

**VILLAGE OF ALTAMONT**  
**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**  
March 1, 2022

Mayor Kerry Dineen  
Trustee Nicholas Fahrenkopf  
Trustee Michelle Ganance  
Trustee Tresa Matulewicz, Absent  
Trustee John Scally

Patty Blackwood, Clerk  
Catherine Hasbrouck, Treasurer, Absent  
Jeffrey Moller, Supt. of Public Works, Excused  
Paul Miller, Altamont Fire Chief  
Jason Johnston, Altamont Police Chief  
Kristin Pratt, Legal Counsel

General Public: 13

7:00 p.m.

Mayor Dineen called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Paul Miller, Chief Altamont Fire Dept., submitted a Chief's report for February. Copy of report included with Official Minutes.

Jeffrey Moller, Supt. of Public Works, submitted a Public Works report for February. Copy of report included with Official Minutes.

Jason Johnston, Altamont Police Chief, reported we've had a couple of more snow storms here in the recent weeks and we've had a problem with people continuing to park on the street overnight and in the restricted lots. We really want to hammer that home. You can't do it. It's interrupting the snow removal and we've been ticketing people and the next step; I don't want to have to do it, but the next step is going to be towing people out of the spots when they're in the way. Just want to drive that home.

Mayor Dineen reported just so people are clear at home that the two restricted lots, I'm going to call them the businesses that they're adjacent to, the Hungerford Market lot, that's a two-hour parking lot and the library parking lot are both municipal lots, but those are two hours. No overnight parking. There is overnight parking behind the Enterprise Printing building and there's room back there for people who need it. The Village Hall parking lot is available as well.

Trustee Scally made a motion seconded by Trustee Fahrenkopf to approve the Treasurer's report; Abstract #18 and #19 and transfer of funds as submitted.

**Roll Call: All in favor**

Mayor Dineen stated I just want to make a quick comment. I meant to say last month. You might notice if you've been here the last couple of months that Trustee Matulewicz hasn't been with us. She's on a temporary medical leave and we wish her well and hope she gets better real soon. We'll see her back shortly.

**Public Comment:**

Judi Walters Dineen, Resident: I am the chairman of the Altamont Parade Committee. This is the first of a couple times that I'll be able to talk about the parade. It's going be May 22nd, by the way, circle that on your calendar. Don't go out of town. You're going to enjoy it. If you have a float or you know an organization or a personal float business, a float is welcome. We're honoring obviously our fallen vets, but we would love to add

more things to the parade this year. If you have any musical talent, please let us know. We'd like to get more music in the parade and we're meeting regularly. You can contact me on the community page and or you can contact the Altamont Parade Committee and we hope we'll see you all there, but I'll tell you again next month.

Kate Provencher, Resident: I just wanted to check in and ask a question because I noticed that the Guilderland Planning Board had on an agenda two weeks ago to talk about a subdivision coming off of Gun Club Road. I wanted to check in on what are our standards for supplying water and sewer out of the Village.

Mayor Dineen: Well, last March we had an item on our agenda. That development came to us originally and said, we have this idea for a development. We'd like to get water and sewer from the Village. We didn't give an answer either way. We said, well, the only way we could even make that decision was by looking at the water availability and then looking at the sewer system. We set up an escrow with that group. Our engineers looked at the possibility of providing water for that and if it was even possible before we answered the request and looked at the septic as well. It was determined that we didn't have enough to supply that safely. We didn't feel and Jeff Moller did not feel that we did. Engineers recommended that we not supply water for that, because as you know Jeff talked several months ago that we had the big water main break on Schoharie Plank Road West. We lost 500,000 gallons of water and things like that happen. It won't be safe for us. We could be in danger of water. That was what we did. We went to our engineers for the decision on that. We did meet with that group again, Jeff Moller and I did, and relayed this information and reviewed the report. The meeting with Guilderland, I think was their IDA, I think I have the right committee. We got an invitation to that last week, Jeff Moller did attend, the only way it would be possible is if the developer could get their water utility from the Town of Guilderland and that is what they're discussing. If they can help put a line in, if they can afford to do that, that is something they're looking at. I don't have any more information on it right now. That's where it stands. Jeff said nothing else was repeated at the meeting other than what I've pretty much told you, for our part.

Kate Provencher, Resident: I was curious about that. The procedure would be for them to come to the Board and for the Board to investigate that. I remember that happening in previous years and is that actually also true for our sewer? Could they get their own water and hook into our sewer?

Mayor Dineen: Yes, they could do that. It has something, and Jeff's not with us this evening, it has something to do with there being a way to hook that up and monitor the usage and then base the rates still on their usage, even with Guilderland.

Kate Provencher, Resident: Would we consider that when we've just had to hike sewer rates because we're not being able to pay for processing?

Mayor Dineen: I don't know at this time. We don't have the facts yet, all of us would want to meet with Jeff. I'm sure it's going to come back to us at some point, but we will have to talk to him and the engineers to see what's going on. There's also another check and balance part, there is the Referral Committee. That would be the second step it comes to.

Kate Provencher, Resident: If the Board was considering doing that, like extending sewer to a development like that, would that be a public hearing or would that just be a Village Board meeting decision?

Mayor Dineen: The recommendation comes from Superintendent Moller to us. It's not a public hearing. It's just like water connections. If it were something we could do, it would be based on our engineering recommendations as well as Superintendent Moller's recommendations.

Trustee Fahrenkopf: They haven't even done a real application.

Mayor Dineen: No, it wasn't an application. I think it was just a discussion with them. There's no application that I know of on file yet. But we did the preliminaries, which was good. We did that way back in March when they first wanted to talk to us.

Kate Provencher, Resident: You know, one of the thoughts that I have about that is not just about our capacity but also about how through making decisions about where we extend water and sewer, we also protect the Village as a village and as a community rather than as becoming part of suburban sprawl in Guilderland. I would hope that the Board would keep that in mind also, which is why I wondered if there's a public hearing, because I think that there would be a lot of thinking about that too.

Mayor Dineen: We do have standards for water that were established around 2008 because I say with Tim McIntyre, we made a water plan and there was so much capacity allotted for inside the Village and so much allotted for outside. I know that Jeff Moller has kept track of that every time we've had a single usage, maybe outside, he deducts that every time. When we had the annexation happen, then we transferred that percentage that was outside to inside because they are now inside. We subtracted that from the outside as well. He is keeping track and then, of course, we knew we were close. That is why we also went right to the engineers. Our calculations had us almost to the cap. I want to say, I can't say exactly without him here, but there is a standard and a process. We look at that.

Kate Provencher, Resident: Yeah. Thank you. What I'm saying is, I think beyond the question of capacity, is also the question about how we maintain Altamont as a Village and as a village feel. I think we have some control over that with how we extend water and sewer.

Mayor Dineen: Sure, true. Absolutely.

Dean Whalen, Resident: I'm just wondering if it's appropriate to request a moment of silence for the people of Ukraine. I just left the news and it's very disturbing.

Mayor Dineen: I would ask everyone to take a moment of silence for the people in Ukraine. Our thoughts are with them at this time. I think we can send them continued good thoughts and wishes and hope for a better outcome than it looks right at the moment.

Harvey Vlahos, Resident: This kind of piggybacks on what Kate was saying there about the water and the sewer, and it kind of ties into the public hearing as well because you have the issue of whether we combine the ZBA and the Planning Board together. It seems to me that there are enough issues coming up and we're about 150% overdue to

revisit if you will, the Comp Plan and what she was saying about how we're going to allocate water and sewer, kind of all ties into how we're going to preserve the character of the Village. I would think that this would tie into the hearing about the combining of the two of them. I think that you should not do that until the Comp Plan has been revised, because that really gives everybody in the whole Village, an opportunity to have input into all the tools and levers that we can use to fashion the kind of community that we want to keep. Then the other thing was that since Tresa is not here, kind of brings up the thought that I had last month and I dropped that off to everybody. Has there been any progress made or any thought or consideration as to codifying the appointment process for all because we talked about the referral committee just now? If something happens and she's not available, will that be put out to the general public through all of the meetings that we have available? I know way back when, when you guys appointed the historian, one of the questions I asked, and it hadn't been done, was it out there that anybody could come and apply? We have several people that have a lot of history that could have possibly been candidates for that. I think it was just an appointment without really opening it up to everybody in the Village. Are you going to act on that in terms of codifying the process?

Mayor Dineen: We're not acting on that at this time. That would be something for a discussion down the road.

Harvey Vlahos, Resident: That's why I brought it in last month. So, we have time to do that.

Mayor Dineen: There's still time to do that.

Maurice McCormick, Resident: I just want to find out if there was any more information on the chickens, like is it progressing forward or anything.

Mayor Dineen: It would be, but he has yet to turn in the application at this time. As we told Mr. Polk that evening, we would forward him the application for this amendment to then come to the Board, because it is a process that's set up in our code. He received it, he talked with our Building and Zoning Officer about it. He has yet to turn it in. I don't know if he's made different decisions or what he's looking for but we're just waiting for that before we can move forward.

Maurice McCormick, Resident: So, it's still being worked on then.

Mayor Dineen: Yeah, it sounds like it. Just nothing has come in yet. I checked with the office and nothing has yet come in.

Ted Neumann, Resident: I just had a curious question about what the snow removal from the sidewalks is on weekends. It seems the last two snowstorms on a Friday, the sidewalks have not been cleared, but the streets have. I was just wondering, is there a policy that we have to wait until the work day to have them cleaned off? Because on last Saturday you couldn't walk anywhere. This is one of the main attributes of the Village. It's a walking Village and there are always people walking around, but on a Saturday and Sunday after a snowstorm on Friday, you can't walk.

Mayor Dineen: I'll direct you to call and contact Jeff Moller about the policy. I can't speak to something of the top of my head, that's his department. I do know that the responsibility for clearing sidewalks, although the Village does it gratis and tries to get to

it as much as they can and they try to do a once through, it is supposed to be maintained by the property owner. When a storm happens on a weekend, I think, they come right in on Monday and do it, from what I've seen. I saw several residents take it upon themselves to clear their sidewalks and salt their sidewalks. I think a lot of people who have been here quite some time, know the process, and the Village does their best to take care of it when they are here. You have to talk to him about what the policy is or how he makes that decision about what they do. Sometimes we don't have the people here to work on weekends. We have four guys and five at best. Sometimes their availability is not there. We do have one on for the weekends that has to do testing all weekend and they can't be taken from that to do the sidewalk because there are some things we have to get done. I hope people will try to, especially when the snow is soft like that, try to remove it the best they can for everybody else that's walking or running.

Trustee Scally: It's generally the property owner's responsibility to clear the sidewalks. It's nice seeing that the Village goes through and uses the machine to clear it out evenly through the sidewalks.

### **Public Hearing 7:19 p.m.**

Kristin Pratt, Legal Counsel, opened the public hearing with reading of the Legal Notice to consider proposed Local Law No. 1 of 2022 to Abolish the Existing Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals and Create a New Zoning Board of Appeals for the Village of Altamont.

Mayor Dineen: I should introduce Ms. Pratt who is covering for Allyson Phillips this evening from the same law firm and she's a Guilderland resident. This is a continuation from last month where we heard comments on this proposal. If you have something you'd like to share with the Board at this time, you may come up to the microphone and share your thoughts with the Board. I think there's a few people that look like they want to speak. I just ask you to keep your comments to three or four minutes just so we have time to hear everybody. Feel free to come up and tell us who you are.

Dean Whalen, Resident: Two thoughts, now this has been clarified that the intent of the proposed is to be five seating members and two alternates. And that was clarified late in the meeting last month. I really do ask the Board to consider actually having that Board be seven members with either one or two alternates. I know that part of the reason for doing this is just trying to streamline, even asking people to join the Board. I propose that you think about seven because what it does, if you do decide to go forward with one Board, it gives a greater level of input and potential different viewpoints. Having seven people responding to an issue as opposed to five, particularly since there's the caution that was mentioned last month, about potential conflict of interest or, you know, a quorum having a certain tone that may not be reflective of the Village as a whole. The second thing I want to ask is something that wasn't really addressed at all. Because I threw it out there and really, I didn't expect it to be addressed directly, but this currently is proposed, per the posting, that the Boards will, if this proceeds, be changed out in April. I haven't really heard any of you respond on how you possibly do that because 355 does not allow you to do that. It talks very specifically about the function of a Planning Board and a Zoning Board, which to my mind means that the code itself has to be modified, which is a public hearing process as well. I still question and I haven't heard a response to how that's going to be handled. Because I don't see it possible in a month. Thank you.

Harvey Vlahos, Resident: (Mr. Vlahos presented the Board with a handout.) This kind of talks a little bit about what they're doing over in Voorheesville, how you can, one of the reasons I think that you should continue to have a Planning Board and a Zoning Board because it gives you that difference of opinion. It also, you know, our whole system, basically this whole democratic system is based on checks and balances. And that's what this does. I think also that you really should do this after you revise the Comp Plan. Because as I said a little bit earlier, the Comp Plan is really what is supposed to be the guiding principles for actions that you take here. I guess, you know, streamlining the process, I mean streamline for who. If somebody has to come back and forth, I mean, it's not like we're holding up, I don't know a bridge or some sort of a major structure or something like that or some kind of a huge development. It's basically a way to check to make sure that it really corresponds to what the Village wants. I think I mentioned last time too, is that if you take a look at the Google maps and you see how little of the Victorian aura we still have left, it's about 30- 35%, something like that. And if you look at what Voorheesville has done like that, these buildings look like they could have been here for 150 years. And that's something that the Planning Board ought to be able to take a look at and say, because it's the different function is to say, yeah, you can do this but it really needs to look like it fits in, which is kind of what we didn't have with Stewarts. I was really suggesting again, I don't know, it's not a rhetorical question. I mean, what is the harm? If somebody has to go back and forth, are we streamlining it for development or should we keep it so that there's a checks and balances for the Village and the character of the Village. I mean, why do we need to streamline it? I'd like to get an answer.

Mayor Dineen: This is public hearing, we're listening and we're going to talk about and answer concerns that we can when we hear everybody's concerns or any points that they make.

Kate Provencher, Resident & Zoning Board of Appeals member: I have questions about this. That of course comes from being on the Zoning Board for many years. I do think it's valuable to have a Planning Board and a Zoning Board. I wasn't here last time. So, I think I probably missed some discussion. I don't think that the process that we've had where an applicant has to go before the Zoning Board and the Planning Board has been onerous or has slowed things down. There's one project that people point to, but there are a number of factors that were going on with that, including the Village Board doing a second hearing on that. If part of the question is about training costs, there are options for training that are free or nearly free and some of them cover the information that we've gotten by having a presentation to the Zoning Board and Planning Board each year. Those are available through the Department of State as webinars. They're really easily accessible. There's also training available through the Capital District Regional Planning Committee that's really affordable also and accessible through webinars. I also think that having two Boards allows for diversity as other folks have said, that's really important in a process where you're talking about planning or variances. I don't know that Board members know that when I started on the Zoning Board, I actually was a renter. And that's a possibility too, that people who rent apartments or half houses or whatever can be on the Board. If part of the issue is that we're not finding folks to serve. I think that speaks to looking at the process for how we engage people in the community. If the Board feels that the only, and I actually haven't heard about, I'd love to know an example of a community in New York State that has one Planning Zoning Board. That's another question that I would ask. Then if the Village Board was going to go to one Board, then I would second the recommendation that there be seven members with an alternate in order to preserve that diversity. Thanks.

Harvey Vlahos, Resident: Actually, just one last afterthought, if you could address how the Board is going to be appointed as you're going through. Is it still going to be open to other people other than the ones that are already on the Board? Things like that. Because I do know people, actually one guy who's got a masters in planning should be a splendid candidate,

Ted Neumann, Resident: I would just like to repeat what Harvey said about the need for streamlining. I don't really see that it's necessary to streamline it. Especially given the development that's going around in the capital region. I think at this point it would be almost more important to increase the amount of members of the Boards rather than merging them into only one. Seems like we ought to be going in the opposite direction rather than shutting down the checks and balances that are in place right now.

Lara Stelmaszyk, Resident: Just listening to the comments people brought up the issue of engagement and lack of involvement. I know that at one point it was said that it was difficult to find people, but at one point it was said that you had a lot of people interested in being on the various Boards. Then the opposite was said that it's hard to find people who would want to be on the Boards. But as Ms. Provencher said too, there is an issue with engagement in this community. It's a very small village. Very few people come to the meetings on a regular basis. I actually, during the height of the pandemic, did tune into some of the meetings online. I noticed that they're not being recorded or broadcast. Why not? That was really, really handy.

Mayor Dineen: They are being recorded right now.

Lara Stelmaszyk, Resident: Okay, but it's not, you couldn't like go on via Zoom. I guess this comes into or plays into the issue of the Boards, plays into the larger issue of community engagement participation in local government, which is very, very important because it's where the rubber meets the road. This affects us all on a daily basis, this kind of thing. Only, what was it, 44 people voted in the last Village Board election for the mayor and two of the positions. That's an embarrassment. I think anything that you can do to increase engagement, allow people to participate. Efficiency is certainly a good thing. You'd have to really parse the word streamlining, what do you mean by that? The only thing that seemed to have been meant by that was reducing costs. But as Ms. Provencher said, there are certainly other ways to reduce costs. So, if you can make the process more efficient for the Village, not necessarily for the applicants. Is combining the Boards the only way to be more efficient? Maybe look at, is there another way to be more efficient in the process without reducing the number of people who are participating? Because I would think that you would want more community engagement. So, I would also ask too that you look more globally at how to improve community engagement in local government. Shrinking it, I think, to a single Board would be a bad thing. I was opposed to the way things went on with the Stewarts project. I was noticing as I was walking and driving by there the other day that the end result there was a lot of talk that went into the landscaping. I see no evidence of that. There's also the issue of the Boards are there and how effective are they really? Because I don't know if it's an issue of seeing whether the recommendations were actually implemented, et cetera. There's efficiency and then effectiveness too. I hope you'd keep that in mind because I look it again like the Stewarts project and it's the landscaping that they talked about, some of it could have been quite interesting and none of it seems to have been implemented or only the bare minimum has. Thank you.

Maurice McCormick, Resident: Believe it or not. I really don't know where to start. I'm certainly against this. I was on the Zoning Board for over 20 years. You have, I don't know how many years of experience sitting in this audience right now that are against this and it's for good cause. You're taking away a filter. There're two filters right now that look at what goes on and what doesn't go on. And you're trying to streamline that. I'll try not to be too offensive tonight. It almost appears like you're trying to trim this down to five like-minded individuals that may be as like-minded and I'm not trying to offend anybody here, like the Board and then we end up with 10 people that make all the decisions on what happens and what doesn't happen as far as projects or different things zoning. I thought this would be a question and answer for you guys. Your support for this is based on two things, financial and convenience. I would like to know, give me the inconvenience, show me where that is. I don't see it. If people had to come back before the Zoning Board, most of the time, it was because the building inspectors at the time were not very good, to be honest with you, when we lost Don Cropsey. When people came in, it was good. Everything was done the way it should be done. And then we ended up with a couple other building inspectors and people would come in and we would say to them, this is an incomplete application. We can't act on this. We just can't do it. It's not legal. Which brings up another point is a lot of times, if you want to save money, we didn't have attorneys there. We did the Zoning Board because we had such a great building inspector and our meetings were on the night the building inspector was working and we used to bounce stuff off him all the time and it worked out well. Then if we got something we thought might be a little more difficult, we would have the attorney come in because we were trying to save money. Then the second part of this, your other support for this is financial. I want to kind of recap last month, from my understanding, I could be wrong on this. We came in here and you were going to have a seven-member panel, and you had the same pillars of support for your project here, which is it's a pain in the neck for people and financial, but nobody had an answer. Nobody on this Board could give me an answer on how much money are you saving. I was kind of hoping I'd get that. We would have a question and answer here, but if that's not the way it goes, that's fine. That's not the way it goes. So, you really got to explain that to people. If you're saving, I don't know, I heard of a number of maybe \$4,000 a year, \$80 bucks a week. Yeah. I mean, I don't know. It's not a lot of money if your budget is what, anybody know? \$1.6 million, \$2 million, something like that. I don't know what the annual budget is. I haven't looked into it that much, but you're kind of like proposing during the pandemic to go from an N 95 mask to why don't you just use a Gator right now? We think it's going to work. In my opinion. If I can put that out there like that, but yeah, now it's not the time. You have a Key Bank proposal probably coming in, the old Key Bank up there. You have Eve Kiltz's property on Schoharie Plank Road. Twelve or thirteen acres that Troy Miller bought and good for him. Let these people do whatever they want with their property, but it has to go through a filter, has to go back and forth. And you know what happens when people have to go back and forth, if they really want to be here, they keep going. That's what Stewarts did for five years. This little village is like a gold mine for people. I don't know if they spend a lot of money, but people really want to be here. Are you going to serve the people that vote for you or are you going to serve businesses? Are you going to protect the Village residents, which I think you're elected to do? I know there's a fine balance there, but you know, Stewarts isn't voting for anybody on this Board. Who do you answer to? And like Harvey brought up the Comprehensive Plan, before you start changing all this to five-members, maybe you should do a Comprehensive Plan. So, you can get an idea on where the Village residents want Altamont to be. It's not up to five people here. It's not up to five people on another Board. It's not up to you folks. We need a Comprehensive Plan or a renewed one to protect the Village of Altamont. I've always said that this is a great little area. I think sometimes people don't understand the value of



being able to live out here. If you want to make it a little Saratoga up there with some more bars and restaurants, well go down on Pearl Street and see how that worked out for Jerry Jennings. You need housing. You need people to live here. That's what makes it. Then maybe some little Mom and Pop shops, that works, in my opinion. When we had people coming back and forth to the Zoning Board, we drew up a checklist, because we got so tired of it. We're like, look it, to our building inspector, these people come before us, this is what has to be done, until you can put a check mark next to every box don't have them come before us because we're wasting our time. And you were paying Board members at the time. You know what else I would like to find out and I'll bring up Stewarts, you folks made some decisions on that. There were decisions made of course, which I disagreed with one hundred percent. Has anybody on this Board gone up there to Severson Avenue or talk to Carol Rothenberg to see what effect did your decision have? Take a little peek into that decision and the ramifications of that. And before you make a decision on what you want to do here, where combining the Boards, because you need to understand. Do you really understand? I've gone up there. I've talked to Carol and I've talked to residents on that street and you know, the resounding comment I get is, I guess we're going to have to live with it. Do you see the stockade fence? That's gone up for Carol there that Stewart's put up and supposed to be a blanket coming from Canada to deaden the sound that goes into her living area, I guess. You go down Severson, there's people on the right that get headlights from Main Street now, never happened before. That's what I'm talking about. Maybe you need to do a Comprehensive Plan to see what people really want. I think you're jumping ahead on maybe what you folks might want, but I'm not sure if that's the best thing for the village.

Mayor Dineen: I'm going to ask you Maurice, with all due respect, just to start to wrap it up because it's been way over three to four minutes. We have some other people that may want to speak tonight.

Maurice McCormick, Resident: I'm sure there's going to be one or two. I think that's about it. You probably got 80 years' worth of experience out here and nobody's on board with this, as far as I know. Well, they all came up. I'll wrap it up, go over my notes and I may come back. Thank you.

Danny Ramirez, Resident & Zoning Board of Appeals Chairperson: Good evening. I'll make mine short and sweet. I was sitting back there and saying to myself, oh it's already been mentioned but I would be remiss and reinforce that as a couple of colleagues said that a seven-board member, Zoning Board membership would be more enticing, more diverse, putting more minds out there, with experiences that maybe whoever they may be, with that one alternate as opposed to five. Working out the timelines as far as, you know, renewals, there's a whole other difference, the memberships or the time span on the Board could be shortened. They can always be renewed.

Mayor Dineen: It actually gets lengthened with seven members.

Danny Ramirez, Resident & Zoning Board of Appeals Chairperson: I understand that but it could be however it's staffed. But seven Board members would be more appropriate if that's the route you're going to go. Thank you.

Barbara Muhlfelder, Resident & Planning Board member: I'm also on the Planning Board and I am in favor of merging the two Boards. Those that have been involved in the Zoning Board, the training that you get, I'm questioning how often you really use it. I think combining the two Boards would be more beneficial. After listening tonight, I

think I am in agreement of raising the Board to seven and then two alternates. I do think, having more diversity, however, I just think with the knowledge from all the Board members or the new Board members of the combined Board, I can't foresee a problem. I think we all have different backgrounds. I think that everybody would be very fair, hopefully. But again, I do think I support increasing the combined Board. Thank you.

Deborah Hext, Resident & Planning Board Chairperson: I'm the Chair of the Planning Board and I had some notes written down here, but actually Harvey and Dean, you all covered it for me. Bringing more people together in one setting, who's it beneficial to? It would be beneficial to me, it would be beneficial to the rest of the Planning Board, it would be beneficial to the Zoning Board. They get to use their training. Danny Ramirez, who's the Chair of the Zoning Board, him and I throw things back at each other all the time. I've learned so much from him. If we were all on the same Board, I can't think of any reason why anyone would be opposed to that, especially if we moved it to seven people. I really am at a loss as to why everyone is against it. Thank you.

Steve Caruso, Resident & Planning Board Chairperson: I am also, right now, on the Planning Board. I've been there for three terms and I would like to also emphasize the fact that I don't necessarily understand where we would lose checks and balances by having one Board. Putting everybody together, having everybody trained and all being on the same page, to be able, I think, to understand things a little clearer the community would be the people who would benefit with this. We would benefit a little bit more because we're more professionally trained. I also will say, and I do agree with this, that I do think seven people would be a better number than five. I think you would get more diversity that way and it would make it a little bit clearer with the results that come that way. So, I do recommend that it go forward. Thank you.

Trustee Fahrenkopf made a motion seconded by Trustee Scally to approve closing the public hearing at 7:53 p.m.

Mayor Dineen: I think everyone was doing the same thing. We're taking a lot of notes. There's a lot to unpack here. Especially for people that may not have been here when we discussed this, different size Boards, last month and reasons for doing this. From what I'm hearing tonight, the perception is different than our intent, is what I'm trying to say. There are a few reasons we're looking at this and it wasn't that we're having an issue with training at all. I think the new training program we've put in place, per comments from both Boards, has really been beneficial to everybody here. We do an in-house training once a year, both Boards, it's worked out great. The Planning Board, more often than not, they meet so many times a year, they put it into action. They have really honed their skills, ZBA does not meet as much. They have lots of great experience and backgrounds in their different perspectives. I would say that they don't get to meet as much and use that training. We have a lot of back and forth when an application comes in. It was like, okay, what can we do to work on this? Dean brought this up last week, in 2007 when the Comp Plan came out and was developed, there was this thought that the Planning Board did not meet regularly enough. So, the responsibilities were then swapped. Then those responsibilities that ZBA, who met all the time back then, would go to the Planning Board. The way I look at this is, same problem different Board, we didn't solve the issues of 2007. It just moved. When we were looking at this and you may call Stewarts the outlier, but it's the outlier that really pointed out some things that we could address and say, you know what, this isn't working so well. That's not the only example of sometimes things have gone back and forth, but that was the biggest one. It was really magnified. We saw these things. Looking at change to me, is why not try something different? Why

not try something that we believe will make it better, not excluding people. We're not getting rid of anybody on those two Boards, people whose terms are up may be different, but they may not all want to be part of it anymore. I don't know. We haven't gotten that far yet. Using the expertise of the people on the ZBA, we want them involved. They don't get the opportunity to be involved. We want their opinions. They don't get to offer them too often. Analyzing the ZBA meetings versus Planning Board meetings since 2009, Zoning Board we had a lot of five, threes, twos. this is two a year, two, three a year compared to Planning Board 7, 5, 10, 10 a year. You can see how it just kind of jumped over. The ZBA recently adopted minutes from 2020, that may give you an idea of how often they don't meet, how often we're not getting their opinions, how often we're not utilizing the people who signed up to serve the Village of Altamont. We looked at that, I think 2019 and 2020, if Stewarts wasn't here, they probably would not have met. 2019 was only Stewarts. 2018, there were two applications, one of them was a variance application that actually turned out that a Planning Board member pointed out that it was actually a not allowed use at that time. It was not knowing what's actually going on. That was what Dean, you told us about the, Planning Board back then. They weren't in the loop. Well, the Zoning Board is also out of the loop for some of these things. I praise Danny and Deb, the Chair people of both those Boards, they do attend each other's meetings now, because they saw the importance of being involved in each other's Boards. Not everybody can attend both meetings. This is why we're trying to do this. Streamlining is not for the businesses, but it does help them some. It's for them, it's for us, it's for everybody taking an application. I guess its efficiency is the better word. It's not streamlining. I don't know where the developer thing came from. It's not about developers. It's about taking an application and going through it, not going back and forth. Someone is applying for a variance. Well, wait a minute. We have to send that back to Planning Board first plus we have to get it okayed by Albany County Planning Board. There are schedules, we're not Guilderland, we don't meet twice a month. It can put a business back, even a small business. If they're applying for something, they have rent to pay, they have plans, whatever their business is going to be and they have openings. I'm not trying to rush it for them because these Boards are excellent at crossing their T's and dotting their I's. They're really good at going through the code, but we also have to consider, we want to be business friendly. We want businesses to open up here. We want those little Mom and Pop shops, Maurice was talking about, but we don't want to break them in the process. To have them go back and forth and lose time on their business, from a family who had a business here in Altamont, it's really important to work with your businesses. If we can help them a little by streamlining the process and taking their application and saying, hey, you know what? You need a variance maybe, and you need to get a SUP approved. There is no reason one Board, we're not dropping duties. We are merely saying one Board combined can serve both practices. You have Zoning Board that has the five checklist items that they have to go through for every application. The Planning Board has their own checklist of things for a SUP or whatever they're hearing on that kind of a thing. Those are all still in place. There's nothing being taken away. It's taking the collective knowledge of both and saying let's work together and make this a very strong Board. Efficiency for our office is huge. We have a very part-time staff. I think everyone here knows that we have one full-time employee. Your answer may be, let's have another full-time in play. Well, that's tricky if you know our budget, that's real tricky. We increased when we can, but we have one secretary to both Boards of Planning and Zoning. And timelines, when you have two different meetings a month and she's trying to meet this one and that one and get Albany County Planning Board, we know it's a lot of work, but to streamline that for our office would be huge. It's huge hours and labor hours and costs, it's huge. Financially without counting the costs of the labor costs of our office and building inspector, you are looking at about \$3,000 to \$4,000. Some

may say that's a drop in the bucket and that's notifications, legal notices and probably counsel. Those are the fees that are the biggest. \$3,000 to \$4,000 a year, if you had attended our last budget hearing, which was only a few days ago, \$3,000 to \$4,000 is huge. I know Harvey knows that and I know Dean knows that. They've sat in there where we've tried to pull a \$1,000 from anywhere we could, so we can give something else a \$1,000. It comes down to the \$500 and a \$1,000 in a village this size. We do well, it's a tight budget. We make sure we have everything we have, but \$3,000 to \$4,000 for us, it's a big deal. If you come to those, you know that. To answer Dean's question about the timing and planning as far as the month and things like that. We talked to Allyson Phillips about this and part of the local law addresses that. As far as things saying Planning Board does this. There is a part of the local law that says wherever this says Planning Board it will now be the duties of the Zoning Board. It's part of the local law. She worked that in because you're going to have that issue kind of the chicken before the egg, no offense to the chicken law. She covered that in the way it was developed. It's in the law. It's written in the law. The law's been posted. It's been outlined since a couple weeks back. More than that maybe. Yeah, it's been out there. It was covered in that. We've talked about the Comp Plan. We all know this, I hope. It's a document that identifies our goals and objectives, our principles, then the code is based on those goals. Is it overdue? Absolutely. Do we have to start addressing this? Absolutely. I don't disagree at all. It kind of gives us the baseline for our code. These Boards enforce our code. They can keep some of these goals in mind, but the code is what is represented from this. Somebody mentioned, not tonight, I think maybe it was last time, that we are taking away from, there's so many integral parts where it identifies Planning and Zoning in this document, which is untrue. There are four mentions of Planning and Zoning in this document. On those pages, it is the first one, it just says they had a role in creating this document. The second one talks about a goal of establishing escrows for both Boards for the applicant to pay for attorney fees and things like that. Then it talks about having some joint training and it talks about training for SEQRA. Those are the only four mentions in there. Which has nothing to do with what we're talking about. That stuff obviously will still take place. So, I'm going down a list of questions here. The fear about the Victorian Era and we're losing that. I don't know how that has anything to do with this. Like I said, the duties of the Boards are not changing. It would be one Board that would address the same thing that they've been addressing all this time. Let me just make sure I'm answering the questions that came out here. I think it was Steve Caruso and, correct me if I'm wrong, he talked about checks and balances and how he didn't see it as that. I'd have to agree with that as well, because they are serving two different purposes when they're together. One is not in charge of the other and one is not correcting the other. It's not the way it works. We had some comments come in from the Planning board sent in from Deb Hext, Planning Board Chair. All five members had expressed that they were in favor of all the things that we've heard tonight from Deb Hext, Barb Muhlfelder and Steve Caruso. One did talk about the appeals process and would we be losing an appeals process. There is no appeal to the Planning Board. The ZBA doesn't appeal to the Planning Board. You're not losing that. There are two communities in New York State that have combined Boards and one of them is the Village of Ravena. It does work very successfully for the Village of Ravena. Is it the absolute answer? I don't know. Do I think it's a good idea to try? Absolutely. The mention of the seven-member Board, I'm not opposed to that whatsoever. We were trying to say a Board is generally only five instead of having one alternate let's have two. Because we really want people that are trained. Then they're coming all the time, whether they're voting or not, they're still involved. I know Deb and probably Danny too, they have asked their alternates for comments and they've really engaged them when they are having meetings. I'm not against a different configuration, it sounds like that was something that was very in favor

here. I do believe we have diversity on the Boards, even now. We have people from all sides of town. We have people who ran in elections but aren't sitting up here now, but both of them are serving on two different Boards. We want those opinions. We want people with different opinions. Those people are on the Boards and the people that are engaged monthly with us know that. There is something with the terms we'd have to work that out because Allyson Phillips described last time, seven Board members are seven-year terms.

Attorney Pratt: The terms are staggered and then if there's a new appointment or a reappointment, it's based on the number of Board members. If it's a five-member Board, it's five years. It's if it's a seven-member Board, it's seven years.

Trustee Fahrenkopf: Is that in law. It has to be that way? You couldn't do a seven-members and an alternate. Could you have two people each year for four-year terms?

Trustee Ganance: That was my question.

Attorney Pratt: I can look into that to see if that's something that could be altered based upon those provisions in the New York State Village Law.

Trustee Ganance: I just feel that I myself would probably feel better with a seven-member Board with two alternates.

Trustee Fahrenkopf: I took a bunch of notes down here. I don't need to get into everything. I think Mayor Dineen covered a lot of it. One of the things I did like was, Maurice, you had this analogy of a filter and I like that actually, partially because I think that, to me, that explains why one Board could do both filters. It's not, as the mayor mentioned, a check and a balance like one Board isn't the Supreme Court that's overturning one of the other Boards. It's not that kind of check and balance. They're doing two different things. The streamlining and the cost saving, I think those are kind of tangential to really what struck me as a reason to do this. For me, the thing I'm worried about is people who have volunteered their time, and we heard some of this from the current Planning Board members, that spends time getting trained, that signs up for however many years term it is, and then doesn't get to use their skills. Doesn't get to give their input. If that was me, I would be very frustrated and disillusioned and start to tune out. In my mind, and this is kind of how I pictured it when it was first brought up, was you could have one very trained, very active, very skilled Board that could look at both of these present Boards filters and be able to give that feedback. I agree, it's probably worth trying. I think a very well trained, very active, very skilled Board, and maybe it should be a bigger Board. I think I like the idea of seven-member Board. Hopefully it doesn't become crazy with too many people shouting at each other, but I think again, it's worth a try. I'd like to maybe look into that a little more.

Trustee Scally: I'm not opposed to the idea. I was on the Planning Board and we met quite frequently. The Planning Board had met so frequently and the Zoning Board had not. I feel that it's a nice compromise if we do move forward with this for a seven-member Board. I think that might be a good idea because there's enough ideas. We still have to follow what Zoning says to move forward something. Opinions can only go so far. I do agree that a seven-member might be a better, might be beneficial for the Village as a whole.

Mayor Dineen: I think all of us have said that that was something we'd be interested in going forward, but we are interested in trying a consolidation of sorts and seeing if it is something that might work better for the Village and for the people who serve on these Boards. Because this public hearing is based on the local law, that is outlined a particular way, we have to amend that local law appropriately and have a public hearing on the amendment of that law and then go forward from there.

Attorney Pratt: That would be my recommendation.

Trustee Fahrenkopf made a motion seconded by Trustee Ganance to approve holding a Public Hearing on April 5, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. on proposed Local Law No. 1 of 2022 to Abolish the Existing Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals and Create a New Zoning Board of Appeals for the Village of Altamont. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Fahrenkopf made a motion seconded by Trustee Ganance to approve of application from Samuel Novak, Guilderland, for Firefighter membership in the Altamont Fire Department, per request of Paul Miller, Chief. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Scally made a motion seconded by Trustee Fahrenkopf to approve appointment of Jaimee Motschmann to Deputy Registrar of Vital Statistics, per recommendation of Patty Blackwood, Village Clerk. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Fahrenkopf made a motion seconded by Trustee Ganance to approve holding Annual Organizational Meeting on Tuesday, April 5, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.  
**Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Scally made a motion seconded by Trustee Fahrenkopf to approve holding Budget Public Hearing prior to adoption on Tuesday, April 5, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.  
**Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Scally made a motion seconded by Trustee Ganance to approve of Board Minutes for February 1, 2022. **Roll Call: All in favor**

The Village Board of Trustees thanked Deborah Hext and Danny Ramirez for taking charge of each of the Boards and all they have done.

Trustee Ganance made a motion seconded by Trustee Scally to adjourn at 8:20 p.m.  
**All in favor**

Respectfully Submitted,

Patty Blackwood  
Clerk