

May 31, 2018 Special Meeting 6:00PM

PRESENT: Mayor Smith; Trustees Austin, Watson, Armstrong and Chaplin; Attorney Erika Sellar Ryan; see attached Sign-In Sheets

Mayor Smith opened the meeting by stating that a few people had asked about abolishing the Police Department and consolidation due to the high tax rate. The Village Board of Trustees wanted to give the public an opportunity to voice their opinions on this matter. Mayor Smith asked how many in attendance were not Village residents and 15 out of the 60 were not Village residents.

Marie Winters stated that as a Rescue Squad member she is glad to have the presence of the Police Department. She also stated that the State Police and Sheriff's Office wouldn't provide the same assistance as the local Police Officers. She also stated that without the Police Department Whitehall would be in more trouble with people bringing drugs from Rutland, VT.

Robert Putorti, Sr. asked what coverage the Village would receive if Washington County Sheriff's took over the Police Department. Mayor Smith replied that it would be same coverage but if a call came from outside the Village the Sheriff's would go on that call. Mr. Putorti asked if the Police Department could go to the Whitehall School. Chief Bassett stated that in extreme situation if dispatched that Police Department could go to the school. Mr. Putorti stated that the children's safety was an important reason to keep the Police Department.

Bruce Angus asked if there would be coverage for all shifts through the Sheriff's Department. Mayor Smith replied that no specifics had been worked out with the Sheriff's Department at this time.

Colin Thompson felt that the Police Department was an asset by having certified officers in the community and worth the cost.

Robert Putorti, Jr. stated that the Police Department is needed as a lot of illegal things come through Whitehall and seven lives have been saved by the Police Department in the last five years which is priceless. He also stated that the Village lost an officer due to the uncertainty of the future of the Police Department. He also stated that Corinth contracted with the Sheriff's Department for police coverage and it is now costing more than originally having their own Police force.

Trustee Austin stated that the Village Board hasn't done anything to abolish the Police Department and that the meeting was to see what the people wanted.

William Humphries stated that one Board member did state that they wanted to get rid of the Police Department and that is why the officer left. He also stated that the Sheriff could tell you anything and change it later.

Charles Bennett stated that the savings from abolishing the Police Department and contracting with the Sheriff's was not worth it and he would rather pay the taxes.

Patricia Norton is in favor of keeping the Police Department. She stated that the officers were very conscientious and supportive of the Rescue Squad. She also stated that as a School Board member she wants our officers to respond to the school.

Patricia Provost stated that she was one of the seven lives that were saved by the Police Department after a fall at her home. She also stated that she lives on Champlain Avenue which has many elderly homeowners and likes that the Police Department is very quick to respond during the night.

James Peterson has family members who have received quick response when needed from the Police Department. He would support a tax increase to pay for the Police Department and feels it provides for better property values.

David Molenaar stated that the Village has the highest tax rate around and can't keep businesses due to this.

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Ann Coulter stated that Whitehall is revitalizing and that without the Police Department a can of worms would be opened up to more drugs in the community. She also stated that other ways of lowering taxes should be explored rather than abolishing the Police Department.

John Gladd feels that the Police Department is too expensive and the residents aren't getting their money's worth from it. He stated that police vehicles sit idling and you need an appointment to meet with the Police Chief.

Gary Hill asked what Lake George does for police coverage and is there a way to streamline services and save money.

Mayor Smith stated that the meeting was to get residents informed with all of the options for a Police Department. He also stated that the Board has supported the Police Department by not cutting its budget. He is willing to take suggestions from the public on other ways to save money.

Pamela Bolton had an issue at two locations, one in the Village and one outside the Village. The Whitehall Police Department provided surveillance but the Sheriff's couldn't provide the same service outside the Village because the Sheriff's Department only has two cars on during the night. Mrs. Bolton stated that if one person is saved by having the Police Department, what price could be put on that.

Bruce Angus stated that the Sheriff's Department covers other communities without cost to those municipalities. Mayor Smith stated that without a contract the Sheriff's Department wouldn't always have a patrol car in the community.

Dana Grant suggested not having a contract with the Sheriff's Department but let the Sheriff's use the Police Office as a substation with no extra coverage. He asked if a lot of overtime was being paid currently.

Chief Bassett stated that by hiring certified part-time Officers the overtime has been cut down. He also stated that he is here as a cost saving measure for both the Village of Whitehall and the Village of Granville through a shared services agreement. He praised the Police Officers stating that the Police Department has more experienced officers than any other Police Department. He stated that the Police Department consists of a great group with a fine mix of smart officers.

Garry Bennett stated that he lives in the Village but is on a State Highway with a 55 MPH speed limit in front of his property. He stated that the cars only slow down when there is a Police presence.

Jason LaMoy is very interested in the idea of peace officers.

Beth Reynolds is in favor of keeping the Police Department but is concerned that the Village budget is getting higher. She suggested borrowing from the reserve funds to keep the taxes with no increase and to get creative to save money.

Trustee Armstrong stated that he only brought up the idea of abolishing the Police Department because of the high tax rate in the Village. He stated that a contract with the Sheriff's would have patrols assigned to Whitehall and that every Village is talking with the Sheriff's to abolish police departments. He stated that the Village of Granville eliminated a position in their Police, Public Works and Clerk departments to save \$40/tax bill. Someone asked how much would be saved in taxes if the Village contracted with the Sheriff's Dept. Mayor Smith stated that by abolishing the Police Department \$57/year could be saved on the tax bill of a property that is assessed at \$100,000.

Matthew Austin asked if consolidating the Police Department with Granville would save any money.

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Terrie Courchesne stated that she had great respect for the Police Department as they have also helped her. She is willing to pay the \$57 to keep the Police Department. She also stated that if the Police Department was gone drugs would be pouring into Whitehall.

Mayor Smith stated that most of the residents in attendance were pro Police Department. He also stated that he appreciated everyone attending the meeting and that nothing would happen to the Police Department right away as there is still two years left with the union contract for the Full-Time Police Officers. Mayor Smith stated that the Village Board would now continue with regular Village business if anyone wished to stay for that portion of the meeting.

Village Justice Robert Putorti, Jr. submitted a request to hire a part-time Court Clerk for 4 hours a week at \$11.50/hr. starting June 1, 2018. Justice Putorti stated that through New York State mandates the Justices have to do more work and a Court Clerk is needed and funds for this position can be used from the Justice contractual budget. Motion made by Trustee Watson, seconded by Trustee Chaplin to hire a part-time Court Clerk for 4 hours/week, Trustees Watson and Chaplin voting yes, Trustees Austin and Armstrong voting no. Motion made by Mayor Smith, seconded by Trustee Austin to table this request until the next meeting, Trustees Watson and Chaplin voting no, all others voting in favor, CARRIED

The Chazen Companies submitted a proposal to prepare and submit a CDBG Public Facilities grant application requesting \$300,000.00 to be used to develop the Flat Iron Building site as a public parking area at a cost of \$2,500.00. The application is due by July 27, 2018. Motion made by Trustee Armstrong, seconded by Trustee Austin to hire The Chazen Companies to submit the grant application at a cost of \$2,500.00, Trustees Watson and Chaplin voting no, all other voting in favor, CARRIED

Motion made by Trustee Armstrong, seconded by Trustee Austin to hold a public hearing on June 19, 2018 at 6:00PM to take public comments regarding submitting a CDBG Public Facilities grant application requesting \$300,000.00 to be used to develop the Flat Iron Building site, Trustee Chaplin and Watson voting no, all other voting in favor, CARRIED

BILLS: Motion made by Trustee Watson, seconded by Trustee Chaplin to approve payment of the abstract covering claims #683-709 totaling \$48,442.17, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Motion made by Trustee Watson, seconded by Trustee Armstrong to approve the attached budget amendments, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Mayor Smith reported that the Comprehensive Planning Committee has approved a request for qualifications seeking proposals from firms to conduct Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Whitehall with the cost not to exceed \$70,000.00. Motion made by Trustee Watson, seconded by Trustee Austin to authorize Mayor Smith to request proposals from qualified firms to conduct the Comprehensive Plan, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Mayor Smith reported that Roger McLaughlin submitted an offer of \$200.00 for the Village property on Maple Street. Trustee Watson feels that this parcel should not be sold because it may be needed in the future to hook up the 10" waterline to make a loop to Kirtland Street. Motion made by Trustee Armstrong, seconded by Trustee Watson to reject Roger McLaughlin's offer and to not sell this parcel, all voting in favor, CARRIED

MJ Engineering needs to submit an application to New York State Department of Health for the waterline under South Bay. There is a fee that is required with this application. Trustee Chaplin stated that the fee should be covered under MJ Engineering's contract to obtain all necessary permits. Motion made by Trustee Chaplin, seconded by Trustee Armstrong to authorize MJ Engineering to submit the application and to sign on behalf of the Village with the cost of the permit to be paid by MJ Engineering, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Motion made by Trustee Armstrong, seconded by Trustee Chaplin to hold a public hearing on the proposed Local Law #1 of 2018 titled "Property Maintenance" on June 19, 2018 at 6:00PM, all voting in favor, CARRIED

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Motion made by Trustee Chaplin, seconded by Trustee Watson to approve the attached resolution to register a Bond Anticipation Note in the principal amount of \$23,725.00 issued by Community Bank, N.A. with an interest rate of 2.80% to purchase a 2018 Dodge Charger Police Car and to authorize Mayor Smith to effectuate the issuance and sale of the same, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Trustee Austin reported that the fence has been installed at Boardman Street cemetery.

Trustee Watson reported that New York State Department of Environmental Conservation conducted a yearly inspection at the Water Treatment Plant and Wastewater Treatment Plant and both reported as satisfactory. He reported that a window has been installed on the door to the chemical room at the Water Treatment Plant. Garry Robinson is investigating the possibility of installing a solar powered valve at Pine Lake to eliminate the sustaining valve at the Water Treatment Plant. Trustee Watson has received two quotes for the inspection of the fire suspension system. Trustee Chaplin suggested asking the Fire Company for recommendations on companies that perform these inspections. Mayor Smith suggested checking with the Village's Insurance Company to see if this inspection has been done previously.

Chief Bassett would like to hire Tom Zovistoski to work part-time at the Police Department. Motion made by Trustee Chaplin, seconded by Trustee Armstrong to authorize Chief Bassett to hire three part-time Police Officers pending a background check, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Chief Bassett would like to pay Sgt. Ryan Pedone more than the current part-time Patrolman pay. Attorney Sellar Ryan stated that the request would have to be in writing and then check with the union contract.

Beth Reynolds asked about sharing the Police Department with the Town and then the officers would be allowed to go to the school. There were residents of the Town in attendance at the meeting in favor of keeping the Police Department. She felt that everyone could benefit and dispense the cost throughout the Town and Village.

Chief Bassett did respond by saying that the Village would still lose coverage if only one officer was on duty and was called out to the Town.

Motion made by Trustee Chaplin, seconded by Trustee Watson to adjourn the meeting at 8:06PM, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Stephanie A. LaChapelle  
Clerk-Treasurer