Monday, March 23, 2020
The Town of Fallsburg Town Board
Conducted a Legislative Meeting via Video Conference Call,
19 Railroad Plaza, South Fallsburg, NY
4:00PM

Present:
Supervisor Steven Vegliante
Councilperson Nathan Steingart
Councilperson Mike Weiner
Councilperson Rebecca Pratt
Town Clerk Donna Akerley
Attorney for the Town Paula E. Kay
Supervisor’s Secretary Melissa Melko
Code Enforcement Officer Mollie Messenger
Comptroller Scott DuBois
Police Chief Simmie Williams

Steven Vegliante: Alright everyone, it’s about 3:57, we have about three minutes to go. Before we start: just a reminder this is a public meeting so all members of the public that are with us today we ask you to keep your Zoom account muted unless you have a question. Just to give everyone that’s here a background as to what we’re going to do today; we’re going to run through- I’ll give a short statement on where the town is with regard to how we’re operating and what we’re doing with regard to the pandemic. I’m going to go through, I’m going to ask each of our department heads that could make it to the meeting to give us their rundown on their departments, mostly in regard to the public and how their department will be interacting with the public and things they can do and can’t do – realistic thing’s that we’re working on and trying to accomplish. And after that we’ll open it up to public comment if anyone wants to ask any or provide anything for the record it’ll be during that period of time. And one of the things we’re trying to do, to the extent possible, keep everyone operating in the town on as normal basis as possible. We’ll all get through this and the better we are at social distancing and keeping away from each other the quicker we’ll be able to get back to life as we knew it before. We’re about a minute away from starting.

Steven Vegliante: Alright, can we have a motion to open up the Town of Fallsburg meeting?
Nathan Steingart: Motion.
Michael Weiner: Motion.
Rebecca Pratt: Second.
Steven Vegliante: All in favor?
Michael Weiner: I.

Steven Vegliante: Quick note, Joe Levner was unable to make it today, we will give him an update on where we are but let’s rise for the pledge to the flag. Nate, I would ask you to lead us.
Pledge to flag.

Steven Vegliante: Alright, so, first is my report. We are doing our best as a town board to operate the town. All our essential services are up. Our town hall and all other town offices are closed to the public, but people are working from home or where necessary from their offices. We are
maintaining social distancing; we are all being conscious of disinfection protocols and certainly to the orders of the governor and the federal government. Our parks department, our golf department, things that are not essential services, those people are either full time and still working where necessary and we’ve had no pushback what-so-ever. By the way everyone, if you could just mute your phones unless you’re speaking, there’s a lot of people on this call, there’s a lot of people participating so, well just make it easier.

We, this is unprecedented terrain, we’ve never seen this, we’ve never done this. The only way that this will get better is if we all follow the CDC guidelines, the Governors guidelines. Keep away from each other for the time being, give ourselves the distance. And disinfectant protocols; follow those. By doing that, by doing that for a couple of weeks, we will stop this spread of this virus, or at least slow it to the extent that our healthcare facilities can catch up. In this past week I have issued a State of Emergency for the Town of Fallsburg, it was limited in nature. It was done because; I did it because Fallsburg has something that other towns probably don’t have as much of, and that is a significant summer camp and seasonal community. Those bungalow colonies and camps are a big part of our economy and they’re a big part of Fallsburg for going back 60-70 years. However, by their definition and their operation, they will violate the Governors orders of 50 people or less, meetings of 50 people or more are prohibited, so in an effort to be safe and because we have no ability to look one-by-one and see and manage it I decided that it was in the best interest of this town and in our county to temporarily suspend the certificates of occupancy for those units. That does not – let me be very clear to everyone on this call and everyone in this meeting – that does not limit a home owner, even a second home owner, from utilizing their homes in the town of Fallsburg. If it is a year-round home that has a CO and such, they are entitled just like you are, or I am entitled to use their home. I have encouraged people that are not full-time residents in the Town of Fallsburg to not come here right now and the reason I’ve done that is to follow the Sullivan County guidance. Our healthcare offerings in Sullivan County; they are going to be stretched and I think it’s prudent at this point to really make it clear to anyone that’s coming here, that the resources available downstate may not be available if you’re sick up here. And that really is it, again; camps, bungalow colonies, those by their nature would violate the governors order and for that reason we did issue a state of emergency and those are prohibited right now. As far as a home, if you own a home in Sullivan county you’re entitled to use it, if you own a home in the town of Fallsburg you’re entitled to use it, I would just ask you to be responsible in making a decision as to whether or not being in Fallsburg is better or safer for you and your family than being where you live year round.

One other thing that we are as a board looking at, that is the Golf Courses and Parks. While the exterior of our parks is open, to the extent residents are allowed to go our parks, none of the interior functions are open – the offices aren’t open, the bathrooms aren’t open, however, you want to use our dog park, you want to use Morningside park, those parks are open and being outside as long as you’re maintaining social distancing is something that can be healthy and is something that can – we all get a little stir crazy so – today’s obviously not a good day with the snow but get outside, breathe fresh air, it will help and our parks will remain open. We are trying to work up a set of protocols that we feel allows to safely open up the golf courses. Again, today is probably not a good example with the weather but we expect this to pass relatively quickly and when we feel comfortable we can safely open the golf courses without violating both, the letter and the intent of the Governor’s orders. We will try and do that but again, we won’t do it until we feel as a board that the golf courses can be operated in a safe manor for all our employees and
for the patrons. With that, I covered our town office are closed to the public but all town, especially all essential working within the town is up and operating. I want to just, by the way, point out the unbelievable dedication of our town staff in every single department. They are working and taking calls and strides. We are producing far better than I would’ve expected out of these circumstances and that is solely due to the dedication of our town workforce. So they have my undying gratitude as well as I’m sure the boards and just ask anyone in the public if they’re dealing with our town, understand that they’re working under difficult conditions; many of them are working from home, many of them working without their files, without their computers. They’re doing it kind of on a shoestring and they’re doing the best they can so I would ask you to please give us the patience that they give others. We’re doing the best we can to get your questions answered, to get your services provided and right now I think we’re doing a heck of a good job and I really want to thank the employees for that, and our department heads – they really are performing above and beyond and to that we thank you.

Okay, so I’m going to move on; I’m going to try to pick our department heads as I see them, again, I think most came/were able to join in here, not everyone, but we’ll try to do our best. So, first one is assessor, Winnie can you give us an update?

Winifred Foerstch: Sure. So both Paulette and I, Paulette’s my assessor clerk, we’re both on the forward calling so anybody who calls is getting our cell phones and we’re picking up all calls, either we’re helping them directly or we’re telling them where they can get the help. We’re trying to keep everyone on-line. Taxlookup.net is a great tool for anyone who needs to look for tax information or information about a property. Then I also was able to attain a notebook so I’m able to get onto my desktop from home so I have all of the programs that I would have as if I was in my office. So, I also have files here and I’m working on trying to get some things done on the roll because our deadline is the middle of April. So between the phones and working from home, we’re trying our best to keep the office going.

Steven Vegliante: Okay, just very quickly Winnie, is there any guidance from the state with regard to your roll date?

Winifred Foerstch: No, not at all, on Friday I sent emails to all three of my contacts; gave them my home number, my cell number, my home email, plus, my work email. I heard back from one of them and they said at the moment they haven’t come to any type of agreement on what they’re going to do. So as we stand right now I’m pushing for the second week of April to get my tentative done and filed. But again, Telesent, we don’t even know if they’re up and running. I haven’t heard from Rosalee, either so I’m not sure.

Steven Vegliante: Winnie, thank you very much we really appreciate it. Arnold, is Arnold with us today?

Arnold Seletsky: Yes, I just want to mention, as you mentioned, the exterior park property is open as are the mini parks. Obviously with the snow my crew will go out to address some of the snow protocols that we do. Everyone will be in a separate truck distancing themselves from everybody. And that’s basically it. Fielding a lot of calls. People will ask us our status and we tell them we’re on hold until further notice as far as camping.
Steven Vegliante: Arnold, thank you very much. Do we have anyone from golf on? Okay, let’s see, next is comptroller; Scott, can you give us an update?

Scott Dubois: I actually spoke to my staff today; they’re going to break up again coming in so bills will be processed. Vicki did ask all department heads if they can email it and she has the template at home, on Friday, the ones that usually produce the payroll sheet and Jamie’s fielding calls about Refuge and Water and Sewer. All the billing has been out for the quarter so we’re good on that front.

Steven Vegliante: Okay, thank you, Scott. Clerk’s Office, Donna.

Donna Akerley: Yes, I was in yesterday working, at the Town Hall, distributing all the mail from the post office, picked up packages, fielded calls, scanned through voice mails. I’ve been answering calls all day today, every single one of them, there was quite a few, everyone seems to be pretty understanding for the most part; you know, we’re all in this together. I will be in the office tomorrow to pick up the mail again, distribute the mail, disinfect again, update the taxlookup website and make a deposit at the bank as well.

Steven Vegliante: Thank you very much, Donna, appreciate it. Courts?

Tracey Lesczyski: Hi everyone, we are working remotely from home as well. The Town of Fallsburg court is closed per administrative orders sent down by the Unified Court System as of last week for 30-45 days. All cases are pretty much put on hold. If you have any concerns again you can contact me 845-434-4574; I am answering calls from home and once I’m able to stop in the office I will be stopping in the office, but again everything is pretty much put on hold for 30-45 days.

Steven Vegliante: Okay Tracey, thank you. Highway, Dylan, how you guys holding up?

Dylan Eidel: We’re doing good. Julia was in this morning before we got here – did her thing, checked a couple emails. She’s working remotely from home. We’re all in, we’re just staggering in and out accordingly. This snow is starting to turn into freezing rain, so we’ll probably be here for a few more hours. Still trying to have the emphasis on social distancing. It’s really hard because you’re in a truck for a few hours and you want to just shoot the bull for a minute, so, I’m trying to keep everybody as far apart as I can. But we’re doing what we have to do. I haven’t had a lot of complaints; we’re doing what we can do.

Steven Vegliante: Appreciate it, Dylan, thank you. Alright, Utilities Department, is Randy Jones with us? Alright so we’ll move on to sewer, Michael?

Michael Herbert: Yeah, we’re moving along just fine. I got the crews at half-staff. We’re schedule swapping so that it’s equal/fair. No issues yet. Our contractors are moving along – no hiccups in that. Other than that, everything seems to be pretty good given the circumstances right now.
Steven Vegliante: Hey, Randy, I saw you jump back on. Go ahead, Randy.

Randy Jones: Yeah, I’ve got the bear minimum, just a couple guys working each day just to do the basics. Trying to keep everybody separate and stuff. Now how long I can do it; I got a lot of jobs coming up that has to be done, so we’ll try it for a bit and see how long this takes.

Steven Vegliante: Alright, Randy, you’ll get together with myself and Mollie. We’ll, three of us, we’ll make a decision on what’s essential, what’s not, and we’ll work from there and still try to maintain distancing.

Randy Jones: Alright.

Steven Vegliante: Water Department, Bobby. No Bobby – I wasn’t sure if he was going to make it. Go ahead, Bobby.

Robert McKeon: Doing well, all the wells are running fine. I got three guys working for day, until about 10 o’clock in the morning until about noon right around the area doing service calls. Were flooded into the service calls between 8 o’clock and 12 and we’ve not had a problem with that. They’re mostly from Vacation Village, second home users, which is historically what happens now with Passover coming, people and snowbirds are coming back. But we haven’t had any extra extra usage and so far so good. Everybody’s driving their own truck. We haven’t had any problems.

Steven Vegliante: Perfect, Bobby, thank you very much. Building Department, Mollie.

Robert McKeon: Yes, sir.

Mollie Messenger: Building Department is answering calls from home. The inspectors are still going out and inspecting, they’re actually answering phone calls on their cell phones from their individual builders. We just can’t issue any new permits right now but they’re stating in contact with all developers and builders. And they’re actually circling the town- one or two a day just to look for violations and other issues that come about.

Steven Vegliante: Great, Mollie, thank you. It’s not on here but the police, Simmie. Simmie Williams as an add-on to our agenda.

Simmie Williams: all of the police officers in the town are healthy. Everyone’s reporting for their shifts and practicing their social distancing and staying in their cars and cleaning them as they leave for the next shift. So right now, all is well.

Steven Vegliante: I really appreciate it. Is there anyone/ any departments that I missed? Paula do you want to add anything?

Paula Kay: I don’t really have anything specific to add except I’m going to be on a call, I think it’s on Wednesday, with a big group of municipal attorneys to talk about how to handle
municipal meetings during this time; what to do with planning and zoning to move things forward if at all possible. And I can always loop back after that meeting to see if I can also get you the info and you can hop on it as well.

Steven Vegliante: Okay, I really appreciate it, I would love to join that.

Paula Kay: Okay, certainly.

Steven Vegliante: Alright, so that’s our update to the public. I really want to say I appreciate all our department heads jumping on this call this way. We are going to probably continue this rundown next week with our Work Session meeting. I will also note that we are meeting as a town, our departments are all going to meet just like this with Zoom at least once a day just to get an idea because one thing when we’re all working together, working from home, scattered, it is important that we all have communication so that’s going to continue. I realize that I missed some stuff on the agenda. Obviously, we’re not going to have any liaison reports tonight but Donna is there any correspondence that we need to read today?

Donna Akerley: No, I have nothing right now, thank you.

Steven Vegliante: Okay, so at this point I will open it up to citizens comments. I would just ask, if you want to speak let’s try to be as orderly as we can about it. Would anyone like to make a comment for the record?

Donna Akerley: If you could just make sure everybody lists their names, so I have it for the record.

Steven Vegliante: Perfect. Anyone? Okay. With that I will thank everyone for joining this meeting tonight. Again, I want to reiterate we will get back to normal as soon as we can. In the meantime, keep in mind this is going to be devastating on our economy here in Sullivan County and there are businesses that are still available and still working. Our restaurants and bars and all those rules have been relaxed in the sense that even though you can’t go to a bar, you can’t go to a restaurant, you can’t go to these places and stay; many of them are open providing take out for food and beverages. And do what you can to support them, I know as time goes on I’m going to encourage the board to join me and virtually go out and support our local businesses because they can really use it and this is going to be a tough thing for everyone to get through so wherever possible, buy local, eat local, drink local, utilize local; that’s what we’re going to do as a town board and I hope that people would join us in doing that. With that I need a motion to go into executive session we have –

Donna Akerley: Steve –

Melissa Melko: Steve, we have a warrant to approve.

Steven Vegliante: Oh, we do. Thank G-d someone else is here. Motion to approve Warrant number 03B20 dated March 18, 2020 in the amount of $1,189,605.16.
Michael Weiner: Move it.
Rebecca Pratt: Second.
Steven Vegliante: All in favor.
Michael Wiener: I.

Steven Vegliante: Thank you. With that I need a motion to go into executive session.

Michael Weiner: Motion.
Rebecca Pratt: Second.
Steven Vegliante: All in favor.
Michael Weiner: I.