

Town of Lewiston addresses financial matters

Town Board OKs serial bond refinancing, town fee schedules

BY TERRY DUFFY

Editor-in-Chief

With a limited Town Hall audience and viewers on Zoom Monday evening, the Lewiston Town Board meeting had its focus on various financial matters. News-makers included:

•The Town Board moved on a resolution intended to provide financial savings to Lewiston from a 2013-dated municipal bond of roughly \$5 million. Town Attorney Al Bax said its financial consultant from Municipal Solutions Inc. had recommended the town pursue a new lender and obtain a more favorable rate.

“They had recommended that we go out or a RFP to see if we can have other lenders possibly provide us with a better deal and save the town some money,” he said.

Bax revealed the town could, in fact, realize a savings of \$594,000 over the next 12 years.

“This has been estimated by

Municipal Solutions. ... The greatest savings will come from these bonds being reissued by Green County Commercial Bank (located in Catskill),” he said. “Part of the savings ... is that Green will be holding these internally; they will not be reissuing to the public. There’s a sizable savings right there.”

Bax added, “This particular financial institution was able to save an additional \$50,000 over the next ... greatest bank (lender).”

Bax said the resolution, once approved by the Town Board, would trigger the refunding of \$3.18 million from the original bond to go toward refinancing by Green County Commercial Bank.

The board went on to approve the resolution by a 5-0 vote. It took effect Feb. 22.

•Town Councilman Rob Morreale presented a resolution to update the town’s municipal fee

schedule. Morreale said the fee schedule had not been updated since 2006, and Building and Zoning Inspector Tim Masters worked on revising it over the past year.

“It had a lot of inequities that just didn’t make sense. ... It needed to get done,” Morreale said.

“The fees have not been updated since 2006,” Masters said, noting the town has been charging the same \$400 building fee since that time.

“For the last year, we have been reviewing it, getting comments from contractors, checking other town’s fees. It’s all the same amount of work. ... In one place, they’re getting 10 times the amount of money that we’re getting for doing the same amount of work,” Masters said.

He noted that, in addition to revising the fee schedule for building and zoning, fees are also being revised for planning review, and subdivisions, which have not

been updated since 2012.

Town Councilman John Jacoby said the new fees reflect the time town inspectors have to spend on all the background areas needed toward permit approvals.

“I think our old fees, broken down, we were paying far more in wages and benefits. ... It was a total loss. Now we’re approaching at least a break even on it,” he said.

Bax said the resolution incorporates two sets of fees: the 2021 fee chart for the building department and another for the municipal review fee schedule.

The matter went on to be approved by a 5-0 vote and takes effect immediately.

Wrapping up:

•The town took action on a bid packet for the Kiwanis Park basketball project. Town Engineer Robert Lannon of GHD said the project calls for demolishing the existing half-court basketball court, constructing a new, larger

court in its place, along with a new half-court.

“The existing basketball court, tennis court and pickle ball courts would all be repaved, as well,” Lannon said.

He noted drainage issues would also be addressed and new basketball goals installed, which were acquired earlier by Parks Director Mike Dashineau.

Soon after, the board approved for the Kiwanis project to go out to bid by GHD.

•Town of Lewiston Senior Center Director Melinda Olick said the AARP tax prep program at the center is now underway.

“People should call if they would like an appointment for seniors to have their taxes prepared by AARP,” she said.

Olick noted the program will run on Mondays and Fridays at the center to April 12. For more information, call the center at 754-2071.

North Tonawanda: Zadzilka will not seek reelection this November

As North Tonawanda Third Ward Alderman Eric Zadzilka settled in recently for his 11th year on the Common Council, he announced he will not seek reelection this coming November.

Zadzilka submitted the following:

During his tenure, he has served as North Tonawanda Council president from 2017-20 and has seen the best results experienced in North Tonawanda when there’s communication and

cooperation with city officials and the city departments. Under his leadership, he has sought fiscal restraint while maintaining the city services the residents have come to expect. More municipalities year after year have to do more with less and North Tonawanda is no different.

The sense of the North Tonawanda community and its ability to help others in need and come together during COVID or any challenge has always inspired him.

Several years ago, he founded the NTBGO, or The North Tonawanda Botanical Gardens Organization, by coordinating resident volunteers to work alongside the city and Parks Department to restore and sustain this beautiful NT park destination.

The growth of the North Tonawanda downtown, new development, addressing infrastructure issues, and continually developing North Tonawanda as a prime destination are a few of the many highlights during his tenure. Businesses continue to choose to invest and develop here in North Tonawanda and he’s especially excited about the recent Timber Shore project proposed by Penrose LLC that’s been given the green light by the council to take place on Tonawanda Island.

“This another exciting project coming to our NT waterfront that I’m glad to be a part of moving this forward,” Zadzilka said.

He has served on many committees throughout his time on the council, including the NTBGO Committee, NT City and Schools Joint Committee, and the North Tonawanda Police Reform Committee. He will continue his service to North Tonawanda and the relationships with the city residents he treasures as he completes his term on Dec. 31.

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING POWER AUTHORITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

The Power Authority of the State of New York (Authority) will hold a public hearing as detailed below on a proposed form of Contract for the sale of hydropower to Trek, Inc., Suco Real Estate NY LLC, Stavatti Aerospace Ltd., Mono-Systems, Inc., and Niagara Specialty Metals, Inc.

Copies of the proposed Contract forms may be inspected at the Authority’s office at the address below, or online at the Authority’s Web site, www.nypa.gov.

Those wishing to make oral statements at the hearing are asked to provide to the Authority, in writing, in advance of the hearing, their name(s) and the name of the organization or group they represent. Oral statements should be limited to five minutes. Speakers should also bring two hard copies of their oral statements to the hearing.

Hearing Date: March 10, 2021
Hearing Times: 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Hearing Location: 535 Washington Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room
Buffalo, New York 14203

Written statements provided to the Authority by close of business on Thursday, March 11, 2021 will also become part of the record of the hearing. For further information, including the address of other Authority offices at which copies of the proposed Contract forms may be inspected, contact:

POWER AUTHORITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
Karen Delince, Corporate Secretary
123 Main Street, White Plains, New York 10601
(914) 390-8085 | secretarys.office@nypa.gov



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STAR program discussed

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The project will need a public hearing for the special use permit.

On Feb. 17, the board discussed another proposed solar project, for 3655 Lockport Road, where CVE Solar is proposing a 4 MW solar array. The project proposes single-sided stationary panels that would be 8 foot, 9 inches, in height and would not utilize any battery storage of power.

The board discussed several issues, including a requested variance from the 250-foot setback from the inhabited building and structure. Members reviewed procedural issues with the Niagara County Planning Board and SEQR and continued discussions over landscaping and screening and the design of the access road. No action was taken.

MacSwan emphasized the two solar projects were applied for before the town’s moratorium on solar projects took effect last month.

STAR Program Exemptions

Assessor Kelli Coughlin urged Wheatfield residents who are turning 65 in 2021, and have an income below \$90,550, to contact her office and get an application for New York state’s Enhanced STAR program. The deadline to apply is March 15. The assessor’s office can be reached at 694-9102.

On the subject of the STAR program, Coughlin and 10th District Legislator David Godfrey advised residents to be cautious when it comes to some recent changes made to the program by Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

Instead of a straight exemption of the payment of some school property taxes, the state has rolled out an option to receive a credit, or check, for those savings later. Coughlin detailed some of her concerns about the state’s plan. She said she sees wrinkles that need to be ironed out.

“I totally would never recommend anyone get the STAR credit, because I always fear that they are not going to have enough to pay their tax bills and then they get the penalties and the fines and all that stuff. So until the state has everything worked, I’m not 100% on this. ... I believe you should stay on the STAR Exemption,” Coughlin said.

However, a current bill in the State Legislature could make the change permanent. If it passes, Coughlin said assessors would have to put applicants for this year into the credit program.

The Town Board’s next meeting is 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 1, via Zoom.

Town of Porter traveler advisory

The New York State Department of Transportation is advising motorists that, beginning at 7 a.m. Monday, March 1, the Route 93 bridge over Twelve Mile Creek in the Town of Porter will be closed to traffic, as the replacement of the bridge gets underway.

Passenger vehicles will be directed to follow a posted detour

along Dickersonville, Braley and Porter Center roads. Truck traffic will be directed to follow a truck detour along NY routes 18 and 425.

This work is expected to last for approximately four months. All construction activities at this location are weather-dependent and subject to change.

Motorists are urged to slow down and drive responsibly in work zones. Fines are doubled for speeding in a work zone. Convictions of two or more speeding violations in a work zone could result in the suspension of an individual’s driver license.

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