

Approved
1/11/2021

**December 14, 2020
Town of Taghkanic
Town Board Meeting**

Note all documents in these minutes may be clicked on and enlarged for easier reading

Town Board Members audited and signed vouchers on December 13 and 14, 2020 separately, due to the COVID-19 social distancing.

6:30 pm: The Town Board interviewed the following Via Zoom:

- + Veronica Mitchell for a position on the PB or ZBA
- + Stephen Fass was unable to keep appointment to be interviewed and hopes to be able to reschedule.

7:01 pm: The Taghkanic Town Board held its regular monthly meeting on the above date with a combination of Supervisor Skoda at the Taghkanic Town Hall with two residents attending in-person and socially distanced, and all other Board Members, Town Clerk and 14 residents attending via Zoom. Supervisor Ryan Skoda opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence.

Present:	Ryan Skoda	Supervisor
	Elizabeth Craig	Board Member
	Kara Gilmore	Board Member
	Linda Swartz	Board Member
	Joyce Thompson	Board Member
	Cheryl Rogers	Clerk

Guest Speaker: Via Zoom: Zoriana M. Stawnychy, Stawnychy Financial Services

Supervisor Ryan Skoda then asked for a motion to approve the following minutes:

November 9, 2020: Town Board meeting minutes were accepted as written with suggested changes, motioned by *Board Member Elizabeth Craig*, seconded by *Board Member Linda Swartz*.

Approved 5 Aye (*Ryan, Elizabeth, Joyce, Kara, Linda*)
0 Nays
0 Absent

November 13, 2020: Town Board Special meeting minutes were accepted as written with suggested changes, motioned by *Board Member Elizabeth Craig*, seconded by *Board Member Linda Swartz*.

Approved 5 Aye (*Ryan, Elizabeth, Joyce, Kara, Linda*)
0 Nays
0 Absent

The Correspondence:

- a) Carol Rusoff, Road concern County Route and Post Hill
 - ✚ **Board Member Joyce Thompson:** thanked the Highway Department for the placement of the Post Hill Road Sign.
- b) Kim Volpe, Animal Health Inspector, Municipal Shelter Inspection Report
- c) Sickler, Torchia, Allen & Churchill, CPA's PC, Form 990 for Churchtown Fire Company
- d) Bonnie Long, Taghkanic Churchtown Road speed limit
 - ✚ **Board Member Linda Swartz:** I sent Bonnie the following email:
As the Town's Traffic Safety Representative, I will try to answer your question.

When a road goes across a town line, as Taghkanic-Churchtown Road does, both towns (in this case Taghkanic and Claverack) must submit the necessary paperwork to the County so that the speed limit is the same for the length of the road through both towns. I believe that Ryan Skoda has been in contact with the Supervisor for the Town of Claverack to take care of that, and we are awaiting County Engineering review.

The wheels of progress do not speed on local roads. Your patience is appreciated.
 - ✚ **Supervisor Ryan Skoda:** Dean Knox has informed me that the speed limit review has been completed for Taghkanic/Churchtown Road.
- e) Jolene Race Director Col. Co. Department of Public Works, New Station Hours
- f) Kent Sammons, letter of interest in PB
- g) Stawnychy Financial, Independent Investment Manager and/or Advisor Report
- h) Association of Towns 2021 Annual Meeting & Training School
 - ✚ **Board Member Joyce Thompson:** encourages Kara and Elizabeth to look over the training the Association of Towns are presenting and hope they consider signing up for a few training sessions.

Reports from the Boards:

Animal Control: Kyle Miller, report submitted as follows

For this month I only have one entry for 12/3. I received a report of 2 dogs roaming on Hoyle Rd. I spoke with the owner the following day and restated the issues as well as the town code. I have not had any more reports since then.

ZBA: James Romaine, Chair, no report.

Planning Board: Katherine Bainer, Chair report submitted.

Assessor: Craig Surprise report submitted.

ZEO/CEO/Building Inspector: Dennis Callahan report submitted.

Historian: Nancy Griffith, no report submitted.

Traffic Safety Board: Board Member Linda Swartz, report submitted as follows:

The Columbia County Traffic Safety Board met at the Public Safety Building in Hudson on Thursday, November 19, 2020.

The request for reduced speed limit on Taghkanic-Churchtown road is on hold at County Engineering awaiting submission of a similar request from the Town of Claverack for the 0.05 mile section of Taghkanic-Churchtown Road that lies within their jurisdiction.

The County has invited the CCTSB to hold our meetings at their new emergency training facility located in the industrial park in Ghent, once COVID restrictions are lifted. This will alleviate the access issues we have experienced at the Public Safety Building.
Traffic Safety Committee By-Laws are under review.

The next meeting of the CCTSB is scheduled for January 28, 2021, at the Public Safety Building in Hudson. It is hoped that we will be able to officially elect the TSB Executive Board at this meeting. The election, typically done in May, was not held in 2020 due to COVID.

Other meetings in 2021 are scheduled as follows: March 25, May 27, July 22, September 23 and November 18.

Environmental Management Council: Larry Kadish no report submitted:

Zoning Commission: Joyce Thompson, report submitted as follows.

The Zoning Commission met on 16 and 30 November.

The Co-Chairs, Linda Swartz and Joyce Thompson, completed a review of the Definitions section and the Appendix covering Conservation Subdivision Regulations. They entered changes adopted by the Commission and conducted basic copy editing for spelling and grammar and standardization of format.

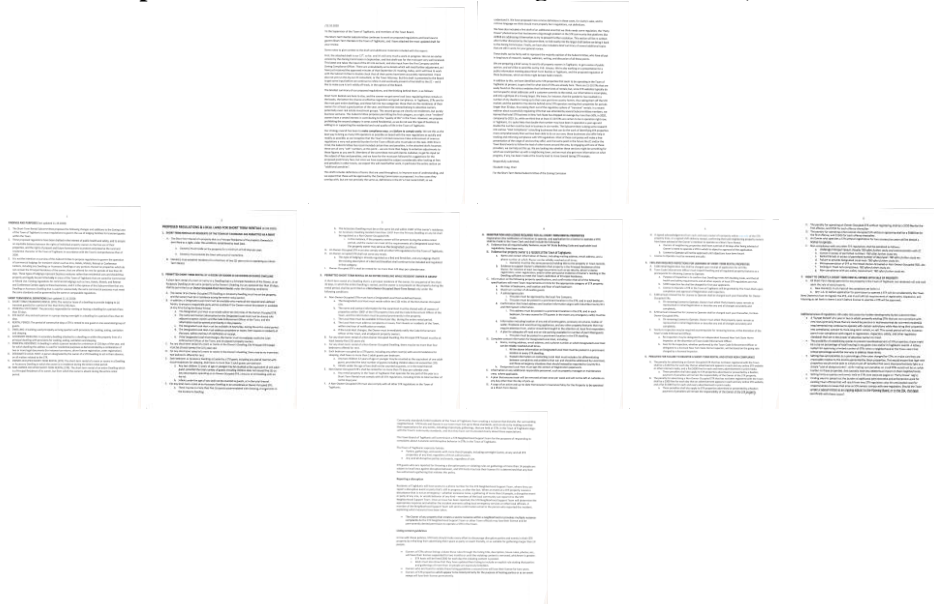
As was stated last month, the 2 November meeting was cancelled to give the Commission time to review the last draft of the code as reviewed by the Consultant, Ted Fink. This draft is the result of his review of the work done by Co-Chairs Swartz and Thompson and his own notes on changes adopted by the Commission.

Review of edits and remaining points for discussion raised by Commission Members or Consultant, Ted Fink, was the focus of both November meetings and on 7 December. Mr. Fink will provide the Commission with his comments on Sections 70 - 130 and the Appendix for the December 21st meeting.

All meetings are being held in-person at the Taghkanic Fire House from 4:00 to 6:00 P.M. and the public is welcome to attend in person or request a zoom link by emailing joyce.thompson721@gmail.com before noon on the day of the meeting. Masks and social distancing practices are required for in-person attendance..

STR Sub-Committee: Board Member Elizabeth Craig, Chair, report submitted as follows:

Report on STR Subcommittee meetings November 2020; submitted 12.10.2020



**Office for the Aging: Joyce Thompson, no meeting to report. *Board Member Joyce Thompson* shared information she received from the Office for the Aging as follows:
Robotic Pets Help Decrease Social Isolation**

In 2019, New York State became the first state in the nation to test robotic pets, cats and dogs, with isolated community-based older adults. “New York piloted 60 Joy for All Companion Pets (30 cats and 30 pups) with socially isolated older adults living at home in 12 counties across the state. Pilot participants were identified using a six-item loneliness scale. Robotic cats and pups are usually given to people with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias as a form of calming pet therapy, but data has shown that using pets to decrease social isolation is highly successful—70% of pilot participants reported a decrease or significant decrease in isolation after one year.”

“Social isolation was already a serious public health problem for older individuals who have limited social connections, and the COVID-19 virus has made this problem exponentially worse,” said Association on Aging in New York Executive Director Becky Preve. “Social isolation also puts older adults at greater risk for a number of physiological issues such as decline in mobility, heart disease including heart attack, stroke, and high blood pressure, cognitive decline, infectious illness, and chronic illnesses, such as type 2 diabetes.” Studies have shown that social isolation disproportionately affects older adults. There are many individuals living alone whose only social contact occurs outside of their home. These interactions may take place at senior centers, Churches and other community programs, most of which have closed or have limitations on the number of people who may attend due to COVID-19. There are also seniors whose only in person contact may consist of the brief interaction with the meals on wheels volunteer.

“While social distancing and Matilda’s Law were put in place to slow the physical effects of COVID-19, they also have the unintended effect of heightening the risk of social isolation and loneliness even more, ultimately leaving older adults and caregivers looking for solutions to provide comfort, companionship, and joy in this time of physical absence.”

The Office for the Aging currently has a limited number of these robotic pets available. The pets look and feel real and respond to touch and voice. However, one is able to mute the sounds, i.e. purring, barking, if they prefer. They offer the convenience of not needing to be fed, walked or bathed. Please call the office at 518-828-4258 for more information or if you are interested in obtaining a pet.

<https://www.homecaremag.com/news/robotic-pets-help-combat-senior-isolation-during-pandemic>

Clerk/Collector: Cheryl Rogers, reports were submitted to the Board.
Supervisor: Ryan Skoda, report submitted as attached.



Highway: George Hotaling, report submitted by Acting Highway Superintendent Michael Conn as attached.



Advisory Board reports:

Financial Advisory Committee Report: Board Member Joyce Thompson report submitted as follows:

The Financial Advisory Committee met on 10 December 2020 to audit the November financial reports. No discrepancies were found when comparing Abstracts, Transfers and Bank Statements.

Town of Taghkanic Revenues as of November 30, 2020

▪ **General Fund**

Revenues stand at 112% of budget. Multiple revenue lines have exceeded budget this year. They include Tax penalties, Sales Tax, Clerk’s Fees, Interest, Building Permits, Fines and Forfeitures and Mortgage Tax Distribution.

▪ **Highway Fund**

Revenues are at 99% of budget before receipt of the final Sales Tax payment in early 2021.

Town of Taghkanic Expenses Budget Amendment #5

▪ **General Fund**

- ◆ The Payroll line, 1342.42 will be increased by \$500 to cover the Retirement payment in December and the set up for the new Time Clock in 2021. The same amount will be taken out of the Contingency line, A1990.4.
- ◆ The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) Clerk line A8010.11 will be increased by \$200 to cover November and December activity and balanced by decreasing the ZBA Contractual line, A8010.4 by the same amount.
- ◆ The Hospitalization line A9060.80 will be increased by \$50.00 to cover the final payment and the HRA line, A9060.81 will be decreased by the same amount, keeping the full payment within the same appropriation category.

▪ **Highway Fund**

The Hospitalization line DA 9060.80 will be increased by \$4,400 to cover the difference between the CDPHP program provided by the Town through November 2020 and the Teamsters program that begins in December 2020. The Teamsters program includes money for HRA as a lump sum. The same amount will be taken from the subordinate HRA line DA9060.81 to keep the transfer within the same major appropriation line of Hospitalization.

Budget Amendment #5:

		2020 Budget Amendment #5	
GENERAL FUND		Increase	Decrease
Payroll Contractual	A1342.42	\$500.00	
Contingency	A1990.4		\$500.00
Zoning Personal Service - Clerk	A8010.11	\$200.00	
Zoning Contractual	A8010.40		\$200.00
Hospitalization	A9060.80	\$50.00	
HRA	A9060.81		\$50.00
HIGHWAY FUND			
Hospitalization	DA9060.80	\$4,400.00	
HRA	DA9060.81		\$4,400.00
		\$5,150.00	\$5,150.00

Board Member Linda Swartz motioned to approve Budget Amendment #5 as presented, seconded by **Board Member Kara Gilmore** as follows:

Approved 5 Aye (*Ryan, Elizabeth, Joyce, Kara, Linda*)
 0 Nays
 0 Absent

TGazette Newsletter Advisory Committee: Nadja Palenzuela report submitted as follows:

Total Sent: 241
Open Rate: 61%
Click-through rate: 60%
Bounce rate: 1 email
Unsubscribe: 1

Opens by device: 46% mobile
 54% desktop

Most popular article was about the Rail Trail and COVID announcement.

Website:

200 unique visitors in the last month
2 new site members
Total subscribers: 116

Facebook

Total followers= 266

Conservation Advisory Committee: Tony LaSalvia no meeting to report:

Larry Kadish: the Head Water 18-Member Committee will hold their first meeting December 18th.

Broadband Advisory Committee: Arthur McGuire, report submitted as follows:

The Broadband Committee met on November 18, 2020 at the Town Hall.

The committee discussed whether it should continue to operate; now that Broadband is available throughout our town. We discussed what we have learned in the last five years and whether that knowledge might be useful to other towns still seeking better broadband. There was little interest among the members in joining the group that is seeking to build its own county-wide broadband network. However, everyone agreed that if we could help other towns, we would be willing to do so. Instead of monthly meetings, we agreed to meet quarterly, with the first meeting in 2021 to take place on the third Wednesday in March.

The group also discussed ways to get better exposure of our Guide to Broadband Financial Help. Susan Raymond led the project to prepare a press release. All members contributed to the drafting and Susan sent it to our two local newspapers. We are pleased to report that this has resulted in articles in both the Columbia Paper and the Register Star.

The next meeting of the Broadband Committee will take place at Arthur McGuire's home on Wednesday, December 16, 2020.

Old Business:

1. **County Route 15 Complaint:** *Supervisor Ryan Skoda:* Attorney Howard and the Sheriff's Department have all the paperwork ready to move forward January

1, 2021. Attorney Howard feels that the Governor will not extend again as he is getting push-back from the landlords. **Supervisor Ryan Skoda:** I will keep John Thompson in the loop.

2. **Highway Facility:** **Supervisor Ryan Skoda:** Everything is still on hold waiting for DEC's decision on the proposed Soil Management Plan submitted months ago.
3. **Culvert Inventory:** **Board Member Joyce Thompson:** I met with Kelsey Jean West (Cornell), Jo-Anne Humphreys (Trout Unlimited), Audrey Kropp (Cornell) and Tracy Brown (Trout Unlimited). They have a final presentation and I would like to invite them to present at January 11, 2021 meeting. All agreed.
4. **LOSAP Audit RFP:** Zoriana Stawnychy, Stawnychy Financial Services will be sending Robert Wheeler's contact information tomorrow and a few more Accountants names.
5. **Police Reinvention Program - Progress Report:** **Board Member Joyce Thompson:**

Upcoming Police Reform Panel Meetings

Law Enforcement/Public Officials Panel

December 16 – 6:00 p.m.

December 17 – 6:00 p.m.

Click [here](#) for links to the meetings

The New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative requires all law enforcement entities across New York State to perform a review that addresses racial and other biases in the practice of police departments, and to develop a plan that fosters fairness and trust in how the police department polices the community it serves. The expectations for the process and timeline culminating in a written reinvention plan presented to the public for comment, ratification, and then submission to the state by April 1 are clearly laid out in the Resource Guide for Public Officials and Citizens provided by the Governor's Office [here](#).

The Guide urges the panel to consider Key Questions and Insights in creating a reinvention plan. What function should the police perform? Are they employing smart and effective policing standards and strategies? Are they fostering community-oriented leadership, culture, and accountability? Are they recruiting and supporting excellent personnel?

The first sessions conducted by the Columbia County Police Reform Panel have been a transparent process with much anecdotal and descriptive information from community members, the Sheriff's Department, and Mental Health Services. The participants, however, have not included representatives from communities that are most impacted by policing. While anecdotal and third-party information is helpful as guidance toward problem areas, actual data is critical for finding and recognizing evidence of racial bias and inequities.

The goal of the next sessions of the Columbia County Police Reform Panel on the dates shown above is to develop a plan. The panelists will need performance data to find and understand problem areas and serve as the basis for meaningful reinvention. Hopefully, that data will be provided to both the panelists and the public.

The panel sessions will be streamed live for Columbia County residents to observe and comment. To watch recordings or read transcripts of what has been presented to date, go to <https://sites.google.com/columbiacountyny.com/police-reform-panel>.

6. **NYS Public Employer Mandatory Health Emergency Plan:** **Board Member Elizabeth Craig:** I have 60% of the draft completed. Will be sending it out to all

the Board Members within the next week.

- 7. Appointments PB and ZBA:** *Supervisor Ryan Skoda* we interviewed Veronica Mitchell earlier and we also have a letter of interest from Kent Sammons for the Planning Board. Kent is in the audience. Does anyone have any questions for Mr. Sammons? Also Moisha Blechman has resigned from the ZBA, which leaves us with another appointment to make for the ZBA.

- ✚ **Board Member Joyce Thompson:** I am not sure why Stephen Fass was unable to attend the interview but I will contact him tomorrow

- ✚ **Supervisor Ryan Skoda:** I will contact Arthur McGuire to ask if he would be interested in the Alternate position on the Planning Board.

- ✚ **Clerk Rogers:** Appointment open to be filled are as follows:

 - ZBA - one unexpired full member with a term ending 12-31-2024

 - ZBA - full member with term ending 12-31-2025

 - ZBA - Alternate

 - Planning Board - Alternate

- 8. Board Member Elizabeth Craig** motioned to appoint Kent Sammons to the ZBA with terming ending December 31, 2025, seconded by **Board Member Kara Gilmore**.

Approved

5 Aye

(Ryan, Elizabeth, Joyce, Kara, Linda)

0 Nays

0 Absent

- ✚ All agreed to finish the appointments at the Year-End meeting December 30, 2020

New Business:

- 1. February 2021 Calendar:** *Board Member Joyce Thompson* moved to accept the February 2021 calendar as presented, seconded by **Board Member Linda Swartz**.

Approved

5 Aye

(Ryan, Elizabeth, Joyce, Kara, Linda)

0 Nays

0 Absent

- 1. Resolution 16-2020 Columbia County West Taghkanic Bridge Project:** *Board Member Linda Swartz* motioned to approve Resolution 16-2020, seconded by **Board Member Joyce Thompson**.

Approved

5 Aye

(Ryan, Elizabeth, Joyce, Kara, Linda)

0 Nays

0 Absent

- 2. Setting a Public Hearing for Local Law 1-2021 Abolishing the Elective Office of Town Highway Superintendent and creating the Appointive Office of Town Highway Superintendent:** *Board Member Joyce Thompson* motioned to set a Public Hearing for Local Law #1 – 2021 for January 11, 2021 at 7 PM, seconded by **Board Member Linda Swartz**.

Approved

5 Aye

(Ryan, Elizabeth, Joyce, Kara, Linda)

0 Nays

0 Absent

The bills were audited and approved for payment as follows:

- ✦ **November 25, 2020 Abstract:** on a motion by **Board Member Elizabeth Craig**, was approved for payment, seconded by **Board Member Linda Swartz**.

2020 General Fund Vouchers	#	360	-	374	\$	2,833.82
2020 Highway Fund Vouchers	#		-		\$	
2020 Hwy Project Fund vouchers	#		-		\$	

Approved 5 Aye (**Ryan, Elizabeth, Joyce, Kara, Linda**)

0 Nays

0 Absent

- ✦ **December 10, 2020 Abstract:** on a motion by **Board Member Elizabeth Craig**, was approved for payment, seconded by **Board Member Linda Swartz**.

2020 General Fund Vouchers	#	375	-		\$	26,908.00
2020 Highway Fund Vouchers	#	170	-		\$	18,562.00
2020 Hwy Project Fund vouchers	#		-		\$	

Approved 5 Aye (**Ryan, Elizabeth, Joyce, Kara, Linda**)

0 Nays

0 Absent

- ✦ **December 14, 2020 Abstract:** on a motion by **Board Member Elizabeth Craig**, was approved for payment, seconded by **Board Member Linda Swartz**.

2020 General Fund Vouchers	#	376	-	403	\$	27,573.21
2020 Highway Fund Vouchers	#	171	-	187	\$	32,388.69
2020 Hwy Project Fund vouchers	#		-		\$	

Approved 5 Aye (**Ryan, Elizabeth, Joyce, Kara, Linda**)

0 Nays

0 Absent

The following people commented during the fifteen minute public comment:

- ✦ **Board Member Kara Gilmore:** I would like to revisit outdoor dining.
- ✦ **Supervisor Ryan Skoda** Dennis Callahan has no intention to place a stop work order on the Diner; he would like the owner to follow through with the ZBA application to get a variance and to be in compliance after the pandemic is over.
- ✦ **Lary Kadish:** Chief Hilscher asked how the budget from the town worked out for the Taghkanic Fire Company.
- ✦ **Supervisor Ryan Skoda:** I think it was a 4% increase.
- ✦ **Nadja Palenzuela:** what is the box outside the town hall is there any information?
- ✦ **Supervisor Ryan Skoda:** the Town approved the placement of the book box at least 2 years ago. The Claverack Library had a group of children make the box at their summer program. It has just taken some time to organize the installation. The Highway employees installed it during last month. A big thank you! All are welcome to bring books and take books.

Executive Session: none

With no further business, on a motion by *Board Member Linda Swartz*, seconded by *Board Member Elizabeth Craig* the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm, carried unanimously by all members present. The next Regular meeting will be January 11, 2021 at the Taghkanic Town Hall.

Audience at Town Hall:

Arthur Griffith

Kent Sammons

Audience via Zoom:

Larry Kadish
Nadja Palenzuela
Diane Rodriguez

Anna Kadish
Sherrill Kurland
Marty Friedman
Susan Raymond

Webb Gilmore
Scott Marinoff
Polly Horton
Linda Reardon

Perry Ascher
Steven Smolensl
Walter Flamenbaum