

COPAKE TOWN BOARD MEETING

Thursday December 14, 2006

At the regular meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Copake the following were present: Supervisor Valentino, Councilpersons Gabaccia, Councilperson Ritchie, Councilperson Miller, Councilperson Sacks, Judge Crowley and Commissioner Nolan.

Supervisor Valentino opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with 34 people present.

A motion was made by Councilperson Ritchie seconded by Councilperson Miller to dispense with the reading of the minutes of November 9, 2006 and November 14, 2006 and accept them as written. Motion was carried.

The following correspondence was read:

From Daniel Tompkins: Letter of resignation from Copake Police effective December 1, 2006.

From Breezy Hill Road and North Mountain Road residents: A petition to lower weight limit on Breezy Hill Road and North Mountain Road with 35 signatures.

From Girl Scout Troop 177: Letter announcing a dedication ceremony to plant a peace pole on Saturday December 16, 2006 at 11:00 at the Copake Town Hall.

Councilperson Miller reported the Planning Board held four public hearing, four major subdivisions three to four site plans and discussed various matters.

Councilperson Gabaccia reported Liz Wadman opened a flower shop in Town, Flowers by Liz, and has a parking problem will be looking to possible amend the code to assist with the parking issue.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia seconded by Councilperson Sacks to appoint Deb Cohen to the Environmental Committee. Motion was carried.

Councilperson Gabaccia reported:

Board of Ethics – Working on revising code with completion in March 2007.

Fri Night Blast – Gerard Meenagh, Fat Boy, donated his services for a dance, thanked Diane Cinque, Shannon Holdridge, Reggie Crowley, Vana Hotaling, Bill Kane, Jeff Nayer and Sue Streeter. Looking at the possibility of opening every Friday in 2007.

Enquiry Board – Have finished, will be reporting later. Thanked Wayne Miller, Frank Bader, Harvey Webber, Jane Peck and Kevin Thieman for the time they devoted.

Investigation was done with little or no cost to town.

Park's & Rec's – December 16th parade of lights with bon fire and caroling. Looking into rodeo.

Policy Committee – To being in January.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia seconded by Councilperson Ritchie to appoint two alternates to the Policy Committee. Motion was carried.

Councilperson Gabaccia and Ritchie stated how sorry they are about the resignation of Danny Tompkins.

Councilperson Gabaccia attended Columbia County Pandemic Influenza meeting, stressing issue of Avian Flu. Suggested creating a dark page on web-site to pop up in case of emergency.

Councilperson Gabaccia thanked Marcia Becker for her work on the school house committee.

Councilperson Ritchie reported the Copake Senior Committee will be sponsoring dance December 22ed from 6pm – 9pm looking for new members.

Councilperson Sacks reported:

Environmental Committee – Collected 500 pages to go through to learn about the vocabulary of water.

Economic Advisory Committee – Town Code on web site, complimented Charles Dodson on the Town's web-site.

Attorney Whitbeck reported court issued temporary restraining order on Lackawanna Farm. A discussion followed. Councilperson Ritchie asked what they're allowed to do, Attorney Whitbeck responded only farming.

Wayne Miller, Chairman of Enquiry Committee read the following report:

I. Preliminary Statement

In 2005, the New York State Comptrollers Office performed an audit of the purchasing practices of the Town of Copake from January 2003 to October 2004. In its report issued in March 2006, the State Comptroller noted a number of discrepancies. After a review of the audit report, the Copake Town Board passed a resolution on April 4, 2006 to create an impartial Inquiry Committee to examine the Town's expenditures during the period from 2000 to 2005.

Pursuant to the April 4th resolution, an Inquiry Committee was formed consisting of the following town residents: Wayne Miller, Harvey Webber, Frank Bader, Jane Peck,

and Kevin Thiemann. At its initial meeting, Wayne Miller was selected to be chairperson and Harvey Webber was selected to be secretary. Town Councilperson Linda Gabaccia served as liaison between the Inquiry Committee and the Town Board.

After consideration of the audit report, local laws and the Town procurement policies, the Inquiry Committee decided to focus its attentions on the 15 month period of time subsequent to the Comptrollers Audit. Committee members agreed to independently review separate three (3) periods of time, which included examination of the Town Board meeting minutes, vouchers, invoices and credit card statements. The findings of the members were then reviewed and discussed by the entire committee at bi-monthly meetings which occurred between May and October 2006.

II. Findings

Based upon its review of the available records, the Inquiry Board Committee has not discovered any violations of Federal, State or Local laws, other than minor discrepancies under the Town of Copake's Procurement Policy.

However, the Inquiry Committee did note the following weakness and oversights in the purchasing practices of the Town of Copake:

1. In several instances major purchase were not supported by documentation in the form of request for proposals (RFPs), bids or estimates from outside vendors.
2. Vouchers were not always supported by purchasing documentation. Purchase receipts were also sometimes missing with regards to credit card changes.
3. The billing cycle for the Town's credit card was not synchronized to the Town Board meeting schedules, thus resulting in late payments and charges when approval for payment came after specified payment date.
4. Expense reimbursement have been submitted and approved without detailed description of the amounts charged and the reasons for the purchase.
5. No comparison of the annual budget and annual expenses could be found in the official minutes of the Town Board.
6. No records could be located documenting the usage of certain Town vehicles.

III. Recommendations:

Based upon its review of the Town record, the Inquiry Committee makes the following recommendations:

1. A policy Manual should be created to contain all policies and procedures to be followed by Town officials and employees. The Manual should contain an organizational chart which identifies which Town employee is responsible for specific purchase and approvals. The manual

should be reviewed on an annual basis and amended as needed. The policy should be distributed to all Town employees.

2. The Town should adopt standardized forms to be used for submission of bids and expense reimbursements.
3. Use of official vehicles should be documented by recording dates and mileage in an official log.
4. Official vehicles should be identified by either a number or license plate on invoices involving maintenance or repairs.
5. Attempts should be made to increase the numbers of vendors and supplies bidding on Town contracts.
6. The Town Board should consider employing a bookkeeper to maintain a general ledger, record all financial transactions and insure that all supporting documentation is submitted and properly filed.
7. The Town Board should consider having an annual audit prepared by a certified public accountant.

Supervisor Valentino thanked the Inquiry Board for their work.

Councilperson Ritchie read the following Open Space Mission Statement:

In consideration of the Constitution of the State of New York which states “ the policy of the state shall be conserve and protected its natural resources and scenic beauty and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural lands for the production of food and other agricultural products” and in recognition of the fact that the Hudson Valley is the 10th most threatened agricultural region in the country, the Town of Copake hereby establishes an Open Space Committee consisting of five members whose mission shall be :

To identify and inventory lands within the Town of Copake of significant agricultural open space, scenic and natural resource value.

And to investigate the development and implementation of strategies for preserving these resources, making recommendations to the Town Board of Copake for further action. Such strategies may include, but are not limited to the purchase of development rights, promotion of the creation of conservation easements, real estate transfer fees and the creation of a dedicated fund to be utilized to purchase these lands.

A motion was made by Councilperson Ritchie seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to form an Open Space Committee consisting of five members. Motion was carried.

A motion was made by Councilperson Ritchie seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to accept proposal from Kevin Carey Building in the amount of \$26,667.00 for renovation of Iron Works School House.

Councilperson Sacks thanked the Fire Department for their respect and professionalism they give to the town 24-7.

Judge Crowley asked about an ad for Public Works position. Supervisor Valentino replied the one criticism from state was work the Highway Department does for town should be separated out and charged back to town and in discussion they thought to hire someone to relieve Highway Superintendent from some of the burdens.

Judge Crowley suggested the board look into a Local Law that requires landlords to register with the Department of Probation prior to renting to sex offenders as there are two now living in Copake, and this would ban them from living near schools and parks.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia seconded by Councilperson Miller to schedule the organizational meeting on January 11, 2007 at 6:30 p.m. followed by regular meeting. Motion was carried.

A motion was made by Councilperson Ritchie seconded by Councilperson Sacks the bills from general abstract #12 and highway abstract # 12 be paid. Motion was carried.

A motion was made by Councilperson Ritchie seconded by Councilperson Miller the meeting be adjourned. Motion was carried.

Respectfully submitted,

