

**Village of Walden  
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting  
February 20, 2024**

Mayor Ramos called the regular meeting of the Village of Walden Board of Trustees to order at 6:30pm.

On roll call the following were:	Mayor:	John Ramos
Present:	Deputy Mayor	Willie Carley
	Trustees	Becky Pearson
		Chris Batson
		Kristie Hall
		Ralph Garrison Jr

Absent: Patricia Maher

Also Present:	John Revella, Village Manager
	Marisa Kraus, Village Clerk
	David Donovan, Village Attorney

**Village Manager's Report**

**Manager Revella:** We've had a couple little snowstorms. DPW Super did well clearing. So did the Parks Department. Couple minor little things that were handled. Went over a couple of FOILs with the attorneys. Just waiting for some documents to go over for a couple new FOILs. Chief and I reviewed some candidates for dispatch and parking enforcement. They got their hire packets, so hopefully they'll be introduced next meeting. Met with the Building Department as well on some updates for code issues and snow removal. The mayor and I did have a meeting with the treasurer candidate that accepted the position. Jean Degon, starting on the 26th. She'll be at the next board meeting to be introduced to the public. Went over sewer plant updates with the DPW Superintendent and the Village Engineer and schedule for improvements. It looks like we're going forward with the idea to have a tunnel to go from Tin Brook Pump Station to the plant. It seems to be the easiest route and the most efficient long term to get done without having these issues with the DEC. That's what we're planning to do. Covered for DPW when Super had some time off. Nothing too crazy. I did go over the riverfront project with the Village Engineer. The bids will be out on Thursday of this week. Also met with the Village Engineer and the flooring company for Village Hall. That's a big discussion. They're on state bid. Likely will be within the \$100-120,000 range for all 3 floors to get done. The biggest issue is because of the office floors and a couple of other floors in the building being unlevelled, they'll need more time to put leveler in to make them ADA compliant. It'll likely be closed for a week during that time when it gets done. That's throwing everything out, dumping everything, leveling everything. How are you gonna get in here? If there's no floor? You can't walk on the floor. We'll be remote likely for that week. Then the second floor and the first floor should only be a few days. Not as long as up here, because they're mostly level. The majority of floors are concrete down below. It shouldn't be much of an issue on those two floors. I had a conference with the Village Attorney and our insurance agent to look at a couple potential claims that I talked about with the board from power surge and sewer overflow and the leak with the elevator from last week. So the board is aware, I did get and sign the quote from the elevator company to get that repaired as soon as possible. It's \$11,628. Rec Department, indoor pickleball is going well. Basketball is going well. 152 kids participating. Adult gym is going well. Easter Egg Hunt is scheduled for March 23rd. Scout Cabin work is ongoing. Building Department,

Inspector issued 13 new permits and 6 violations for snow removal from the last storm. Code Enforcement Officer, started today so you'll see her running around. She'll be introduced at the next meeting. The part time inspector did issue a CO, two certificates of compliance. Did some fire and safety inspections, assisted in violation notices, and advised that there's been no progress on 35-37 North Montgomery Street to date. Clerk's been updating Facebook, website, FOILs, handicap requests, resident complaints responses and getting ready for upcoming election. Finance has been working on invoices with me, Edmunds, bank reqs, accruals and vouchers. There are some more vouchers in the room, make sure you sign those when you get a chance. Public Works working on vehicles and equipment as needed. Cleaning and checking the sewer stations. Water Department has done 11 mark outs, replaced 5 meters, 4 endpoints, did an inspection and 2 closings. Public Works obviously cleared the streets and sidewalks from snow storms. Also had a water main break on 208 near Squire Village, and are continuing to flush and jet. Police Department still looking at applications, but we did get another part timer in. We got a part time dispatcher and a part time parking enforcement officer now. We're working on scheduling for that. There were 33 traffic tickets issued. 15 parking tickets. There was 7 cars towed from those. There were 5 parking lot tickets and 5 cars towed from when they were cleaning the lots. Been 3 MVAs and 6 arrests, and there was 242 blotters.

**Trustee Pearson:** Police Department. I'm reading parking enforcement candidates. We have some. How many did we have?

**Manager Revella:** There were 2 that were vetted. 1 was hired.

**Trustee Pearson:** When do they start?

**Manager Revella:** We're trying to work on the schedule now.

**Trustee Pearson:** Will they have just not weekday morning schedule? Will it be weekend? Afternoons? Different schedules for these people, I hope.

**Manager Revella:** It'll be a flexible schedule that we can manipulate as needed. They are aware that it's not just Monday through Friday.

**Trustee Pearson:** Correspondence with the comptroller. Do you have anything to report on that?

**Manager Revella:** No. Been responding as we can. Marisa has been helping. I've been finding some stuff for them, depending on what they're asking for. For personnel files and really just going through payroll.

**Trustee Pearson:** And while I'm talking about audits, we had RBT's audit come back and you said that we're not going to have them come before us.

**Manager Revella:** You are. I asked them when. I don't know because they plan on doing 22 and 23 together. You said maybe do one now and one later. I asked them when they can come.

**Trustee Pearson:** We paid for 22.

**Manager Revella:** We paid for both.

**Trustee Pearson:** We might as well get the update on 22 and when they do 23, get that done.

**Manager Revella:** Fine. I asked them for a date.

**Trustee Pearson:** For next meeting.

**Manager Revella:** I don't know. They're in the middle of their crunch right now.

**Trustee Pearson:** What's up with the electric charging station?

**Manager Revella:** I'm waiting for American Electric to come and make sure everything's connected properly so we can get it running. NYSEG ran the line and put a meter, but they haven't put it on yet. I'm asking the company to come. We've asked them.

**Trustee Pearson:** You talked about the elevator and you said as soon as possible. What does that mean to me?

**Manager Revella:** Whenever the parts come in, they don't know.

**Trustee Pearson:** Does this village board need to make a second recommendation for election that's going to be on the first floor of this building?

**Manager Revella:** Yes.

**Trustee Pearson:** Maybe we should talk about that tonight sometime during the meeting or at the end.

**Attorney Donovan:** You adopted a resolution, I assume designated third floor. If it's not going to be here, you need a motion and a resolution to put it someplace else.

**Manager Revella:** As an alternate location.

**Trustee Pearson:** How soon does that have to be done? Don't you have to let the county know that as well?

**Attorney Donovan:** Where are they going to put the voting machines? But yes, you need to let the county know so they don't put the machines in the wrong room.

**Manager Revella:** We have had it on the first floor in the past. If we need to, that's a potential.

**Trustee Pearson:** You said for the plan for the pump station is the tunnel. Do you have a time frame for that?

**Manager Revella:** No, we have the funding. It's just a matter of getting the plans approved. He's got to get it drafted for that route. The DEC asked us to do it a certain way, and we did plans for that. And then they said, can you do it some other way after they made us do it that way. So now we're trying alternate methods based on our conversations with them.

**Trustee Pearson:** They're not happy with the tunnel.

**Manager Revella:** They didn't say that. They told us to deal with the storage tank on site. We did plans for a storage tank on site and showed them what it would look like because of the topography is so hard. They're like, oh, we don't like that. So now we're going to try something else.

**Trustee Pearson:** When we did the smoke testing, what is the next step after you do the smoke

testing is?

**Manager Revella:** They evaluate the locations that had smoke infiltrations to determine what the source was, to determine who's responsible for making repairs, if any, and try to get funding for them.

**Trustee Pearson:** The contractor gives you a report on what needs to get done and then we have to figure out how to rectify?

**Manager Revella:** Whether it's our own utility intrusion or private construction, we have to determine which is which and who is responsible. I have the engineer working on cost per foot now for our capital projects for this budget, so we can start working on ours because we know that we do have some catch basins connected.

**Trustee Pearson:** Last meeting you talked about silt fencing. What's happening?

**Manager Revella:** GT is putting up the silt fencing. I'll ask him when.

**Trustee Hall:** 35-37 North Montgomery, I see no progress. Has updated with any kind of letter, email, anything?

**Manager Revella:** I don't recall seeing any letters or anything else. May have emailed the Building Department, but I didn't see anything happening. He said in an email that he was having the guy go to make sure it's safe and people can get in, but I didn't see anything actually done on the site.

**Trustee Hall:** The whole back is wide open.

**Manager Revella:** That's what his email said.

**Trustee Hall:** And that was after the Covid thing.

**Manager Revella:** Yeah, it was after.

**Trustee Garrison:** I like that there's more activity on the police reporting. That's good. I like to see the numbers coming up. Means they're out there doing what they need to do. Also, they're having issues with the feed. I don't know if anybody can look into that. It's cutting in and out. They're having a hard time with it. Just wanted to put that out there.

**Trustee Batson:** The flooring you say is going to come in roughly around 120K. Do you recall what we budgeted for that?

**Manager Revella:** We were talking about 105 last time.

**Trustee Batson:** A little higher than anticipated. Any resolution from the insurance claims potential with the power outage?

**Manager Revella:** We talked about on Thursday. The insurance company was being notified about a different potential claims. I just got numbers today on two of them that I sent to them. They're waiting for those numbers.

**Trustee Batson:** Is there a potential, though, that they cover any portion of that?

**Manager Revella:** Yes. All three of those items are potentially covered.

**Trustee Batson:** I know that some of the power stuff we talked about was upwards of 50 grand a week. Do we pay that out and then we recoup it through an insurance claim?

**Manager Revella:** That's right.

**Trustee Batson:** Highway Department, he talks about calling for pricing for new vehicles and stuff like that. I just simply don't recall. Is that proposed budget items for next year?

**Manager Revella:** Correct. 2024-2025. It's due now.

**Trustee Batson:** I notice, oddly, there's a stump grinder in there which came up randomly enough of us grinding stumps that something that we're going to pursue on roads. I know there were some restrictions.

**Manager Revella:** Instead of renting a stump grinder when we need it, if we have the attachment, we don't need to rent it. We can make it happen when time allows, instead of trying to schedule and then have weather problems or personnel problems. It will be cheaper.

**Trustee Batson:** But it will not still give us the ability to grind some of the more stumps that people are more outspoken about because there's still sitting on gas lines or something like that.

**Manager Revella:** Correct.

**Trustee Garrison:** It's not an attempt to remedy that. It's just simply a cost reducing strategy to get away from rentals.

**Manager Revella:** Correct.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Back to the smoke test, what is the average cost for the homeowner before?

**Manager Revella:** I don't know. Depends on what the problem is. If they have gutters connected or if they have the actual sewer line or drain lines. Depends on what's connected. Depending on the cost. If it's just one sump pump connected, maybe they can just disconnect it, put it somewhere else. Some things may be a little more costly. Because they have to run a whole drain line all the way to the road to the drain in the road. That's a lot more money. Have to figure that out.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** You say tunnel, When I think of tunnel, I think of like you drive a car through, but it's just a little hole for the sewer.

**Manager Revella:** The one from Tin Brook to the plant. It's like three feet in diameter. It's an encasement and then through that goes the regular pipe. The pipe is probably 30in depending on what he designs. I'm not sure. But I know it's a three foot wide tunnel.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I know before we had, I think a picture or two saying, the route for. Are you going to provide another one?

**Manager Revella:** It's going to go directly from the Tin Brook straight down Bradley Lane. Previously it through our easement, it goes between a couple houses and down around the corner. It's doesn't make sense to go through those bends when you can go down the road straight.

Especially with a tunnel like that. It's that deep and that wide. It'd be less cost effective.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** It's going to disrupt a lot of traffic. Have some ticked off individuals. The Comp Plan Committee, I didn't read it in the minutes. Did we say when we're going to do that?

**Manager Revella:** Yeah. That the manager is going to contact the members to get a date that everyone's available. I reached out to all the members. It's an email.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Maybe I missed it. I don't check my emails all the time. Thank you, I appreciate it.

**Mayor Ramos:** We'll have a letter E, on the agenda, alternate location for election. We can discuss that and make an adjustment.

**Trustee Garrison:** With the claim to going in for the power outages, does that include the PD air conditioning system?

**Manager Revella:** We're not sure if that is covered by warranty yet or not. It might be.

### **Approval of February 6, 2024**

Trustee Hall made a motion to approve the February 6, 2024 minutes with corrections. Seconded by Trustee Batson. 5 ayes. 1 abstention (Trustee Garrison). Motion carried.

### **Public Comment**

**Mary Ellen Matise:** Just checking to see if everybody got the material that I sent about the bikeways? John is the resolution to OCTC or to the county?

**Manager Revella:** It's just in support of the Orange County Bikeway Vision.

**Mary Ellen Matise:** So I can send it to both. Thanks.

### **Double Utility Poles**

**Attorney Donovan:** After last meeting I made some modifications, as directed by the board. You have a track change version of that which shows the changes. I did have some communication from Trustee Pearson, with a couple other suggestions.

**Trustee Pearson:** On 132 at the very beginning, letter A, it talks about rights of way facilitative delivery. I want him to add the sidewalks into that. He added the sidewalks into the other ones. But I think wherever it talks about rights of way we should have the sidewalks in there as well. The second one was on the next page, letter H, sidewalks in that as well. Then on the next page 132-4. I asked Dave about, it says the plant must be removed within 30 days or subject to penalties, and I asked 30 days from when? I think we should put something in there when the 30 days starts. It doesn't say that.

**Attorney Donovan:** The way it reads now the Superintendent of Public Works will provide written notice to the public utility, which has the top plant of the double pole that the plant must be removed within 30 days. I read that to be 30 days from the notice. I think Trustee Pearson has said, let's use a belt and suspenders and let's say that the notice provides the 30 days, right? So it's 30 days on the day of the notice. No issue with that at all. That's absolutely fine.

**Trustee Pearson:** That was on the letter B as well. 15 days from what? On letter C, the next one down at the very bottom, the last sentence failing to comply with the requirements of this position

may, but I want will or shall. I don't care which one you put in there.

**Attorney Donovan:** I think that's consistent with other changes that were recommended at the last meeting I just missed that one.

**Trustee Pearson:** That's okay. I just spoke to Dave about 132-6 the penalties, but letter A and B. One is \$1,000 and the next one down is \$250. I would just say make them all consistent at \$1000, because the board wanted them to be raised up from \$250 to \$1000.

**Attorney Donovan:** It was the pole for \$1000, the plant, the equipment for \$250. No issue at all with making each \$1000.

**Trustee Pearson:** The one pole goes in and that's the telephone line at the top. And then other pole can sit there forever until somebody decide they want to take their lines down and you still have two poles there. That's how I look at that. Letter D, I don't know if you understood what I wrote there, Dave. I wrote will cost paid by the violator. Can we get our court cost?

**Attorney Donovan:** Our court costs are not going to be recoverable.

**Trustee Pearson:** On letter A on the next page, 132-7.

**Attorney Donovan:** I missed a sidewalk.

**Trustee Pearson:** Yeah, sidewalk. That's all I had.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** On the first page is says chapter 132 Double Utility Poles G. For clarification, for me, it says enacting this chapter the Village Board deems this chapter to be an exercise of the police power of the Village of Walden.

**Attorney Donovan:** Not meaning law enforcement. Go back to the beginning of the country. Power that was reserved to the government was the police power, their inherent power to adopt legislation. It's different from law enforcement.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I just need clarification. I understand, but if I read it in police powers. Is there another way we can word it?

**Attorney Donovan:** I could cite inherent power.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Thank you, sir. I want to say thank you for the, the extra information. That was very helpful.

**Mayor Ramos:** Most of these zombie poles, still maintain some electric or wiring. On Wait Street there are eight poles that still maintain some form, the new pole is a lot higher than where the wires are going to be situated. Is that pole because the pole was erected that's brand new, is a secondary pole, a zombie pole?

**Manager Revella:** Yes.

**Mayor Ramos:** Even though that there's lines still running.

**Manager Revella:** That's been the problem. The electric company comes and switches the lines over. Cable and phone won't. They just sit there.

**Mayor Ramos:** Does that indicate anything in our new legislation?

**Manager Revella:** That's the premise of it. Yes.

**Attorney Donovan:** The question now is, do you want me to put it in final form for one last look? Or do you want to schedule public hearing?

**Mayor Ramos:** Schedule public hearing.

**Trustee Pearson:** I'm good if that all changes.

**Attorney Donovan:** What I can do is, I can accept the changes I made before, highlight the new changes. You get it one last time.

**Manager Revella:** There may be changes after the public hearing too.

**Trustee Pearson:** You have to publish a public hearing. It cost money to do that. I'm pretty comfortable with what I just said. If everybody's in agreeance with it, that's up to you guys.

**Mayor Ramos:** Schedule a public hearing. Everybody agreed?

**All:** Yes.

Trustee Garrison made a motion to schedule a public hearing for introductory to local law for Double Utility Poles. Seconded Trustee Hall.

**Trustee Pearson:** I want to just confirm that you did tell me that this is for when this goes through and if it does go through, any pole from before, it has to be fixed as well.

**Attorney Donovan:** Where that that would be true. It applies to existing poles. That doesn't mean there's not going to be some sort of dispute, discrepancy, fight.

**Trustee Pearson:** Do we need to put that in the law that historically older poles that are not just be replaced after this law, should we put that in there?

**Attorney Donovan:** Sure I can.

**Trustee Batson:** This process appears to start when we issue or whatever language is outlined in 132-4 where we issue some sort of citation or notice. Have we made those notices for after the adoption of this, we have some sort of commitment to ourselves to identify all the zombie poles and push notifications out at once? Or do these notifications already exist?

**Manager Revella:** Our Edmunds program has a notification system. We would just cite which code we're referencing for the violation and the date, time, location.

**Trustee Batson:** Currently the zombie poles that we are concerned with, have no notifications.

**Manager Revella:** Correct.

**Trustee Batson:** Not that it is a property of this particular document, but it may be worth some sort of notation that once this is adopted, that is to be executed soon thereafter.



**Manager Revella:** You mean, like noticed?

**Trustee Batson:** I don't know how to express it. Once this is adopted, we can obviously put it in full effect, but it only becomes relevant if we actually take these steps to make the notice. We have not made the notices yet, which is fine. It's not going to do anything without this document on it. However, once this is passed, but we get a commitment from you or from the Department of Public Works to make those notifications immediately.

**Manager Revella:** Or as designee.

**Trustee Batson:** Or as designated. Yes. So we can get ball rolling. I want to see the action on this.

**Manager Revella:** We cannot do anything until it's passed by the board and 14 days with the Secretary of State.

**Trustee Batson:** 14 days after this, the meeting after that, I would love to see the manager's report that the DPW has initiated.

**Attorney Donovan:** There's been notification about the pole located at this place subject to this legislation.

**Trustee Batson:** Yes. Not contingent on passing this document. Just trying to add to the discussion of it that we actually execute on once it is passed.

### **Village Code Updates**

**Attorney Donovan:** I want to thank Marisa for putting all the minutes together from all the meetings. I commend you all for working so diligently on this. What I'd like to get, though, is some sort of process. So we're not spinning wheels. I'm not giving you something that you don't want. I provide you what you want from me. Ultimately, if you're looking to change, make up a number, chapter 22, paragraph A, would be a local law, to change it from whatever is now to what you want it to be in the future. As I went through the minutes of all the meetings, I would see something like, that's a note to take for Dave question. I had that question down for Dave and so on. I don't know if you want me to address those questions in writing. We take up certain say we go on the agenda for chapters, almost like what you guys did. I guess I want to make sure that we have an agreed upon process that sufficient where I provide you with what you want to update your code. What I didn't see in here is what I just talked about. First, is we want you to change x to y. There was a lot of discussion but there was no motion to change anything. Maybe you didn't want to do that. I just want to make sure that what I produce to you is what you want and we have a productive interchange to make sure that the code looks good. I guess I'm looking for a little direction.

**Trustee Batson:** Do you want it to be done in a public forum? Do you want some sort of secondary meeting that we roundtable?

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** We did everything in that work session.

**Attorney Donovan:** If you meet as a quorum of the board and you're going to discuss village business, it's open to the public. Public doesn't have to comment, but they have to see what you're doing. That's the basic intent of open government. I'll do whatever you want. I kind of had an idea going into this that I would produce like a draft local law, but I don't think that's the way this ended up. I think that would be inefficient.

**Trustee Pearson:** I think what you're asking is, what do you want to see us tell you?

**Attorney Donovan:** Right.

**Trustee Pearson:** John took notes on that where we wanted like a sentence change or thought process.

**Manager Revella:** I gave him copies of my notes. He just wants to make sure, I think it is what you're asking for his responses to those, and then to figure out if you want to make a change or not.

**Trustee Pearson:** It doesn't mean you have to put it in a form yet. But when we go back through that, maybe like whatever it is, 132.5 or whatever it is we might have a comment. What about changing from day to night? Then we're looking can we do that? Should we do it? What are your thoughts on it? Maybe I think I was just looking for. I'd have to go back.

**Attorney Donovan:** Would it work for the board if I went back and like for each set of minutes that you did, for each meeting you attacked certain divisions of the code and I tried to address the issues in writing. Would that be helpful?

**Trustee Pearson:** That'd be great

**Mayor Ramos:** Yes.

**Attorney Donovan:** I'll go back to the June 20th and I'll put together what I think what the issues that were raised and I'll try to address those and then the board can decide whether, hey, we want to change this law, we want you to give us a draft or something.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I need a little bit more. Once you put that in writing we can review it. Then if we have questions, come and we all have a dialog about it. Even though you put it in writing, there may still be a question about it.

**Attorney Donovan:** I thought it would be an agenda item. I would give you at this meeting you discussed the following. Here are my comments. And then it would be agenda item on your meeting to have a discussion where you may decide, we want you to prepare a draft of a local law for us to look at or perhaps maybe you don't want to make any change. But not that it would be in writing just to go and it would be in writing to be an agenda item discussed by the board. Does that work okay?

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** That's great.

### **Resolution in Support – Rail Trail Connectivity to Walden**

**Manager Revella:** Did everybody get a copy of the draft?

**Trustee Pearson:** On the 5th whereas it says designated as section five, John, do you know anything about section five?

**Manager Revella:** Section five is the county plan.

**Trustee Pearson:** Walden to Campbell, but does it give you miles? Nothing.

**Attorney Donovan:** In the document I tried to, I got an email yesterday. In this report from the

County Planning Department, there's different segments where they're trying to attach. I wanted to reference something to Walden. There's a reason why Walden is adopting this resolution in support. Segment 5 talks about Campbell Hall.

**Trustee Pearson:** It doesn't say what part of Walden. The line of Walden or is it going to?

**Attorney Donovan:** I couldn't tell from the map that was attached.

**Manager Revella:** The original plan was to have a trail along the side of the tracks connecting Campbell Hall to the village. That's the plan.

Trustee Pearson made a motion to adopt Resolution in Support of Rail Trail Connectivity to Walden. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Carley. 4 ayes. 2 abstentions (Trustee Garrison & Trustee Batson). Motion carried.

**Trustee Batson:** I'm going to abstain on the basis that this says that it explicitly states that we follow the rules of the Orange County Bikeway Vision provided by the Orange County part of plan in July 2023 in sake of transparency I'm just not familiar with that document. I'm more than happy to research it.

**Trustee Garrison:** I'm just going to go on record. The only reason that I am abstaining at this time is I want to look more into who is going to be responsible for patrolling this area and what the impact is going to be on the already overworked Police Department and all of that. I'm just going to abstain for now until I can get more information on that.

### **Volunteer Tax Exemption**

**Manager Revella:** We've been talking about this for a couple months about when it's required to be passed or not. It's just not completely clear. We do have one on the books now. Dave can talk to what is already on the books in the village. This is just a little change that should take effect by the end of 2025 is what I was told.

**Attorney Donovan:** Currently, you have a 10%, with a cap. I'm just quoting from the existing law, which means that you shall not exceed \$3,000 multiplied by the latest equalization rate. I don't know what that means for the Village of Walden. I can tell you when, I did this in Hamptonburg, we are assessed to do a calculation. It was between \$30 on the low end to \$60 on the high end with the person who qualified for this. You have that in place now. With the new legislation does it eliminates the cap, the \$3,000 multiplied by latest equalization rate. It also establishes two other categories that you can have or not have. That would be unremarried spouse, whose spouse died in the line of duty, who was enrolled with the tax exemption for 20 years or more. You can opt in to those things. You also need to establish the eligibility. You get to establish it between 2 and 5 years of service. The current village lauds five years. You can go down to 2, 3 or 4. That's up to you for eligibility. In terms of the timing, the new law remains in place. The way the village works, we're a little over a year behind because the tax roll is complete July 1. So your village tax go for 24-25 will already be out. So people would have the benefit of the existing exemption. But if you act after but before March 1 of next year then it would be effective on the 25-26 village tax bill. You need to act or not. You don't have to do this, but you need to act by December 25 if you want to have the exemption.

**Trustee Pearson:** It says, in our law right now that we have, it was up to 10%. I don't know what we did with that. I get that 10% is what most people are doing, but it doesn't mean you have to go to 10%. The other thing is 2 to 5 years. We had 5 years before. I would just keep it consistent with 5 years. I don't know about the Fire Department. How many people come and go. I don't know what

happens there. I don't know if they're coming and they stay for a long time. I don't know their turnover rate. It is for only village residents. The 20 year lifetime was fine for me. We need a public hearing on this and how is that going to happen before March 1st?

**Attorney Donovan:** If you wanted to have it before March 1st of this year, you need a special meeting. What I'm reading from your law is that it's 10%. Not up to 10.

**Trustee Pearson:** Maybe the new law says up to 10%.

**Attorney Donovan:** Then the board can set it. The existing law is 10%.

**Trustee Pearson:** Underneath section 3 amendment to the Town Code.

**Attorney Donovan:** I just wanted to let you see what the county did, what I prepared for the Town of Hamptonburg.

**Trustee Pearson:** I have a circle on number 2, this says 2

**Attorney Donovan:** Hamptonburg opt'd for 2

**Trustee Pearson:** We could do 5 or whatever we want to do is what you're saying.

**Attorney Donovan:** 2, 3, 4 or 5

**Trustee Pearson:** Just explain the next one down. Number 3. I think I understand it. Number 3 under 128-13. I had a question about primary residence in another section. To the extent that such real property has uses other than primary residence enrolled member or enrolled member or spouse. Just explain that to me.

**Attorney Donovan:** You have a home occupation or you're renting out space. Say it's a two family. Only the portion that your residence gets the benefit of tax exemption.

**Trustee Pearson:** We would know that because they would have an apartment, that they would have to register with the Building Department. How does that work? This goes to the assessor's office and the town so the assessor doesn't even know that half the time.

**Attorney Donovan:** They may. They may not.

**Trustee Pearson:** All of this goes through the town for the village because we don't have our own assessor.

**Attorney Donovan:** That's correct.

**Trustee Pearson:** The next page over number 5, the last sentence. The entity certification shall be filed annually with the assessor's office on or before 31st. So, it is the assessor's office. Does our clerk have to get anything?

**Attorney Donovan:** No, I think it's the department, not the fire commissioners, but they have to file a certification with the assessor saying, Joe Jones, Mary Jones was a certified enrolled member for this period of time. If they don't get that, then the assessor can't give the exemption.

**Trustee Pearson:** Letter B, underneath that and maybe Kristie can talk to me about that. I didn't

look it up and I don't know where to look at it. What qualifies you to be a member?

**Trustee Hall:** In Walden, we have our district in our department, but you have to be a member of the district. If you're a member of the department, you're a member of the district. The district is the one that had to adopt this. Which they did. What qualifies you to be a member? You have to have your physical. You have to have a certain number of calls, you have to have certain things.

**Trustee Pearson:** There is a form, if we decide to do that, that the member has to fill out that then your district will then take it to the tax assessor.

**Trustee Hall:** I believe that there is a form that I saw online and correct me if I'm wrong, there is a form that I'm going to have to fill out for my property. Yes. Then the district has to also submit, which I believe they do, submit names and how long you've been a member. The commissioners.

**Trustee Pearson:** They have to be active members?

**Trustee Hall:** Yes. We have active and non-active or social department. But as far as district, I believe there's active and not active. To be an active member, you have to have so many calls, you have to have a physical, you have to complete your OSHA for the year. You have to do all that and you have to do it in a timely manner. If you don't do it by the end of the year, then you go inactive and then you don't get certain benefits. You have to keep up with it.

**Trustee Pearson:** The primary residence, that to me is an issue only because we have people and have many residences. Do they call them all primary residences? You might have rentals.

**Trustee Hall:** I think your primary is where you're license.

**Trustee Pearson:** I just didn't know how restrictive.

**Trustee Hall:** For many of you who don't realize, or don't know, the Walden Fire District adopted this or approve this back in February of 2023, for 10%. The Valley Central School District approved it in January of 24 for 10%. Montgomery, Maybrook and Coldenham Fire Districts have approved it. I know Town of Montgomery, I believe is going tomorrow night to do their meeting and from my understanding, they're going to go forward with it. I believe Village of Montgomery had discussed it and is doing a special public hearing to work on this. I know currently it is 5 years. But right now the volunteer service is hurting and it's very hard to get. Nobody wants to get up at 2:00 in the morning. Let's be honest. And it's hard to get people. Having this I think is going to help. It's going to give that little extra incentive to get people to want to do something, to want to help, to want to get that little bit of extra off on your taxes. Right now, I believe in the village, there's 29 members that would be eligible for this. If you're doing the math, if you're working the numbers out, I believe from listening to Bob Reynolds over in Montgomery, it's like buying your volunteer chief cup of coffee for the year. It's not going to cost much. It's pennies per volunteer.

**Manager Revella:** You're saying it's 29 more people than already are exempt under our code?

**Trustee Hall:** No, 29 members.

**Manager Revella:** They already qualify or currently get 10% exemption under our code now. It wouldn't be any different that you're aware of?

**Trustee Hall:** No. It's not going to change. It's not going to make any difference monetary wise. They're already there. I understand that it says that you can wait till for 2025 and I know I can't

make the motion. I can't vote on anything. I understand that, but coming from the volunteers. If there's any way to make this happen, the earlier the better for them. I would like to see that happen. It's not just the fire company. This is also ambulance workers. I don't know if you guys were aware of that as well. The other difference was, I believe it extended to the unmarried surviving spouses. Which I think is a great idea. You're there for 20 something years and God forbid something happens to your spouse still gets that discount. And it's not necessary to reapply. So once you have it, you have it. Kind of like the STAR.

**Attorney Donovan:** I'm not necessarily sure about that, Kristie, because there has to be at least a certification.

**Trustee Hall:** Right, but I believe the district and maybe I read it wrong. I believe the district has to send that list to the assessor's office. So, I don't have to reapply every year. But as long as I'm on that list, they see that. Does that make sense? I could be wrong.

**Attorney Donovan:** I thought you had to reapply. There at least has to be a certification from the fire company.

**Trustee Hall:** I can double check into that, but maybe I misread it.

**Mayor Ramos:** I was under the impression that once the certification, giving them the exemption and they provide their hours and their as a member, that certification was a document that's accepted by the assessor's office as a true document that provides 10%. But you can review that if you'd like.

**Attorney Donovan:** We have some dialog I'm looking at now. We did have some dialog with town assessor. Going to review what he said.

**Trustee Hall:** I know currently if you don't take the 10% or whatever on your village taxes. You can take it on your income taxes, which I believe is a \$200 deduction there. If you do this part, then you cannot take it on your income taxes. You can't do both.

**Attorney Donovan:** An email from Dennis Ketcham saying that, it requires annual renewal. But maybe it's just the certificate from the fire company.

**Trustee Pearson:** On our code, it said on the exemptions 267-21 letter C, such qualified members files foresaid certificate annually the town assessor's office before the tax status.

**Trustee Hall:** I believe somebody just said that the district does give a list to the office and then they advise the village. I think, I don't know if I just copied this right off of the state page. Once the exemption is granted, the exemption may be continued for authorized period provided the eligibility requirement continues to be satisfied.

**Attorney Donovan:** After the village provides the framework, it's up to the fire district and assessor, whatever needs to be done.

**Trustee Hall:** It's really pennies on the dollar for everybody.

**Trustee Garrison:** I see it in the Hamptonburg one. Do you have an idea of what most municipalities are going with as far as length of time, length of service for eligibility?

**Attorney Donovan:** I can only speak for the ones I know, which are 3 and it's 2 years.

**Trustee Garrison:** Which 3 do you know?

**Attorney Donovan:** Village of Goshen, Town of Goshen and Town of Hamptonburg.

**Trustee Garrison:** Village of Montgomery did 2 years. And I think the school did 3 years for eligibility. I don't see why we should go any more than 2 years. Personally, that's my opinion on it. These are people that are doing this for nothing. They get up middle of the night, they get up out of bed, they leave dinners, they leave their family. It happens. I've seen it. Been a long time family members that have been in the fire services and the EMTs and I'm not going to jump off of everything that Trustee Hall said, but it's very important for me. That's where I stand on it. I don't have any questions regarding it. We're talking about people that are volunteering to run into a burning building and save your home and we're going to give them nothing in return. It just doesn't sit well with me.

**Trustee Batson:** It's not a money issue for us. It's not a revenue impact. It's us showing support. I also don't see why the cap should be at 5 years. The only question I would have, I think Trustee Hall touched on this is that, the extension of benefits to spouses that die in the line of duty. That seems to be pretty common of a great many of benefits in this similar vein. Right? This is really just an extension there. Feels like the only things that we decide on collectively is what is the time frame? Do we allow that particular benefit to be in and then how quickly can we bring this to the next step of resolution, which would be a special meeting or public hearing or something like that? Is that that correct? Those are the three things that we need to focus on. It already exists. All this does is remove the cap and then adjust the time frame if need be and add in the exemption for unmarried spouses.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I'm totally in support for it. I just think the clarity and maybe now with the dialog about the qualified member. Only reason I'm saying that, I had the opportunity to work with the Goodwill Fire Department and just learning some inside stuff and Trustee Hall can help, learn some insights so you can have a person come in and I want to be a volunteer firefighter. They have to go through certain qualifications for that. If they get accepted to be in there, is that considered a qualified or is it after they go through their certifications. I don't know all the lingo in at the levels.

**Trustee Hall:** Once you get accepted, you still have to do certain things. You have to attend a certain amount of fire calls. You have to do OSHA, you have to have a physical. Technically you should attend a certain amount of calls, meetings, drills. That's all part of it.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Based off my limited experience, it was like a person could be, still a firefighter, but they can't be a voting member at that time.

**Trustee Hall:** There are different levels within a department. Right now, we have the district and the department, so there are different levels in the department. I believe this is more at district level. But there are a lot of things once you become a firefighter and there are different things. There's fire police, there's exterior, there's interior. For an interior class, it's over 120 hours right now. So you're getting somebody to take 120 hours within a couple months span at nights and weekends. Right now I'm taking three different classes. Right now, on top of this and working, my kid, I'm taking 3 other classes.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I'm not questioning anything. I'm just saying if we have to, I don't know if we do or don't. The question to me is, let's make sure everyone understands what qualified means versus if somebody says, hey, I want to be a volunteer firefighter and in 2 years say they don't meet their qualifications. What do we do with that?

**Manager Revella:** They won't be on the certified list from the fire district.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Whatever the fire district classify as qualified.

**Manager Revella:** That's correct.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** As a volunteer, not as an interior, exterior?

**Trustee Hall:** Yes, as a member.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Then you have different people. For instance, I'm a Chaplain with the Fire Department. What about the other entities that support?

**Trustee Hall:** Our Chaplain we have VanHouten. He comes in, he does his OSHA. He does his stuff to stay.

**Manager Revella:** But just being a Chaplain is not enough to be a qualified member.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Like you have a secretary, you have somebody else part of the Fire Department and if the ambulance had somebody else who wasn't an EMT or paramedic, would they be considered because it's says department in it?

**Manager Revella:** They'd have to be qualified. They have to meet those qualifications, not just be Chaplain to be Chaplain and do OSHA and do this and do that. Secretary, same thing.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I just want to put that out there because that's what I read, that the person can't just be part of the Fire Department. I don't even know the word for it because we use firefighter, EMS or paramedic. That's what I just wanted to put out there. It can't just be a part of the Fire Department or part of an Ambulance Department.

**Trustee Pearson:** Are Board Members qualified members?

**Manager Revella:** I don't know how our district determines.

**Trustee Pearson:** If I'm looking at the Ambulance Corps. They have a board. Are they board members or are they members of the ambulance?

**Trustee Hall:** Within the district, are you talking about the Board of Fire Commissioners?

**Trustee Pearson:** Ambulance Corps.

**Trustee Hall:** I don't know about them. I don't know what their criteria is for anything.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** That's why I was saying qualified. Because somebody could be a part of the Fire Department, but they're not the ones who actually go to the firefighting work.

**Trustee Hall:** No, but their job is just as important. While we're doing this. Somebody still needs to run the radio. Somebody still needs to get the proper tools and stuff like that. So they're just as important. They have to meet the same criteria that I would to do that. And I would assume that the ambulance workers are the same. I would assume that their board still has to submit a list. I would assume that, but I don't know their situation.



**Trustee Pearson:** Your board are basically members of the Fire Department. I don't think that the Ambulance Corp is the same. I think the Ambulance Corp has members that are volunteering their time to be a board member to run the Ambulance Corps.

**Trustee Hall:** They may have their criteria, their qualifications may be different. I don't know to be honest with you.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I guess that's what I was kicking around in my head about qualifying and then the other side of it and I get it, so my other question is, can we add, others to this? For example, if we got our dispatchers. Say the dispatchers downstairs are not paid, we get volunteer. I'm just putting it out there. Can we add to it or is it just specifically Fire?

**Attorney Donovan:** PD Dispatchers? No. For the taxing authority, we're only allowed to do what the state enables us to do by state legislation. Otherwise we're powerless in terms of taxation.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Say if somebody lives in this district but they work in another, they're not a firefighter here in this district, but they are in another district.

**Attorney Donovan:** They don't get the exemption. To get the Village of Walden exemption, you have to be in the Village of Walden Fire Department.

**Trustee Batson:** Going back to our code review, just a definition on the top there for qualified, would be very helpful, because when I did go back and read this in section.

**Attorney Donovan:** But we don't make that determination. The Fire Department or Ambulance Corp makes that determination.

**Trustee Batson:** We have to just accept what they define as a qualified member.

**Attorney Donovan:** All we're doing is establishing a framework. Then they make the certification to the assessor, who either grants or denies the exemption and then there's a process to appeal that if they want.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Like what Trustee Batson is saying, can say deemed by Fire Department?

**Attorney Donovan:** They have to provide certification annually.

**Trustee Batson:** Going back to Deputy Mayor's comment, sorry to use the Chaplain example again, but if they did say Chaplain was a qualified member, they qualify. We're at their mercy on that discretion.

**Attorney Donovan:** I guess what I'm getting at is ultimately we don't make that determination. We just provide a framework for the exemption between the Fire District, the Ambulance District and the assessor data science.

**Trustee Batson:** I would go back to Trustee Hall. Their role is no less important.

**Mayor Ramos:** I saw that the Town of Hamptonburg adopted this in 2006. The original one. And ours was what year?

**Manager Revella:** 2006

**Attorney Donovan:** Hamptonburg's new one was just January 2024.

**Mayor Ramos:** This should have been done 100 years ago or 50 years ago. I've got no issue with the 10% or the 2 year minimum of being a member. I do have the Ambulance Corps, if you're a member of the Ambulance Corps, is there a distinction of EMT, paramedic that would get the exemption? Just that you're a member.

**Manager Revella:** We don't make those determinations, whoever they said is a qualified member is going to get the exemption. It's up to the Ambulance District to submit the list.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Why did they say 5 years before versus 2?

**Attorney Donovan:** Hamptonburg said 2. The board must have decided for whatever reason.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I'm saying we said 5 also, you said, right?

**Trustee Pearson:** In 2006 it was 5 years. And that law is still current. It's going on until 2025 next December. You have that law still current. It's still active.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I get it. But why did they say 5 versus 2 back then?

**Trustee Pearson:** I don't know if there was even a qualification. Maybe it was 5 that you could do at that time.

**Attorney Donovan:** Hamptonburg did 2, so you could definitely choose whatever.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I agree with 2, but it maybe I was missing something. That's all.

**Mayor Ramos:** Where do we go from here?

**Attorney Donovan:** If you do nothing and wait till after March 1, then the exemption applies this year. Whatever you do, by the way, the village tax bill that comes out in June is unaffected. What's going to apply is the one that's in place now, chapter 267. So, if you want to act before March 1, 2024, then the new exemption, which would eliminate the cap and if you want to reduce to 2 years of service instead of 5, you do a qualified spouse. Then to make that effective on the 25-26 tax bill, you need to have a special meeting because you need to do it before March 1 of this year. If you act after March 1 of 2024, but before March 1, 2025, the new exemption will be on 26-27 tax bill. In the meantime, the current exemption remains in place. If you do nothing, I'm sorry, give you more information. If you do nothing at all. The existing exemption expires December 2025.

**Manager Revella:** Just so everyone's aware, the cap doesn't really affect anyone in the village right now, because you have to have a \$30,000 tax bill and there isn't one right now for any single family home in our Village.

**Attorney Donovan:** If for whatever reason, if you want to do it, then I need to find out when the legal would be in the record because you need to have 3 days in the paper prior to the public hearing. It's really 4 days after it appeared.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Your recommendations sound like we don't have to rush to do this by March 1st.

**Manager Revella:** You need the rush to do it, but you don't have to rush by March 1st. It's not really going to affect anything right now. Everything's in place now that gives the exemption that's necessary that the people qualify for. The only thing is the cap really right now that would affect people that are in our department, otherwise it would change if you effect the years for eligibility.

**Attorney Donovan:** Or if you're unremarried spouse.

**Manager Revella:** Widowed spouse that their husband or wife died in the line of duty.

**Trustee Batson:** Everything you've said is based on folks with 5 years of service. If we enact this immediately, folks with 2 years of service would immediately be eligible.

**Attorney Donovan:** No, they would be eligible in 25-26.

**Trustee Hall:** When I said number, the number 29, it was actually a research number that I just received. I watched Bob Reynolds on Town of Montgomery, Village of Montgomery, and I spoke with somebody who did research and 29 is the accurate number.

**Manager Revella:** For 5 years or 2 years? He didn't say. I don't know either. I am sure it isn't a big difference.

**Trustee Hall:** Everybody was going with 2 years, so I believe it was 2 years.

**Trustee Pearson:** Our exemption is 5 years.

**Manager Revella:** It's firefighters etc. that are property owners in the Village of Walden. We're having an issue with membership. Of that membership. The ones that actually own property in the Village of Walden squeezes that down a lot. There's not a lot of eligible people. It's really budget neutral.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I get it that there's no major rush.

**Manager Revella:** No, but we should hurry up.

**Trustee Hall:** I know I can't make a motion but I would like it.

**Attorney Donovan:** It has to be in the paper for 3 days. I prefer to have it, depending on the paper the 27th.

**Manager Revella:** It's not going to be the paper until at least the 23rd.

**Mayor Ramos:** Are we in for a special meeting for the 27th?

**Manager Revella:** It depends on when it's in the paper.

**Mayor Ramos:** If we shoot it for The Record, it'll be there in the next day.

**Manager Revella:** It's 2 days at least, she says.

**Mayor Ramos:** So 23rd. We would be good for the 27th for a special meeting.

**Attorney Donovan:** If it got in the 23rd.

**Manager Revella:** What time?

**Mayor Ramos:** It'll be just a short agenda item for this public hearing. It's a public hearing. 6 o'clock.

**Attorney Donovan:** It would be 3 local laws.

**Manager Revella:** Is that with consensus?

**All:** Yes.

**Manager Revella:** For Dave's purposes, he can draft it with the 2 years. We'll see what with the public hearing.

Trustee Garrison made a motion to set a public hearing for Local Laws Volunteer Tax Exemption, Unremarried Spouse for February 27, 2024 at 6pm or soon thereafter. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Carley. 5 ayes. 1 abstention (Trustee Hall). Motion carried.

### **Elections Alt Location**

**Mayor Ramos:** We have to discuss an alternate location for elections on March 19th in the event the elevator does not get repaired in time. But hopefully we will exhaust all remedies to try to get it.

**Manager Revella:** I would recommend the first floor of the Village Hall.

**Mayor Ramos:** Where would that be, exactly?

**Manager Revella:** In the library.

**Mayor Ramos:** We have to ask Ginny. It's 8 to 9 p.m.

**Manager Revella:** Correct.

**Trustee Batson:** No opportunity to use the senior center?

**Manager Revella:** We wouldn't want to change the location, location, a physical location. The floors a big enough change.

**Mayor Ramos:** Board of Elections will have to review.

**Manager Revella:** Once we get the parking lot done, maybe.

**Trustee Pearson:** Does it have to be permanent or we can keep it here and that would be our second.

**Manager Revella:** That's the alternate location.

Trustee Garrison made a motion to that the election will be held on the 1st floor of Village Hall in the event that the 3rd floor is unavailable to obstruction. Seconded by Trustee Hall. 5 ayes. 1 abstention (Trustee Pearson) Motion carried.

## **VFW**

**Manager Revella:** I have one minor thing, sir. I apologize. I got a call today and a request today for a loan for the VFW. For them to install a new furnace. It does qualify under a loan program. I just don't have the time constraints for myself to approve. I just need the board's authorization to approve them for a loan. The rest of it is \$17680 for 0% to be paid upon sale. Like we did for the sewer line when we ended up doing that last time. That's up to the board.

**Trustee Pearson:** Why can't you approve it?

**Manager Revella:** Because of the timing. I need the Building Department to go do an evaluation, do a write up and then do bidding. To alleviate those steps because of the emergency situation. I need the board to approve.

**Mayor Ramos:** This is emergency exigent circumstances.

**Manager Revella:** Yes, sir.

Trustee Pearson made a motion to approve the rehab loan for the VFW to repair their furnace system. Seconded by Trustee Garrison. All ayes. Motion carried

## **Public Comment**

**Mary Ellen Matise:** Somebody at Gold's Gym asked me if they would do indoor pickleball on Saturday. Doesn't have to be every Saturday. But people say they can't use Gold's Gym on Saturday, so they are looking for an alternative. Make a little more money for the village. Comp plan meetings. I didn't answer you, but, any day is okay as long as it's not a Village Board meeting or a Town Board meeting or something. You're thinking those will start in March?

**Manager Revella:** Yes.

**Mary Ellen Matise:** The end of March?

**Manager Revella:** Towards the beginning.

**Mary Ellen Matise:** Good, because I'm getting my stuff ready. Budget meetings. When are they going to be?

**Manager Revella:** We'll be setting those at the next meeting.

**Mary Ellen Matise:** Did anybody look into any of those list of property issues that I gave you all? Are we going to discuss some of those properties or look into some of those easements? Right of ways and things like that before they become problems? I just want to, go back and make a couple more comments about school and Mayor Ramos, you're on the committee and I don't know if you've had reported anything to the rest of us, if they've had a meeting or what's going on there, or when the next tour is going to be. I'm just going to leave this with you because to me, some of these comments are kind of concerning, with regards to the village and in fact, I don't see why the school hasn't reached out to the village to set up a public meeting with us, because really, it's their responsibility to do that. Not us tracking them down. When somebody's at the session that we went to says, wouldn't you like a nice circular driveway so that the busses could drop the kids off safely? What does that say to you? When somebody who's connected to the school says to you, well, there's really no room for expansion there. What if we have to expand? What does that say to you? That they're not looking at alternatives to effectively use the space they have, without just thinking about trashing it and building something else? When you look at the ratings of all 4 elementary schools

and I asked somebody, why are the rating so bad? Well, the reading program is so bad. The reading program that they buy is so bad. What does that say to you? Why don't they spend more money on instructional materials rather than certain other things? Why are we in not even the top of the last 50%, but somewhere in the middle of the last 50% as a school district. These are all things that are really concerning and sort of could you could give an indication that an idea is already in the works that they haven't shared with us. I think it's a big concern for the village. And I think we need to be more proactive on it.

**Ellen Hudson:** You had brought up some school data the last time you were here. You had mentioned that in the data that 50% of the children in elementary school are eligible for lunch year. That's a very large number. I think somebody really needs to address that. That's one of the reasons why I actually came down here, because when I heard that, I was shocked and the property taxes and the situation that we're dealing with, with the economy. Thank you for bringing that to everybody's attention. I had come down here last September. I specifically said when I came down here that I don't like coming on to camera. I like my privacy. I don't want to be googled. I made some comments. Then I was in the convenience store and there was an article in the front page of the paper that said Walden residents speak up about police enforcement and my name was on the front page of the paper. That was in the paper. Nobody got back to me about this. Not one person. I went to the police station several times since this. And I'm still having the same problem. My first request is that I have an email here between, Marisa and I from June 28th of 2023. And it was from the FOIL request that I had made because I was looking for my police records in one total. I had never done a FOIL request before. May 18th of 2021, specifically for records of an incident that I had with the police on May 16th, 2021. Where I had people come to my house. They threatened me. I never left my house and I still had the police come to my house and there was a 3 hour incident that happened that day. I had never done a full response before. On 5/18, I put in a FOIL request for what happened on 5/16/21. Ever since then, I have been in a bit of a nightmare when it comes to the Police Department and the village. So my first request is that I had gone back and forth with Marisa because on that first FOIL request, I asked for 3 records. I asked for body cam that was delayed like 9 months. Red tape excuses and then I went back and wanted to look at my full record, because there seems to be a lot of inconsistencies in the data that I'm getting. Misspelled names. Facts are completely falsified. I had gone back and forth with Marisa and I requested that I would like my record in full. The answer that I completely got over and over again was that "I must reiterate that since I have provided all of the records that you have requested in the format in which they exist, there is nothing in the law that requires the creation of an entirely new record or production of an existing record in a format that is different." And then I went back and I argued and I said, this isn't a new record. This is everything in total, which would be a complete different request. I still couldn't get it. It would be a lot easier for me if I could just get my police records in one PDF. How do I go about getting that? Because going back and forth with the Police Chief and whoever else the powers that be here, there was another gentleman that was here, 2 meetings about a meeting ago that had an issue with his employment records with the FOIL and he seemed pretty aggravated. Can I get those? How do I go about that? Just 1 whole PDF of my police records.

**Manager Revella:** I don't have an answer for her.

**Mayor Ramos:** That would be again, the Police Chief.

**Ellen Hudson:** He's not helpful.

**Mayor Ramos:** Then you would have to file a document reiterating getting the information and if there's a refusal, obviously, there is FOIL regulations that we deal with here in New York State. You can talk to the Attorney General. You can talk to county attorney. Talk to that the District Attorney.

**Ellen Hudson:** I get that. We'll get to that. Let's step back. I had put in a FOIL request for 5/18/21. Then I had a family member put in a FOIL request for 6/3/21. How I know this is because that family member got the FOIL request the same day. Like I had mentioned in my article, there seem to be special privileges for some people and privileges for other people. I guess I'm not in that group. That family member got that FOIL request same day and that family member put that FOIL data in the trunk of a car of somebody that I was friends with or somebody in my family. It was pretty obvious that that was put there in case I got pulled over. There was really no way of addressing it, that there's special treatment for this person that gets the FOIL request same day. Then I have to wait 9 months. Then when I get the data is going to be on a CD. Then I had to argue with John I didn't want it on a CD. Then we went back and forth that a CD is still a used media, and that it was perfectly fine, and then he wanted a dollar for the CD. I didn't have this problem.

**Manager Revella:** I didn't want the dollar. That's what the village charges.

**Ellen Hudson:** Then I provided my own CD. But I at the time was a client of Fearless Safe Homes with an active restraining order. And this is the kind of courtesy that I was receiving. The reason why I'm having this issue is because if this is happening to me. I've known you since you were a kid. Then it must be happening to a lot of people. Your answer is that I have to go to the Attorney General or the District Attorney or the Police Chief. Okay.

**Mayor Ramos:** Go to Chief first.

**Ellen Hudson:** Well, that's the problem. See, I went to the police on February 2nd and February 3rd about this ongoing problem. And I'm really gated to the lobby with children walking by, public employees sitting in the chair, listening to all of the information that I shared with the police officer about my ongoing issue. It wasn't resolved, so much so that I filed a complaint with another jurisdiction that this is going on in. I had another false crisis call made on me. It seems that when I complain, they call 311. Then they say that I'm deeply mentally ill and my health insurance is billed for unauthorized stuff that shouldn't be authorized. Now, I was here in October because I had this issue. I went to the Police Chief and he didn't want to talk to me. I ended up on the front page of the paper. Then I was told to go to the District Attorney. I did. He doesn't answer my phone calls. I ended up Facebooking him in November and he replied for me on Facebook back, ask me for my phone number through Facebook Messenger. That's professional. After I didn't answer the first phone call because I didn't realize that it was the District Attorney calling me from my phone number through Facebook. He called me again and he told me that he wanted me to come in and speak with the investigator. Then he never answered my phone calls after that. A couple of weeks ago or 3 weeks ago, there was luckily and unfortunately, the family of Megan McDonald, who was murdered in Middletown in 2003, came out publicly, and they're calling for an FBI probe of DA Huber. So much so that there was actually an article about it this morning. Megan McDonald murder NYPD detectives asked Hochul for probe of unethical, underhanded DA. Now, how am I supposed to go to the DA for my FOIL records if you don't answer my calls and the Police Chief doesn't answer my calls?

**Mayor Ramos:** Then you go to the Attorney General.

**Ellen Hudson:** I have. I actually filed an Attorney General complaint in May of 2023. That was the officer that I spoke about here. And when I was downstairs in the lobby on February 2nd and February 3rd, I had a conversation with Dispatcher Brown, who told me that the officer that I report to the AG retired because he didn't like doing overtime. According to my FOIL records, he gave back a person that was suicidal with bullets that was under a TOP that was never addressed. I'm having a very big issue with Chief Herlihy. So much so that I have reached out to him several times

and he won't deal with me. He won't contact me. He won't address all of the falsified records that are throughout my FOIL or even give me the full document. I haven't heard from him. Do you have any other suggestions besides that? Because, I had to call 911 for my dad on Thursday because this is causing him severe issues. And Friday I called and spoke to Dispatcher Brown and I was on the phone with him for 15 minutes, and he told me there was nobody that I could talk to. It shouldn't be Dispatcher Brown's responsibility. He shouldn't be handling police work. Do you agree with that?

**Attorney Donovan:** So this is just public comment. Let's just leave it at public comment.

**Ellen Hudson:** I can't get my full FOIL out of you. I have to go to the AG. That's number one. That being said, also while I was here. I e-mailed a bunch of people on the board in December because you can't report police misconduct in Orange County. If I have an issue with a Police Officer, I'm going to go to Chief Herlihy, who doesn't answer the phone. Then I call the District Attorney and he doesn't answer the phone. I'm supposed to go through a web form for the Attorney General, and then you don't hear anything. Then if you have to follow up, you go through a voicemail and you leave voicemails for them. Luckily enough, I was able to speak because I had some information about this case and Megan McDonald and I spoke to an investigator over in Middletown last week and he also suggested that I should go to the AG. I don't think that we should put this over to the AG, considering that we should be doing it now. It's just a FOIL request. But if you don't want to give it to me, that's okay. That's number one. Number two. John, what's going on with 29 Grant Street?

**Attorney Donovan:** This is not a question answer session. If you have comments to make, you can make it to the board.

**Ellen Hudson:** Sure. When I was here, 29 Grant Street. Mrs. Taylor when she was here, she used to ask questions. Right when I made my comments, there was a New York Forward Grant. Now, we didn't get that. There is a new law that was put out in, there was an article yesterday actually in the National Review. What this law does is that because when I had my issue with the police, part of the problem that I had was that I was a licensed real estate agent and the police reported that I wasn't and that it was a psychological delusion. Now arguing with the Attorney General and the state and possibly the FBI is not something that I want to do when I'm caregiving my father and having to call 911. When I was a real estate agent, I had an issue with my car being damaged in the City of Newburgh.

**Mayor Ramos:** Can we stick to the issues in the Village of Walden? We're versed in laws. We have an attorney that does that. So, let's get to the point. We still have village business to conduct.

**Ellen Hudson:** According to this LLC, that's all of New York State. I was just referencing my own experience of when I was a real estate agent. People buy stuff under LLCs and I had mentioned during my public comments in September that 29 Grant Street was for sale when I worked at the brokerage that I was employed at. The New York Forward Grant was put through, was pushed and the board members voted on it because it was sold as \$2 million that wouldn't cost anything to the village. I went home and I remembered that when we had that property or when I was employed and as a real estate agent, that property had some environmental issues. I went in and researched and it turned out that the property was registered under an LLC to UPS store in Kingston. There's no way of figuring out who owns this property. That's what this new law is. This new law that was instituted, it actually starts a database that allows for disclosure. If right now nobody can tell who the developer is for 29 Grant Street because it's registered to LLC up in Kingston or it was when I checked when I was here in September.

**Mayor Ramos:** I have to ask you to complete what you're driving at so that we can continue.



**Ellen Hudson:** I tell you what. It doesn't seem like you're a very friendly person. I watched this when you actually did the trustee meeting. When you hired the new treasurer and it was under your command. And Trustee Batson and Trustee Pearson wanted to put it up for a little of the public dialog and you wouldn't even make eye contact with them or address it on camera in a public forum. It seems like you're doing the same thing to me right now.

**Mayor Ramos:** I'm making eye contact with you, but thank you for bringing that up.

**Ellen Hudson:** It's nice to know that when the school children are at 50% needing lunch assistance, that this is the attitude that you have. Thank you.

### **Payment of Audited Bills**

Deputy Mayor Carley made a motion to approve payment of audited bills. Seconded by Trustee Garrison. All ayes. Motion carried. Motion carried.

### **Miscellaneous Comments from the Board of Trustees**

**Trustee Pearson:** We had gotten an email a while ago about senior programs and if people wanted to help pick them, did we get a committee together for that? Maybe I was wrong, but about senior programs or programs of community center, has that started as a committee formed.

**Manager Revella:** It was about a year ago and Trustee Maher was there at the meeting. I went to the meeting. The mayor was at the meeting with the Rec Department.

**Trustee Pearson:** Have we done anything more or are we getting more programs?

**Manager Revella:** They have programming down there.

**Trustee Pearson:** I know that the seniors there, I'm just talking about other programs that might be happening. Are there any educational things that go on down there or is there anything else that's happening?

**Manager Revella:** Ms. Ruiz has a few programs going on down there. There's a lot of stuff. Yeah.

**Trustee Pearson:** I just don't know where we were at with that. Whether we have more things happening or not. I just know I look at the community center and in Montgomery in those events, they do trips. Mayor, aren't you the President of the Senior Club?

**Mayor Ramos:** Yes, I am.

**Trustee Pearson:** Are there things that you have planned?

**Mayor Ramos:** We did have a trip. The Montgomery Senior Center's active every day. Trish does everything every day. Right now they have a car insurance reduction. And we're going to have hours once we start firing up in April.

**Trustee Pearson:** I have an email about trees in Walden Estates along the Tin Brook, falling into people's yard. On the one side that we own easement. Then there's a light out that somebody has emailed the village and nothing's been taken care of. You don't know anything about it?

**Manager Revella:** I do. We're taking care of. It's an issue with NYSEG getting the right bulbs. There's more than 1 light out. We can't get a machine to the edge of the brook to get a tree. They

fall sometimes. It's too muddy down there.

**Trustee Pearson:** In here, the Building Department was asking about making, some escrow things higher. Are we going to get into that this meeting?

**Manager Revella:** We have fee changes coming up at the first meeting in April for all the fees. I don't know if you want to wait till then.

**Trustee Pearson:** Okay. It seemed like he wrote about it twice in here.

**Manager Revella:** Yes, the Zoning Board, I believe made the recommendations. It should be in your packet.

**Trustee Pearson:** Cameras on the streets. Where are we at with that?

**Manager Revella:** They got delivered. Gonna start install.

**Trustee Pearson:** Arbor Day, May 9th. We're planning on. It will be at the school this year at 12:15. Little different. School will be hopefully purchasing the trees this year for the school because they cut down some trees. Jimmy is on board. Hopefully the village will show up just to be there as well. Maybe we could still plant our trees in the park.

**Manager Revella:** We have to do a resolution for that as well to make sure.

**Trustee Pearson:** I'm bringing it up now. If we can get that taken care of and the school is going to be planting. They cut down a couple of trees in between the two playgrounds. They want to put up some new trees. We're still working on it. I have a yes, but I haven't heard the trees, Jimmy recommend what trees to put up. Liaisons, Willie you asked about liaisons to be put on the agenda. I didn't see it on this agenda.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I was going to bring it up also.

**Trustee Pearson:** If you need a second person to get on the agenda I will help you put it on. Unless the mayor and the manager want to put it on.

**Trustee Hall:** Orange County Transit. I know it didn't come up this month, but I looked back, because I just wanted to double check. I know there was a little confusion if they were supposed to come, when they were supposed to come, all that good stuff. Trustee Garrison made a motion to grant the 12 month extension, seconded by Deputy Mayor Carley. But there was nothing in there that they had to come certain time. At that point I said I'd like to see them November. But then at the end, Mayor Ramos said let's continue with our monthly update. We expect at least a quick response to the approval of DOT. They're short, sweet emails, whatever that was I guess, acceptable. Are we reaching them out to them any time to get monthly updates or are we just going to wait for them to send something when they hear, how does that?

**Mayor Ramos:** It's monthly.

**Trustee Hall:** Was it this month?

**Manager Revella:** I don't remember when they responded last.

**Trustee Batson:** Their last response was no response.

**Manager Revella:** It was. It was a short blurb.

**Mayor Ramos:** I thought it was in February.

**Trustee Hall:** Maybe. My days are a little run together.

**Trustee Garrison:** February 6th.

**Mayor Ramos:** They'll have a comment in March.

**Trustee Hall:** Maybe.

**Trustee Garrison:** Some of you may not know, but I opted to do a ride along with the Village of Walden Police Department on Saturday evening, just to get a feel of how everything's been going down there. It was interesting. It was intriguing to see the ins and outs of what their daily patrol is and how they do certain things, how their systems work. Things like that. Lots of good things. I observed a lot of good things. I see a lot of good stuff happening. There are some issues down there that we are trying to work out. I've kind of made it a personal thing for me to really dive into what is going on down there and see if we can try to get things back on the upswing. So, if you see me down there a lot, I'm not in any kind of trouble. I'm just trying to interview and speak with as many of the officers that we have currently and officers that recently left our department just to get an idea of what is and isn't going well and what we can work on or try to work on. I just want to give everybody an update on that. The officers that I did get to talk to and that I did get to ride along with and work with. They're doing great things. You may not see it, but they are working. They're patrolling. They're doing what they can do. So understaffed that it's very difficult. Some of those guys are getting knocks on the door at 2 in the morning that they're mandated to go to work. It's it's been rough for them. Not asking for anybody to cut them slack or look at them any differently, but they are definitely working harder than we see and what we're seeing from the outside looking in. It was very interesting. There is a couple other things that I want to discuss, but now's not the time or the place to discuss them, but just look forward to all the meetings I will be updating on how things are going with the PD and things that I've been doing.

**Trustee Batson:** In the last meeting, I had brought up a question around if we have like a project plan or something that helps to lay out projects versus budgets, and you told me to make a template. I didn't. I haven't forgotten about it. I just haven't got around to it. I just want to let you know that it did not fall off my radar. It's on my to do list. I have about a thousand questions about Miss Hudson's interaction. I'm assuming you're gonna tell me those would probably be best served in attorney client session.

**Manager Revella:** All I can say is that her FOIL request was responded to fully. There are certain things that we could not respond to because we're not allowed. Otherwise, everything that was able to be responded to was responded to within the time frame that we were allowed.

**Trustee Batson:** I don't have a full grasp of the FOIL process. I've never gone through it myself.

**Manager Revella:** Just for example, she's asked for records.

**Attorney Donovan:** Let's not talk about this now, if you don't mind.

**Manager Revella:** If someone asks for police records that have the redaction, they have the redaction. You give something that's redacted.

**Trustee Batson:** I'll reserve my questions for the executive session.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** A couple of weeks ago on Saturday, we had the Sacred Place Of My Ancestors ceremony. That was really nice. Kudos to the group that put that together. Especially, Mercedes, the young lady who is spearheading and also NYS Senator Olson was there and Assemblyman Brian Maher, Village Manager was there and other managers from the different areas, council supervisors and so forth, so on. It was a great turnout. When I was knocking on doors, so we can get on the ballot. Some people brought up some questions and I told the young lady, I'll bring up your bring up your questions or your concerns at the board meeting last week and I forgot. It was centered around speed bumps because the speeding and Valley Ave and stop signs, things of that nature. If we can go back over that in the future, kind of discuss that is centered around the police side, patrolling that area because I guess it's a dragway where they got in either two blocks or something, they can go down. That needs to be addressed. I guess there are some issues with FOIL. I don't know all the things around there, but I hear you. The attorney said let's wait for that one. We'll wait for him to discuss. The liaisons, I think we should have a discussion if the board agrees to reinstitute that. I think that was a good idea. I was on the board at that time. Why it went away. It's good and bad. I think some parameters of place in there. Liaison is not a supervisor. Supposed to be working to communicate, back and forth. I don't know if we need a motion to put that on if you can help me with that or is it just something that the board can address.

**Mayor Ramos:** We can put it on next meeting.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I don't know if all the board members remember what positions in like, DPW, the school and Parks and Recreation.

**Manager Revella:** The reason why they were taken away is because the Liaisonships shouldn't be with departments. They should be with things like the town or the library. Outside entities would make more sense for Liaisonships. Otherwise, you are usurping your authority to talk to those departments.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** That's why I bring up. It's not a position of, being lord or supervisor, but communication. Specifically, I believe, since we're talking a little bit about it, the department has should communicate with you as their supervisor. We'll talk about it and get some views on it.

**Mayor Ramos:** I have to ask the board to, it's the sample resolution calling for an increase in the AIM funding. AIM is the Aid and Incentives for Municipalities program. The state has not increased AIM funding in 15 years. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, inflation has increased nearly 45% during that same time. The New York State Conference of Mayors and Municipal Officials is asking mayors throughout the whole state to sign a support letter to the governor and have to ask the board to allow me to sign on behalf of the Village of Walden.

**All:** Yes.

\*Read Community Events into Minutes\*

**Executive Session - Discuss the Employment History of Particular Person, Attorney Client Privilege Session Regarding Issues in Relation to Freedom Of Information Law**

Deputy Mayor Carly made a motion to enter into executive session to discuss employment of particular person and attorney client privilege session regarding issues in relation to freedom of information law. Seconded by Trustee Pearson. All ayes. Motion carried.

**Reconvene**

Trustee Hall made a motion to reconvene the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees. Seconded by Trustee Garrison. All ayes. Motion carried.

**Village of Walden Board of Trustees  
Regular Meeting  
February 20, 2024  
Motions & Resolutions**

**Approval of February 6, 2024**

Trustee Hall made a motion to approve the February 6, 2024 minutes with corrections. Seconded by Trustee Batson. 5 ayes. 1 abstention (Trustee Garrison). Motion carried.

**Double Utility Poles**

Trustee Garrison made a motion to schedule a public hearing for introductory to local law for Double Utility Poles. Seconded Trustee Hall. All ayes. Motion carried.

**Resolution in Support – Rail Trail Connectivity to Walden**

Trustee Pearson made a motion to adopt Resolution in Support of Rail Trail Connectivity to Walden. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Carley. 4 ayes. 2 abstentions (Trustee Garrison & Trustee Batson). Motion carried.

**Volunteer Tax Exemption**

Trustee Garrison made a motion to set a public hearing for Local Laws Volunteer Tax Exemption, Unremarried Spouse for February 27, 2024 at 6pm or soon thereafter. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Carley. 5 ayes. 1 abstention (Trustee Hall). Motion carried.

**Elections Alt Location**

Trustee Garrison made a motion to that the election will be held on the 1st floor of Village Hall in the event that the 3rd floor is unavailable to obstruction. Seconded by Trustee Hall. 5 ayes. 1 abstention (Trustee Pearson) Motion carried.

**VFW**

Trustee Pearson made a motion to approve the rehab loan for the VFW to repair their furnace system. Seconded by Trustee Garrison. All ayes. Motion carried

**Payment of Audited Bills**

Deputy Mayor Carley made a motion to approve payment of audited bills. Seconded by Trustee Garrison. All ayes. Motion carried. Motion carried.

**Executive Session - Discuss the Employment History of Particular Person, Attorney Client Privilege Session Regarding Issues in Relation to Freedom Of Information Law**

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Trustee Hall made a motion to reconvene the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees. Seconded by Trustee Garrison. All ayes. Motion carried.