

REGULAR MEETING – ATHENS TOWN BOARD – November 4, 2021

Supervisor Robert F. Butler, Jr. called the regular meeting of the Athens Town Board to order on November 4, 2021 at 7:00 P.M. at the Athens Town Hall with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

The following people were present: Supervisor Butler; Councilmember Mary H. Brandow; Councilmember Michael Ragaini; Councilmember Anthony Paluch; Councilmember Shannon Spinner and Town Clerk Linda M. Stacey. (Highway Superintendent John Farrell was absent.)

These people were also present; Finance/budget Officer Don Pierro; Michael Campbell; Lynn Brunner; Robert Brunner; Michael Pirrone; Judge Connie Pazin; Theresa Cardinale; Fran McCusker; Barbara Trembacz; Cari and David Gardner.

The following bills were audited by the Board and ordered paid.
General Abstract #21, vouchers #495 through #518 inclusive for \$56,046.86.
Highway Abstract #20, vouchers #151 through #169 inclusive for \$47,013.01.

Supervisor Butler read the Notice of Public Hearing for the Preliminary Budget for 2022 as it appeared in the Official Newspaper. He then opened the hearing to questions from the public.

Don Pierro Finance/Budget Officer informed the Board that he had received the West Athens Lime Street Fire Protection Budget; Leeds-Fire Protection Budget and the Library Budget all of which are considered Special Districts.

Supervisor Butler informed those present, that the public hearing would remain open until November 15, 2021.

Councilmember Mary H. Brandow made a motion seconded by Councilmember Shannon Spinner to approve and accept the Town Clerk's Report. Ayes-5 (Butler; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Councilmember Michael Ragaini made a motion seconded by Supervisor Robert F. Butler, Jr. to accept the minutes from the Town of Catskill, from the Public Hearing on the Town of Catskill, Town of Athens and Leeds Hose Public Hearing on Fire Protection held on October 27, 2021. Ayes- 5 (Butler; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Councilmember Anthony Paluch made a motion seconded by Councilmember Michael Ragaini to approve the minutes of October 6, 2021 as read. Ayes- 5 (Butler; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Abstentions-0

Councilmember Michael Ragaini made a motion seconded by Councilmember Anthony Paluch to approve the workshop minutes of October 20, 2021 as read. Ayes- 5 (Butler; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Councilmember Anthony Paluch made a motion seconded by Councilmember Michael Ragaini to approve the minutes of October 18, 2021 approved as read. Ayes- 5 (Butler; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Bob Knighton, President of Greene Land Trust requested a letter of support from the Town of Athens for their application for funds for engineering. They will include this letter of support with their online application.

The Board was notified by Catskill Rotary That they would like sponsor and restore the Wacky Raft Race. Tentative date is July 9, 2022.

Supervisor Butler Read the following Notice of Public Hearing for Proposed Local Law #2 of 2021:

NOTICE is hereby given that the Town Board of the Town of Athens will hold a Public Hearing on November 15, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. to listen to comment from the public regarding a proposed Local Law to Override the Tax Levy Limit for Fiscal Year 2022. The hearing will take place at the Athens Fire House located at 39 3rd Street, Athens, NY. The proposed Local Law amends Chapter 76 of the Athens Town Code to allow the Town Board to Override the Tax Levy Limit for Fiscal Year 2022 Established by General Municipal Law §3-c, and to allow the Town of Athens to adopt a Town Budget for town purposes, fire protection districts, and other special or improvement districts governed by the Town Board for the Fiscal Year 2022 that requires a real property tax levy in excess of the tax levy limit as defined by GML §3-c. The proposed local law is available for public inspection at the Town Clerk's office at 2 First Street, Athens, NY 12015, Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. At the above date, time and place all interested persons are welcome to attend and will be heard.

On the motion of Councilmember Shannon Spinner seconded by Councilmember Mary H. Brandow **RESOLUTION #2021-46A that the notice above for the Proposed Local Law #2 be published in the paper was adopted.** Ayes- 5 (Butler; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

The holiday list for 2022 was handed out to be voted on, so it could go into the Employee Handbook.

On the motion of Councilmember Shannon Spinner seconded by Councilmember Mary H. Brandow the following **RESOLUTION #2021-47 to adopt the Holiday Schedule** for employees for 2022 was adopted. Ayes- 5 (Butler; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

On the motion of Councilmember Mary H. Brandow seconded by Councilmember Michael Ragaini the following **RESOLUTION #2021-48** was made and adopted:

WHEREAS, the Edward J. Arthur Elementary School (“EJA”) located in Athens is vital to the education of the children in Athens and to the overall health, welfare and prosperity of the community,

WHEREAS, the Superintendent of Schools of the Cocksackie-Athens Central School District has proposed a plan to reconfigure grade groupings (hereinafter “Reconfiguration”) that would change EJA from a Kindergarten through 4th grade (K-4) school for the southern region of the District to Pre-Kindergarten through 2nd grade (preK -2) for the entire District,

WHEREAS, the current three-tier school system comprising two Elementary Schools (K-4), a Middle School (5th – 8th grade) and a High School (9th – 12th grade) would be reconfigured to four tiers comprising an Early Learning Center (preK-2), Elementary School (3rd – 5th grade), Middle School (6th-8th grade) and High School (9th-12th Grade),

WHEREAS, the Reconfiguration would require 4-7 year old children throughout New Baltimore and central and northern regions of Cocksackie to take long bus rides to EJA in the morning and back home in the afternoon, and would relocate 3rd and 4th Graders (8-9 years old) from EJA to Cocksackie Elementary School,

WHEREAS, the Village of Athens is a vital civic center of the Town and School District with a high population density, elementary school, library, playgrounds, churches, police department, fire department, post office, government offices, little league, senior center, American Legion Hall, municipal utilities, cemeteries, restaurants, business, the Athens Pool, active citizenry, a strong sense of community, and many other institutions and assets that together make a wonderful place to live and raise a family,

WHEREAS, the Town has always had and always needed an elementary school; always supported an elementary school financially and otherwise; the Town and Village of Athens pay 35% of the School District tax levy; and a K-4 EJA is an appropriate investment to serve the needs of the School District,

WHEREAS, the Town Board has considered the merits of the Reconfiguration plan and has determined that reconfiguration would result in substantial harm to the Town of Athens, including but not limited to the quality of its residents and the prosperity of the Town,

WHEREAS, among its wide-ranging negative impacts, Reconfiguration will risk the safety of very young and vulnerable children lacking the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development necessary to safely participate in two long commutes every day without close parental supervision; will add a major school transition for 7-year old children causing unnecessary upheaval in their academic and social development; will impede childhood development by turning large amounts of normal activity time into counterproductive transportation time every day; will cause unnecessary hardships on young families; and will disrupt the simplicity and security of early childhood community life in the Town of Athens,

WHEREAS, the prospects of children attending school in Athens only through the 2nd grade will make Athens a less attractive place to live and raise a family, which will be very damaging to the vitality and prosperity of the Town,

WHEREAS, there is broad opposition and little, if any, support from the residence of the Town of Athens for the proposed Grade Reconfiguration, and

WHEREAS, the School District proposed a similar grade reconfiguration circa-2015, which was met with broad opposition and little, if any, support from the residence of the Town of Athens,

IT IS RESOLVED THAT, the Town Board of the Town of Athens opposes the proposed Grade Reconfiguration and directs the Town Supervisor to convey this resolution to the School Board and Superintendent of Schools.

Ayes- 5 (Butler; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0

Councilmember Mary H. Brandow made a motion Attorney McHugh, Finance/ Budget Officer Don Pierro and she be on a committee to talk with the Village about money that is due. There was no second to this motion. Discussion followed.

As there was no further business to come before the meeting, Councilmember Ragaini made a motion to adjourn Councilmember Spinner seconded the motion.
Ayes- 5 (Butler; Brandow; Ragaini; Paluch; Spinner) Noes-0 Absent-0 Abstentions-0
Meeting adjourned at 7:35p.m.