

**Village Of Chaumont**  
**Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Trustees**  
**June 20, 2023**

**Location of Meeting:**

Village Office  
12175 State Route 12E  
Chaumont, New York 13622

**Present at Meeting:** Val Rust, Jim Morrow, Jose Sosa, Mike Nichols, Dori-Ann Froelich, Erin Fulton, Karen Fitzgerald, Amy Williams, Terry Countryman, and Will Lipczynski

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Chaumont was called to order at 6:30 PM on June 20, 2023.

**I. Privilege of the Floor**

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance. Amy Williams attended and lodged a formal complaint regarding the ongoing Property Maintenance Code violation at 12234 NYS Route 12E, which is across the street from her personal residence and adjacent to her business, Wise Guys Ristorante. She explained that customers ask her on a daily basis why nothing is being done to rectify the situation. Millions of dollars have been put into beautifying the property, just to have the property owner at 12234 NYS Route 12E make a mockery of village law and everything that has been accomplished. According to Mrs. Williams, the property owner harasses customers who park on the street, and something must be done.

Mayor Rust explained that the Village Board and ZEO are doing what they can, in accordance with village law, that they are currently in the process of beefing up the property maintenance code – with fines more heavily placed on violations and unpaid fines relieved onto property taxes. She explained the process of documentation, notices of violations, deadlines and fines. Amy explained her frustration that you simply do not see this in the villages of Clayton or Sackets Harbor. Mayor Rust addressed the accusation of the property owner harassing customers in the street, and encouraged Amy to contact law enforcement when that happens. NYS Route 12E is a state highway, and vehicles are permitted to park there. She asked Amy to give the board one month, in which they will be able to show documentation and fines. Amy shared her appreciation for what the board is trying to accomplish.

Town of Lyme Supervisor Terry Countryman stopped by for privilege of the floor to ask the board's opinion on live streaming the town and village joint fire district meeting on July 11th, as he has had various resident requests. The board agreed it was an open meeting and they had no problem with that, and Fire Chief Will Lipczynski said he would run it by their attorney, Brad Pinsky.

Mayor Rust asked Supervisor Countryman about possible use of the current municipal building for village offices after the Town of Lyme offices move to the new municipal building outside village limits. She expressed board discomfort with committing to the new building without any financial agreement given by the town. Supervisor Countryman said he'd envisioned this building returning to the tax roll as a hotel, or some kind of manufacturing plant.

Will Lipczynski attended the board meeting as a follow-up to the volunteer fire department's proposal on May 31st to become their own fire district. It was explained to the trustees who were unable to

attend the meeting last month that fire districts are being formed everywhere due to the increasing price of fire equipment, trucks, and high labor rates. Villages and towns simply cannot contain the soaring costs, and fundraising is becoming a burdensome and overwhelming task. Many volunteer firefighters are not only giving their free time to emergency situations, but extensive training – and then trying to commit to fundraising as well. This contributes to a loss of volunteers, which in turn affects fundraising even more. Old, antiquated equipment due to lack of funds is a real safety concern. This could all be addressed by the creation of a joint fire district. A fire district would have 3-7 commissioners who are elected to make all the decisions (run the district) and create a budget for the fire department. They are essentially the “board.” These are unpaid positions and cannot be held by a fire chief. Fire districts can increase taxes, can be served notices of claim, have to submit to FOIL, must complete an Annual Financial Report with the comptroller, can be audited, etc. They are under the same regulations as a municipality where everything is open to the public. There are public hearings for agenda items such as budget approval, and elections for positions such as commissioner. This does not apply to positions of secretary and treasurer, as those positions are usually appointed and paid. No vote of the public is required to form a fire district, but a public hearing would be held before the town and village board make their final determination. In the May 31st meeting it was determined that villages are required to approve all VFD memberships. Without it, members may not be covered under fire department insurance in case of severe injury or death. Due to this, Chief Lipczynski supplied a membership roster which was approved by Deputy Mayor Jim Morrow and seconded by Trustee Dori Froelich. All in favor.

Clerk Fulton shared an email in which the Village of Chaumont liability insurance agent shared that they do not believe it is village responsibility to cover the fire department/provide the firefighters’ insurance. They did recommend we reach out to the village attorney regarding Fire Department Law. The fire department’s attorney, Brad Pinsky, believes it is village responsibility. Currently, the Chaumont Vol Fire Dept. Inc. holds its own plan and pays its own premiums – at the tune of about \$14,000 for accident/death/cancer and \$20,000 for building/vehicle/liability annually, according to Chief Lipczynski. They are self-insured through Jefferson County for workers’ comp.

## **II. DPW Update**

Clerk Fulton brought up a resident request to eliminate the recyclable sorting policy. After discussion, the board agreed that without a separator (as other municipalities have) it would be too time consuming for our two DPW laborers to sort every single residents’ recyclables. As it is, it takes almost a full day to maintain this assignment with residents currently sorting their own. The policy will remain unchanged.

Clerk Fulton talked with attorney John Mancini at NYCOM regarding Joan O’Brien’s concerns with DPW snowplows and recycling turning around in her driveway. Mr. Mancini cited eminent domain due to the safety of our laborers and the unreasonable request of having them back out. After studying maps of both Madison and Mill streets, the board determined for the safety of our laborers and walking school children, the village vehicles will not backing out up the road. Our DPW Superintendent will determine the best course of action, will ask Mrs. O’Brien’s permission, and will be committed to return her property to its previous condition each spring – on both Madison and Mill. Mayor Rust will send policies she found from other villages which designates a similar course of action.

## **III. Motion to Approve Abstract #1 of 2023/2024**

Trustee Nichols made a motion to approve Abstract #1 of 2023/2024 and Trustee Sosa seconded the motion.



## VII. Old Business

The Board of Trustees wishes to move forward with adopting a local law regarding Prior Written Notice. Clerk Fulton will reach out to our attorney, Jim Burrows, to draft this law and start the process.

## VIII. New Business

There was no new business on the agenda.

## IX. Correspondence

Clerk Fulton presented monthly correspondence.

- The Village of Chaumont Local Law 1 2023 “Short-Term Rental Unit” was filed on 5/09/2023
- James Millington submitted the Uniform Code Administration and Enforcement Report for Jan 1, 2021 – Dec 31, 2021
- Unemployment Insurance Notice of Potential Charges with a \$0.00 claim
- Notice from Storino Geomatics that they were retained to perform a property survey on a parcel that adjoins the WWTP (61.42-2-18.3)
- Patricia Reome wrote a thank you to Allen Strasser on behalf of the Village of Chaumont
- Invitation to the 55<sup>th</sup> annual Cape Vincent French Festival on July 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>
- NYMIR Cyber Liability coverage information
- Notice of municipal insurance renewal on 10/15/2023
- NYMIR notice requiring installation and consistent use of Master Battery Disconnect Switches
- A letter from David Forbes to Kenneth Bibbins (NYSDOT) regarding the bridge project
- A letter of reply from Kenneth Bibbins to David Forbes
- A memorandum from DANC requesting to pay for the Town of Lyme water main break repair with capital reserves
- Excellus notice of proposed premium rate change (12.10%)
- UB Max will not be retiring this year, but will increase approximately 9% by the next renewal
- Peter Baynes resignation from NYCOM and selection of Barbara Van Epps as Executive Director starting September 1, 2023

## X. Resolution #26 of the 2022-2023 Organizational Year

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Village Board of the Village of Chaumont and Town Board of the Town of Lyme will hold a joint meeting on the 11th day of July, 2023 at the Chaumont Fire Department, 11385 NY-12E, Chaumont, NY at 6:30 PM to consider the formation of said joint fire district, and for such other and further action on the part of said Boards with relation thereto as may be authorized and prescribed by law.

<b>VOTING:</b>	<b>Ayes</b> 5	<b>Nays</b>	0
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The roll call vote was:	Valerie Rust, Mayor	YES
	James Morrow, Deputy Mayor	YES

Michael Nichols, Trustee	YES
Dori-Ann Froelich, Trustee	YES
Jose Sosa, Trustee	YES

**RESOLUTION NO. 26 ADOPTED.**

**XI. Resolution #27 of the 2022-2023 Organizational Year**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Village of Chaumont Board of Trustees will accept the amendment from James Burrows of the law firm Kendall, Walton, and Burrows for an increase of \$1,000.00 to his contract agreement for the Village of Chaumont River Crossing Project. This increase from \$14,000.00 to \$15,000.00 will cover anticipated easement work associated with additional waterline improvements on Church Street.

**VOTING:**                                      **Ayes**    4                                      **Nays**                                      1

The roll call vote was:	Valerie Rust, Mayor	YES
	James Morrow, Deputy Mayor	NO
	Michael Nichols, Trustee	YES
	Dori-Ann Froelich, Trustee	YES
	Jose Sosa, Trustee	YES

**RESOLUTION NO. 27 ADOPTED.**

**XII. Resolution #28 of the 2022-2023 Organizational Year**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Village of Chaumont Board of Trustees will increase DPW laborer Trevor Weston’s hourly rate to \$15.86/hour as an evaluation increase according to the personnel policy. Trevor completed his first year of village service, and in accordance with the policy, received a highly satisfactory evaluation to receive his 1st year service rate increase, which went into effect on February 7th, 2023.

**VOTING:**                                      **Ayes**    5                                      **Nays**                                      0

The roll call vote was:	Valerie Rust, Mayor	YES
	James Morrow, Deputy Mayor	YES
	Michael Nichols, Trustee	YES
	Dori-Ann Froelich, Trustee	YES
	Jose Sosa, Trustee	YES

**RESOLUTION NO. 28 ADOPTED.**

**XIII. Mayor’s Report/Committee Reports**

Trustee Froelich had no committee report to share as the Village Planning Board meeting was canceled this month.

Deputy Mayor Morrow and Trustee Sosa shared youth commission updates, summer rec staff approvals, the Town of Lyme's hiring of a landscaper for the sports fields, and the upcoming Lyme Community Night with the Watertown Rapids on June 30th.

Trustee Nichols gave a report on the village beach, focusing on lack of swing installation, necessary painting, junk under lifeguard station, and holes throughout property. All tools must be returned to shed. The village should consider a joint fence repair at the beach and Bicentennial Park with the Town of Lyme. Grills need to be cleaned, leaves blown out of fence area, and weeds whacked. Sheds should be wiped and gazebo painted. Although the benches look good, Memorial Park must be cleaned. He also mentioned the light at Memorial Park being on consistently. Limbs over crosswalk signs must be trimmed back. Clerk Fulton agreed to share this list with the DPW laborers.

Mayor Rust designated Deputy Clerk Fitzgerald to be the secondary bank statement audit individual for Treasurer Fulton, signing off on statements monthly. She updated the VBT on the status of our Outside Water Users on Hart Road, explaining we may possibly need to obtain an easement from Academy Street to the school parcel to cover our water line on the Nichols Trust private property within the village. The Nichols family believes the easement should be secured from Academy Street to the village line, but this has been sent to the village attorney for clarification. Deputy Mayor Morrow questioned if the users on Hart Road are considered a Town of Lyme water district, and Mayor Rust said she believes it had been approved as an extension of District #1 in the 1990s. She reached out to Bob Okie regarding our tennis courts and asked him to remove the Village of Chaumont from his schedule for this year as the committee continues to research the best way to move forward. Greg Ingerson continues to work on our outstanding balance with Walker Process Equipment. Victor Ciaccia working on securing decommissioning bond with Convergent for the Village of Chaumont.

The Property Maintenance Code was discussed at length. It was determined that it must be completely rewritten, approved by attorney Jim Burrows, and once again put before the public with a hearing. Revisiting the complaint earlier in the evening, it was decided that a new letter must be written specifying violations and giving a deadline to resolve said violations. This must be sent certified, registered mail with a return receipt requested. This notice of violation/formal notice must dictate fine schedule, as well. Each week it must be documented with another letter, and a fine if not corrected. At the end of the month, we will pursue civil proceedings with an appearance ticket. Clerk Fulton agreed to get the ball rolling on this and discuss with both Jim Millington and Richard Ingerson.

#### **XIV. Motion to Adjourn Meeting**

Deputy Mayor Morrow made a motion to adjourn at 9:37 PM, which was seconded by Trustee Sosa.

Respectfully Submitted

*Erin Fulton*

Erin Fulton  
Village Clerk/Treasurer