

VILLAGE OF ALTAMONT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING

July 2, 2019

Mayor Kerry Dineen
Trustee Nicholas Fahrenkopf
Trustee Michelle Ganance
Trustee John Scally
Trustee Dean Whalen

Patty Blackwood, Clerk
Catherine Hasbrouck, Treasurer
Jeffrey Moller, Supt. of Public Works
Paul Miller, Altamont Fire Chief
Todd Pucci, Altamont Police Chief
John Hartzell, Legal Counsel

General Public: 23

7:03 p.m.

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

Mayor Dineen stated she wanted to give a quick thank you to Jack and Cindy Pollard. Earlier we heard about how they had donated a tree to Orsini Park to honor the seniors of our Village. They talked about it at a senior lunch about a month ago. Today was the dedication and the blessing of the tree in the park. Seniors had their regular Tuesday luncheon and then came over for dessert. Cindy put together a nice program and the Village will have to put it up on their website along with some pictures of the tree. Mayor Dineen thanked the Pollard's for including her on this and thanked all the people who came out to support them.

Todd Pucci, Chief Altamont Police Dept., stated he wanted to remind everyone to be safe out there on the roads during the holiday. The County will be having a DWI Sweep which the Altamont Police Department will be participating in. Chief Pucci stated the Altamont Fair is next month and hopefully it doesn't rain and we won't have the parking issues we had last year.

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

Jeffrey Moller, Supt. of Public Works, stated we're wrapping up our blacktop patching. For the past few weeks we have been spot patching side streets. We're going to back away from that for a month or two. We still have more to do but we're going to start on our sidewalk program. We have a couple of buildings at the wastewater plant that we have to have some roof repairs. We're getting quotes on that. We're going to be starting this project in the back expanding the parking lot. State Contractor Village normally uses gave a quote for Sunset Drive paving but they won't finish top it. We are back to square one. Need to contact other agencies because we want someone to come in and do the whole thing.

Trustee Whalen made a motion seconded by Trustee Scally to approve the Treasurer's report; Abstract #25, #2 and #3 and transfer of funds as submitted.

Roll Call: All in favor

Public Comment:

Tom Capuano, Brandle Road, stated I'd like to talk briefly about the Crounse house. I and the Historic Altamont Incorporated, we continue to consider the historic Crounse house

to be a very, very important historic asset for the village with a lot of potential. I know many people have been through that house and said it's not historically significant, but we have people, also experts including from the State Historic Preservation office, the preservation architects of Thaler Lacey from North Pearl Street, who have said just the opposite and that it is worth saving. That the timber structure in particular is original to the building and that there's a lot of woodwork inside that could be saved. Of course, you know, we've talked about this thing for a year and a half now. It's exactly a year and a half, since I came on board, to talk about it and I realized there's not a lot of interest. I have noticed that there hasn't been much interest from the board yet. Still, I'm addressing you because I'm just sure that if there were a spark of interest from the board, to take some kind of a preservation action towards the house, your interest could be a catalyst in our community. The only thing I can think of now, now that the grant idea is not possible, is this thing called the endangered properties intervention program loans. It's offered through this state wide nonprofit called NYS Preservation Society. I have spoken with them in particular Bill Schroeder who would be happy to come out if there was an invitation put out to him. He would come and talk about how we could obtain a loan. One thing we could do with a loan would be to spare the taxpayers the money that it will cost to demolish that building. To demolish that building is going to require asbestos abatement. I asked him point blank, could this loan be used for asbestos abatement and he said yes, definitely could be used for asbestos abatement. If we use the loan, let's just say \$50,000 to abate the asbestos, the asbestos now is gone. Now you, as co-owners with Guilderland, could offer that property up to another developer similar to the two developers we had interested during this last year and a half. They would buy the house without the asbestos and save themselves that \$50,000. They would be obliged under the terms of the restrictive covenant that was put in place by both municipalities at one point. They would be obliged to reconstruct the house and it would be back on the tax rolls. It would be a single-family dwelling that would still be there with a historic marker in front of it, like the other houses in Knowersville. We would keep that, the last vestige of the origins of Altamont, intact by preserving that house in Knowersville. There are so few buildings in Knowersville that attest to the origins of Altamont. It seems really important to preserve it, if at all possible. As long as it's still standing, and the architects are saying that the front part is structurally sound, I think it's worth looking into. However, if you decide to demolish it anyway, I would like you to know on behalf of the organization, I represent Historic Altamont Incorporated, that we would be very interested in partnering with you to maintain some sort of a monument, some sort of dedication to the important events that happened on that site, including the arrival of the 134th Volunteer Regiment from Schoharie in 1852-63 when Dr Crounse and his assistant tended to the soldiers on their way to the civil war. In other words, if your next step is, you're determined to demolish it, then at least consider inviting us to help. I mean, we could at least pull weeds. I've heard many people say that they would like to put a garden in there and do landscaping and make some kind of a memorial. Of course, you've got the Museum in the Streets which always needs tending to, and we're a historic organization, we'd like to assist in that. That's been our interest all along as a historic organization concerned with the community. My last request is if the house does come down and it's completely gone, of course you the village and the township would have a lot of options with that 2.8 acres. It is my sincere hope that before you take any steps in deciding what you would do with an empty parcel is that you would call out for public input on what you would do with that parcel if the house is gone. I think there'd be a lot of interest. Obviously, there are all kinds of things you have to do before you develop a piece of property. It might be interesting to know that when Jay Whitecloud toured that property last summer he found a stone that he said could very well be from a cemetery and we know that Dr Crounse had an African American assistant, that also was there that night that the Schoharie Regiment

came down and we also know that it was customary in these parts of Altamont and Guilderland that the hired people, the enslaved African Americans were buried sort of informally on property. It's very possible that we have much more than just a historic building and historic property we may have more than that there. Anyway, all these things are important to take into consideration. That's why I'm begging that if the house is demolished and initiatives are taken to do something with the property, that there will be public input like this and that it be well advertised.

Kristin Casey, Main Street, stated I too would like to make comments about the Crounse House. Before I do, I'd like to just comment on Tom. I've only recently gotten to know him when he came home from being away at a job at a university. Since he's been back, he's worked on the VanArenam barn. He's working with the Altamont Fair on their historical records. He's involved with ACT and he started Historic Altamont and he's a real asset and treasure for our community and I just wanted to thank him. One more option, once again, to save the village money to pay for the asbestos removal and as a result of being in a position to save the Crounse House building. As Tom asked, you think there is something some way that you could consider this grant. For those who may wonder, I just want to express once again why so many of us are so passionate about the Crounse House. For me it began around 2015 when Mayor Jim Gaughan asked me to pull together a group of people from the community in support of the building. Of course, the cost of the building and renovating it were pretty high. So, the village decided not to go further. Tom, however has restored our energy and our enthusiasm. We believe that Frederick Crounse is one of our founding fathers. Our persistence and drive come from a genuine and a deep-seated belief that Dr Crounse and his residence form a landmark and a pivotal point in Altamont's early history. This home is a real and physical length between old Altamont and new Altamont. Altamont, Knowersville of the early 1800 's and the new Altamont that was established in 1890. His property, his house is the link and that's why we're so passionate about it. Just think what it was like in 1830 and what it was like as a country doctor driving far and wide to the handful of settlements that at that time made up Knowersville. Just think about Knowersville when all the rest of Altamont wasn't here. Think of the civil war soldiers coming to that property and him taking care of them. They were injured. That property is in a way hallowed grounds for our community. Yes, it's an eyesore. Yes, it's still dilapidated. Yes, parts of it are condemned, but its bones are good. You have people that have told us who are historic preservationist. It's worth every effort we can expend to make something of this space of this building. It's our heritage. We want to honor Dr Crounse's presence for all the new people who bought old homes to renovate, who came to Altamont to renovate and preserve the future through the homes that they bought and for the families who bought newer homes but came here because of the historic character of this village. For those who say, we should not look to the past but focus on the future. I say, yes, I agree, but we should do both. We should work together to do both. I want us all to come together as the community we have been in the past who shares the love of our Altamont. This divided Altamont is upsetting and some of us have been a part of all that and I don't want that anymore. I want us to work together. I want us to work together to move to the future and preserve the past. And I really believe we can do both. This is why we started ACT over 15 years ago. Why we came together to preserve the train station for an accessible library. Why we celebrate Victorian holidays each year and why we created the comprehensive plan to show we could achieve all objectives, not just some at the same time. I'm just asking you to come together and really try and understand where this passion is coming from, but if not if you can't save it and you decide that it needs to be demolished, then could we have a community discussion about it. Could we work together to create a space you, Mayor Dineen, said that honors the historic nature of the property and at the same time enhances

the Museum in the Streets. On the wonderful Altamont Community Facebook site, which now has 900 members, an incredible community resource, everybody should participate in that, Mrs. Dineen stated that she believed it would become a green space, although I believe she felt the Museum in the Streets recognition was perhaps sufficient. I went by on the way here to read what it says in there about the Crounse House and it's small and I really believe we need to do something more. Ideas can come forward, like using the actual beams from the house and maybe creating a pergola there of some kind or using somehow the front entrance, that is still salvageable. First priority is to do the loan, but I want to thank all of you for your patience and particularly to that of Peter Barber and the Town and for your willingness to serve on these really tough issues. Historic Altamont looks forward to working with you and together finding the most significant and lasting tribute to one of our most distinguished community leaders.

Rich Perras, Bozenkill Road, stated I know I'm not a contractor. I've belonged to the Altamont Rescue Squad for thirty years. I'm still on the rescue squad. We offered to buy that property 15 to 20 years ago. We got turned down. If you drive by and look at that right now, that Crounse building is collapsing, the roof line is collapsing. The left front corner is collapsing. The windows are starting to offset. The whole thing is settling in the ground. I understand you want to save an old building, but it's not aesthetically pleasing. It is too far gone. What I would do is take the front foyer door entry, which is very nice looking, and the door and jack it up somehow to save that part and the rest of it demolish. There's really no saving it. It's sinking in the ground. You don't have to be an engineer to figure out that thing is long gone.

Barbara Muhfelder, Maple Avenue, stated I would like to start off by saying I have owned four historic houses, all dating in the 1800's. I live in a Victorian. I love old houses. When Mayor Gaughan initially started working on this, I was behind him 100%. I'm was very excited about it. But again, as the years passed and no action has been taken and Guilderland, I think, maybe has not been as responsive as they could be. I do feel that it needs to come down. However, I agree with Mr. Capuano. I think it would be wonderful if we could do something very special with the property and the idea of the wood for pergola, that would be great. I know so many people that have come to see me, they say what's going on with that house. We're ending up with a lot of empty buildings in Altamont and that's very sad. I do think that that Historic Altamont Organization's input should be welcome. I think, again, working together would be wonderful. I do feel it needs to come down.

Mayor Dineen stated for those of you who only came here in the last five or six years, I think it's great that the group Historic Altamont has formed to preserve things that are a part of our history in this area. I think what's missing is the work and the diligence that the Boards went through. Just over two years ago, the reason we voted at that time to take the building down is it was based on the community input we received that night, including former Mayor Gaughan and those that wanted to use the building and save the building. We had architects, engineers, and two historians. I know there can be different opinions from all sorts of people in these positions. I understand that. We extended it meeting after meeting and it was a committee, a joint committee from Guilderland and Altamont, that got together to research all the uses. What did we need in this area, what could it be used for? The research basically showed us there weren't the needs that we had first thought we would use the house for. Through all of that, and in the end, after a lot of community input we received that said please take it down, we can't financially keep this going as a village. We did all vote that evening to do so. Guilderland was behind us, eventually. They got to the same conclusion at one of their meetings. It might

have been within the next year. We were then approached by Mr. Capuano a year and a half ago or so. Trustee Fahrenkopf and I sat on meetings with the town going through these possibilities and giving timeline after timeline. Saying we'll wait to see how you get your information together, get your research together with the first gentleman that was going to help. All of a sudden, he was gone. I was surprised by that because I didn't know that right way. Then we had another gentleman who was working with one of the building inspectors. He was a local gentleman who restores historic houses. He came to the reality that the village came to, three years earlier, that it was not financially feasible to do what he was hoping to do. We knew he had the skills to do that. But he walked away for the same reason and that was after us extending the timeline several times when asked to. Then last November, I received an email from Historic Altamont telling me they were no longer interested in the property. Trustee Fahrenkopf and I started meeting in February with the town again. We had our superintendent of public works go out and get some pricing on taking down the house. It has always been our intent to keep a beautiful green space. We've mentioned many times a gazebo, a pergola, something doing just what Mr. Perras said. Using the door or using another part would be a wonderful use to make that a great space and honor Museum in the Streets as well as the house itself. That has never been a question. We're not looking to turn the parcel over and sell it. I don't think that ever came up. We're sorry that the grant didn't work out, but in all honesty, at our meeting in June, was when we were approached about a grant. We meet once a month. We're not the same as the town. We didn't have the information. It came in the end of that week. The board picked it up the following week. Twelve or thirteen days is not enough time for us to do our due diligence to read this. And we didn't have a meeting to adopt something formally. Guilderland, they adopted it. I was there for the beginning of their meeting, had to watch the rest of it on TV, but there wasn't even a discussion on it. They adopted it with, as Michelle you pointed out to me, in the wrong amount of the grant. It was the wrong thing. We were hoping to hear it tonight and I understand that you couldn't get everything together to do that for the grant. But that was us giving another chance for that. So, that's where we're at with this, we have budgeted for that house to make sure we had monies to take it down. At this point, we'll have to talk with the town again, Nick and I, and get back to the trustees on the outcome as far as moving forward. I can't speak to a loan or anything like that, but again, what's the end goal? The village and town own the house that we both said we can't fiscally afford. Guilderland said they do not want another historic property. We know we can't afford a house but we would like the site because we feel it's very important. So, I think that's the compromise, in my opinion. We can have this discussion later on after we talk to the town. Obviously if the house comes down, we would take anyone's input on the site because I think we're all on the same page as far as that goes. It is a huge safety issue and it has been for so long. If you're really familiar with that community site, I think you've seen the sentiment on there. We've heard about it more often because again, they don't associate that property with Guilderland, it's the entrance to Altamont even though it's technically in the town. We will set up a meeting with the town and then report back to you guys by our next meeting and see where we're at with the town and see what their feelings are at the time.

Trustee Fahrenkopf made a motion seconded by Trustee Whalen to approve the following resolution: Whereas, as Local Law number 1 of 2019 amends the village code to create zoning regulations for the Bozenkill Road Annexation which are the same regulations in effect on those lands prior to annexation by the Village; and Whereas, as a consequence of no change in the regulations that govern the annexed lands, the Village does not reasonably anticipate a change in the use or development of those lands as a consequence of the zoning amendments; and Whereas, because no change in use or development of those lands is reasonably anticipated, no significant environmental impact is expected; and Whereas, the Village Board has completed parts 2 and 3 of the long EAF form for the proposed zoning amendments and has not identified any moderate to large environmental impact; Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Village Board hereby determines to issue a negative declaration in accordance with section 617 of the Environmental Conservation Law. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Ganance made a motion seconded by Trustee Whalen to approve Local Law No. 1 of 2019 of the Village of Altamont Amending the Zoning Law to Incorporate the Bozenkill Annexation. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Fahrenkopf made a motion seconded by Trustee Ganance to approve Resolution Determining the SEQRA Classification, Designating Lead Agency, Referring Application to the Village Planning Board and the County of Albany Planning Board, and Setting a Public Hearing on Local Law No. 2 of 2019 Relating to the Rezoning of 107-109 Helderberg Avenue. **Roll Call: All in favor**
Copy of Resolution included with Official Minutes.

Trustee Scally made a motion seconded by Trustee Fahrenkopf to approve of contract for Village of Altamont's renewal of liability insurance of \$50,097 from Marshall and Sterling. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Fahrenkopf made a motion seconded by Trustee Whalen to decline purchase of terrorism insurance of \$668 from Marshall and Sterling. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Fahrenkopf made a motion seconded by Trustee Ganance to decline purchase of Data Compromise and Cyber Coverage insurance of \$1,033 from Marshall and Sterling. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Ganance made a motion seconded by Trustee Whalen to approve of contract for Village of Altamont's renewal of Workers' Compensation Insurance with NYS Municipal Workers' Compensation Alliance for annual premium of \$29,729. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Scally made a motion seconded by Trustee Whalen to approve of hiring Ronald Clough, Altamont, as part-time senior van driver, at a salary of \$13.40 per hour. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Whalen made a motion seconded by Trustee Ganance to approve appointment of Ginger Hannah to Subregistrar of Vital Statistics in absence of Patty Blackwood, Registrar, and Catherine Hasbrouck, Deputy Registrar, per recommendation of Patty Blackwood, Village Clerk. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Scally made a motion seconded by Trustee Whalen to approve acknowledgement of required annual audit of Altamont Justice Hout's records that was conducted on June 19th by John Scally, Trustee, and Catherine Hasbrouck, Treasurer.

Roll Call: All in favor

Trustee Fahrenkopf made a motion seconded by Trustee Whalen to approve acknowledgement of required annual audit of Altamont Justice Greene's records that was conducted on June 26th by Michelle Ganance, Trustee, and Catherine Hasbrouck, Treasurer. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Scally made a motion seconded by Trustee Ganance to approve resignation of Wayde Bush, with regret, Planning Board member, effective June 21, 2019.

Roll Call: All in favor

Trustee Fahrenkopf made a motion seconded by Trustee Whalen to approve resolution to affirm Mayor Dineen's appointment of Connie Rue to Planning Board member. Position was vacated by Wayde Bush and has a five-year term which expires on March 31, 2020.

Roll Call: All in favor

Trustee Scally made a motion seconded by Trustee Fahrenkopf to approve Altamont Fire Department's and Altamont Police Department's participation in National Night Out at Tawasentha Park on August 6th. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Fahrenkopf made a motion seconded by Trustee Whalen to approve of Altamont Fire Department to hold the following events: 9/11 Memorial Service on September 11th; and Comedy Night on November 2nd. **Roll Call: All in favor**

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

Trustee Whalen made a motion seconded by Trustee Scally to approve of Board Minutes for June 4, 2019. **Roll Call: All in favor**

Trustee Fahrenkopf made a motion seconded by Trustee Ganance to adjourn at 7:59 p.m. **All in favor**

Respectfully Submitted,

Patty Blackwood
Clerk