

**TOWN OF KIRKWOOD
TOWN BOARD MEETING**

December 29, 2020

A special meeting of the Kirkwood Town Board was held on December 29, 2020 at 6:23 PM at the Joseph A. Griffin Town Hall with Supervisor Gordon Kniffen presiding.

Present: Supervisor Gordon Kniffen
Councilman Robert Weingartner
Councilman Lewis Grubham
Councilwoman Katie Legg
Councilman William Diffendorf, Jr.

Also Present: Robert McKertich, Attorney
Kelley Diffendorf, Town Clerk
John A. Finch Jr., Commissioner of Public Works
Jim Smith, Budget Officer
Marchie Diffendorf, Planning Board Chairman
Gayle Diffendorf, Deputy Town Clerk

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Done Prior to the Public Hearing

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: December 1, 2020 Town Board Meeting

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Pat Griffin from the public said, I just want to take this opportunity to thank my good friend, Gordi Kniffen for his many, many years of dedicated service to this Town. Not only for your many years as Councilman but also for the last 17 years as Supervisor. You took over as Supervisor during a difficult time and you've done a superb job. You have always worked hard for this Town and its residents. I'm very proud of this Town as I know so many of the residents are due to your hard work and getting us what we have here. I just want to thank you publicly for all your hard work, you are certainly going to be missed. Supervisor Kniffen said thank you and I appreciate that.

COMMUNICATIONS: Resignation Letter from Lew Grubham

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Workman's Comp

Councilman Weingartner said, the Workman's Comp renewal just came through. It was approximately \$89,000, which is pretty much what we've been at for the past couple years. We also received a check for \$1,400 from PERMA after an audit. We will be entering into a two year agreement with them, similar to the one we had for the past two years. Our rates went down in 2020 due to our performance and hopefully that will continue and our numbers will stay or go down even more. I'm very pleased about this.

OLD BUSINESS:

Councilwoman Legg moved to adopt resolution, after a Public Hearing, adopting Local Law 4-2020 entitled "A Local Law Amending Certain Section of the Sewer Rents Local Law", in accordance with the attached resolution. Councilman Diffendorf seconded.

138:20
Local Law
Amending
Sewer Rents

Roll Call Vote: Councilman Weingartner - yes
Councilman Grubham - yes
Councilwoman Legg - yes
Councilman Diffendorf - yes
Supervisor Kniffen - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

Councilman Diffendorf moved to adopt resolution amending the Town of Kirkwood Benefit Plan regarding increase in Health Insurance Reimbursement Pool and increase in health insurance contributions effective January 1, 2021, in accordance with the attached Benefit Plan. Councilman Grubham seconded.

139:20
Health
Insurance
Benefit Plan
Increase

Roll Call Vote: Councilman Weingartner - yes
Councilman Grubham - yes
Councilwoman Legg - yes
Councilman Diffendorf - yes
Supervisor Kniffen - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

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140:20
Reappt
W.Woolbaugh
Pl Bd

Councilman Grubham moved to adopt resolution reappointing Walter Woolbaugh to the Planning Board for a term to expire December 31, 2025. Councilman Weingartner seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Councilman Weingartner - yes
 Councilman Grubham - yes
 Councilwoman Legg - yes
 Councilman Diffendorf - yes
 Supervisor Kniffen - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

141:20
Reappt
C.French
ZBA

Councilman Weingartner moved to adopt resolution reappointing Cynthia French to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term to expire December 31, 2025. Councilwoman Legg seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Councilman Weingartner - yes
 Councilman Grubham - yes
 Councilwoman Legg - yes
 Councilman Diffendorf - yes
 Supervisor Kniffen - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

142:20
Petty Cash
2021

Councilwoman Legg moved to adopt resolution authorizing the continuation of petty cash for 2021, subject to audit by the Budget Director, for the following departments at specified amounts, pursuant to Town Law Section 64, Paragraph 1(2):

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Bookkeeper | \$100 |
| Building & Code Inspector | \$100 |
| DPW Commissioner | \$200 and \$35 for Water Department |
| Supervisor | \$200 |
| Town Clerk | \$200 |
| Town Justice | \$200 |
| Town Justice | \$200 |

Councilman Diffendorf seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Councilman Weingartner - yes
 Councilman Grubham - yes
 Councilwoman Legg - yes
 Councilman Diffendorf - yes
 Supervisor Kniffen - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

143:20
Assessor to
renew
property tax
exemptions

Councilman Diffendorf moved to adopt resolution authorizing the Assessor to renew certain real property tax exemptions without an application for the year 2021, in accordance with the attached resolution. Councilman Grubham seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Councilman Weingartner - yes
 Councilman Grubham - yes
 Councilwoman Legg - yes
 Councilman Diffendorf - yes
 Supervisor Kniffen - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

144:20
Transfer of
Funds

Councilman Grubham moved to adopt resolution authorizing the Transfer of Funds, in accordance with the attached Budget Adjustment Sheet. Councilman Weingartner seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Councilman Weingartner - yes
 Councilman Grubham - yes
 Councilwoman Legg - yes
 Councilman Diffendorf - yes
 Supervisor Kniffen - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

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AUDIT AND PAYMENT OF CLAIMS:

Councilman Weingartner moved to adopt resolution authorizing the audit and payment of the following claims: General and Highway Funds, Special Districts (Fire, Light, Water and Sewer Districts), Professional Services, Capital Projects and Reserve Funds claims # 20-01535 through # 20-01658 in the total amount of \$254,480.30, which includes prepaid claims as authorized by resolution adopted January 7, 2020. Councilwoman Legg seconded.

145:20
Audit/Pay

Discussion – Voting Payment to County

Councilman Diffendorf said, we are paying the County \$14,956 now for next year’s election. The last election we just had hasn’t even been decided and we are already paying for next year. It seems the County is jumping the gun on getting their money for the election. We will pay it, but it seems a little odd to me. It’s good that we are all aware of what is going on because these elections cost us a lot of money. All the early voting is not free, it costs money. There’s a lot of things that need to be taken care of with these elections, any voting in New York State, anyone can vote as anyone, you don’t show who you are. Councilman Diffendorf asked if anyone had to show identification to vote, no one responded. Councilman Weingartner said it’s not the law in New York State. Councilman Diffendorf said I know it’s not. But there’s a lot of money that goes to waste here because we don’t even know what is right or wrong anymore and the corruption. I just want to make everyone aware that elections cost money and there’s a lot of problems with elections. Supervisor Kniffen thanked Councilman Diffendorf for his comments.

Roll Call Vote: Councilman Weingartner - yes
 Councilman Grubham - yes
 Councilwoman Legg - yes
 Councilman Diffendorf - yes
 Supervisor Kniffen - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

Councilman Diffendorf moved to adopt resolution to appoint SKJ Facilities Management Company as the cleaning service for the Town of Kirkwood, in accordance with the attached agreement, effective upon the termination of Brooms over Broome. Councilman Grubham seconded.

146:20
SKJ new
cleaning
company

Roll Call Vote: Councilman Weingartner - yes
 Councilman Grubham - yes
 Councilwoman Legg - yes
 Councilman Diffendorf - yes
 Supervisor Kniffen - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS:

Councilman Grubham said, as many of you know, for nearly 70 years Supervisor Kniffen has been involved in the Town. He’s given all of us a lot. I have been involved with him in Little League, Zoning Board of Appeals, Councilman, and much more. He’s done more for this Town than almost anyone has in that span of time. He has done it with love in his heart for everyone and for the Town. We would like to do a little something for him since we can’t do too much with this virus right now, I’d like to ask Councilwoman Legg to read a resolution.

Councilman Grubham moved to adopt resolution honoring Gordon E. Kniffen for his retirement and many years of service, in accordance with the attached resolution. Councilman Diffendorf seconded.

147:20
Honor
G.Kniffen

Roll Call Vote: Councilman Weingartner - yes
 Councilman Grubham - yes
 Councilwoman Legg - yes
 Councilman Diffendorf - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

Supervisor Kniffen responded to the resolution by saying, I certainly appreciate that. This is tough for me and my family. The first thing I’d like to say is, I want to thank all the people of Kirkwood and the Town Board’s that I have served with. I love Kirkwood with all my heart and I care about everything. My special thing was working with the youth. When we first started we didn’t have much money for youth activities like we do today. I

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can remember being the basketball director for the young guys at Bell School. So, without much money you were not only the director, but the coach, the scorekeeper, and sometimes even had to play. It was a lot of fun. Through the years we've had flag football and as we grew more the girls were involved. My heart, as you all know, is with little league. I always had my kids call me Gordi, and nothing hits your heart more than when you are walking in Schneider's parking lot and you hear, hey Gordi, hey coach from one of your former players. While I wanted the kids to most importantly have a good time, I figured while they were there why don't they learn a little bit about baseball. But at that age kids are cute. Supervisor Kniffen told a few nice stories and memories from his coaching days that brought smiles and laughs to everyone at the meeting. Supervisor Kniffen continued by saying, it's always been close to my heart to make sure all the kids felt part of the team even if they may not have had the most athletic ability. I wanted them to say I'm one of them and not feel like an outcast. It not only pleased the kids but the parents as well.

From there I was able to get involved with the annual Christmas party. It started with Ernie Gaeta, Jim Williams, and myself. It was at the bank in Schneider's parking lot. We got a Santa from downtown and had some of the young girls dress as elves. We always had to keep the car running so we all could jump in and get warm. With the cold weather being an issue we eventually moved the Christmas party to the Town garage when John Finch, Sr. was Highway Superintendent. At that point we really improved on things because we got a real Santa and a real Mrs. Claus, and they are both here tonight, referring to Councilman Diffendorf and Pat Griffin. One year Santa was put on the roof of the Post Office and what a thrill that was for the kids.

We also had the Christmas tree lighting, one year Leslie from Country Marketplace made yellow ribbons for all the Veterans with their names on the ribbons. We would have someone that's been in the Town forever to turn the lights on the tree. That was fun.

Sometimes I wonder how I got here. When I was young I thought about getting on the Town Board. It was back when the Justices served on the Town Board and that was the year they were no longer going to do that. So, there were two openings and a lot of people running. You had to get out there and work hard. The Town Board was in the now Post Office and I sat next to Joe Griffin, Herb Kline, Ernie Travis and Art Shafer. When Art Shafer left, Joe Griffin became Supervisor. As the years rolled along I became his Deputy. He would give me good projects, and we could be celebrating Joe Griffin here tonight, that's what kind of guy he was. He gave me projects like the Bell School project and the Senior Citizen Affordable housing project, he had me present them even though he was the Supervisor. Since I did a lot of the work he wanted me to get the credit for that. He always talked with me about switching positions and I told him I don't want to be Supervisor. But, unfortunately, our friend Joe Griffin got very sick. He wanted me to take his place because I had seniority. The Town Board appointed me and that is how I got started. It gave me a whole new look at things because I was the boss. I met a lot of people along the way.

I want to take this opportunity to thank several people. Our Code department, Chad Moran is probably the best Code Officer in Broome County, he's out there all the time looking around and getting things done. I want to thank the people on the Zoning Board and Planning Board, they get paid very, very little and work nights, and their work is hard. Marchie Diffendorf has the Planning Board and Duane Travis has the Zoning Board of Appeals, a special thanks to them for what they do. Mary Kay Sullivan, my secretary, is awesome. I say a few words and she can read my mind and know what to do. We are blessed to have her. Jean Smith, who is now training our new bookkeeper, thanks to them. Jim Smith, I don't know what we would do without you. He is our financial wizard. He does a lot of complicated work for us, we appreciate you. Of course our Town Board, I appreciate them. A gal named Gayle, Gayle Diffendorf was our Town Clerk for years and we've worked together for years. Thank you for all you've done. Kelley Diffendorf is really filling in great, she's a good person and we enjoy being with her. John Finch, thanks to all your people and your secretary. Sue Glovich is a great person and does a great job. Robert McKertich, our lawyer, he came in at a bad time when the virus broke loose. So it has been a challenge and thank you so much for doing that. Thank you to the Country Courier, we appreciate you and you do a great job.

Thank you! I have a few more days, so watch out! Thank you very much!

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Councilman Diffendorf said Supervisor Kniffen and I have been on the Board for 36 years together and it doesn't seem possible. When I was a young kid, Gordi Kniffen was coaching my brother, Jack on the Dodgers and he took over for Herbie Howell, they had great championship teams back then. Gordi Kniffen had me helping out with Santa Claus when I was a young teenager. He got me started early in this business. When I came home from Vietnam in December, Gordi Kniffen had me already signed up to be the basketball coach and I had just got home. He always grabbed anyone he could. It's amazing where we've come from and how we got here. Congratulations Gordi, you've had a great run. Supervisor Kniffen thanked Councilman Diffendorf.

Jason Griffin from the public said to Supervisor Kniffen, I just want to say that I admire you beyond what words can say. I think you are one of the best men I have ever known and I have learned from you. I love how much you love my father. This Town is very lucky. Supervisor Kniffen replied, I love you too.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilman Weingartner moved to adopt resolution to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Grubham seconded. All voted in favor.

MOTION CARRIED.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Kelley M. Diffendorf
Town Clerk