

**Official Minutes- Montezuma Town Board Meeting**

**February 18, 2025 at 6pm**

Supervisor David Corey opened the meeting, led by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Members Present: Supervisor:** David Corey

**Deputy Supervisor/Councilman:** Thomas Hitchcock Jr.

**Councilman:** Thomas Fitzsimmons

**Councilman:** Christopher Howard

**Councilman:** Marvin King **(Absent)**

**Deputy Town Clerk:** Tiffini Sharp

**Code Enforcement Officer:** John Greer

**Highway Superintendent:** Kenneth Cook

**Deputy HWY Superintendent:** David Ware

**Residents:** Ben Ware

John Greer, Code Enforcement Officer, stated no permits were issued in January. Eleven permits were issued in 2024. \$1,853 in fees was collected in 2024. Inspections were performed in compliance with New York State regulations. Complaints were investigated and corrected accordingly. He has attended New York State in-service training and worked with the Cayuga County Health Department for permit requests as needed. Previous years have seen over twenty permits, although there are some new builds in process upcoming. Thomas Fitzsimmons asked if John Greer inspects septic systems. John works with the health department requirements for testing and inspection as needed. There is a list of inspectors on file. Thomas Fitzsimmons asked about the trailer on Route 90. John stated the testing for new builds is required after it is occupied for thirty days. Thomas Fitzsimmons mentioned the trailer is requesting water service. John Greer stated this will need to be done once the trailer is installed. Additional inspections have been needed at the site for the poured pad and other concerns. Thomas Fitzsimmons asked if this needs to be approved before move-in. John stated there are inspections needed before move-in, but the health department requires the septic system to be inspected after the house is lived in for thirty days.

Cheryl Longyear, Town Historian read her monthly report and distributed copies of The Chronicle. She requested a motion of support to submit an application for the Parks and Trails NY Empire Canal Program. She would like to submit for a grant for funding to utilize this program to create an action plan to expand our park. Motion was made by Thomas Hitchcock Jr, seconded by David Corey. Motion carried 4/0.

Highway Superintendent Kenneth Cook read his monthly report. He is seeking alternative options to potentially replace the plows' cutting edges with a new option with rubber coating as he is having the make repairs often on them. The town of Savannah has had success with this style, as well as the thruway, and it would cost approximately \$2600. The Soil and Water District is working on a grant through New York State to cover half the cost of this upgrade through the Salt Reduction Plan and Kenneth will begin the paperwork for this. Cheryl Longyear asked if this grant is being processed by the state. Kenneth stated he is going through Soil and Water and Cayuga County through the New York State initiative. He will do more research on this style of plow blade. Pipe has been ordered for this year's road work. New stairs have been built at the highway garage and they were a safety concern. The bobcat mower still has a recall regarding the way the deck lowers slowly while being cleaned. This is a safety concern and the Highway Department will use straps whenever the deck is lifted until Bobcat has a recall fix to install. This is recommended by Bobcat.

Obtaining rock salt has been a challenge this year. 105 tons were delivered after over three weeks of requesting them as the barn nearly ran out. Sand and stone have been suggested as an alternative. Thomas Hitchcock Jr mentioned this is not ideal for any area with a sewer system, but should be alright in our area. There are substantial pot holes at the Town Highway Garage that Kenneth will price out the repair. Christopher Howard asked if the town can repair this ourselves. Kenneth can, but this cannot be applied to the CHIPS program since it is not a legal road. The snow plow service has gone over in contracted runs this year. Cayuga County is aware and Kenneth will continue to submit his runs. Steve Fedrizzi is working on a grievance for breach of contract with American Rock Salt due to the failure of prompt delivery of rock salt.

Kenneth is attending a day trip on March 5<sup>th</sup> with the other Highway Superintendents to request more CHIPS money. There are thirty people scheduled to take the bus trip. David Corey mentioned the amount we are paying for rock salt has lowered this year due to the contract from American Rock Salt. Kenneth stated the American Rock Salt stays with the road and melts gradually rather than the powder previously used.

David Ware submitted a Water Committee Report, read by Tiffini Sharp, Water Clerk. The main concern is red tagging has been processed in the past. Letters were drafted and submitted to the board—one for shutoff notice letters, and one for a payment agreement that can be made in writing if anyone is struggling to make their payments. The current concern is red tags are often sent out at the same time of the meter reading, so additional balances are accrued before final payment is made. Port Byron red tags after 30 days without payment, and the shutoff occurs after the 60-day mark, then the new reads are done. Thomas Fitzsimmons mentioned the reads are done at 90 days. David Ware clarified the red tag has been sent out but not turned off, so the meter reads happen again and the balance is added. Tiffini Sharp mentioned many late payments have been coming in with a check without the penalty being added. She wondered should this penalty be added to the next bill or should the person be contacted? The issue is if they are a tenant, the only person on file is the landlord so there is no contact information for the responsible party. Thomas Fitzsimmons mentioned this has not been an issue in the past but is becoming a larger issue as more payments are being late. He is concerned this method may create more shut-off notices. Thomas Hitchcock Jr stated a 30-day notice is reasonable and plenty of time to make payment. Christopher Howard stated a precedent should be set. David Ware stated he handed a customer a red tag and he stated he forgot about his payment. However, he was already in arrears and now had a new water bill in addition to this. He feels a clearer process needs to be in place.

8074 State Route 90 was mentioned, a vacant house that is listed for sale and continues to have an unpaid water bill. David Ware feels the real estate company should be contacted and advised the water will be shut-off if it is not paid. Thomas Hitchcock Jr mentioned whether the bill will carry to the new homeowner. Thomas Fitzsimmons said this was attempted in the past and never paid. Thomas Fitzsimmons asked if the house is winterized or heated. David Corey asked if it is being showed and it is, so it is likely being heated. David Ware feels the funds need to be collected with a clearer precedent. Thomas Fitzsimmons stated water shutoffs were paused during COVID, and it was not as much of an issue in the past as it is now. It is time to resume shutoff procedures. David Ware stated it was voted in October 2024 to resume the shutoffs so he believes the letter is helpful to alert anyone who is not aware. Tiffini Sharp mentioned payment arrangements need to be documented in writing rather than a verbal agreement or people dropping off partial payments without any explanation. She would like to have the payment option available for those who may be struggling. David Corey made a motion to resume shut off, seconded by Thomas Hitchcock Jr. Motion carried 4/0.

Thomas Fitzsimmons mentioned tenants whose landlords will clear balances. Christopher Howard stated often it will be billed to the tenant or removed from their security deposit if unpaid. Tiffini Sharp advised she has been in contact with property owners regarding this.

David Ware brought up the process of water pit installations and a potential for price increases due to market prices and maintenance costs. This was discussed. Stanley Longyear said there is a schedule of water pit install prices. Tiffini Sharp will locate this information and will bring it to the board and water committee. Motion made by Christopher Howard for a 15% increase, seconded by Thomas Hitchcock Jr. Motion carried 4/0.

Other vacant properties were mentioned but Tiffini Sharp clarified the main concern is whether the payment is being made, not whether it is vacant or not. Thomas Fitzsimmons mentioned winterization of vacant properties is a concern. David Corey made a motion to contact the real estate agent at 8074 State Route 90 regarding the unpaid water bills, seconded Christopher Howard. Motion carried 4/0. Tiffini Sharp will reach out this week.

David Corey stated a motion was needed to adopt the 2024 standard workday for elected officials. Thomas Fitzsimmons asked what the standard workday is. David Corey explained it has to do with those who are in salaried, elected positions. Tiffini Sharp clarified if a position is salaried, they can decide to either track their hours or have their salary divided evenly through the year. New York retirement still requires an average amount of hours worked. Patricia Crane asked everyone to track their hours for three months, as she needs to submit this information by May. David Corey asked for a vote. Motion was carried 4/0.

Tiffini Sharp asked for input on the upcoming playground renovations. The plan is to add a climbing structure to the town playground, then add a swing set or some sort of play structure at the butterfly garden. BYO Playground was the only one to respond with a quote and they offer a discount for municipalities. The budget was discussed and to keep in mind mulch will be needed. The town needs to take three quotes to compare. Cheryl Longyear asked about the previous company used for a quote in the past, they did not respond back to Tiffini. Christopher Howard stated there may be a company in Syracuse to use. Tiffini will gather additional quotes and reach out to the town's insurance carrier as well for the next board meeting.

Supervisor David Corey brought a copy of the current dog ownership regulations and had Tiffini Sharp make a few changes. The board was presented with the proposed changes. A public hearing will need to be held to vote on updates. Tiffini Sharp asked if this would be sent out with dog licenses. Suzie Tracy, Dog Control Officer will be sending them out twice per year and will be ticketing unpaid dog licenses. Thomas Hitchcock Jr mentioned rabies shots may be hard to access with the veterinarian shortage in the area. Tiffini Sharp mentioned rabies clinics at Tractor Supply and Petco, as well as clinics through the county at the SPCA if one cannot get their pet to a veterinarian.

The monthly bills were submitted for review. Motion made to approve the bills was made by Thomas Fitzsimmons, seconded by Christopher Howard. Motion carried 4/0.

The monthly Supervisor's Report was submitted for review. The heat system has been updated in the Town Clerk's office. Thomas Fitzsimmons questioned the trash bill configuration and Kenneth Cook clarified the highway and the town office splits the cost each month. A few revisions were needed to be made and will be given to Patricia Crane. Motion to approve the report as amended was made by Thomas Hitchcock Jr, seconded by Christopher Howard. Motion carried 4/0.

The minutes from January's town board meeting were reviewed. Motion made to accept the minutes made by Thomas Hitchcock Jr, seconded by Christopher Howard. Motion carried 4/0.

No public concerns or comments were brought forward. Motion to adjourn was made by Thomas Hitchcock Jr, seconded by David Corey. Motion carried 4/0.