

**Village of Aurora Board of Trustees February 5, 2019 Work Session Minutes**

The meeting was held at the Aurora Firehouse Meeting Room at 4:00 p.m.

**Present:** Mayor Bonnie Bennett, Trustees Grace Bates, Matt Bianconi and Alan Ominsky

**Absent:** Kit Van Orman

**Others Present:** Village Clerk Ann Balloni, ZBA member Laura Holland and local resident Dr. Margaret Flowers

**Call to Order:** Mayor Bennett called the work session to order at 4:06 p.m.

Mayor Bennett discussed a letter (attached) to the Board of Trustees from Trustee Kit Van Orman. Trustee Van Orman decided to recuse herself from Board discussions of the proposed solar law, proposed fireworks law and water issues, following a discussion with Village Attorney Tom Blair. Mayor Bennett referenced the Village Ethics Policy which states:

1. **General prohibition.** A municipal officer or employee may not use his or her official position or office, or take or fail to take any action, in a manner which he or she knows or has reason to know may result in a personal financial benefit for any of the following persons:
  - . (1) The municipal officer or employee;
  - . (2) His or her outside employer or business;
  - . (3) A member of his or her household;
  - . (4) A customer or client;
  - . (5) A relative; or
  - . (6) A person from whom the officer or employee has received election campaign contributions of more than \$1000 in the aggregate during the past 12 months.

Mayor Bennett noted that she understood the conflict of interest with the solar law as Trustee Van Orman works for Wells College and Wells College has proposed a large solar array for the campus but was surprised about her recusal for fireworks and water issues.

Trustees Bates and Bianconi also disagreed with the recusal for fireworks and water, but Mayor Bennett reminded them that it is Trustee Van Orman's decision. Trustee Bates further questioned the recusal for the solar law discussions due to Trustee Van Orman not personally benefitting financially from the solar law. Mayor Bennett again referred to the Village Ethics Policy noting that Trustee Van Orman's employer, Wells College, is benefitting financially so there is a conflict of interest.

Mayor Bennett then read Trustee Van Orman's letter into the record and noted that the 3-2 vote at the January 16, 2019 Village Board meeting amending the solar law now becomes 2-2 "NO" vote due to Trustee Van Orman's recusal, per Village Attorney Tom Blair. Trustees Bates and Bianconi questioned if the original draft proposing solar arrays as 500' from Scenic Route 90 is the norm. Mayor Bennett responded that she was referencing County 239 review standards that mandate projects within 500' of a public way come to their committee for approval.

In consultation with Village Council, the Trustees are also considering amending the section of the law regarding decommissioning costs to an applicant.

On motion by Mayor Bennett, seconded by Trustee Bates, the Village Board voted to re-open the discussion of amending the solar law.

AYES: Bennett, Bates, Bianconi and Ominsky

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously

Mayor Bennett confirmed that the deadline for the 6-month moratorium to enact the solar law is the March Village Board meeting and that the Trustees have until 10 days before the Public Hearing, tentatively scheduled for February 25, to amend the law. The Trustees scheduled a work session to amend the solar law for February 13, 2019 at 4:00 p.m.

**RT 81 Update:** Mayor Bennett attended a meeting regarding the 3 options for restructuring Interstate 81 through Syracuse. The options are: rebuilding the current viaduct, creating a community grid or constructing a tunnel. The community grid option is favored by the Mayor of Syracuse to increase traffic in the downtown business district. The community grid, however, would be a hardship for truckers due to the 18-mile increase on their route which is further hampered by increased traffic lights. The

community grid plan would likely cause increased truck traffic in the Village and other smaller, surrounding communities that are not equipped to handle the additional heavy vehicles on their roads.

Mayor Bennett noted that Congressman Katko, who is on the transportation committee, seemed to indicate support for the tunnel despite it being the most expensive option. Mr. Katko expressed interest in the best option looking forward into the future, even with the added cost, as the project is monumental in scope and duration for Central New York for decades to come.

**Inns of Aurora negotiations:** Mayor Bennett asked the Trustees to think about the offer by the Inns of Aurora to sell land to the Village for a new Village Hall. Mayor Bennett noted that the Aurora Historical Society could use a permanent home apart from the current space given them by the Inns of Aurora and proposed that the Trustees consider a Village Complex. As the Trustees have discussed in the past building a pavilion/recreation area along with office space and meeting rooms, Mayor Bennett suggested applying for grant funding given the number of municipal projects being funded by the Cayuga County Economic Development Council.

Mayor Bennett added that access to the lot could be directly across from Court St and mentioned that Village Engineer, Ken Teter, suggested following the backyard line of the houses along Sherwood which could give the Village about 2 ½ acres of property.

Trustee Bianconi proposed negotiating on the Village Park land, next to the Aurora Inn, and suggested approaching Pleasant Rowland and Wells College about land at the south end of town along Poplar Ridge Road and across the road next to Paine's Creek. Mayor Bennett responded that a Village Hall should be more centrally located and reiterated Inns of Aurora General Manager, Sue Edinger's assertion that the land off Sherwood is the only site offered by Ms. Rowland and that she is not interested in acquiring the Village Park property.

Trustee Bates questioned if there is money in the Village Budget for a new Village Hall and why we are considering spending money on one. Mayor Bennett pointed out that there is no office for the code officer, the clerk & treasurer are in a storage closet, we have run out of room for the Village permit files and the permanent records are currently stored in a POD next to the Waste Water Treatment Plant.

#### **Draft Fireworks Law Review**

The Village Board discussed the following during their review of the Draft Fireworks Law:

- Intensity of displays
- Height and duration of displays
- Ways to alleviate stress on livestock
- Effect of weather conditions
- Effect on the surrounding agricultural area
- Regulating per the Village Noise Ordinance or Zoning Law
- Enacting a 6-month moratorium
- Working in conjunction with the Town of Ledyard for the best solution

Mayor Bennett reminded the Trustees that drafting legislation isn't relevant to anyone's opinion of fireworks, but about protecting the health, safety and welfare of the community.

**Adjournment:** On motion by Trustee Bianconi, seconded by Trustee Ominsky, the Village Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

AYES: Bennett, Bates, Bianconi, Ominsky and Van Orman

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Balloni  
Village Clerk