

The regular meeting of the Mechanicville City Council was held at the Senior Citizen's Center, 178 North Main Street, Mechanicville, NY on Wednesday, February 4, 2015. Mayor Baker opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call:	Mayor Baker	- present
	Comm. Seber	- present
	Comm. Gilheany	- absent
	Comm. Higgins	- present
	Comm. Hipwell	- present

Joseph Dugan led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Comm. Hipwell, seconded by Comm. Seber, moved that the minutes of the regular meeting of January 21, 2015, be accepted as prepared. Roll Call: Affirmative – all. Negative – none.

Comm. Seber said as they spoke about at the last meeting, the council is considering doing a re-evaluation of the properties here in Mechanicville. We haven't had a re-val in over 20 years. Our equalization rate is at 75%. We are in the process of gathering information and hopefully in the next month or so we will make a decision of whether we will move forward with this or not. They have asked Beth Cervenak from the NYS Office of Real Property Tax Services to do an outline of the process and just give everyone a general idea of how you move through this process if and when they decide to move forward with the re-val. This won't be a q and a; they will have plenty of opportunity if they decide to move forward with this. Said Beth was just going to layout the time frame and everything involved.

Beth Cervenak said she was from the NYS Office of Real Property Tax Services which is a division of Taxation and Finance and she has been with real property for 23 years and she is a liaison for 4 counties, Saratoga, Rensselaer, Herkimer and Schenectady County. Said one of her main job functions is to support municipality's assessors who want to embark on a re-assessment project. The computer software that the assessor uses is their system and they help her learn and maintain the system and any other kind of support function. She gave the council members a packet of information. Said there is periodic information out on their website concerning re-assessments and what it involves. Said she left a handful of pamphlets with the council that has frequently asked questions on assessment. Talked about where they can find information and links on re-assessment. Talked about other information she gave the council including a more detailed schedule of tasks, a project timetable, what events need to occur and what time frames so that they have more of an understanding of chronic logically what happens during the process. Said it culminates with the final assessment roll which would be for the 2016 assessment roll. Said she is available to the council, the assessor, school officials and anyone who has any concerns. Said real property law dictates that assessments are to be set at a uniform percentage of their full value. Assessments are updated by doing a city wide review of all the assessments on the role using the principals that are in place that will be market incoming cost to re-establish assessments. Said the goal is that everyone pays their fair share in the property tax. Talked about the Star Program and that the assessor is required to state their level of assessment for 1 percentage of full value they're assessing properties at. Said increasing assessments to full value

is not designed to raise more revenue, revenues are set by budgets for the taxing jurisdictions every year. The purpose of a re-assessment is to get everybody at their equitable level of assessment, not to raise more monies, those are driven by the budgets. Said currently for 2014 Mechanicville is at about 75. Said the new analysis numbers for 2015 and they found that there has been an appreciation in the market in Mechanicville by about 5 percentage points which means the 75 would more than likely go down to 70% level. Said the purpose of the re-assessment would be to bring everyone up to 100% equitable at their full market value. Talked more about assessments. Said the equity is still pretty good in the city but as time goes on that uniformity is going to widen. Some of the benefits of re-assessment improves the equity within the city; it increases taxpayer understanding and confidence in the real property system. Said when they haven't looked at or analyzed assessments in 20 years, the taxpayers aren't going to be confident that everybody is equal so they encourage at the state periodic re-assessment. Another benefit is that Rachel does her project, everything comes out great, the state is looking along with her and analyzing market with her, she puts on the new assessment roll at full value. Said they can use her roll as their measure of what they think the market is. By the monitoring process and working along with her they don't have to do their own independent measure of value in the city, they accept her assessment roll as the full value standard, that translates to an equalization rate of 100%. Said there is a state aid program whereby they go over the process and they can give reimbursement monies to the city on a per parcel basis to help defray the cost of the re-assessment. She will help Rachel with that. What a re-assessment does not do is generate additional revenue; it just makes everyone equitable in paying their fair share. Talked about other municipalities and how they assess at different levels. Said it's not going to compensate any taxpayers who are over assessed before the re-evaluation, it's a going forward equity program. Said there is a schedule, there are things that have to happen in a timely fashion which are outlined in the handout. Talked about the key elements. Once the data on every property has been collected and verified, Rachel will send out a mailer to every property owner saying this is what we have on file for your property, asking the taxpayer to review it and send it back with any corrections or come in and talk to Rachel about the inventory. Said this is a data driven process, the success of the project is only going to be as good as the data is on the file so they want the taxpayers to review it. After that has been done they go into the re-evaluation stage. Talked about what that will consist of. Toward the end which will be January, February, March of 2016 all of the preliminary new assessments are put on file. They should have a meeting to discuss because there will be a mailing of those two preliminary assessments mailed to each property owner explaining that they an opportunity to come in, schedule an appointment and review their new assessment. If the taxpayer has evidence that the value should be something different that would be the time to come in and talk with the assessor and get those things ironed out because once that informal meeting review takes place, Rachel is charged with establishing the tentative assessment roll and then you are into the grievance process. Then you have an informal stage, then you have the formal stage of grievance and if you are still not satisfied with your new assessment you go before the Board of Assessment Review and then if you're not satisfied again, you go before a hearing officer. There are many opportunities for the taxpayers to be part of this process and to get the best full market value on their property.

Comm. Seber said he's been asked this question, if a data collector comes to your home do you need to let them inside.

Ms. Cervenak said you do not.

Comm. Seber asked if it would affect their assessment.

Ms. Cervenak said it could. She and her collection staff, at the very least they have to visit every property, if they are not allowed into the building they have to do their best from the road. If they are not let into the property, they might not know the condition of the property, it would be good to have an interior inspection, it's not very involved, it's just trying to get the number of bedrooms, baths and condition. If she can't discern what those qualities are, she will have to make her best guess. More discussion was held on home furnishings.

Mayor Baker said if they think there is something wrong with the house because they are not letting them in, the Building Inspector can follow up because he has to.

Ms. Cervenak said she can't speak to what a Building Inspector does. More discussion was held on this.

Comm. Seber thanked her and said it was very informative.

Mayor Baker said they now have representatives from Clifton Park/Halfmoon Rescue Squad.

Larry Whalen, Past President of the John Ahearn Rescue Squad, was there to try to offset some of the negative talks that are going on around the city about the rescue squad's ability to answer calls to the building. They as the ex-board of the John Ahearn Rescue Squad are the ones that got them involved in this. They feel that at the time it was the best venue and they still feel that way. Clifton Park answers about 500 calls a month while John Ahearn only answers 1,200 a year. The average time for a call is 5.7 minutes, that's well below the national average. One of the things that they failed to recognize was they only had one squad on a day so if the ambulance was out to a hospital in Albany, Troy or Schenectady they had to rely on mutual aid but with Clifton Park, they have 5 or 6 ambulances, they have a system that was explained to the council months ago they automatically rotate it into another area so that it's close by. Yes they are down on the Waterford Road, something he knows they want to get out of and have their own building here in the city; it's something we want also. Said some things they have done for us in the city is they have sponsored babysitting classes at the library, they have donated defibs for the library and have trained the personnel at the library how to use them. The building is something that took them all by surprise; they went through it many times then found out that it had asbestos in it. The asbestos process has been long and tedious. They hired a contractor and then hired a second contractor to watch the first contractor as set down by law. He wants the people to know that the rescue squad is here to stay and they are professionals in every sense of the word. They have just taken on board a new person who will explain some of her duties to you. Just wants to let the people know that read some of these articles in the papers that they are not always 100% true and he is concerned about the people that need to rely on the ambulance have concerns that this will not happen but it will happen.

Eric Hansen, Director of Administration of Clifton Park/Halfmoon Emergency Corp., he is very happy to report that the paperwork that is necessary for the asbestos abatement with the building will be filed this week, it has to go to the Department of Labor for a 10 day waiting period for public comment and if no one comments they should be starting construction in the next couple of weeks. Talked about finances and how the building is in an excellent location. The asbestos should be taken care of in 2 or 3 weeks then they will be able to go full speed with construction. They are very excited to get the ball rolling. They have a new Director of Community Development Leah Ferrone.

Ms. Ferrone said her role is to serve as Ambassador to the organization in the community. Said this is a special community for her as her grandparents, Mary and Joe Ruggiero, lived here for many years and she lives here with her husband Joe. She has an open door policy with any questions about organization or service that they provide. This organization does incredible work. Said she is learning a lot about EMS abilities and this organization does more incredible work than you can imagine, especially for the community. Said they will see a lot more of them.

Comm. Hipwell said Clifton Park Ambulance, he thinks they are doing an outstanding job. When they first took over he timed them, he doesn't have to time them anymore, they are in the city 5 minutes or less. The other day there was an ambulance call, they sent two. He personally wanted to thank them for doing an outstanding job.

Mayor Baker wanted to thank Dave and his crew for the great job they did during this last snowstorm. Said he's had a lot of comment from people about the condition of our streets. Said 40 tickets were issued and 25 cars were towed. He and Dave talked, there have been issues in the past where people's cars have been towed and they have gone to tow truck operators business after hours and taken their vehicles back. Said they can still follow up and get the tickets paid and get the tow truck operator paid. He and Dave have talked about a controlled area where they can have the vehicles towed to from now on that belongs to the city. They haven't nailed it down yet but believe they will be able to do that soon. So if your car is towed it will be towed to city property, it will be locked behind a fence and you won't get it until you pay your tow job and your ticket. They also had issues during this last snowstorm, people aren't happy, he's sorry but if you choose to live in the city you have to understand there are only a certain amount of parking spots, they have to plow snow. They had an issue with a city resident that when the plow truck was going by his home, he wasn't happy with the truck but for whatever reason it was he took a shovel to the window of the truck and the driver of the truck was cut with flying glass, we are not going to put up with that kind of nonsense, you need to grow up. He's been arrested for assault and 3<sup>rd</sup>, for reckless endangerment and criminal mischief. Said they don't have the final say, the courts do. After the incident there was a guy chased down the street with a shovel. Said they are doing the best they can, he's sorry if they are unhappy with how they are doing it, they are doing it the best they can.

Comm. Higgins said the trouble is people are shoveling out their driveways before the storm is done, they have to keep going around and plowing them back in that's where everyone is upset and there's nothing they can do about it.

Mayor Baker said he tells people to wait until they are done plowing, then do the end of their driveway. More discussion was held on this.

Mayor Baker said he is looking at maybe changing the red tag system they have in place. If they give them a red tag today there is no fine but he wants to change it that the second time they give them one a fine goes along with it.

Attorney Serbalik said it can be done by ordinance.

Mayor Baker said they believe as of today that they have 4 bridge projects going on this year. They have Main Street, Frances Street and the Overpass will be done. They believe they will be able to leave ½ of the Overpass open and do half at a time because of the width of the medium between it. The 4<sup>th</sup> one is the Round Lake Avenue Bridge up by DiSiena's. That is a county project but it's still within our limits. Believes Central Avenue will remain open, they should manage it all right. They will meet with their engineers to work it out.

Comm. Seber said on the foreclosure process they don't have 12 properties any more, they are down to 9 and they have until May 15<sup>th</sup> before they do foreclosure.

Comm. Higgins said their dump truck is in and they should have it next Tuesday.

Comm. Hipwell said the city's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is coming up this year. On May 8<sup>th</sup> they will hold a dinner at the Ugly Rooster and tickets will be \$20.00 if bought ahead but \$25.00 at the door. They are still looking for ads; call his office to put an ad in. Said the 4 Chaplains is Saturday at 11:00 a.m.

Attorney Serbalik asked for an executive session for litigation against the police department. Discussion was held on DEC.

Mayor Baker said the Zoning Board of Appeals/Planning Board will hold a meeting next Tuesday night at the DPW building with NYSEG on their plans for Central Avenue. Said the city engineer should be at that meeting. Opened up the meeting to public comment.

Dave Hicks, 1<sup>st</sup> Street complained about 1<sup>st</sup> Street and cars and plowing. Asked who Roger Jackson was in a resolution.

Comm. Seber said he is a private citizen.

Kim Dunn, 250 South Main Street, gave kudos to the Clifton Park/Halfmoon Ambulance for the work they are doing.

Dana Watt asked what time the meeting was next week.

Mayor Baker said at 7:00 p.m. at the DPW Building.

Mike Mallory said he didn't have any complaint, DPW did a good job.

Comm. Seber read RES. NO. 22-15 AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE STILLWATER AREA COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTER FOR AN ELDER CARE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM AVAILABLE TO THE SENIOR RESIDENTS OF MECHANICVILLE FOR AN ANNUAL SUM OF \$7,000.00

Moved by Mayor Baker, seconded by Comm. Hipwell. Roll Call: Affirmative – all.  
Negative – none.

Comm. Seber read RES. NO. 23-15 AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH THE MECHANICVILLE AREA COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTER, INC. FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES TO THE RESIDENTS OF THE CITY OF MECHANICVILLE ON A QUARTERLY BASIS FOR THE SUM OF \$2,500.00

Moved by Comm. Seber, seconded by Comm. Higgins. Roll Call: Affirmative – all.  
Negative – none.

Comm. Seber read RES. NO. 24-25 AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO SIGN ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO RETAIN CHA ASSOCIATES, 3 WINNERS CIRCLE, ALBANY, NY AS THE CITY'S ENGINEERING FIRM FOR THE SARATOGA AVENUE (RT. 67) BRIDGE PROJECT

Moved by Mayor Baker, seconded by Comm. Higgins. Roll Call: Affirmative – all.  
Negative – none.

Comm. Seber said they passed 2 resolutions last year to do a pre-application to get funding for the reservoir. This resolution is a combination of the two resolutions to make DEC happy.

Comm. Seber read RES. NO. 25-15 AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO SIGN ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY FOR THE APPLICATIONS FOR USDA AND/OR EFC FUNDING

Moved by Comm. Seber, seconded by Comm. Higgins. Roll Call: Affirmative – all.  
Negative – none.

Comm. Seber read RES. NO. 26-15 APPROVING LOAN TO ROGER JACKSON FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO REAL PROPERTY AND AUTHORIZING THE COMM. OF ACCOUNTS TO ISSUE CHECKS FROM THE LOAN PROCEEDS

Comm. Seber said we get reimbursed for our services. Said \$18,400 comes to city which part of it pays Dave, John Holland and Gina's salary.

Moved by Comm. Higgins, seconded by Mayor Baker. Roll Call: Affirmative – all. Negative – none.

Comm. Seber read RES. NO. 27-15 PAYROLL AND VOUCHERS

Moved by Comm. Higgins, seconded by Comm. Hipwell. Roll Call: Affirmative – all. Negative – none.

No new business.

Mayor Baker said back in August he sent a letter to Congressman Tonko relative to railroad because they were concerned about the Dutch Cap and followed up with it and it was inspected in November and they found no problems.

Comm. Higgins, seconded by Comm. Hipwell moved that the meeting be closed to go into executive session on litigation at 8:10 p.m. Roll call: Affirmative – all. Negative – none.

Comm. Hipwell, seconded by Comm. Higgins, moved that the executive session be closed at 8:45 p.m. to re-open regular meeting. Roll Call: Affirmative – all. Negative – none.

Mayor Baker, seconded by Comm. Seber, moved that the regular meeting be adjourned at 8:47 p.m. Roll Call: Affirmative – all. Negative – none.