Reserve Bank Statements and Cash Reconciliations were completed for the month ending September 2023 with no exceptions noted. Copies of statements and reconciliations were turned over to the Audit Firm for review.

We provided written notice to four employees to complete a waiver form for Town insurance to comply with the Medical Buy-out policy. To date he has received three completed forms with one refusal.

The September Monthly Retirement Report was prepared, filed timely, and accepted as submitted without exceptions.

Supervisor Pirrone has given the go-ahead to allow our resident taxpayers to pay for Real Estate Taxes via Credit Card. These services were purchased via the NYS Office of General Services (OGS). When a Town purchases goods or services via an OGS contract, those goods and services are deemed fully vetted and bid on in satisfaction of all New York State bidding rules to achieve full compliance. This new policy will begin with the tax bills starting January 2024. A special thanks to the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Bookkeeper to the Supervisor for their diligence in developing this opportunity.

Mr. Pierro stated that Highway Resolution was needed to authorize a transfer of excess Highway project funds to the Highway Equipment Reserves.

On the motion of Councilmember Mary H. Brandow seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner the following **RESOLUTION # 2023-48** was adopted as follows:

Resolution to Approve the Transfer of Excess Town of Athens Highway Project Cash to Highway Equipment Reserves:

WHEREAS The Town Board of the Town of Athens hereby determines that it is in the public interest and purpose to approve the transfer of excess Highway project funds to the Highway Equipment Reserves and;

WHEREAS The Town of Athens Town Board authorizes the funding in anticipation of the 2024 equipment purchases as part of the overall spending plan for Highway Equipment as previously approved by the Town Board and,

WHEREAS this Board Resolution permits the transfer of Highway Projects Cash to Highway Equipment Reserve Funds for these allowable expenditures in the amount of sixty-eight thousand one hundred fifty-three dollars and two cents (\$68,153.02) and,

WHEREAS said Funds are held in the National Bank of Coxsackie, Athens, NY 12015 and are liquid and available for immediate use once authorized by the Town Board and,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Board of the Town of Athens hereby authorizes the transfer of excess Highway project funds to the Highway to the Highway Equipment Reserve in the amount of \$68,153.02 for use of 2024 Highway Equipment purchases. That said approved expenditures are in compliance with the original intent of said Highway Equipment Reserve funds. That such Town Board approval is further evidenced by the majority consensus appearing below, and that the foregoing resolution shall become effective upon the execution of the signature of the Town Clerk.

Adopted as follows: Ayes-5 (Pirrone; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0
Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Lee Palmateer's Notice of Claim against Greene County Industrial Development Agency; New Athens Generating Company, LLC; Paul J. Goldman; County of Greene; Catskill Central School District; and the Town of Athens, will be sent to the Towns' insurance carrier.

Supervisor's Report: General Items.

Dangerous & Unsafe Property:

Supervisor Michael N. Pirrone reported that a Notice of Violation/Order to Remedy was sent to Wells Fargo Bank Association in Westbury, NY 11590, for the following: 1030 Leeds Athens Road, an apparent violation of the Zoning /Building Laws exists on this property. The building is vacant, door and windows broken. Household debris scattered in the house and around the property. The owners are directed and ordered to comply with the law and to remedy the condition above on or before October 26, 2023.

NYS Fire Code section 311.1 states-Vacant Premises: General. Temporarily unoccupied, structures, premises or portions thereof, including tenant spaces, shall be safeguarded and maintained.

Town Attorney George McHugh suggested that this building be boarded up so no one can get hurt. He also suggested taking this building down and adding the costs to the taxes of the owner, Wells Fargo.

Memo received from Greene County Administrator RE: a Greene County-Wide Ambulatory System. The County will be undertaking a review of the County EMS response and transport system. This evaluation is centered on both the ALS and BLS capacity within the County and its future.

The Legislature will be interviewing consultants within the next few weeks in anticipation of a contract award in the November cycle. **The Legislature will also convene a task force.**

Supervisor Pirrone also presented Federal Year 2024, Damages Required For Disaster Declaration thresholds effective October 1, 2023, for Homeland Security and Emergency Services for every County in New York State.

Training for Planning Officials presented by the NY Department of State in cooperation with Columbia County Planning Department, Greene County Economic Development, Tourism & Planning. This will be held Thursday October 26, 2023 at the Columbia-Greene Community College Room #614, in Hudson, NY.

Supervisor Pirrone presented the 2024 Catskill Ambulance for signing.

Councilmember Michael Ragaini made a motion seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner authorizing the Supervisor to sign the 2024 Catskill Ambulance Contract. Ayes-5 (Pirrone; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Supervisor Michael N. Pirrone also received a letter from Greene County Emergency Medical Systems that their budget for year 2024, has been increased by 12.8%. The important item is a pay increase for their paramedics in order to offer competitive wages. The County will be paying 85% of the total budget. A bill for the first one-third of the Town of Athens 2024 contribution will be sent in late December of this year.

There will be a Public Hearing on Central Hudson's proposed 31.9% increase in base delivery revenues. The hearing will be held on Tuesday October 17, 2023, starting at 1:30 pm at the Robert Antonelli Senior Center, Catskill, NY.

The Athens Community Food Pantry is seeking financial assistance from the Town of Athens to help purchase food from the Northeast Regional Food Bank. Their monthly cost to the Food Bank is on the average of \$1950. The bulk of the cost is meats, cereals, juices and paper products such as toilet paper.

Councilmember Anthony Paluch made a motion seconded by Councilmember Michael Ragaini to contribute \$500 to the Athens Community Food Pantry. Ayes-5 (Pirrone; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

A motion was made by Councilmember Michael Ragaini seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner authorizing the Supervisor to sign a letter of engagement with John Dowd. Ayes-5 (Pirrone; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Patrick Doyle of Flint Mine Solar, gave an update of the Project to date. He told the Board that he expects the Project to begin construction possibly in April of 2024. He doesn't expect construction to be complete until late 2024 or early 2025. Utility hook ups will probably be done Earlier, and a substation will be built.

Resident Karen Dudley asked about the cable from Canada to New York City. She was told that the only information that we have is in the binder that they sent to us. People may come in and look at it.

Resident George Greiner spoke about Battery Storage, and how he had read that one of these facilities exploded and caught fire. The firefighters protective gear had chemicals from the smoke and batteries on them. This was a bad fire due to all the chemicals that came from the batteries the had been exposed to the fire.

Discussion followed on battery storage facilities and a local law to protect the Town and the residents.

As there was no further business come before the meeting, **a motion to adjourn was made by Councilmember Shannon Spinner** seconded by Councilmember Mary H. Brandow. Ayes-5 (Pirrone; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm.