

A Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Oxford was held on August 6, 2024, at the Oxford Fire Station 20 Main Street, Oxford, NY 13830.

Present were: Mayor Terry Stark, Trustee Dale Leach, Trustee Dustin Hendricks, Trustee Richard Marks, Trustee Mary Branham, Fire Chief Ron Martin, Alan Davis Town of Oxford Supervisor, John Cammarata Town of Smithville Supervisor, Zach Meseck Town of Preston Supervisor, Ron Charles Oxford Town Council, Carl Koenig Oxford Town Council, Kim Nichols Village Engineer Consultant, Mark Forrest EMS Coordinator, Glen DeGear ALS Technician, Clerk-Treasurer Shelly Marks.

Mayor Stark sent out E-Mails with revisions for the upcoming fire contract-\$26,000 was taken out of the overall budget for the money that was received from the dissolution of the Brisben Fire Department. The current contract ends at the end of December 2024.

Supervisor Meseck talked about the second contract being the difference between night and day. He was pleased with the new contract sent to him by Mayor Stark. He feels better every day about this contract. He would like to see it closer to 2%.

Supervisor Davis said this is such a substantial portion of their budget. 3.7% (or whatever percentage) eats up a big percentage of their tax cap. He is not sure if this will be sustainable in the future, and he is not sure what will hold. There are less trucks, and mutual aid. This continues to be a sizable chunk out of their budget, and he agrees with Zach that the second contract is better than the first one that was initially sent out.

Any funding the village receives from grants will reduce payments received from the towns according to Mayor Stark. He has written this in the grant paperwork, and it will be used to lower the current payment schedule.

Supervisor Cammarata spoke to some residents in Smithville. No one agreed with the 19.6 on the first contract. The most recent contract was 5 and residents are okay with that one. Supervisor Cammarata was asked what he is going to do about the fire contract. The question was 13% but, did that include the repairs to the fire station, the answer is yes. People that are serviced in North and South Tyner are part of fire district 23. They pay Oxford to protect their house. They should pay a portion of the fire contract. Chief Martin says the fire department protects your house, and the residents should protect theirs. Smithville residents do not feel they should have to pay for the repair of the fire station. 1.7% Smithville Center 1.9% the main area and 19.6% down to 13% and his board wants it to come down even more.

The village has been paying \$40,000 - \$60,000 for insurance in the past few years and \$12,000 - \$15,000 for supplies yearly. We used to get supplies from the hospitals. The village may have to pull the plug with the EMS at the end of 2026 if things do not change. The fire district does not get money for taxes from wholly exempt properties (library, NYSDOT, American Legion, Post Office, Churches, Schools, NYS Veteran's Home, municipal buildings, and property). These are non-budgeted items.

The total amount of town and county taxes paid for fire tax is only 5-7% of the total taxes due, we cannot keep this at 2%. Ron Charles said 1.6 million is their total budget and \$200,000 is the fire tax and 13% of their total spent. \$32,000 could be raised but they are tied to 2%. Trustee Leach said that the 2% only affects the school districts.

The dissolution of the Brisben fire department increase is even higher on their taxes. Mayor Stark was asked why we have a 5-year fire contract and why it is not shorter. The mayor explained that there is not enough time, and we are not allowed to have a contract longer than 5 years. Towns cannot have their own fire department. There were four fire districts serving Smithville before Brisben went out of business. They were paying more for those four districts than the other four were. That was less expensive than Norwich is, however.

The fire district started in 1952 for fire protection. Supervisor Meseck said the Town of Preston has a good relationship with the Oxford district and his constituents are happy and would not

mind if it went over 2%. The village passed a resolution to override the tax cap, but this had nothing to do with the fire department. This was not necessary in the end, however. He had some questions, and he wanted to jump in – we all want some sort of a contract. He wishes the town could make just one fire contract payment, but they rely on the taxes to help with the payment. An increase of over 2% sounds inevitable. We are taking a huge first step, he feels. They have quite a bit in savings and are happy where things are going. He agrees there will be more problems if we go over the 2% tax cap. Oxford is applying for a grant and, if we get it, we could go back and change the amounts. Mayor Stark said that if we start doing work on the project, we may not be eligible for the grant. This is outside of New York State. It is currently in Washington and when we get it, we do not know. Exhibit 2 payment summary – franchise payments are NYSEG/Charter. Supervisor Meseck asked if the other towns could have a voice over things that are purchased for the fire station. Mayor Stark spent time and money to find out from an attorney if they can have a say and, legally, no they cannot. It is not just about getting a cheaper price as Norwich is cheaper, but Preston has a history with Oxford, and he trusts us to do the right thing for them and we have been consistent. Preston Manor may have some medical supplies they can help Oxford with if we are interested. Mark Forrest said that the drugs are what most of their supply charges are. They have plenty bandages, splints, etc. right now.

Chief Martin said one of the reasons Brisben went out is because they did not increase their budget and the lack of volunteers. It will be costly for everyone that has a fire department. NFPA is costing towns a lot of money. He has no idea what the amount is going to be. It currently costs \$7,000 to put a fire fighter in full turn out gear that only lasts for 10 years.

Mayor Stark is dealing with fire district #23, and they must do things in concert. Either they are all in or, they are all out. The Town of Smithville must provide fire protection to the town. They either must be a fire district, or a fire protection district and they must work together and cannot operate separately.

Demolition of 62 Albany Street – Kale Webb Property

Code Enforcement Officer Roger Barrows was present for this portion of the meeting. Mayor Stark will be sending out the demolition order. Mayor Stark said if the property owner does not pay for the demolition expenses, it will go on his taxes. Unpaid taxes do not go back to the county for five years now. When property goes up for foreclosure, the county can come back and ask for the money from the municipality. The county is not required to take care of our taxes according to Zach Wentworth, County attorney. He feels this will be more than \$30,000. Mayor Stark walked the property and saw the graves and pool. Does the village want to do any preliminary cleanup and have a community group clean it up?

Electrical – should we go ahead and award the contract to Wescott? They have done a lot of work for us. This is not for the fire station roof just the electrical. Chief Martin has a new estimate from Wescott.

Trustee Branham said Michael Flanagan wants to have a meeting on Friday or Monday to talk to the architect that made the specs. Kim Nichols said Monday at 10:00 or 11:00 works for him and Chief Martin.

Kim Nichols met with Labella on the roof and Mayor Stark will take care of Westcott.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Stark made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shelly W. Marks
Clerk-Treasurer