

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 15th day of October 2025.

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

Visitors: Jeffrey Sweeney, Brandi Smith, Margie Taft, Caleb Cook, Alan Crooker, Dolores Crooker, Jim Feldman, Sam Dick, M. Ruth Schoonover, Tim Hargrave, Lisa Hargrave, Richard Stewart, Wilma Stewart, Ray Behari, Lori Behari, Ava Turner, Cal Hoad (Zoom), Lamora Hoad (Zoom)

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

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Caleb Cook asked the Board to consider abandoning the seasonal part of South Hill Road. He said people continue to dump trash and animal carcasses on his property which adjoins this area. Michael Volino said if Caleb wishes to start proceedings to have the Town abandon or apply for a discontinuance of the seasonal road, he should talk to the Highway Superintendent to get this started.

Motion was made by Noel Sylvester and seconded by Jennifer Hargrave that Public Comment be closed. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

MINUTES: Motion was made by Holly Chase and seconded by Dan Gee that the minutes from the September 17 regular meeting be approved as presented. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

BILLS: Michael Volino said the following bills were presented for payment:

General Fund: \$6953.10 Vouchers A190-A208
Community Development: \$4989.70 Vouchers A193 and A199
Highway \$63,625.65 Vouchers DA139-DA152
Trust & Agency \$165.00 Voucher TA10

Motion was made by Jennifer Hargrave and seconded by Noel Sylvester that the bills be ordered paid as presented. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

TOWN CLERK: Sue Conklin said that Desiree Fisk had presented the preliminary budget for the Fire Advisory Board and notice of publication as required.

The Clerk's Report was reviewed and she noted she collected \$1255.00 during September of which \$809.89 stayed with the Town.

Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

HISTORIAN: Nothing to report

Justice: Darlene Smith reported no collections during the month of September.

DOG CONTROL: The Dog Control Officer reported he received two complaints of dogs running at large.

- Randy Akins reported the recent rabies clinic was a big success with a total of 89 animals vaccinated and \$203.00 received in donations which was split between Steuben County Public Health and the Town of Thurston.

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- noted the Rathbone shelter (which we use) is closing at the end of this year since they will not be able to meet the new state requirements as is the one in Canisteo. He noted that the DCO for Troupsburg is meeting with State Officials about possibly building a shelter in that municipality. Should this happen, we could possibly contract with that shelter.

FIRE DEPARTMENT: Desiree Fisk said the Fire Department will be holding their (2026 budget) public hearing on October 23, 2025.

CODE ENFORCEMENT: Nick Nolton noted the following activity for the month of September:

5 permits issued at a value of \$148,000 and \$735.00 in fees.

3 Certificates of Compliance with a value of \$53,940.

YTD: 27 permits with a value of \$878,550.

YTD Fees total \$2535.

The new State Code Books should be arriving soon.

HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT:

- rebuild a retaining wall and repaired a head wall on Tucker Road

- cleaned out a portion of ditch on Starr Road

- finished grading, raked, rolled, and brined on Rising, Travis, Reed, McIntosh, Green Hill (top portion), Helms Road, Griffin, and two dirt areas on Tucker Road.

- started work on Forty Dollar Road

- have about 80% of the road sand we need for the winter, salt and sand have been mixed, and the salt barn is about half full

- changed out the air chamber for the brakes and the rubber support block for the springs on Truck 242 with parts already in the shop as well as adjusting rear brakes. Oil change and grease job were done so the truck is ready for winter once we put the riggings back on.

SUPERVISOR:

- The John Deere Grader was ordered on September 18th and will arrive in early February

- OSC has given no designation for the Town's Fiscal scores, which is a positive result

- Four trees were removed from the Thurston Village Cemetery on September 19

- Third quarter NY45 and Federal 941 were completed and filed on September 22

- Michael met with Kayla Wagner from NYMIR regarding the 2026 Insurance Policy. Kayla will attend the November 24 meeting

- Michael attended the Superintendent's Roundtable regarding the budget process on September 25

- The inside walls of the salt barn were repaired by September 26th

- The third quarter Perma Payroll Audit was completed on September 27th

- The month end closing for September was completed and sent to the Town Board on October 3rd

- Michael has attended two meetings with Steuben County regarding updating the Hazard Mitigation Plan which is required by FEMA every three years

- CDBG bi-weekly check-ins continue with Labella & STC and Eco Testing has been completed. The three projects being done this year will be put to bid.

Motion was made by Dan Gee and seconded by Jennifer Hargrave that all departmental reports be accepted as presented. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Roads: Michael said Ben Smith has obtained estimates for signs to replace the ones in the Town which are in poor condition. Some are road signs, and some are symbol signs. The two estimates he found were Signs and Safety Equipment Inc. for a total of \$1,380.39 and JC Smith, Inc for a total of \$1353.50. It was felt that the bid from Signs and Safety Equipment was better suited to our needs. Therefore, motion was made by Dan Gee and seconded by Holly Chase that the signs be purchased from Signs and Safety Equipment Inc. at a cost of \$1380.39. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Cemeteries:

Signs - Holly Chase found signs through Amazon that were less expensive than any she could make at a cost of \$96.99 each. Dan Gee said he would install the signs. Therefore, motion was made by Noel Sylvester and seconded by Jennifer Hargrave that Holly Chase be authorized order five custom signs from Amazon for the cemeteries in Thurston which are required to be marked. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Wreaths Across America – Michael said we can purchase 20 wreaths at a cost of \$340.00 to be placed on Veterans graves in the Thurston Cemetery. If anyone does step up to donate towards these wreaths, the extra funds would go to Bath VA for more wreaths. Motion was made by Noel Sylvester and seconded by Dan Gee that the town donate \$340.00 to this organization for wreaths to be placed at a ceremony in December. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried. He noted we will also receive 8 free wreaths, and this will cover the veterans buried in cemeteries other than the Thurston Cemetery.

There being no further old business, motion was made by Noel Sylvester and seconded by Daniel Gee that Unfinished Business be closed. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

Michael Volino asked the Board to consider passing a resolution in opposition to the government mandated Natural Gas Bans to support Nick Langworthy’s Energy Choice Act (H.R.3699, S.1945) and to note our opposition to government-mandated gas bans. Motion was made by Jennifer Hargrave and seconded by Holly Chase that the following resolution be passed:

WHEREAS affordable and reliable energy is essential to the health, safety, and economic prosperity of New York families, businesses, and communities; and

WHEREAS natural gas remains a dependable, cost-effective, and clean-burning energy source used by millions of New Yorkers to heat their homes, cook their food, and power their businesses; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, New York State enacted the **Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA)**, which mandates aggressive emissions reductions and serves as the foundation for sweeping energy restrictions, including efforts to phase out natural gas; and

WHEREAS, building on the CLCPA, Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature in 2023 enacted provisions in the state budget banning natural gas and other fossil fuel hookups in most new residential and commercial buildings, effective 2026 for smaller buildings, and 2029 for larger buildings, thereby eliminating consumer choice and limiting access to affordable energy; and

WHEREAS Governor Hochul has publicly supported these bans and related measures as part of her administration’s climate and energy agenda, despite widespread concerns that such mandates will increase costs, strain grid reliability, and restrict energy diversity; and

WHEREAS, these top-down policies undermine affordability, threaten reliability during peak demand, and strip away the freedom of consumers and businesses to choose the energy sources that best meet their needs; and

WHEREAS, Congressman Nick Langworthy of New York and Senator Jim Justice of West Virginia introduced the **Energy Choice Act (H.R. 3699, S. 1945)**, federal legislation that ensures state and local governments cannot restrict

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consumer access to natural gas and other affordable energy sources, thereby protecting freedom of choice for New Yorkers and all Americans; and

WHEREAS the Energy Choice Act would safeguard households, small businesses, hospitals, farmers, and manufacturers from harmful government overreach and preserve access to an “all-of-the-above” energy strategy that strengthens reliability and affordability.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Thurston Board strongly supports the Energy Choice Act as introduced by Congressman Langworthy (H.R. 3699) and Senator Justice (S. 1945) and stands firmly opposed to New York State’s natural gas bans, the CLCPA-driven restrictions, and other state energy mandates that eliminate consumer choice; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the Town of Thurston Board urges Congress to pass the Energy Choice Act to defend consumer choice, protect energy affordability, and preserve reliable access to natural gas for New Yorkers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be sent to Congressman Nick Langworthy, Senator Jim Justice, the New York Congressional delegation, Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, Governor Kathy Hochul, and leadership of the New York State Legislature.

The resolution was put to roll call vote as follows: Michael Volino, aye; Holly Chase, aye; Noel Sylvester, aye; Dan Gee, aye; and Jennifer Hargrave, aye. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote and carried.

Town Hall

Discussion has been held regarding the purchase of chairs to replace the worn-out ones at the Board Table. Michael Volino said we received some sales tax funds that were not anticipated so there is funding available. Jennifer Hargrave said that Sam’s has chairs for \$125 each that would work for the Board. Motion was made by Jennifer Hargrave and seconded by Noel Sylvester that the chairs be purchased at a price not to exceed \$125.00 each. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried. The Board will continue to get pricing on the chairs the public uses at meetings. Once purchased there is \$3675 that can be debited from the County Sales Tax Revenue fund.

NYMIR Risk Assessment

NYMIR reported three areas that need to be taken care of by November 8th. **1)** It is required that a pre-inspection report be done on Town Vehicles and Equipment each day prior to use. Motion was made by Holly Chase and seconded by Noel Sylvester that the form provided by NYMIR will be used starting at once. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

2) It is also required that the Town have a ‘Hold Harmless Agreement’ with any outside contractors that we use. Motion was made by Dan Gee and seconded by Holly Chase that the following format be used:

Town of Thurston Hold Harmless Agreement

The CONTRACTOR/VENDOR hereby agrees to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the Town of Thurston from and against all liability, loss, damage, claim or action to the extent permissible by law, arising out of operations performed or services provided by the contractor/vendor under the contract (including the transportation of people). This will be signed by the Town Supervisor and the Contractor/Vendor and dated. Contractors/Vendors will also be required to provide Garage Liability Pre-occurrence Limit of 1 million and Aggregate Limit of 2 million as well as proof of Worker’s Compensation and Employer’s Liability for employees if applicable.

Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

3) Last, it was noted that the sidewalk behind the Town Hall needs repair as it is a trip hazard. Motion was made by Noel Sylvester and seconded by Jennifer Hargrave that Code Officer Nick Nolton will repair this as soon as possible at a cost of \$420.00. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

2026 Budget:

The Town Supervisor said the tentative budget has now been reviewed and needs to be accepted as the Preliminary Budget. Motion was made by Noel Sylvester and seconded by Holly Chase that the 2026 budget as presented become the preliminary budget. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried. Motion was made by Noel Sylvester

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and seconded by Jennifer Hargrave that a public hearing be held at 6:45 on November 12th to hear public comment. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Disability Exemption Law:

Diana Dixon, Head Assessor, asked the Board to consider a Local Law for a tax exemption for Disabled and Age/Low Income residents. The County already has this exemption and in Thurston there are 13 disabled and 40 people who have applied and are eligible for the low income/age exemption. Residents can use one or the other but not both exemptions and at this time the impact is small. We currently have a Veterans and Fireman's exemption Local Law. Motion was made by Holly Chase and seconded by Noel Sylvester that we have our attorney draft this Local Law. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Motion was made by Holly Chase and seconded by Dan Gee that New Business be closed. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

It was noted the next regular meeting will be held on November 12 (second Wednesday) at 7:00 p.m.

Motion was made by Holly Chase and seconded by Jennifer Hargrave that the meeting be closed at 7:55 p.m. Put to vote, all those present, aye. Carried.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Sue Conklin, Town Clerk