Town of Yates December Yearend Meeting
8 S. Main St., Lyndonville, NY 14098
December 30, 2024, 5:00PM

Present: Jim Simon, Supervisor
Susan Hrovat, Councilman
Terry Chaffee, Jr., Councilman
John Riggi, Councilman
Michele Harling, Town Clerk

Excused: Harold Suhr, Councilman
Roger Wolfe, Highway Superintendent
Trisha Laszewski, Town Assessor
David Reese, Code Enforcement Officer

Others :	Paula Simon	Justin Edwards	Wes Bradley
	Paul Lauricella	Sandy Lauricella	Bill Jurinich

Supervisor Simon called the December Yearend Meeting to order at 5:00PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SUPERVISOR REMARKS

Supervisor Simon stated that there will not be Privilege of the Floor at tonight's meeting. He encouraged those that want to speak to attend the regular January Town Board Meeting next week or to stay after the meeting and speak with him directly.

CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence.

RESOLUTION NO. 112-12/24

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE MINUTES

RESOLVED, to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2024 Regular Board Meeting as presented to each Board Member.

Offered by Councilman Chaffee, who moved its adoption
Seconded by Councilman Hrovat

4 Ayes 0 Nays 1 Absent (Suhr)

Motion: Carried

RESOLUTION NO. 113-12/24

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING BOOKKEEPER TO MAKE YEAREND ADJUSTMENTS FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2024

WHEREAS, the independent auditors have recommended that the Bookkeeper request a "Blanket Resolution" to allow for any budget adjustments that may be required at yearend; be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Board authorizes the Bookkeeper to make the necessary budget adjustments and inter-fund transfers, and furnish a copy of said adjustments to the Town Supervisor when completed.

Offered by Councilman Hrovat, who moved its adoption
Seconded by Councilman Riggi

Supervisor Simon thanked our bookkeeper, Joanna, and the Town Clerk for all of their yearend work.

4 Ayes 0 Nays 1 Absent (Suhr)

Motion: Carried

RESOLUTION NO. 114-12/24

RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT 2024 YEAREND WATER 2 AND WATER 4 REPORT

WHEREAS, Water 2 and Water 4 have been closed and balanced for the fiscal year 2024, and

WHEREAS, a copy of the balance sheets outlining all income and payments have been prepared by the Town Clerk and reviewed by the Town Board, be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Board accepts the yearend report for Water 2 and Water 4 as presented, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that signed copies of the reports shall be attached to these minutes.

Offered by Councilman Chaffee, who moved its adoption
Seconded by Councilman Riggi

4 Ayes 0 Nays 1 Absent (Suhr)

Motion: Carried

RESOLUTION NO. 115-12/24

RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT 2024 TOWN CLERK'S YEAREND REPORT

WHEREAS, the Town Clerk has prepared a yearend report for 2024 that has been reviewed by the Town Board, be it

RESOLVED, the Town Board accepts the report as presented, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that a signed copy of the report shall be attached to these minutes.

Offered by Councilman Hrovat, who moved its adoption
Seconded by Councilman Chaffee

4 Ayes 0 Nays 1 Absent (Suhr)

Motion: Carried

RESOLUTION NO. 116-12/24

RESOLUTION TO PAY BILLS

WHEREAS, bills have been reviewed by the Town Board, be it

RESOLVED to pay bills as follows:

A-Accounts-(General – Townwide)	$ 16,902.16
B-Accounts-(General – Outside Village)	$ 2,202.39
DA-Accounts- (Highway – Town wide)	$ 7,113.36
DB-Accounts- (Highway – Outside Village)	$ 5,943.94
Water 4-	$ 1,459.84
Water 2-	$
Youth-	$
Fire-	$
TOTAL	$ 33,621.69

Offered by Councilman Riggi, who moved its adoption
Seconded by Councilman Hrovat

4 Ayes 0 Nays 1 Absent (Suhr)

Motion: Carried

TOWN OFFICERS REMARKS

Councilman Chaffee said it has been a good year and I think we have accomplished everything that we set out to do.

Councilman Riggi said this is my final function as a Town Board Member after 9 plus years. As I stated in my resignation letter that was submitted on June 3, 2024, I have really enjoyed working with this group. We have had a lot of arguments that were very productive. We changed minds amongst ourselves from time to time which is a hallmark of a high functioning group. The following are my comments as a private citizen that all go back to a Facebook post that reads: "This was an inside job. When voters voted it down I'm thinking Councilman Riggi went to his daughter, Marisa Riggi, who is Executive Director of the Land Conservancy to get the ball rolling. He has since resigned so as not to face accusations of conflict of interest from the public. This is conflict of interest and scandalous, if you ask me." Well, Mr. Lauricella, you are wrong. There is no evidence at all of that. This document that sites my resignation from the Board, written on June 3, 2024, was written and presented before the election. So, you're out of your mind if you think that I went to my daughter. I know people that think like that and they think that way because that's how they would act if they were in that position. Not making any accusations- it's what I've seen in my long and storied life. These are comments based on what was said about me and my family. This was also said in the Facebook post "This conservancy, in my opinion, is a radical leftist group. Climate change extremists, anti-growth, they may even put climate refugees on the land. I am not making this up. Read about them in their own words. Go down to about 6 people to see the Executive Director. The whole group is scary." Councilman Riggi took Paul's advice and looked at the mission that reads: "To permanently protect land with significant conservation value in Western New York for the benefit of future generations. Our vision: We envision a future in which forest, farms, meadows and waterways are connected and cherished and protected in Western New York. Our clean air, clean water and fertile soils will equitably support health and well-being of future generations." I don't hear anything there about "climate refugees". Marisa's bio is simple; it says where she comes from, where she went to school, where she had her first job, being named Buffalo Business First list of 40 notable Western New York professionals under forty, passionate about land conservation and wildlife, enjoys hiking, cooking, reading and gardening. I don't hear anything about "climate refugees".

Paul Lauricella, Town of Yates, asked if he could respond.

Councilman Riggi and Supervisor Simon said no, he may not. Supervisor Simon asked that Paul please not interrupt.

Councilman Riggi said this is personal. The Conservancies impact goals for 2026 targets: protect nature, protect farmland, connect people to nature and agriculture, restore ecological integrity; he doesn't hear anything about "climate refugees" with any of these goals. He told Paul you are a liar, Sir.

Paul Lauricella said that it is in there.

Sandy Lauricella, Town of Yates, said that she had to step out because she has severe anxiety. She said that this should have been done outside. She added that you should not upset people that come to meetings. This is disgusting.

Supervisor Simon said that Paul and Sandy Lauricella were out of order and that she should please remove herself from the building.

Councilman Riggi said yes, the land is coming off the tax rolls and will cost the taxpayers $5.00 per year, per taxpayer, in taxes. If you are so concerned about $5.00 per year, I will drop a $5.00 bill on the road in front of your house every year, if that's what you want; if that's why you are so upset. Keep my daughter's name out of your mouth, and off of your pen. If you continue, you risk litigation with me personally, sir.

Councilman Hrovat said that she is disappointed to see the Facebook posts which is similar to what 8th grade kids do- bullying behind a computer screen is pretty easy to do. With regard to the purchase of land near the Yates Town Park- the land was for sale and it was offered to the Town of Yates, first. There was no doubt that the Board wanted it and thought that it would be good for several reasons. It was done with complete transparency to the point where Supervisor Simon actually shared during a meeting the information that if people are opposed to it, they can circulate a petition; which Paul did and bought signs and put them out, and vote against it. This cost the Town about $2,500 - $3,000. It is designed so that when people disagree or don't agree there is a process to allow this to happen. It was voted down by the taxpayers. We were disappointed to see this happen. Some of the reasons have been brought up on Facebook. Justin Edwards and she have been talking today very civilly. It's ok to disagree and it's ok to not agree- we do it all the time, here. The way this is being done behind a computer screen is cowardly and shameful because many people were interested in buying the land when the Town of Yates did not buy it. She had people call her and ask for NYSEG phone numbers. She asked John for a contact number that was not available because the guy had moved out so she was told to call the switchboard. She did what she could to help whoever. NYSEG gets carbon credits for selling the property to a land preserve type situation. That's why they offered to sell it to the Town of Yates first. They don't care about us, they don't care about our taxes and they don't care about our opinions. They are a business and that's how it works. They wanted to sell it to someone. They were willing to sell it to us for $700,000. We would have sought out grants which are our taxpayer money, some of it, that is put into a pool that somebody is going to use. It's not going to come back to us or to any taxpayer in the United States. It's put in a purse to use. Foolishly, in her opinion, we didn't pass the vote. So now that land goes up for sale. Two land conservancies were interested. One in Genesee area and the Western New York Land Conservancy and you know how they found out about it? Because of your signs on the road. That's fine, that's how the democratic process works. So, it was brought to the attention of Tom Rivers, who wrote an article, and all of a sudden there is all of this interest generated. She had rich people in this area, like doctors, calling that were trying to wheel and deal with her. She said that there was no way. They were offering to buy portions of the property or the whole thing and keep the lakefront and give the middle portion back to the Town. She told them that it was not her decision, it had been voted down, and it was not happening. Many people were interested but it was sold to the Conservancy because that helps NYSEG. It was going to be one of the conservancies. They were not in a hurry to sell it, they've held it for years, but we lost our opportunity. She said when someone cares about the Town, the way that you profess to care about the Town, you base your opinions on facts and you're not, Paul, you're not. I think that you're a good husband and a good father but you're horrible when you go out and create these crazy plots and theories that aren't even based on fact and it's concerning to her. He is not

forward thinking, he's not able to see this threat or head it off because you keep a narrow mindset. For some reason you have a vendetta against the Town, she doesn't know what it is, she has seen it from the very first day when you wrote in a memo a very inappropriate thing with your tax bill. She happened to walk in and she saw it. She wondered why this is, this is not productive. The land was going to be sold one way or another. This group of people right here; we tried to use the resources that were available to us. Whether you agree with grants or not, we tried to ensure that the complete ability to generate income would not be lost, we could have found some way to make that land produce an income. The Town of Yates would have lost a little less than $4,000 a year. We could have maybe created some soccer fields or some football fields, whatever, on part of it and generated a little bit of income to cover that but the voters spoke. It was shut down, the land was sold to the Conservancy; there is no theory. We don't have that much power among us. When you attack Mr. Riggi, Mr. Chaffee, Mr. Simon or Miss Harling; you're attacking me and my family because you're saying that there is a lack of integrity, a lack of character, it's a desperate attempt on your part that may or may not work the way you desire and you generate this information and put it out on Facebook- you are attacking our integrity. Terry Chaffee, she believes, served in Desert Storm and put his life on the line and was almost killed. He is a man of integrity with a job and a family. He doesn't walk around bragging about it and she's sure that he has things that he doesn't talk about, emotional or otherwise.

Paul Lauricella asked where she was going with this.

Councilman Hrovat said that he honorable served this Country and this Town and Paul is undermining our Councilman and this group of people when you attack him personally.

Paul Lauricella said that is my right.

Councilman Hrovat said that Mr. Riggi has had significant experience with financial issues, with science and chemistry. He has made multi-million dollar deals. His reputation is important to him he's not going to do an underhanded thing for a public vote over a piece of property. We don't sit around at night dreaming up ways to screw people over. Mr. Simon served honorably in the Air Force. Nobody has any intentions, here, of damaging their reputation or character or integrity over a park. Myself, I love this community. I respect the democratic process. It didn't go how I wanted but I didn't go out on Facebook and start trashing people or trashing their family members or saying that there was something underhanded going on. It's inappropriate, she is disappointed and she would like to think that as adults we could work together and disagree in a productive way. She disagrees with a lot of what Councilman Riggi says.

Paul Lauricella said that he does not trash anyone.

Supervisor Simon reminded Paul that this is not privilege of the floor. He added that if he wants to speak, then he will have to leave.

Councilman Hrovat said that there were several innuendos; "Speak to this, speak to that, this is underhanded" a lot of generated hate and discontent. It is misappropriated so yes, she is frustrated. People get on that horrible Facebook and believe these things. She would like to ask

that from now all of us take a moment and think about what we put out there, if you actually use that rag of newsletter, for information and make sure that it is something that you would be ok for your mother to see or your child to see and that you do it with some integrity and honesty and not mean spirited.

Supervisor Simon said that this probably feels uncomfortable for some of you that are here because this is the first time that he's done this. He intentionally decided not to have Privilege of the Floor and it didn't go well and he is surprised, he thought that it would. He thought for one meeting we could all just be able to say our peace and next week we'll pick up Privilege of the Floor again. So if you're going to add that paragraph to your Letter to the Editor, then just be advised that he has a very open Privilege of the Floor and you all know it. He has engaged in conversations during Privilege of the Floor and had Board Members say that you don't do that. Sometimes he believes that it's the time to do it, not today. Secondly, he thinks it's great that when we got the no vote we did exactly what we said in every public meeting. We reminded people that if the vote goes no, they are going to sell it. We asked them early on and they said yes, if you don't buy it we're selling it to someone else. Personally, he thinks it's great that this is happening; had nothing to do with it; they're selling it, they didn't sell it to us, they're selling it to someone else. They could have sold it to the person who wanted to make several homes and a bar and grill. They could have sold it to my son who would have loved to make it a disc golf course. They didn't. They did what they did because they are an independent company and this is America and they found someone who was interested and got a $1.1million grant. Lastly he commended Councilman Riggi for outstanding service. He thanked him for serving this Town.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Councilman Chaffee, Whereas there is no new business to be brought before the Board, the meeting is adjourned at 5:17PM.
Seconded by Councilman Riggi

4 Ayes 0 Nays 1 Absent (Suhr)

Motion: Carried

Respectfully Submitted,
Michele L. Harling
Yates Town Clerk