

PRESENT: Mayor Eagan; Trustees Watson, LaChapelle, Norton and Putorti; Dawn Anthony; Charles Bennett; Philip Smith; John Rozell; Natasha Holdridge; Suzi Chaplin; David Chaplin; EJ Conzola; Tony Leclair; John Burgart; Robin Burgart; Sheriff Jeff Murphy; Frank Hunt; Sgt. Richard LaChapelle; Beth Reynolds; Dana Grant; Marge Mohn; Jeff Thomas; Brian Brooks at 5:28PM; Diane Petryk at 5:55PM

Mayor Eagan opened the public hearing to hear and take comments from the public regarding proposed Local Law #2 of 2024 to abolish the Village of Whitehall Police Department. Sheriff Murphy at the Village's request previously gave a proposal for police protection which he gave everyone in attendance handouts from that presentation. He explained that the Washington Co. Sheriff's Dept. would use the same formula as what is working in the Village of Fort Edward. The Sheriff's contract would be for 4 deputies dedicated to the Village of Whitehall for 20 hours per day. The deputies would be assigned mainly to the village but will also patrol an extended area. The deputy on patrol in the village would go outside the village in emergency cases and then the Sergeant on duty would assign another patrol to cover. The contract would also include administration, lieutenants, dog patrols, investigators, etc. without additional costs. Charles Bennett stated that not having a local police department would not work. He stated that cars speed past his house on State Route 22 all the time and he never sees a Sheriff patrol and that taxes should be increased to keep the police department. John Burgart also has a concern with speeders in the Village. Sheriff Murphy stated that they could set up speed signs that collect data and follow up with a car to issue tickets. Charles Bennett asked if other entities would be contributing towards the contract. Sgt. LaChapelle stated that he posted a five-week schedule for part-time officer to cover and only three shifts were covered in that time. He also stated that the Village can't keep hiring new officers and sending them to school just to leave after becoming certified. He also stated that we need police coverage in the Village and the Sheriff's Department would provide that. John Burgart asked if the Sheriff's would enforce local laws. Sheriff Murphy responded yes, they would enforce local laws and provide coverage for local events. John Burgart asked if the deputies would be the same ones all the time so that the people of Whitehall would get to know them. Sheriff Murphy replied that the assigned deputies would be the same and will get familiar with Whitehall. Marge Mohn asked how the Town would pay for this service. She was told that only the Village would pay with this contract. John Rozell asked who would look at the cameras at the Town Park as there has been vandalism there recently and Investigator Frank Hunt has looked at the cameras for them. Sheriff Murphy stated that the dedicated deputy would handle any incidents. Dana Grant asked how much time the Washington County Sheriffs have been spending in Whitehall recently. Sheriff Murphy replied that in the last year the Sheriff's have handled 1277 calls in Whitehall due to the Village Police Department decreasing coverage. Brian Brooks stated that the response time would be better with the Sheriffs located in Whitehall. Dana Grant stated that there is a need for more police coverage. Brian Brooks asked if the Sheriffs deputies would utilize the current police station as a substation. Sheriff Murphy replied that the use of the current police station as a substation would be helpful as some the equipment they use is already there and it would keep the deputies in Whitehall by not having to travel to Fort Edward. Sgt. LaChapelle asked Town Supervisor Rozell if the Town would help by paying for the electric, heat etc. needed at the police station as their contribution to having the Sheriffs in Whitehall. Supervisor John Rozell replied that he didn't know. Dana Grant asked if the village would be without coverage if someone had to be transported to the County jail. Sheriff Murphy replied that the Sergeant on duty would make sure that the post had coverage. Charlie Bennett asked how much more it would cost to have 24-hour coverage instead of 20-hour coverage. Tony Leclair replied that they would have to calculate the difference and that the 4-hour shortage is during the times that have the least number of calls. Dana Grant stated that 20 hours/day coverage is more than what we currently have and it will cost less. Brian Brooks stated that the liability will also lessen if we contract with the Sheriffs. Beth Reynolds asked if the Village had a contract with the Sheriffs would there still be cost for the village besides the contract cost. Mayor Eagan replied that the Village's labor attorney will have to look into the status of the 207C case that we currently have with an officer if the police department is abolished. Beth Reynolds stated that the cost of police department is increasing each year. Mayor Eagan stated that the Village Board worked hard with Police Union to give a fair, very competitive salary to the officers but couldn't keep up with other agencies who are paying more. Diane Petryk arrived and stated that she was strenuously against abolishing the Police Department and she wasn't happy with regional coverage. Marge Mohn

stated that she was strenuously in favor of contracting with the Sheriffs for police coverage. David Chaplin asked what is the average response time to calls. Sheriff Murphy replied 15 minutes but would be less because a Sheriff car would already be in Whitehall. Marge Mohn asked how the State Police fit into this. Sheriff Murphy replied that the State Police are trying to get more troopers locally due to the increased calls. Beth Reynolds asked what the next steps were. Mayor Eagan stated the after the public hearing if the Village Board adopts the local law to abolish the Police Department a public notice must be published stating the local law is subject to permissive referendum and if no petition is filed for the permissive referendum the law would be in effect. Charlie Bennett asked when the contract with the Sheriff's Department would begin. Mayor Eagan stated that a negotiation and contract would be needed before a start date is decided. Sheriff Murphy stated that the Village's Attorney and the County Attorney would write the contract which typically takes about two months. John Burgart doesn't see any alternative but to go with the Sheriffs. Sgt. LaChapelle stated that the process needs to be started as he is only here until September. Marge Mohn thanked Sheriff Murphy for attending the meeting. Beth Reynolds stated that in the past funds were taken from the surplus to fund the police department which isn't sustainable. It was stated that the majority of people in attendance were in favor of abolishing the police department and contract with the Sheriff's Department, two people were still undecided and one was against. Motion made by Trustee LaChapelle, seconded by Trustee Putorti to close the public hearing at 6:30PM, all voting in favor,

CARRIED

Motion made by Trustee LaChapelle, seconded by Trustee Norton to adopt the attached resolution adopting Local Law #2 Of 2024 titled "A Local Law Abolishing the Village of Whitehall Police Department", all voting in favor,

CARRIED

Motion made by Trustee Norton, seconded by Trustee LaChapelle to approve the minutes of the May 29<sup>th</sup>, June 18<sup>th</sup>, June 26<sup>th</sup> and June 29<sup>th</sup> meetings, all voting in favor,

CARRIED

Marge Mohn had a complaint stating that she had a buyer for her building and after someone from the office told the buyer that there was no parking for this building, the buyer backed out the contract. There is street parking but there is a Winter Parking Ban from November 1 through March 31 when parking would not be allowed on the village streets. Marge Mohn feels that the Winter Parking ban is absurd and that the Village should just call people to move their vehicles when plowing is needed. Beth Reynolds stated that there is parking behind the library. Mayor Eagan talked about what happened at the property located at 1 North Williams Street. She had a call that the building's roof was caving in. She contacted the Village Attorney and an engineer came to the site. The engineer stated that the building was in imminent danger of collapse. The Village's obligation was to make sure the area was safe. After an emergency meeting of the Board, it was decided to have the Department of Public Works demolition the building while treating the property as if there was asbestos. Mayor Eagan stated that the Village cannot legally do anything further with the debris as the Village does not own the property and that a lien will be placed on the property to recoup the cost of the demolition and engineer. Marge Mohn asked what happened to all the grants to help homeowners. Mayor Eagan stated that a grant through Restore NY was looked into for another property on Broadway and using the NYS Labor standards the clean up would cost approximately \$200,000.00 and the Village would be responsible for \$40,000.00 and the Village can't afford that.

Dana Grant asked for help from the Department of Public Works with signage during the Sasquatch Festival in September with placing signs for one way parking on Skenesborough Drive.

LETTERS: Charter Communications sent notification of upcoming programming changes. Steven Morrill submitted a letter asking for an adjustment on his water bill due to leaks. Annette Parrot sent a letter regarding high grass at a property on Blount Street. The Compliance Officer has sent a notice to the owner regarding this. David Buxton submitted a resignation from the Police Department effective July 2, 2024. Thomas Nichols submitted a resignation as Acting Village Justice effective December 31, 2024. Motion made by Trustee Watson, seconded by Trustee LaChapelle to accept the correspondence and to place it on file, all voting in favor,

CARRIED

July 16, 2024 Regular Meeting Continued

Motion made by Trustee Watson, seconded by Trustee LaChapelle to table the request for adjustment of the water bill by Steven Morrill until further information is provided, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Motion made by Trustee LaChapelle, seconded by Trustee Watson to accept David Buxton's resignation from the Police Department effective July 2, 2024, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Motion made by Trustee Norton, seconded by Trustee Watson to accept Thomas Nichols resignation as Acting Village Justice effective December 31, 2024, all voting in favor, CARRIED

A discussion took place regarding the request by John Daly for an adjustment to the water/sewer bill at 116 Broadway which was previously tabled for more information. Motion made by Trustee LaChapelle, seconded by Trustee Norton to adjustment John Daly's water/sewer bill at 116 Broadway to a minimum charge due to a faulty meter, all voting in favor, CARRIED

BILLS: Motion made by Trustee Watson, seconded by Trustee Putorti to approve payment of the abstract covering claims #25-00065-25-00119 totaling \$105,873.47, all voting in favor, CARRIED

REPORTS: Justice Johnson submitted a report for May. Justice Nichols submitted a report for June. A Police report was received for June 19-July 16, 2024. Motion made by Trustee Putorti, seconded by Trustee Norton to accept and file the reports, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Motion made by Trustee Norton, seconded by Trustee LaChapelle to adopt the attached resolution that the proposed municipal water valve improvement project does not meet or exceed the thresholds for a Type 1 action as stipulated in SEQRA 6 NYCRR Part 617.4 and that the project is an unlisted action and the Village Board is the appropriate agency to serve as Lead Agency, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Motion made by Trustee Watson, seconded by Trustee Norton to adopt the attached resolution issuing a negative declaration of environmental significance under SEQR for the proposed municipal water valve improvement project, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Trustee Watson reported that the Department of Public Works had to repair a leak on a 10' waterline due to National Grid breaking the line when placing a new pole. Charles Bennett asked if the fire hydrant near his property that is in a gully could be placed on a higher area. Trustee Watson will look into this request.

Mayor Eagan was asked by CHPE to remind everyone not to run the red lights throughout the construction area that is only one lane as this could be dangerous.

Motion made by Trustee LaChapelle, seconded by Trustee Norton to convene into executive session to discuss specific personnel at 7:29PM, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Motion made by Trustee LaChapelle, seconded by Trustee Watson to end executive session and to reconvene into regular session at 7:43PM, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Motion made by Trustee Norton, seconded by Trustee LaChapelle to adjourn the meeting at 7:44PM, all voting in favor, CARRIED

Stephanie A. LaChapelle  
Clerk-Treasurer