

Town of Fowler Special Highway Dept. Meeting Minutes of July 28, 2021 at 4:00PM

The Town of Fowler Special Highway Dept. meeting was held on the above date with all Board members present excluding Councilperson Cleveland. Also present were Town Clerk Tami Gale and Highway Superintendent Randy Durham.

Supervisor Newvine called the meeting to order at 4:15PM and reported that some board members had concerns with employment issues within the highway department.

Councilperson Andrews asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham if he had given seasonal employee Tom Peck a pay raise of \$1.00 an hour. Hwy. Superintendent Durham reported he sure did, and that it was up to him. He reported he can give anywhere from \$13.00/per hour up to the amount of money the rest of the highway laborers get paid, and stated Tom Peck has his CDL license. Councilperson Andrews asked Highway Superintendent Durham if he thought he should have informed him of the pay increase, as liaison to the highway department, so he could relay the pay raise to the other members of the board. Hwy. Superintendent replied maybe he should of and maybe he could have, but \$16.00/hour pay for someone who already has a CDL license and could step in after an employee who had been being trained for a year and a half had quit, is not a lot of money.

Councilperson Simmons agreed, it wasn't a lot of money, but stated it would have been nice for Hwy. Superintendent Durham to inform the board of the raise.

Town Clerk Gale asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham when the raise went into effect as it is her responsibility to report all salary changes to the County. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated she would need to ask Bookkeeper Finnie for the information. Town Clerk Gale stated that moving forward she needs to be made aware of any salary changes and the effective dates of the changes. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated he would think that Bookkeeper Finnie was going to be communicating this information to her, but okay.

Supervisor Newvine discussed that when Austin Fayette was a seasonal worker and the Highway Superintendent felt he deserved more pay, he just gave him more pay, he didn't remember him notifying the board.

Councilperson Simmons reported she believed prior increases in pay were reported at board meetings, and her main concern is wanting to be kept informed.

Councilperson Bishop stated the raise was Hwy. Superintendent Durham's decision to make but he would have rather seen the increase in pay be made if Tom was going to stay on as permanent help through the whole year, saying he would be of no use to the Town this winter.

Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated that Tom Peck will come back to work as seasonal help every summer, and he and Supervisor Newvine had talked about this.

Supervisor Newvine added that he and Hwy. Superintendent Durham had met with Tom Peck and Hwy. Superintendent Durham asked him if he wanted a full-time position and he didn't want to work full time but agreed to be a seasonal worker in the summers.

Councilperson Bishop stated it is Hwy. Superintendent Durham's discretion as to the amount of money he wants to pay, but it is his opinion that he would not give extra pay to part time help.

Councilperson Andrews stated that when people come and ask him questions concerning the highway department, and he isn't informed, the next question he gets is why don't you know, and he would like a little more heads up.

Councilperson Andrews stated he agrees with Councilperson Bishop that he would not give extra pay to seasonal help.

Councilperson Simmons stated he knew when he was hired that he was only going to make \$15.00/hour.

Supervisor Newvine stated the head lifeguard is paid \$15.00/hour and the lifeguards are paid \$14.00/hour, and they are summer help.

Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated that we are talking about a guy that has a skill that we require. He stated when he first was hired, he was only going to be a flagger, until someone quit in the highway department with really no notice, and he picked up the slack and that is worth something.

Councilperson Simmons agreed that was true.

Councilperson Bishop expressed safety concerns and the lack of safety signs in the work zones during recent road work. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated they should have put the safety signs up when they moved onto that road, and he was probably right. He stated he is up with the hot mix, guiding the trucks, making sure the shoulders are going on correctly, and that is where he feels he should be. He stated he has a Deputy Hwy. Superintendent in the back to make sure the safety signs are being moved. Councilperson Bishop agreed.

Supervisor Newvine suggested Hwy. Superintendent Durham could designate someone to be in charge of sign safety as he has so many things to do during the process.

Councilperson Bishop suggested they could also place orange cones in the middle of the roads to make traffic slow down.

Councilperson Bishop asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham if it was one of his helpers who are paid by the County, that was flagging on the day being discussed. Hwy. Superintendent Durham reported it was, and he has 2 helpers that are paid by the County. They can remain with the hwy. department for up to 2 years. Supervisor Newvine asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham to provide Town Clerk Gale with the names and contact information for the 2 helpers to have on file in the event of an emergency. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated he would get the information to the Town Clerk.

Supervisor Newvine asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham if the road shoulders were all done. Hwy. Superintendent Durham reported they were not finished yet.

Councilperson Bishop stated the road shoulders that have been put on so far look good.

Supervisor Newvine asked if the road crack sealing had been completed. Hwy. Superintendent Durham reported they still needed to come back to finish crack sealing on the California Road. He reported the board had authorized him to spend \$5,000 more on road crack sealing and they will move onto the Sullivan Road if there is any material left after the California Road is finished.

Supervisor Newvine asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham how he determined the roads he wants to crack seal. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated the newer roads are cracking, and it is hard to determine because you can't do them all. He reported there were some major cracks in the Doane Road so he figured that should get done, and from the Hull Road to the California Road, you might as well do, because we are right there.

Councilperson Bishop stated you can see a big difference between the Sullivan Road and the Emeryville Road, and they were done the same year. Both Hwy. Superintendent Durham and Councilperson Bishop agree that the two agree on a few things and are hit and miss on others.

Councilperson Bishop addressed the tree problem and his concerns regarding tree issues that were discussed at the July 14, 2021, Regular scheduled board meeting. Supervisor Newvine wanted to address the topic as well, stating he went on a drive with Councilperson Bishop to view the trees he had concerns about. Supervisor Newvine stated he thought he heard Hwy. Superintendent Durham say during the July 14, 2021, board meeting that he would address the tree concerns of Councilperson Bishop's in the fall.

Councilperson Bishop asked Supervisor Newvine if he thought there were tree issues in the Town. Supervisor Newvine stated yes, he did, that the trees are grown in, but he was not in favor of having the road crew go up there and cut trees. Councilperson Bishop stated the tree problems aren't the fault of Hwy. Superintendent Durham, and that they go back 3 to 4 highway superintendents ago.

Supervisor Newvine suggested Hwy. Superintendent Durham could maybe put together a tree program where the Town could hire a company that is familiar with working around power lines and licensed to come in and take care of the trees that are going to reach the roads. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated when he sees a tree problem, they take care of it.

Councilperson Bishop asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham if he could use any CHIP money for the tree problem. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated the CHIP money is already spent this year and it is going to be used on the River Road next year. He stated we can't get back to the point where 50% of our roads are bad like it was when he took over as Hwy. Superintendent. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated the board was gracious enough to give him a whole bunch of money and he went to town fixing the roads, and that is exactly what they should do, to get to a point that the roads are all fixed and only need to be capped.

Supervisor Newvine stated when the Town receives the ARPA money he would like nothing more than to use it on the roads, but the roads are not listed as something the Town can use the money for. Supervisor Newvine reported he had attended a webinar which listed water & sewer & front-line workers as acceptable expenses to use the ARPA money on and unless some guidelines loosen up, he didn't see anything the Town could use the money for. Councilperson Simmons asked if the Town would just not be able to use it at all. Supervisor Newvine reported he had learned the Town would have 4 years to spend the money, and the IRS would not penalize the Town for earning interest on it. Supervisor Newvine reported that it is not set in stone, and he is hopeful the rules pertaining to using the money will change, reporting he continues to keep up to date by attending webinars on the ARPA money.

Supervisor Newvine reported he had attended a supervisor's meeting last night and had learned there is speculation that the County may be fooling with the sales tax again.

Hwy. Superintendent Durham reported there is also speculation that any new CDL drivers are going to need to take a \$6500.00 course starting next year. Councilperson Bishop stated he had heard the DOT physicals are also going to be required two times a year. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated he had asked St. Lawrence County Superintendent of Highways Don Chambers about physicals being required and his reply was that they are not being required at this time.

Supervisor Newvine asked everyone in attendance if they had received the email concerning the Island Branch bridge closure beginning on August 9th. Everyone reported they were aware of the closure. Supervisor

Newvine reported that Town Clerk Gale had it posted at the Town Hall and on the Town website, and Town Clerk Gale stated it will be advertised in the Tribune for 2 weeks.

Councilperson Simmons asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham about who he was hiring for the highway laborer position that was advertised. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated he had received 2 applications that are worth looking at. Supervisor Newvine asked when he wanted to hire someone for the position. Hwy. Superintendent Durham replied he had no time frame, as there is no guarantee the person would have a CDL license by winter. Hwy. Superintendent Durham reported 1 applicant lives in the Town of Fowler and the other is moving to the Town of Fowler by September 1st this year.

Councilperson Simmons thanked Hwy. Superintendent Durham for putting the sign back up at the Farm to Market Road cemetery.

Councilperson Simmons and Councilperson Andrews reported they had each been asked by taxpayers if the section of road by the railroad tracks to the State barn in Hailesboro would be getting paved. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated that it has been verified that there are sewage systems attached to the drainage in this area and he cannot and will not hook a sewage system up to a drain. He is willing to tear it all apart and put new piping and drainage down through there, but there will be no septic hooked into it. Supervisor Newvine asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham to clarify the area he is talking about. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated it is basically from the Hailesboro Post Office to the State Barn. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated the Town should do the section of road, but it effects a lot of people who would need to move their septic and possibly their wells.

Supervisor Newvine addressed Hwy. Superintendent Durham stating basically the board wants to be more informed and that they all appreciate the job he does. He stated Councilperson Bishop is adamant about highway issues because he knows so much about that kind of stuff. Supervisor Newvine stated both Hwy. Superintendent Durham and Councilperson Bishop have worked well together, better than they ever used to.

With no further business, at 4:50PM a motion was made by Councilperson Andrews seconded by Councilperson Bishop to adjourn the Special Highway Meeting. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Tami Gale, Town Clerk