



## Town of Niskayuna

January 6, 2021

### **HIGHWAY, PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING**

HELD VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE<sup>1</sup>

**Present:** R. Perez-Jaquith, Y. Syed, S. Fiminski, B. Backus, R. Smith, L. Peretti, L. Robertson, M. Martinelli, L. O'Brien, M. Yetto, J. Hawley, I. Alam, W. Lawrence, A. Finnan, P. Rakvica, P. Briggs

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Approval of Minutes – December 2, 2020 Meeting (prepared by Julie Lohre). Motion to approve by Supervisor Syed and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Lori Peretti

#### **Senior Program Updates (Linda O'Brien) -**

Linda O'Brien began her report by complimenting the new Senior Bus Driver. He is doing a great job, helping with grocery shopping, errands and making phone calls to senior residents. He is able to be pro-active in these tasks, which is a big help to the staff. He has also donated magnets to which the staff added the Senior Center contact information. These magnets have been added to activity bags that Linda, Robin and Edie have created by filling 2-gallon Ziploc bags with trivia and activity sheets, as well as puzzles and crafts. They are also creating mini bags for those folks that really only want up-dated information, such as monthly event calendars and menus. The Center staff is also continuing the monthly tradition of celebrating birthdays. They have ordered two dozen cupcakes from The Co-Op and individually boxed them. While running errands, and delivering the activity bags, the new bus driver, Matt Mazure is also delivering cupcakes. Linda informed the group that they received many appreciative thank-you calls.

Linda reported that they are continuing with the postcards as an additional means of reaching out. Exercise classes are continuing over Zoom. They have over 50 seniors registered in 5 different weekly classes. Edie has been wonderful maintaining this program, by helping both residents and instructors use the technology. They have also doubled their number of Facebook followers in the year since they began using this social media platform. A Facebook Live presentation on The Grinch Who Stole Christmas had over 90 views.

The lunch program continues to be very successful, even with the center itself being closed. They filled 75 requests for box lunches in December and have already filled 31 in the first week of this year. Linda informed the group that with the snow, they have been receiving a large number of phone calls from residents looking for a variety of different types of help with snow removal. The center staff has been directing residents to the Umbrella program, although that requires membership in the program, so it can be a bit of a process. They also have tried using the Nisky

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<sup>1</sup> New York State Executive Order 202.1: "*Suspension of law allowing the attendance of meetings telephonically or other similar service*: Article 7 of the Public Officers Law, to the extent necessary to permit any public body to meet and take such actions authorized by the law without permitting in public in-person access to meetings and authorizing such meetings to be held remotely by conference call or similar service, provided that the public has the ability to view or listen to such proceeding and that such meetings are recorded and later transcribed."

Neighbors program which is just taking contact information at this point, since they are not yet up and running. Councilwoman Jaquith asked for clarification about whether that is the N-to-N program that sends out emails. Linda explained that the Neighbor to Neighbor program is an e-mail sent out by the Niskayuna School District on a weekly basis. She questioned whether they would be able to forward that email to residents, and help them sign up for the service. Councilwoman Jaquith said the information from that email is non-proprietary and able to be shared. She will forward the last email that she received, so that the information can be passed along. There are often students looking for odd jobs advertising in this manner.

While the Center is closed, the staff has kept busy cleaning, up-dating the seasonal/holiday decorations, and making sure the facility is ready to open, as soon as it is possible. They have added a lot of senior's e-mail addresses to the website, so that they can now receive town information. Councilwoman Jaquith inquired as to whether their outreach, as well as the bus driver's trips, is being logged. Linda assured her that everything is being well documented, and will email her a report. The Senior Center staff has been receiving requests for information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. Councilwoman Jaquith will pass along any information she receives from the bi-weekly County health updates.

Linda reported to the group, that the Senior Center building is having an issue with squirrels. Ray Smith and Charlie Bergami are both aware of the situation. In an off-line discussion, they will all discuss a course of action.

#### **Highway & Parks Items (Ray Smith) -**

**Water Breaks** - (\$1500.00) - There were five water related repairs in the month of December.

**Highway Crews** - Crews are working on snow removal in courts, and intersections where it is impacting visibility. They are also removing snow in some areas to make room for upcoming snow. Crews are also working on resident requests such as downed trees, washouts and drainage issues.

**Christmas Tree Pick-up** – Trucks will be circulating the town for the month of January. There are rules and regulations posted on the town website. Trees must be free of stands, plastic bags and ornaments, as they are chipped and used as mulch. This provides a resource for the town as well as eliminating the fee to dispose of them.

**December Snow Storm and other weather related activities** - Ray updated the committee on the issues brought about by the snowstorm on December 17<sup>th</sup>. All crews were out on the roads by 3:00 am and worked for 19 continuous hours to keep the roads clear. Almost every truck got stuck, often on flat ground. The job that would take about 4 hours in a typical storm, took 13 hours - and that did not include any clean-up – just keeping roads passable. Crews were back on the roads by 6:30 the next morning continuing the clean-up. Ray reported that throughout the storm, there were many calls to the Highway Department from the UCC as well as residents. Calls from the UCC often asked for assistance in helping essential workers, including medical personnel, get to their jobs. Highway Department employees assisted in digging these workers out, as well as plowing paths for them to get where they needed to be. Resident's calls are handled as quickly as possible, usually as soon as the storm clean-up has been handled. Councilwoman Jaquith inquired about whether it would be helpful to put a recorded message on the Highway Department phone during these situations. Ray explained that there is a message, telling residents to call the UCC if there is an emergency. In most cases, the Highway Department is able to stay on top of resident calls, whether they are requests for

assistance or complaints, however, this storm was overwhelming. Ray also reported that Supervisor Syed's email to residents asking people to be patient and stay off the roads if at all possible was helpful. He did not feel that there was a reason to change their system for phone communication from residents, but that perhaps educating people about the email contact system would suffice.

**Sidewalks – (update)** Ray reported that the volume of snow that fell made clearing the Rt. 7 sidewalks impossible with the equipment on hand. Ray reached out to DOT for assistance in clearing bust stops, and loaders were dispatched to help with the clearing of corners on Rt. 7 where visibility was a safety issue. Ray was able to rent an additional piece of equipment which ultimately helped the situation, and informed the committee that they will monitor the usage of that equipment to see if it would be worthwhile to purchase in the future. He stressed that while side-walks are a priority to the Highway Department, in a storm that big, there are other priorities as well.

**Personnel** - There has been one retirement in the Highway Department. Due to COVID-19, Ray has not brought anyone in to interview at this time. With retirement incentives, there may be other openings and they will be addressed as necessary.

**Open Discussion-** Councilwoman Jaquith confirmed that the only resolution for the next Town Board meeting will be the yard waste increase. Ismat Alam will forward that information to Alaina Finan.

### **Tree Council and Complete Streets (Laura Robertson) –**

The Tree Council continues to work on the Street Tree Master Plan. One invoice has just gone through. Councilwoman Jaquith asked Laura to remind the group about this plan. The Master Tree Plan has been in the works for well over a year, but it has finally come to fruition. It should be completed by mid- February. Ismat Alam asked what year it was budgeted for. She reminded the group to inform her of any outstanding invoices at the end of the year, as they must be accrued. This way they will not affect the current budget. This money would be taken from the Tree Miscellaneous fund in the Highway Department Budget. Laura Robertson informed the committee that the Tree City application was ready and would be filed by the end of the day. The designation of a "Tree City" is an award for being conscientious about the trees in your city and pledging to your residents to continue to improve them. It is an honor and something that could be added to grant applications. The Complete Streets Committee has been working with the Nott Street Improvement Committee.

**Nott Street Improvement Plan** – The Nott Street Improvement Committee had a kick-off meeting on January 5<sup>th</sup>. The committee has a couple of members from the Complete Streets Committee helping out in addition to a few people from the Planning Board. Laura will send out the Power Point from the engineering firm, as well as some of the bullet points that were discussed so residents can see what is proposed. After a short period of gathering comments, the committee will begin moving forward. Councilwoman Jaquith inquired as to how they are presenting this to the public. Laura informed the group that they want to make sure that anything that is presented to the public is actually something that the town would be able to support. The committee will be looking at all suggested options, and present for discussion, those that would be feasible. Councilwoman Jaquith asked about possible funding sources. She wanted to make sure that any type of grant money or matching funds that might be available are investigated. Ismat Alam informed the group that her

department will be taking over grant applications going forward. She asked Laura to let her know in advance, if there are any grants available.

River Road Construction – Laura reported to the group that the majority of the work was completed in 2020. They were able to finish a large part of the project before the big storm, and actually came back as soon as most of the snow melted and completed more of the project. At this point all that is left is restoration of the site and final close-out of the project. With the project nearing completion, the town should be able to get the reimbursement for the majority of the money spent. The fields can now rest until spring, but should be ready for play when the season opens. There is an outstanding dispute for soil in the amount of thirty-thousand dollars, but this has been sent on to the legal department. Laura will let Councilwoman Jaquith know when all the work has been completed and the dispute resolved.

Rivers Ledge – Parkland Fund – Laura explained to the group the options the town has to pay for improvements to Aqueduct Park. She also illustrated the pros and cons of using money from the different funds available. It was decided to be an off-line discussion.

### **Recreation [Community Programs] Items (Lori Peretti) -**

January / February Events – Lori Peretti reported that the West Mountain Friday night ski club will begin on January 8<sup>th</sup>. There are 42 students registered, but only 25 are registered for the bus, allowing us to keep the 55 passenger coach bus at 50% capacity. All of the same summer camp COVID-19 safety protocols will be followed. Temperatures will be taken and hands sanitized before students will be allowed to board the bus. Eating and drinking will not be allowed, and masks will be worn at all times on the bus. Students will no longer be allowed to drop equipment at the Town Hall, but these concessions are necessary and kids are excited that the program is going forward. Councilwoman Jaquith confirmed that the Rec1 registration includes COVID waivers.

There will also be one adult program beginning in February. Thanks to the UV-C fixtures installed at the Senior Center, we will be able to hold Adult Tai Chi. This program is scheduled to run February through April, but the instructor is happy to push the starting date back in the event the Center has not re-opened by that time.

The Community Programs Department will probably have a list of Rec. Leaders for an upcoming resolution. In the event that the Senior Center re-opens and we are able to rent it out for events, these staff members will be cleared to work the events.

Sponsorship/Ad Revenue Initiative – Lori Peretti is waiting to hear back from Alexis Kim regarding the legal portion, and Lisa Stevens has been working hard formatting a fee structure. There will be an off-line meeting with Councilwoman Jaquith regarding the various sponsorship opportunities and the fee levels. When the legal portion is complete, the program will be ready to go. Letters can begin to go out. This will begin generating revenue for the town. Councilwoman Jaquith reminded the committee of the importance of this project and the positive impact it will have on the town's budget.

**The next meeting is Wednesday, February 3rd at 8:15 am**

**Minutes prepared by Julie Lohre**