

A regular meeting of the Town Board of Thurston, County of Steuben, and the State of New York was held at the Town Hall, 7578 County Route 333 on the 12th day of November 2025.

Present: Town Supervisor: Michael Volino
Town Council: Daniel Gee, Holly Chase, Noel Sylvester, Jennifer Hargrave
Highway Superintendent: Ben Smith (Zoom)
Code Enforcement Officer: Nick Nolton
Assessor: Diana Dixon
Fire Department Secretary: Desiree Fisk

Visitors: Marge Taft, Alan Crooker, Dolores Crooker, Tim Hargrave, Lisa Hargrave, Sheree Gauss, Jeff Sweeney, Samuel Dick, Brandi Smith

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 p.m.

Insurance Renewal: Kayla Wagner was present from the Sprague Agency to present the new insurance policy for 2026. She reviewed the policy with the board and said there would be a slight decrease in the premium due to lowering the umbrella amount by four million. It was also pointed out that if an employee uses their personal vehicle on town business, their personal policy would kick in first, then the town policy if needed.

Public Comment:

- Samuel Dick asked when the potholes in Smith Road would be filled as they are very deep. Michael said he would pass the information along to Ben Smith, Highway Superintendent. Sam also noted he was not happy with the Dog Control in Thurston as there have been neighboring dogs running loose as well as chasing deer and this problem is not being taken care of. Tickets are being issued but the problem continues.
- Jeff Sweeney said a short while ago a large tree came down on Knowles Road and he called Ben Smith to ask to have it removed and was told he did not have time. It laid there for five days and hindered the fire department when they came to fight a fire at his son's house.
- Tim Hargrave commended the Board on passing a resolution supporting Nick Langworthys efforts to stop the NYS Governor from passing a law prohibiting new construction from having any type of heating other than electric. That law was ready to be passed despite these efforts. He said he was concerned that the future town boards may not feel the same and asked how the Town would enforce their views on this subject. He said he feels we need to be more aggressive on pushing back on government overreach. He said he disagrees with the Town using the NYS Building Codes as he feels it violates his right to freedom to do what he wants on his own property.
- Sheree Gauss asked what is being done about the piles of garbage and apparent dump by the B&P property on Route 333. This was referred to Nick Nolton.

There being no further public comment, motion was made by Jennifer Hargrave and seconded by Dan Gee that public comment be closed. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Minutes: Motion was made by Noel Sylvester and seconded by Dan Gee that the minutes from the October 15 meeting be approved as presented. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Bills: The following bills were submitted for approval by Michael Volino:

General Bills \$15,732.62 on Vouchers A209-A227
Community Development \$15,683.11 on Vouchers A212, A213, A215
Highway \$56,260.77 Vouchers DA153-DA162
Trust and Agency \$165.00 Voucher TA11

Bills continued: Motion was made by Dan Gee and seconded by Noel Sylvester that the bills be ordered paid and charged to the proper accounts as submitted. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

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Department Reports:

- Town Clerk: Sue Conklin noted she collected \$1040 in the month of October with \$999 going back to the Town as follows: \$50 for room rental, \$189 for dog licenses; \$760 for Building Permits.
- Historian: Noel Sylvester said he attended the 1st annual Town Historian luncheon in October.
- Assessor: Diana Dixon said the assessors have mailed notices for the exemptions that need to be renewed each year.
- Justice: Darlene Smith reported collecting \$188 in fees during October.
- Dog Control: Randy Akins reported 4 complaints during the month of October and that he issued two appearance tickets for dogs running at large.
- Highway Superintendent: Ben Smith reported the following activity during October:
 - Finished up work on Forty Dollar Road for the year
 - Graded Barrett Road and opened the ditch
 - Did some ditching on Starr Road
 - Cleaned a section of ditch on Helms Road
 - Brought in the rest of the road sand
 - Repaired the turn around at the end of Eddy Road
 - Beefed up the turn around on South Hill to protect trucks from getting stuck when turning around
 - Put riggings back on all ten wheelers so they are ready to plow
 - Salted and sanded town roads on November 11th.
- Town Supervisor: Michael Volino reported the following activity during October:
 - Bi Weekly check-ins with Labella and STC continue. Asbestos testing is complete, bids on the first three projects (CDBG) will be awarded the first week of December.
 - Cemetery Signs (will be installed in the spring) and new Board Member chairs have arrived
 - Town of Thurston has been awarded a Slip and Fall Prevention Grant in the amount of \$5000
 - NYMIR notified us we meet all conditions for insurance renewal
 - New road signs are here
 - Month End closing for October was completed and sent to the Board
 - Four new elected officials are registered for the Newly Elected Officials Training in Corning in January 2026
 - Annual inspection of Fire Extinguishers in the Town Hall, Highway Shop and on town equipment has been completed
 - Our new government website is now live and IB Design did a great job – very professional looking
 - Second CHIPS Reimbursement request of \$57,914.72 was sent in. Half of this was for Savona Campbell Road and half for Forty Dollar Road.

Motion was made by Holly Chase and seconded by Noel Sylvester that all department reports be accepted as presented. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Unfinished Business:

Supervisor Volino asked if there was any discussion on the tentative budget as present. There being none, motion was made by Jennifer Hargrave and seconded by Holly Chase that the following Resolution # 19 of 2025 of the Town of Thurston adopting the annual budget for the year 2026 be passed:

WHEREAS the Town Board of the Town of Thurston has conducted all required public hearings and deliberations regarding the preliminary budget for the fiscal year 2026, and

WHEREAS the Town Board has made such revisions, changes, and alterations as it deems necessary to the preliminary budget, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Board of the Town of Thurston hereby formally adopts the budget for the fiscal year as presented and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the budget as adopted herein shall be the official budget for the Town of Thurston for the fiscal year 2026 and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Town Clerk is directed to certify a copy of this adopted budget and to file it as required by law.

Put to roll call vote: Jennifer Hargrave, aye; Noel Sylvester, aye; Michael Volino, aye; Dan Gee, aye; Holly Chase, aye.

ADOPTED by the Town Board of the Town of Thurston on November 2025.

Local Laws for Aged and Disability Exemptions: Michael asked if the Board was in favor of pursuing having two Local Laws drafted allowing for tax exemptions for disability or age in Thurston. He said a person can only use one of these. Motion was made by Dan Gee and seconded by Noel Sylvester that the Town Supervisor move forward on having these Local Laws drafted. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Chairs for Town Hall: The Board had discussed the purchase of new chairs for the public to use when attending meetings in the Town Hall. He said we received unexpected money from County Sales Tax Revenue that can be used for this purchase. Therefore, motion was made by Jennifer Hargrave and seconded by Dan Gee that 30 padded vinyl chairs be ordered at a cost of \$2400 with funds to be debited from County Sales Tax Revenue. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried. The Town will keep and store the old metal chairs.

Motion was made by Noel Sylvester and seconded by Dan Gee that unfinished business be closed. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

New Business: Michael asked the Board to consider a resolution for a policy of partial payment of health insurance premiums for elected officials as follows:

RESOLUTION # 20 of 2025: Policy for Partial Payment of Health Insurance Premiums for Elected Officials

1. Purpose

This resolution sets forth the policy and procedures of the **Town of Thurston** for providing partial payment of health insurance premiums for elected officials.

- a. The Town adopts this policy to support its public servants, while striving to meet the ever-rising cost of health insurance and ensuring that the Town stays below the 2% tax cap.
- b. The term "health insurance" includes medical, dental, and vision coverage.
- c. The term "elected official" indicates the Superintendent of Highways.
- d. The Town adopts this policy pursuant to its authority under New York General Municipal Law § 92-a.

2. Procedure

- a. The Town will contribute 80% toward the cost of health insurance for elected officials for the following types of policies: individual, two-person, or family.
- b. If any elected official chooses to opt-in, the coverage begins on January 1, 2026, and on each day the elected official begins a new term of office.
- c. The coverage provided herein will expire on the last day in office for any elected official.
- d. The elected official's contribution toward the health insurance premium will be paid with pre-tax dollars. Deductions are taken from the employee's paycheck before federal, state, and social security taxes are calculated.
- e. Any elected official who chooses not to opt in will not receive the cash equivalent of the coverage offered.

3. Annual Review: The Town Board shall review this policy annually at its Organizational Meeting, and, when needed, update this policy and procedures.

4. Effective Date. This policy will become effective immediately upon passage of this resolution. The earliest coverage can begin is January 1, 2026.

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Policy continued: Motion was made by Holly Chase and seconded by Dan Gee that the Policy for Partial Payment of Health Insurance Premiums for Elected Officials be adopted as presented. Put to roll call vote: Michael Volino, aye; Holly Chase, aye; Noel Sylvester, aye; Dan Gee, aye; Jannifer Hargrave, aye. Unanimously Carried.

Local Law prohibiting construction of a landfill: Michael noted that Earth Justice has offered to again draft a local law pro bono prohibiting the construction of a landfill. Motion was made by Holly Chase and seconded by Jennifer Hargrave that Michael be authorized to sign a retainer with Earth Justice to draw up this local law. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Debt Service: Michael noted he would like to make additional payments on the 2025 Peterbilt. Motion was made by Holly Chase and seconded by Daniel Gee that the Town Supervisor be authorized to pay an additional payment on the 2025 Peterbilt in the amount of \$39,350.81 from the appropriated Highway Fund balance, and that he also pay the remaining balance of the 2025 Peterbilt in the amount of \$78,702.62 from the unassigned General Fund balance. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Organizational Meeting: Motion was made by Holly Chase and seconded by Dan Gee that the Reorganizational Meeting for the Town of Thurston be held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 7, 2026. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Garage Door Replacement Highway Shop: Michael said the bottom panel is loose and falling off on the middle door at the Highway Shop. Lewis Garage Door will replace this and fix the openers on the other two doors for us at a total cost of \$7100 which includes a 10x13 insulated door, labor, and an opener. Motion was made by Dan Gee and seconded by Jennifer Hargrave that the middle door of the highway shop be replaced by Lewis Garage Door and this be paid from the building reserve repair fund. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Motion was made by Holly Chsae and seconded by Jennifer Hargrave that new business be closed. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Motion was then made by Holly Chase and seconded by Jennifer Hargrave that the meeting be adjourned at 8:30 p.m. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Sue Conklin, Town Clerk.