

# The Westfield Republican

"First Republican Newspaper Printed in U. S. A."  
Also serving the communities of Chautauqua and Mayville since 1856

WESTFIELD REPUBLICAN, Thursday, June 10, 2021

## Sherman approves suspension of late water payment penalty fees

By David Prenatt

editorial@westfieldrepublican.com

**SHERMAN** — Village of Sherman Board of Trustee members approved a resolution to suspend the penalty fees on late water payments at their regular meeting on June 2, 2021.

In conjunction with a law signed by Governor Cuomo extending the COVID-19 utility shut-off moratorium, the Village suspended all penalties on late water payments, effective May 11. The law prohibits the imposition of late fees for residential and small business customers who enter into a deferred payment agreement.

In a related matter, the board accepted a motion to repost \$22,978 in unpaid water balances which cannot be re-levied into the tax warrant.

The final tax rate for the Village is \$10.322867 per thousand on the 2021-2022 tax warrant. This translates into a tax warrant of \$251,312 which does not include a water re-levy.

The required notices regarding the new law will be sent to all customers in the June water and sewer bills. Sherman Mayor Colleen Meeder noted, however, that the law only relates to water service, not to sewer.

Meeder clarified that the tax rate is the product of the tax levy and the assessed property value, the re-levy is not part of the tax rate. The tax warrant is the total of the tax levy and the

re-levied items.

In another matter, in response to inquiries from residents, which were posed at the Open House on May 24, Meeder explained the history of the First Street project, which has been planned since the summer of 2017. The four-part project includes water lines, streets, storm water and sidewalks, she said.

In the summer of 2017 & 2018, the Village purchased \$30,000 worth of supplies, specifically designated for use on First and Edmunds Streets. However, in 2018, a stormwater line collapsed on East Street, preventing the work on First Street from starting, she added.

In 2019, Meeder said, a great deal of work needed to be done on First, Willard, Klondyke and Edmunds Streets, thus delaying the completion of the First Street project. The work on the four streets cost \$93,466, of which \$35,437 went into First Street, she said.

In the summer of 2020, Meeder said, a total of \$9,228 was spent in materials for the First Street sidewalks. However, the COVID pandemic severely impaired the progress of the work on First Street because municipalities share services with one another and with Chautauqua County.

See LATE FEES,  
Page A3

# LATE FEES, From Page 1

Meeder told trustees that while many municipalities were closed in 2020, “we were the only municipality that didn’t shut down. We functioned the entire time..”

Meeder also noted that the staffing problems alone caused further delays in the work on First Street. “There were a slew of retirements at the County level,” she said. “Bill Boria ended up doing three jobs.” She also noted that a large percentage of workers were furloughed. Furthermore, Meeder said, no one could be connected to the new water lines until the Department of Health came in and gave their approval.

Meeder said she understands people’s frustrations, but she wants them to be aware that the Village wants the work completed as much as the residents do. “It’s not that we’re overlooking this, it’s not that we don’t care,” she said. Bill Ward, County Legislator was in attendance and been in discussions about this season’s schedule; he noted the County is contracting out the paving projects.

Plans for 2021 include \$16,000 worth of topcoat to be applied to First Street.

The amount invested in First Street so far, Meeder said, is \$90,715, not including labor costs and other materials. The total cost of the First Street project to-date is more than \$150,000. “We want to get this done,” she said. “We are invested in this.”

Trustee Donna Higginbotham agreed with Meeder that people’s frustrations are understandable, but noted that they should consider why things have been delayed. “If people would first hear the explanation,” she said, “I would think that would satisfy them.”

Meeder also updated board members on the Village’s various capital projects. She told trustees that there were 39 people at the May 24 open house, and that the steering committee met afterwards. The committee will forward the proposed draft of the Comprehensive Plan, including comments and notes from the Open House to the board, she said. There will be a public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan on July 14 at 6 pm., she added.

Regarding the Comprehensive Plan, trustees

accepted the proposed draft of the Climate Smart Comprehensive Plan which was approved by the steering committee following the open house. Board members also approved the motion to begin the SEQRA for the Comprehensive Plan, denoting the Village as the lead agency.

In other business, Meeder told board members that two EFC grant applications for 2020 were denied. The Green Innovation Grant Program money was not awarded to Sherman for the 2020 cycle. “We were highly encouraged to resubmit the application,” she said. “We resubmit in July and the grant is awarded in December.”

The 2020 Green Innovation Grant Program funds went to “The Capital District and population centers like Buffalo who received a great deal of the funds,” she said. However, the 2021 money will be more evenly distributed across the State.”

Meeder also said that the Village was notified that it was not awarded the EPG grant for composting. Wastewater Treatment Plant Chief Operator Jay Irwin told trustees, “there are

other avenues for that which we can explore.” Meeder noted that the application for the 2021 cycle is currently open under the Consolidated Funding Application, which is due at the end of July.

Nevertheless, both Irwin and Meeder emphasized that the Village has received a \$1,250,000 CDBG grant for the WWTP project. “Everything is finally starting to happen,” Irwin said. Requests for bids for the project will go out in early July, Irwin said, and construction will begin as early as 2021 or spring 2022.

Meeder told trustees that the grant will reduce the Village share of the project from 47.6% to 32.4%, thereby reducing the annual payment from \$115,607 to \$78,762.

Meeder also told trustees that the Village was recently awarded a \$47,500 Community Planning Grant with a \$2,500 Village match. The funds will be used to conduct the Village of Sherman Community Planning/Market Analysis on Main Street. “These grants are critical to help us facilitate the next steps for our community,” Meeder said.