

TOWN OF KIRKWOOD WORK SESSION

March 30, 2021

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

Also Present: Robert McKertich, Attorney
Kelley Diffendorf, Town Clerk
John A. Finch Jr., Commissioner of Public Works
Marchie Diffendorf, Planning Bd. Chairman
Duane Travis, ZBA Chairman (via Zoom)

1. Discussion – Resolution authorizing the Supervisor to enter into an Agreement and Addendum with the Southern Tier Zoological Society, Inc., regarding the 2021 Zoo Season, in accordance with the attached agreement. (LCG)

Supervisor Grubham said we do this every year. We give them \$2000 and they give us 600 tickets to give to Kirkwood residents. Residents just need to call the Town Clerk's office or stop in with proof of residency. The Zoo would also send the Zoomobile to the Town Fair as part of this deal but that won't happen since we aren't having the fair this year.

2. Discussion – Resolution authorizing Lewis C. Grubham, Catherine Legg, William J. Diffendorf, Jr., and Robert Weingartner to sign the Manufacturers and Traders Trust Company Public Funds Certified Resolutions, in accordance to the attached forms. (LCG)

Supervisor Grubham said this will be a resolution for Board members to sign with M & T Bank for the bank accounts. It was out of date and needs to be redone.

3. Discussion – Town Court Study and Recommendations. (LCG/RJF/KML)

Supervisor Grubham said when we got the budget requests in October for this year the court clerks had asked for substantial raises. \$8,000, \$8,800, and \$7,000 for each of them and it didn't get approved. They got the standard raise. In the beginning of December the Judges sent me a letter complaining about this and we (Councilwoman Legg, Councilman Weingartner and myself) had a meeting with the court clerks. I decided we would have a committee (Councilwoman Legg and Councilman Weingartner) to study the situation to see if they truly were underpaid and by how much. It would be on paper instead of just talking about it so it is right there for everyone to see. The committee got together and came up with some numbers. Councilman Weingartner did a very nice job on this report.

Councilman Weingartner said this really started back in June 2020. I met with the clerks in July and did some work to find out some information on things. I believe at the October meeting I

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brought up a raise recommendation and at the time we decided to table it because of the COVID budget and not knowing the financial health of the Town. Once Supervisor Grubham was elected, Councilwoman Legg and I got together and started gathering information. I got some information from the clerks and got some information on my own. I called the clerks from other towns and gained information from www.seethroughny.net for municipal salaries. Councilman Weingartner gathered information from comparable Towns (Town of Chenango, Town of Union, Town of Vestal, and Town of Dickinson). All of the reports that were provided to the Board are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

Councilman Weingartner said, Councilwoman Legg and I decided a good recommendation would be a 6.28% increase. That would be \$19.80 an hour for Paula Hashem, who has 13 years of experience and has also worked for the State for 5 years prior to coming to Kirkwood. Erin Tuttle and Kathy Martone would get the 6.28% increase as well. I think we need to do some type of evaluations for not just the court clerks, but for all of our individuals. The courts do have to go through a standard audit through the Comptroller's office and for as long as I can remember our courts have always gotten really good reviews. I know they have come back and said that our court is like a model court and they wish other courts were like ours. The evaluations would be good to have, something on paper, to find out how an individual is performing.

Supervisor Grubham said Councilman Weingartner's recommendation is that Paula Hashem should be at \$19.80 an hour, Erin Tuttle at \$18.55 an hour, and Kathy Martone at \$19.17 an hour. For informational purposes that would raise Paula's rate by \$1.17 an hour, Erin's by \$1.10 an hour, and Kathy's by \$1.13 an hour from what they are making now.

Supervisor Grubham said the Town of Dickinson is able to do the work with one full time and one part time clerk when all the other towns do the work with 2 ½ clerks. I'd like to find an efficiency company or person to look at our operation to see if there isn't a way we can do it better. Maybe we don't have the right equipment. But when you look at the Town of Dickinson clerks, who are actually doing more than we are doing, they are getting it done with 1 ½ clerks. We need to have someone look it over and decide if it can be done better. I also want to point out, because there is this constant talk of how much money they bring into the town, which at one time was true, but that is not true anymore. I figured out all the court costs, and based on what we have in our budget the court costs us, the taxpayers of Kirkwood, about \$71, 349 a year to have that court here. The State takes so much of the money. When a ticket is written on the highway we only get 22% and the State gets all the rest of it, and it causes a deficit like this.

Councilman Diffendorf said I want to thank Councilman Weingartner and Councilwoman Legg for doing such a nice job on this study. There is a lot of work involved. We did this years ago

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and I know it. I agree with Supervisor Grubham questioning how can Dickinson do such a great job with 1 ½ people and we have 2 ½ people. Their top person is just going to be making \$3,000 more than our people. She must be pretty qualified the way she is getting all that work done. The Town of Chenango, which we very well compare to, pays their employees \$19 an hour. We are going to increase our employee to \$19.80, that's \$.80 more, then we are very equal. Councilman Weingartner responded to Councilman Diffendorf saying that I thought \$19.80 was a good number and it was 6.28%. I just felt since they are doing a great job that that is what they are worth. Councilman Diffendorf said I just think it is a little high. I just know when we raise one, two or three employee's rate the snowball starts and it gets bigger and bigger. There will be more people coming in for raises as this goes on. What we do here tonight may not seem like a big deal but it will have other effects to it. I see Chenango is at \$19 an hour with 22 years of experience. Paula Hashem has 13 years of experience and getting \$.80 more. Their Vehicle and Traffic Law (VTL) rate is the same as ours. If we want to compare, and that is what we do, then hers should be \$19 an hour. Again, I want to compliment you on the nice job you did with this report, otherwise we wouldn't have these numbers to compare.

Councilman Shafer said to take it a little further, you have other people working in the administration. Before budget time you should think about that, the salaries of the employees and decide what to do. Supervisor Grubham said they normally get a 2.5% increase every year as it is, it's not like they are stuck in the mud. They get the minimum at least for another 3 years because of the contract.

Councilwoman Legg said I do agree with Councilman Weingartner about having evaluations. When it comes to figuring out if someone does deserve an increase we have nothing to warrant what kind of job they do. Supervisor Grubham said we would have to evaluate everyone. The Judges would evaluate the court clerks. That is a separate issue then what we are talking about here tonight, we can discuss that at some other point. Right now we are looking at what the rate is going to be and if we are going to increase it. Councilman Shafer said that Councilman Diffendorf had a good point. Are we open for compromise? Councilman Weingartner said I just think that is what they are worth. I've seen the work they have done, I know what they do. I think our courts run more efficiently than the other courts around. That's my personal feeling.

Supervisor Grubham said I propose that we have this as a resolution using Councilman Weingartner's numbers and we can vote on it. Councilman Diffendorf said how about we take all three of them and put them all at \$19 an hour. Councilman Weingartner said I totally disagree with that. You have different levels of knowledge and experience. Someone who has 5 years of experience opposed to someone who has 13 years of experience or even 20 years of experience, I just think you start at a certain salary and every year you get your raise. If you

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do something good, you get a little bit more. Councilman Diffendorf said to Councilman Weingartner, then why doesn't Kathy Martone get more than Paula Hashem. Councilman Weingartner said because Kathy Martone is part-time. Councilman Diffendorf said I understand that, but she has 20 years of experience and using the same logic she has more experience than Paula Hashem. Councilman Weingartner said Kathy Martone doesn't have the State experience like Paula Hashem does. Councilman Weingartner responded to Councilman Diffendorf by saying working for the State would definitely help you be a more efficient person. Councilman Diffendorf said I'm agreeing they are all efficient workers. But under your logic, you are saying 20 years would be better than 13 years of experience, and 13 is better than 5 years of experience. Sometimes people learn a lot more in 5 years, you never know. I just think with the comparison, that \$19.80 is too much. It was \$19 an hour in the Town of Chenango. They have 22 years of experience and handle the same cases that we handle. I thought that is what Paula Hashem was saying, by comparison what their pay should be. That is what she kept saying, by comparison. If we compared to the Town of Dickinson we'd be saving \$40,000+ a year with benefits. We have 2 ½ clerks and other towns that do more work are getting by with 1 ½ clerks. I don't know how we reward them that much. I think it should be \$19 an hour, which is what the comparison is.

Supervisor Grubham said we'll do a resolution and put the numbers in and everyone gets to vote. Supervisor Grubham asked Mr. McKertich to put that together.

4. Discussion – Change in job title (MEO Heavy to MEO III) and increase in salary for Joe Barton. (LCG/JAF)

Supervisor Grubham said John Finch brought this to me and he'd like to change the job title for Joe Barton from MEO Heavy to MEO III and increase his salary. John Finch said I'm looking to increase Joe Barton's salary based on his experience. He has over 35 years of experience and he had a previous business which he had for a number of years. Since he has been here, which is going on 4 years now, he's done numerous jobs for us that we normally would have contracted out. He built a road from scratch that goes from the highway garage lower lot to the upper lot. He did all the clearing of the trees. He came in there with his level laser and did all that work all by himself. He operated the bulldozer and did an awesome job. That probably would have cost us \$10,000-\$15,000, he saved us a lot of money. Over the winter he cut a hole in the side of the building at the Water Treatment Plant for a new exhaust fan. That would have cost \$3,000-\$4,000 if we had a contractor do it. He's excellent on any kind of machine I put him in, he can operate anything. He's very precise and safe. We definitely have future projects he'll be completing to save the Town money. He'll be digging the footers for the concrete work on the Salt Barn. That will save several thousand dollars. He's been underpaid and I think it's time we pay him based on his skill and expertise on the equipment and knowledge in the field. He currently makes \$19.31 an hour and I'd like to increase that to \$21.31 an hour immediately. In 2022 I'd like to increase his wage another \$1 an hour on top of

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his normal raise which is \$.50, bringing him to a total of \$22.81 to start 2022. We submitted the job title change to Broome County from MEO Heavy to MEO III, which is a different classification. More skills are involved, operating bulldozers, loaders, graters, and the skill and precision needed to operate safely around the public and other employees. He also does masonry. Anything I ask him to do he can do it.

Councilman Grubham said in my opinion it is well worth the money. Incidentally for both Joe Barton and the court clerks the raises are not retroactive, they will start in April.

Councilman Diffendorf said I have seen his work and he is qualified. There are a lot of towns paying their highway people this kind of money. To get a person that can do those things, you just don't find them.

Mr. McKertich said just to clarify the resolution will be effective April 7, 2021 and his salary rate will go up to \$21.31 an hour, and effective January 1, 2022 his salary rate would go up to \$22.81. Councilman Grubham said that would be a \$1 an hour increase plus his normal \$.50 an hour. That raise included the yearly \$.50 increase.

5. Discussion – Highway Garage Roof Painting. (JAF/LCG)

Supervisor Grubham said I asked John Finch to look into painting the metal roofing on the Highway Garage that is rusting up. If we can get some paint on it it will last a lot longer before it rots out and we have to replace the whole thing.

John Finch said I got pricing from Precision Painting in Endicott and Filbin Painting in Vestal. Filbin came in at \$4,370 to spot prime and paint one coat of aluminum paint. Precision came in at \$3,360 and they may do a little more by pressure washing first. They do know they have to pay the prevailing job rate of \$47.60 per hour.

5a. Discussion – IT Upgrade – Town Hall Meeting Room

Supervisor Grubham introduced Darrell Dennison as our IT contact. He said we are going to set up a better system for our Zoom meetings. Supervisor Grubham referred to a test computer, monitor, and camera that is located in the meeting room. We will need a wide angle camera. A 65 inch television screen will be mounted in the window on the left side of the room. The people on Zoom will be able to see us better and hear us better and we can see them and hear them too. Darrell Dennison said we need to add a new wireless access point. That will help the choppiness that has been happening. The equipment is not that fancy, it's just a computer with a wide screen camera and a TV. Supervisor Grubham said I'm assuming this Zoom stuff is going to be forever so we might as well have a decent setup. It will probably cost about \$1,500. If everyone is in agreement we will go ahead with the new setup.

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6. Discussion – Resolution ratifying a resolution authorizing Pump Service and Supply of Troy, Inc. to repair one HOMA AMX644-80/29P/U FM Electric Sub Pump at the Main Sewer Station, at a cost not to exceed \$ 3,856.50, in accordance with the attached quote. (JAF)

John Finch said the items #6 and #7 go together. The repair of two HOMA pumps from our main sewer station. The first one we had was an emergency situation because we only had three pumps operational down there. The main pump was down and the backup was down. I talked to Supervisor Grubham about getting the main one repaired so we could have all four going. We need to ratify that resolution for that pump. The other pump (from #7) is the spare pump for \$5,203.50. I'm looking for authorization so we can have that fixed and have a backup.

Supervisor Grubham said the first pump was really important because we would be down a pump. The second one is to have an extra pump around just in case it's needed. I'd like to wait on the second pump until we see how we can use the money from the rescue plan. Maybe we can use some of it on sewer and water items. Then we wouldn't have to take it out of our budget. I'd like to hold on this until we figure that out.

John Finch said I would like to make sure we always have a backup because you never know. If you get two pumps down it can be a problem. It depends on how often they go down. If you get a heavy rain and they plug and overheat I'd rather have a spare than not. The pump service is waiting for approval to fix it. If they don't get approval they will have to send it back to us or they may charge us to have it sit there. Once we do get approval and it's a month from now then it will be an even longer process.

Councilman Weingartner said I think we should wait. John Finch replied to Councilman Diffendorf saying yes we still have the muffin monsters, just one. Late February was when these pumps went down, before that it was October or November. One time we had just one pump down there because three of them were on the fritz.

Supervisor Grubham said you are right, we need all those pumps working. The question is can we wait just a little bit until we find out how we can use the rescue money.

I have asked John Finch to put together some numbers on stuff that we could use for sewer, water, or to repair pipes that are old. He is developing some numbers now and when I find out what we can actually do then maybe we will be ahead of the curve a little bit knowing what some jobs will cost us. Maybe we can use some of it on the Salt Barn or on the Town Hall repairs. It's unknown at this time.

Councilman Diffendorf told John Finch to bring it up again next month.

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- 7. Discussion – Resolution authorizing Pump Service and Supply of Troy, Inc., to repair one HOMA AMX644-80/29P/U FM Electric Sub Pump at the Main Sewer Station, at a cost not to exceed \$5,203.50, in accordance with the attached quote. (JAF)**

Held over.

- 8. Discussion – Resolution authorizing Keystone Associates to conduct two (2) test borings for the new salt barn, at a cost not to exceed \$ 4,875.00, in accordance with the attached agreement. (JAF/LCG)**

Supervisor Grubham said we have to have some borings done at the new Salt Barn so they can design the concrete work for the building. We got two bids on this and Keystone was the lowest bid. We need to have them sign a contract so we can get the work done.

- 9. Discussion – Temporary Help for the Summer – Resolution hiring Everett Benedict as Laborer to work in the Highway Department effective April 21, 2021 at a rate of pay of \$12.82 per hour. (JAF)**

John Finch said I'd like to hire Everett Benedict for our part-time summer help for the Highway Department.

- 10. Discussion – Resolution authorizing Tyler Harpell to attend the Grade C Water Distribution Operator Certification Course on April 19-23, 2021 at a cost of \$575.00, with all reasonable expenses paid, in accordance with the Reimbursement Policy for Employee Training Expenses. (JAF)**

John Finch said this is to send Tyler Harpell to a Grade C Water Distribution Certification Course, this is required through the Health Department to operate the Water Treatment Plant. If he passes this he gets an \$800 raise.

- 11. Discussion – Resolution designating April 19-22, 2021 for Municipal Cleanup Days in the Town of Kirkwood, materials accepted are furniture, mattresses, and white goods, with delivery to the Broome County Landfill on April 23, 2021, in accordance with the attached application form. (JAF)**

John Finch said this is our yearly Municipal Cleanup Days. On the 23rd we would take whatever is dropped off up to the landfill. Furniture, mattresses, white goods, household furniture, anything people can drop off. No construction debris. John Finch responded to Councilman Diffendorf saying this year we won't be doing the electronics drop off that we usually do in August. The County is not sponsoring it this year. We did it for two years and they dropped it this year. It's very costly to have other companies come in and do it. Last year we had 6 or 7 pallets of televisions and electronics.

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- 12. Discussion – Resolution authorizing advertising for Sealed Bids for the Air Stripper System Rehabilitation, with bids returnable to the Town Clerk’s Office on April 27, 2021 at 12 noon, and to be publicly opened and read at that time. (JAF)**

John Finch said we are going to advertise for the bids for the two Air Strippers at well #1 and well #3 at the beginning of April so we can have the bids back by April 27th. Then we can review them and have a recommendation for the Board on the sealed bids. Supervisor Grubham said when those bids come in they will probably be around \$170,000 and I’m hoping I’ll have better information and they may be able to get covered by this rescue plan too. We should have some time because it will be a month before we get the bids and then we have 45 days before we have to award the contract.

- 13. Discussion – Resolution appointing Matthew J. Williams as Temporary Ad Hoc Members of the Planning Board, pursuant to Local Law No. 11-1986; to be compensated at \$30.00 per meeting attended, upon submission of a voucher to the Town Clerk. (LCG)**

- 14. Audit of Claims.**

- 15. Executive Session.**

The meeting was adjourned to go into Executive Session at 7:00 PM.