

Town of Fowler March 10th, 2024, Regular Scheduled Board Meeting Minutes at 6:00 PM

The Town of Fowler Regular scheduled Town Board meeting was held on the above date with four Board members present. Councilperson Cleveland was not in attendance. Also present were Town Clerk Tami Gale, Highway Superintendent Randy Durham, Code Enforcement Officer Glen Besaw, Town Justice Tim Knowlton, Planning Board Member John Walsh, Ethics Committee Member Vivian Goodman, Mary Benware, Deb Walsh, and Rachel Hunter, Editor of the Gouverneur Tribune Press.

Supervisor Newwine called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM then proceeded with the pledge of allegiance and led a moment of silence to honor our military men and women, all healthcare workers, and for the families of those who have recently passed including Dorothy Bressette, Brian Burns, and Janet Watson.

Supervisor Newwine asked for a motion to approve the minutes from February 10, 2025, regular scheduled board meeting. A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Bishop and carried.

DISCUSSION ON SOLICITING INSURANCE QUOTES

Supervisor Newwine asked for a motion to advertise soliciting quotes for municipal insurance coverage May 2025 to May 2026. After some discussion, a motion was made by Councilperson Knight seconded by Councilperson Simmons to advertise the quotes to come in for the April 14 board meeting.

DISCUSSION ON 2025 MOWING CONTRACT

Supervisor Newwine reported that Tina & Dan Fifiel were awarded the mowing contract last year for the 2024 mowing season in the amount of \$13,250.00 paid in five monthly installments of \$2,650 commencing in May and ending in September. Supervisor Newwine stated he had spoken to Dan, and they would ask for the same amount for the mowing contract in 2025 with no increases. Supervisor Newwine asked the board for their thoughts on awarding the contract for the 2025 season this evening or, if they wanted to award the contract at the April 14 meeting, stating that the town doesn't have to put this contract out for bid. Councilperson Bishop stated he thought that the clean-up of the cemeteries, and getting them ready for the mowing season, should be paid separately. Councilperson Simmons reported that the cemetery clean-up is included as part of the mowing agreement. After some further discussion, a motion was made by Councilperson Simmons and seconded by Councilperson Bishop to award the mowing contract for the 2025 mowing season this evening to Tina & Dan Fifiel in the amount of \$13,250.00. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

RESOLUTIONS

Supervisor Newwine discussed resolution #11 of 2025 prepared by Town Attorney Henry Leader ordering the removal of structures owned by Julie Wood at 81 Little York Road, with the town board, code enforcement officer and highway superintendent prior to its consideration for passage. Supervisor Newwine asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham if he had the equipment to take the structure down. It was discussed he would need a larger excavator to do the job. CEO Besaw reported the engineer report states the eminent danger is the structure needs to be knocked down to the ground.

After further discussion, Supervisor Newwine submitted proposed Resolution #11 of 2025 to the board for consideration for adoption.

RESOLUTION #11 of 2025

Ordering the removal of structures owned by Julie Wood at 81 Little York Road, Town of Fowler

A motion was made by Councilperson Knight seconded by Councilperson Bishop to adopt Resolution #11 of 2025, a resolution ordering the removal of structures owned by Julie Wood at 81 Little York Road, Town of Fowler. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

AYES: 4 *NEVVINE, SIMMONS, BISHOP, KNIGHT*

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 1 *CLEVELAND*

Supervisor Newwine asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham and Code Enforcement Officer Besaw to coordinate the project together.

RESOLUTION #12 of 2025

Supporting Assembly Bill A.5890

A motion was made by Councilperson Bishop seconded by Councilperson Knight to adopt Resolution #12 of 2025, a resolution supporting Assembly Bill A.5890, "an act to amend the State Finance Law, the General Municipal Law, the Public Authorities Law and the Highway Law, in relation to awarding contracts for the purchase of rock salt or sodium chloride mined or hand harvested in Canada." All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

****Copies of this resolution will be forwarded to Governor Kathy Hochul, Assemblyman Scott Gray, Senator Mark Walczyk, Assemblyman Ken Blankenbush and Senator Dan Stec.****

AYES: 4 *NEVVINE, SIMMONS, BISHOP, KNIGHT*

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 1 *CLEVELAND*

Town Department Reports

Justice Department

Town Justice Tim Knowlton:

- The court is running well.
- Commended the St. Lawrence County Sheriff Department for their prompt and timely transportation of incarcerated individuals for their court appearances at the Town of Fowler Court.
- Stated we are blessed and fortunate to have the Village police officers, the New York State Troopers, and the Sheriff Department members.

Supervisor Newwine asked what the use of the court mediator was for this month. Justice Knowlton reported the mediator was used for a Civil Case regarding an eviction.

Bookkeeper

Bookkeeper Barbara Finnie was not in attendance.

- She had provided Town of Fowler Cash Balance Reports for Month Ending January 31, 2025, and Budget Balance Reports for month ending January 31, 2025 to the board members for their review.
- The reports showed the general fund was 5.39% spent and had received 1.04% of revenue and the highway fund was 3.57% spent and had received 0.29% of revenue.

USDA 2026 Mack Plow Truck Loan Update

Supervisor Newwine reported that the Town has decided not to go through with the USDA loan for the new 2026 Mack Plow Truck as there was no grant money offered with the loan, and it would have been pointless to accrue the interest and cost of a bond, when the plan is to pay it off in full anyway. Supervisor Newwine reported a letter had been sent to the USDA declining the loan.

Assessors

Assessor Chair Kathy Besaw was not in attendance.

Historian

Historian Karen Simmons reported:

- She had ordered the plaque in memory of Sherrie Williams, and it should be picked up by the next board meeting.

Animal Control

Councilperson Simmons reported for Dan Moyer who was not in attendance:

- 3 complaints have been received concerning dog control on Little York Rd, County Route 22, and the Triangle Pond Road.

Beaver Control

Councilperson Simmons reported for Moyers Wildlife Control who was not in attendance:

- He will be checking the beaver dam on Little York Road and CR 22 using his canoe as soon as the weather gets nice enough.

Hwy. Superintendent Durham reported a beaver had been seen behind a home on Little York Rd.

Town Clerk Gale asked Councilperson Simmons to remind Moyers Wildlife Control to bring in their license and proof of insurance pertaining to the beaver contract.

Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement Officer Besaw:

- Will be attending the Government Conference in Verona on March 31st and April 1st.
- He had received another email recommending bullet proof vests be worn by code enforcement officers when they go to a complaint and reported he will be looking into ordering one this week.
- Asked if the bill had been submitted to the Town to pay for the engineered report on the structure damaged by fire at 81 Little York Rd. Town Clerk Gale reported that a bill has not been received by the Town.

Town Clerk

Town Clerk Tami Gale:

- DEC gross sales for the month were \$80.00 with the Town of Fowler commission being \$4.44. She had issued 7 Certified Death certificates, licensed 18 dogs, and had collected \$2.75 for photo copies.
- Reported she is preparing the paperwork for the tax warrant renewal for the County Treasurer's Office and taxes are 75.76% collected. The amount left to be collected is \$629,332.70.
- Asked the board their pleasure in setting the fee for 2nd notices for taxpayers who haven't paid any tax at all this year. After some discussion, it was the consensus of the board to set the 2nd notice fee at \$2.00.
- 2nd Notices to taxpayers will be mailed in mid-April.

- Reported the 2025 Free Rabies Clinic Schedule is out and copies are available if anyone would like one.
- She had signed two individuals up for the government conference training in Verona.

Highway Department

Highway Superintendent Randy Durham reported:

- The new tractor, broom, and brush hog are now in Canton. He is waiting for a block heater to come in before going to look at it and make sure everything is working properly.
- The 2026 MACK Plow Truck has a new build day of May 13th, it should be in Watertown by the end of May, and then it goes to Viking, where there are 250 trucks ahead of it to be completed.
- He is waiting for CHIPS funds to be announced in the new State budget.
- He has attended meetings with Assembly members Scott Gray and Ken Blankenbush asking for an increase in CHIPS, as Governor Hochul recommended the CHIPS funds to stay flat this year as it has for the last two years.
- He has been advised by St. Lawrence County Superintendent of Highways, Don Chambers, the County will be paving County Route 24, from State Highway 58 all the way to Kelloggs Corners this year. They will also be doing the little piece of highway on County Route 22, which they took over last year in the road swap with the Town of Fowler.
- He has ordered another pallet of patch to fix potholes.
- The highway department workers are putting up sand for next year, which will take about a week to a week and a half to fill the Salt Barn.
- The County pavement bid came in at \$2.00 less per ton than it was last year.
- Reported it is illegal to put snow in the road and he has had to advise town residents of this on a few occasions.

CEO Besaw asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham if he saw the announcement on Channel 7 News that municipalities could receive up to an additional \$250,000 from the State for road work. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated he had not seen the news but will wait for the State Budget to be announced and then he will receive briefings from Assemblyman Scott Gray on the programs that are available to the Town.

Councilmembers

Councilperson Karen Simmons:

- In the month of February, the HAP Program was visited 41 times.
- Thanked Rosalee Thornton and Tami Gale for setting the food items out for the HAP Program when she was ill and could not come in.
- Thanked Kenny and Crystal Smith and the First Presbyterian Church of Gouverneur for food donations.
- Thanked Robert and Diane Jennings for their donation of \$100.00 to the food programs.
- SOS care packages for senior citizens in the Town of Fowler will be delivered on Friday, March 21st with a total of 107 care packages being delivered.
- The first meeting for Family Day was held on March 6th and the next Family Day meeting will be held on March 27th at 3:00 PM.
- Family Day is being held on Saturday, July 19, 2025.

Councilperson Lynn Bishop:

- Reported he has discussed the installation of a sidewalk between the parking lot and the pavilion with maintenance worker Byron Woodward. Supervisor Newwine agreed that the addition of a

sidewalk is a great idea, and for Councilperson Bishop to coordinate the plans with Councilperson Cleveland and maintenance worker Byron Woodward.

- Asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham about the washout on Little York Road, and if the guardrails could be stood back up.
- Asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham to put cones up on the California Road to make drivers aware of the bumps and the need to slow down.

Councilperson Cleveland:

Councilperson Cleveland was not in attendance.

Councilperson Leo Knight Jr:

- Had no further questions or commentary.

Supervisor Ricky W. Newvine:

- Reported he had sent the job description and amendments for the safety officer position to the union representative, who will prepare a MOU (memorandum of understanding) which will be made part of the union contract.
- He had contacted Lyle Hotis to make him aware the Town of Fowler is moving forward with sponsoring a bench at the Gouverneur, St. Lawrence County Fair. An invoice for the sponsorship will be sent to the Town.
- He has spoken to the engineer for the County bridge project on County Route 22, as well as several residents impacted by the project. They are hoping to move the project to start later in the year, possibly July, giving the farmer who would be impacted by the project time to put his feed up for the year, and go from there.
- Reported he had received notification from Ampersand Hollow Dam, LLC. that they are surrendering their FERC license.
- Reported he had received notification from the St. Lawrence County Youth Bureau that the Town of Fowler will again be receiving a \$5,000 grant this year.
- Reported he had received a report from St. Lawrence County Legislator Harry Smithers containing several updates: the County has tentatively agreed to a new contract with St. Lawrence County Corrections Officers, the 2nd Family Court Judge is getting settled, objections were expressed to the discontinuation of walleye stocking by the DEC, additional sales tax money from 2024 is being distributed, road salt supply is running low, six million dollars of St. Lawrence County fund balance will be used to pave 38 additional miles of County roads, which will bring a total of 100 additional miles paved in the last four years, objections were expressed to the closure of all public schools in New York State for the Chinese New Year, support was expressed for the improvement and safety of New York State Corrections Officers and a review of the HALT Act.
- He had received correspondence that the St. Lawrence Draft Horse Club has decided to disband after 40 years. They will be holding an auction on May 17, 2025 at 10:00 AM, at the former Plow Day's field, to auction off the club inventory, including a cooking trailer.

Public Comment

Mary Benware

- Commended the Town for their effort put into the board meeting and all the information she had received by attending the meeting, and thanked Town Clerk Gale for the information she had shared with her regarding a grant opportunity available to assist with damage she had incurred due to Hurricane Debbie.
- Reported she has lived in her home on Country Club Rd for 57 years and had some water damage occur in 2005, but reported the flooding she had endured from hurricane Debbie in August gave her a whole new inclination of what is going on.
- Asked board members for their help and advice concerning the water run-off that is causing flooding issues to her property, and how she could keep the water from coming into her house again.

Hwy. Superintendent Durham reported he is going to put a 36” drain all the way across the road, to enlarge the drain like he has done to most of them. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated hurricane Debbie produced 8 inches of rain in 2 hours, and nothing could have held it. Highway Superintendent Durham reported this job is on his list and he will get it done this spring.

- Mary stated that she remains concerned about the timing of the improvements, and if they will be completed before the water comes back to that problem area.

Highway Superintendent Durham expressed he must wait for a thaw to begin the improvements.

Councilperson Bishop asked if there are any easements that are in need of cleaning in that area.

Highway Superintendent Durham reported that enlarging the culvert is going to be one of the highway department’s first projects to complete.

- Mary asked the board if there was a way to slow down the traffic on the Country Club Rd, fearing someone would be killed.

Supervisor Newwine reported that once the Country Club Rd is repaved, that they could then apply again to St. Lawrence County for a speed reduction on the road.

- Mary thanked the board for listening to her concerns.

Supervisor Newwine asked for a motion to audit the bills. A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Bishop to audit the bills. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

The bills audited for the General and Highway Fund were #53 to #89, with a total of \$42,853.46.

The next regular scheduled board meeting will be held on April 14th, 2025, at 6:00PM.

With no further business, on a motion of Councilperson Simmons, seconded by Councilperson Knight, the March 10, 2025 Regular Town Board meeting was adjourned at 6:40 PM. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Tami Gale; Town Clerk