**VILLAGE OF COXSACKIE**

**BOARD MINUTES**

**October 12, 2021**

Mayor Mark Evans called the Board Meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Present were Trustee Donald Daoust, Trustee Katlyn Irwin and Trustee Rebecca Vermilyea. Trustee Stephen Hanse was absent.

A motion to approve the minutes from the September 13, 2021 Board Meeting was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Vermilyea. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Mayor Evans voted yes. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. Trustee Irwin abstained. The motion carried.

**Correspondence Received**

A letter was received from Robin Wickham-Drobner requesting to use the Village Hall parking lot on Sunday, November 21st for a food drive for the Girl Scouts.

A letter was received from Greene County Veterans Service Agency inviting the Village to Honor a Vet ceremony at Catskill Point on Saturday, November 6, 2021 at 10 a.m.

A letter was received from NYS Department of Public Service on Broadband Mapping that they will be doing.

A letter was received from the Greene County IDA on the draft PILOT for the Champlain-Hudson Power Express power line.

A Certificate of Recognition was received from Coxsackie Hose Company #3 recognizing the Village Board for outstanding achievement in years of support.

**Correspondence Sent**

A letter was sent to Central Hudson thanking them for a quick response after the July storm in the Village of Coxsackie.

**Liaisons & Board Reports**

Mayor Evans stated that the Village Board will dispense with the reading of the monthly department head reports, but that all monthly reports are on file with the Village Clerk.

Mayor Evans stated that Riverside Park is closed during renovations. The Police Department will be keeping and eye on the park to ensure residents are not going in there when they shouldn’t be. It is very unsafe during this time. The ribbon cutting event for the new Wastewater Treatment Plant was very nice and well attended. Mayor Evans gave an update on the Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant, stating that it is a $10 million grant, and that the Village has made it through the 1st and 2nd rounds. A presentation was given to the Empire Development Council who is the body that determines what agencies receive the grant. NYS has $20 million in funding, and they award two grants for $10 million each. There are only four communities left in the running. They are Cohoes, Coxsackie, Tannersville & Troy. Mayor Evans stated that the Owl Auction/Gala went well and was well attended. The amount that was raised was significant. It seemed like a nice event.

Trustee Irwin stated that this year is the last year for Ellen Delucia and Sharon Askew to serve on the Owl Committee. She said that it would be nice for the Village Board to do something to thank them for their service to the community.

**Motions & Resolutions**

A motion to approve the draft Memorandum of Understanding with the United Public Service Employees Union (UPSEU) for reimbursement of training expenses to the Village of Coxsackie for water/wastewater employees should an employee leave was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Irwin. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

A motion to approve the request received from the Village of Coxsackie Fire Department to hold the annual Parade of Lights on December 3, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Irwin. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

A motion to approve the request received from Robin Wickham-Drobner to use the Village Hall parking lot for a Girl Scout Food Drive on Sunday, November 21st was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Irwin. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

A motion to approve the quote received from The Reis Group for NYS Statutory Disability insurance carrier ShelterPoint at an annual premium of $781.00 was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Irwin. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

A motion to approve renewing the MVP Silver 8 HDHP EPO health insurance plan to start on 12/1/2021 was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Irwin. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

A motion to approve the Cyber Security insurance policy through Lloyds with a $3 million limit at an annual premium of $10,117.58 was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Irwin. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

A motion to approve renewing the Commercial Liability insurance policies through Argonaut Insurance Co., Travelers Insurance Co., and Chubb at a total annual premium of $122,495.39 was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Irwin. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

A motion to approve donating the old Kayak launch to the Town of Windham DPW, as the Village no longer has a use for it as NYS will be installing a new one, and since the Village is grateful for the Town of Windham’s assistance after the July storm was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Irwin. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

A motion to approve changing Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer, Mike Ragaini’s hours from Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 1-4 p.m. to Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 8-11 a.m. was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Irwin. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

A motion to authorize the recognition of the Veterans Banner Committee as an official Village group, with Don Daoust serving as liaison, and for the Treasurer to set up a special account for monies raised by this committee was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Irwin. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

A motion to approve the request received from Christmas by the River to light trees on Reed Street using solar powered lights which will stay up permanently, at a cost of $750.00 was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Irwin. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

A motion to approve Water Fund voucher 134 totaling $ 1,250.00 payable to Onsolve due to it accidentally being left off Abstract #4’s approval was made by Trustee Vermilyea and seconded by Trustee Daoust. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

A motion to approve the bills on General Fund Abstract #5, vouchers 339-406 totaling $109,584.97; Water Fund Abstract #5, vouchers 135-174 totaling $ 204,355.74; Sewer Fund Abstract #5, vouchers 99-133 totaling $ 345,079.44; Capital Projects Fund Abstract #5, voucher 7 totaling $ 761,559.49; Adopt A Grave Fund Abstract #5, voucher 3 totaling $ 491.06; Owl Project Fund Abstract #5, vouchers 8-40 totaling $ 10,674.35; Trust & Agency Fund Abstract #5, vouchers 17-22 totaling $ 647.81 was made by Trustee Vermilyea and seconded by Trustee Irwin. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

**Public Comment Period**

Carly Lynch, of 60 New Street, brought up a recent issue where a vendor set up in McQuade Park during the D.M. Hamilton firehouse’s 150th anniversary celebration on October 8th was found to be selling Confederate flags. She is happy that the Mayor responded and the issue was taken care of, but she feels that the Village Board needs to take more steps to address having this issue again in the future. She asked that the Village develop guidelines for the park that are in line with the 2020 NYS legislation. She said that she expects the Village to move swiftly to create guidelines that align with the NYS law, making it unlawful to sell or display the Confederate flag or other symbols of hate on community property like McQuade Park or at community events. She said having the Confederate flag at a local park was offensive and distressing. She was totally shocked and would have never thought something like that would be for sale in the public domain and it is a Village park, so she was very surprised. However, she is happy that the D.M. Hamilton fire company responded to the problem and addressed it on Facebook quickly. That is important, but it is also important that we prevent it from happening again. She said that she is sure it was an unforeseen detail. This is not about placing blame; it is about making sure it doesn’t happen again.

Tara Templeton stated that she seconds the sentiment from Carly Lynch. As a parent, she has also stopped taking children to McQuade Park due to a firemen’s personal vehicle that has flags on it with curse words. There is also a problem with graffiti on the playground. She also mentioned a separate issue regarding the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) video that was made, where downtown business owners were interviewed. She said that she is a local business owner and was unaware of this video being made. She wishes that she would have been asked to be included and that there was more direct communication with business owners about this grant process.

Terry Lynch, of 60 New Street, stated that the Coxsackie-Athens School District is also experiencing problems with racism. He would hope that both the Village and School District would want to take measures to encourage growth and not receive bad press.

Trustee Irwin apologized to Tara Templeton for not including her as a business owner in the filming for the DRI. She is also not happy with the way the DRI process has been developed and wish there was more inclusion and communication.

Tara Templeton stated that she has had her business open downtown for over a year now. She has experienced a lot of impact to her business, from not only COVID, but also the closing of Riverside Park and the moving of the Farmers’ Market. There is not as much foot traffic downtown now. She wishes that the Village would have better communication with business owners.

Mayor Evans stated that Riverside Park is a NYS park, but the Village has an agreement to maintain it. Before the park closed, he pleaded with the state to allow the Village to give more public notice. The state told the Village not to disclose that information, and that they would issue a press release and have a groundbreaking. Unfortunately, a groundbreaking never happened.

Trustee Daoust stated that he was one of the forerunners to convert McQuade Park playground from wooden structures to plastic. One time, there were kids in the park while he was there with his grandson, and they were extremely rude to him. He was shocked by how they talked to an adult. The Mayor has asked the Police Department to canvass the park, and the Board has even explored the option of putting up cameras. The Board is trying to work on a viable solution.

Trustee Irwin thanked the public for speaking on the flag issue. Although the Board is not responsible for the vendor, the Village is responsible for acknowledging, correcting the issue, and moving forward. She said that the incident was unfortunate but emphasized that the Fire Department was not to blame. She said that she doesn’t think it was anyone’s fault in this room or in this community.

Mayor Evans stated that the fire company asked permission last year to hold a Mardi Gras parade on Friday 10/8 and a dress parade on Saturday 10/9, with music, vendors, and food trucks at McQuade Park after the parades to mark the company’s 150th anniversary. The fire company asked the vendor to remove the Confederate flags after they were made aware of them. He said he firmly believes that there was no malicious intent on the part of the fire company. He doesn’t believe they knew this vendor had those items. When the Riverside Festival has vendors they also do not get a full list of items for sale by the vendor. In the past, the Village has had issues with vendors at the festival that were handled similarly. He said that he came under fire on social media for not seeing to the flags’ removal personally. He said that he was at another event in Climax during the day and had a personal emergency to attend to in the evening but was told by fire officials that the issue was being addressed. On his way out, he saw a member of the fire company, who is a fellow firefighter and an ex-chief, and he assured him that it was handled. Knowing him for 30 years and being a fellow firefighter and an ex-chief, he felt he could put confidence in what he was saying was true, so he left and didn’t hear anything more about it. A mistake was made, but the Fire Department handled the situation correctly. The Board will take up and discuss this issue with counsel and inquire about drafting a future policy to handle potential situations like this one. The current Village code addressing parks does not address things like this.

Courtney Stickle, co-organizer of the fire company’s 150th anniversary celebration, said her committee dealt with the matter when it was brought to their attention. There was only a handful of people on the committee who put this together. The vendor was late setting up and set up while members were parading. As soon as they arrived back at the park they were made aware of the situation, and they immediately acted. She said that vendors were required to identify what they planned to sell during the event, but did so in broad strokes such as flags, cups, tumblers, and did not provide specifics. She said that she has faced intimidation in the community since the incident. She said that this has had a serious effect on her. She has had multiple people sending her threatening Facebook messages. She understands that this is a hate thing and racism, but it breaks her heart because if anyone knows anything about this Fire Department it’s that they are all about this community, and they are all about helping people. She helped open an outreach program here at the church, and she would give someone the shirt off her back, and she has been threatened. When picking up her child from school she had grown adults standing in her way and bullying her. She said that she loves this community, and she understands that people took this to heart. She also took this to heart. She was upset by this also. She said that if they had known from the get-go that this man was selling these items, his application would not have even been accepted.

Tara Templeton stated that she has also witnessed bullying in the community and has even received threatening phone calls at her place of business.

Mayor Evans stated that notifying him earlier in the day, when the flags were first seen in the park, would have been more helpful than venting on social media. He said he wishes that instead of going and posting on Facebook, somebody had called him and made him aware of it hours earlier. Give the Village a chance. We can’t do anything unless we know about it, and we can’t help unless we are given an opportunity. The whole Facebook thing is condemnation and guilty before you have even had a chance to respond and take care of it.

Trustee Irwin added that voicing outrage on social media is not helpful. Ultimately, what we are looking for are healthy solutions and blame is the opposite of a healthy solution. The Board has a responsibility to be accessible, to respond and act. However, the community should take responsibility of reaching out directly instead of posting on Facebook.

Patricia Maxwell, of 2 Elm Street, stated that although she has not personally encountered bullying, if it was a situation she would contact the Village directly, not post online.

Robin Wickham-Drobner stated that she has held events for Girl Scouts at McQuade Park where they found graffiti written on tables. She had let the Mayor know and it was taken care of right away. She has also witnessed teens misbehaving at the park, and she went to the Police Department and the problem was addressed immediately. She also let the Board know that she has an insurance rider for her Girl Scout event on November 21st. She can provide the Village Office with a copy before the event.

Carly Lynch stated that she appreciates hearing both sides of the flag issue. Things can get misconstrued on social media. As new people come into the community the Village should want people to feel welcome. She would love to see a shared culture of understanding. She will plan on attending more Board Meetings in the future.

Mayor Evans thanked D.M. Hamilton fire company for 150 years of service. Greene County is home to some of the oldest fire companies in the nation. Besides firefighting, the also do many great services for the community.

No further public comments were offered.

A motion to adjourn the Board meeting was made by Trustee Daoust and seconded by Trustee Vermilyea. Trustee Daoust voted yes. Trustee Irwin voted yes. Trustee Vermilyea voted yes. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nikki Bereznak
Clerk