

**Village of Walden  
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting  
August 3, 2021**

Deputy Mayor Carley called the regular meeting of the Village of Walden Board of Trustees to order at 6:30pm.

On roll call the following were:

Present:

Mayor:

Deputy Mayor  
Trustees

Willie Carley  
Brian Sebring  
Cheryl Baker  
John Elliott  
Lynn E. Thompson  
Patricia Maher

Absent:

John Ramos

Also Present:

John Revella, Village Manager  
Marisa Kraus, Village Clerk  
Dave Donovan, Village Attorney

**Manager's Report**

**Manager Revella:** We had a few meetings on and finalized the PD retro for PBA contract. Had some meetings on capital projects with the Engineer. Also had a meeting with the Building Department and Engineer regarding Falcon's Rest project and its place on the IDA agenda and our concerns and where they are in moving forward. Had another meeting with the Mayor and the IDA regarding potential projects on West Main Street. Met with the DPW Super, for a short period of time he was on vacation, so I was covering, but made sure he had updates on different projects going on, including paving and patching and the capital project update list. He did meet and is going over the site plans for the community center with the engineer. I can say that we did receive our first allocation of ARPA funds and there's more than sufficient funds there to cover the remainder of the community center without having to get any additional bonding. We'll get our second allocation next year. Clerk has been working on 207c and worker's comp matters, retirement reports, working on FOILs, finished the new calendar and it is out and processing permits. The Building Inspector has been doing building permits and COs as usual. Inspections coming up. Responding to complaints, reviewed the application for the Big Apple Circus to relocate and have some operations back at 39 Edmunds Lane. On the back section of the property. The Code Enforcement Officer has been out reviewing property maintenance violations. The Parks Department has done over 55 residential cleanups so far this season. Due to the weather, the grass has been growing more frequently and quicker this year than in years past. Outdoor soccer registration is now up online on SI Play. Summer camp is going well and flag football is going well. Music in the Grove is going well. PD has been out doing some details. I do have interviews tomorrow for police officer and part time dispatcher and then we'll start the additional police officer interviews from the canvassing shortly as well. Library is on full schedule. Most of their events are in the bimonthly calendar. Went over a few different attorney client matters with our Village Attorney.

Deputy Mayor Carley read community events into the minutes

**Approval of July 20, 2021 Minutes**

Trustee Thompson made a motion to approve the July 20, 2021 minutes. Seconded by Trustee

Baker. All ayes. Motion carried.

### **Public Comment on Business of the Board**

**Brenda Adams:** 31 Valley Ave. Hello, everybody. The fact that I'm compelled to speak tonight makes me both angry and sad. The Treasurer position is so important that every step should be taken to make absolutely sure the most qualified person is hired. Therefore, I'm pleading with you to postpone the appointment tonight. I didn't expect a new treasurer to be appointed so quickly as there were only 2 viable applicants as of the last board meeting. I anticipated the position would be reposted to cast the net wider to make sure the most qualified Treasurer would be found. Who knows, perhaps the candidate you've chosen would be that person even with 10 more applicants, you'll never know if the position is not reposted. I understand interviewing. It's not my favorite thing to do. It's time consuming. It's frustrating. And when an applicant is a neighbor or a friend, it can be emotionally draining. Quitting your search with just 2 applicants is the easy way out and irresponsible. While the quantity of applicants and their qualifications concern me greatly, I'm here about what the Village needs in this position. I don't have to tell any of you. An organization does not create a position to employ someone. The organization creates the position because it is to the benefit of the entity. The Treasurer's position highly benefits the Village and it's essential a prospective employee must be fully vetted to make sure all the boxes are checked. A little history so you know where I'm coming from and why. I was recruited to fill Sue Rumbold's, now Sue Taylor, Trustee position when she was elected Mayor. She challenged me to help get the Village in a better financial position with competent people. 3 years later, when I left the board, I was confident the Village was in good hands with Kelly Kelly as Treasurer. She has an in-depth knowledge of accounting, which her predecessors did not have. Going back, Manage Revella's first treasurer had an MBA. Officials were so excited. We have an MBA. Yay, yay! Working for the Village. It was a complete failure. The next Treasurer who took the position out of desire to help his community was very proficient in business administration, not in accounting. And it became a problem. Municipal accounting is far different from corporate for profit accounting. New York State has so many municipalities that there are people out there who understand what this kind of government accounting is all about. Municipal accounting is unique in that instruction is given very little time in college courses. However, with a solid understanding of accounting, the transition to municipal accounting is not difficult. Meaning one went deep into accounting instruction, not general overview or how to read a financial statement. Very deep with all the courses that go with the accounting. Business Administrator Degrees prepares a person to take a different approach. One learns the basics of many facets of administrative duties, including accounting, but does not go fully deep in any 1 aspect. The Village of Walden Treasurer needs to be someone with deep accounting knowledge, not someone who understands the concept, but one who understands the nitty gritty work from bookkeeper to financial reporting to financial analysis. The Treasurer needs a wide spectrum of knowledge. In a small office the Treasurer must be able to perform the duties of staff when they're inept, when they're absent, and must be able to train new staff in the ways of municipal finance. The Village needs someone who is ready to sink their teeth into understand the overall composition of the Village. Where departments work individually and where they work collectively. This is very important during the budget process. In other words, someone who has the passion for the health of the Village. It's not for someone who is learning something new to add to a resume. Look for someone for the long haul. The Village needs someone who appreciates the staff and is unbiased to all coworkers, staff, peers, board, and a team player. Kelly's gone. We do not want to go backward. Finding the perfect match to Village needs and professional skills is near to impossible. Every entity has unique operations. Even the most skilled doesn't know everything about every kind of business entity operation. However, please strive to get the best match possible. I heard through the gossip mill this position is starting at \$71,500. If true, why? I'm not positive, but I believe that is very close to what Kelly was making when she left with her accounting degree and all of her experience. Salary should be commensurate with skill. If the prospective employee is a superstar, I get the high salary. If there is no municipal accounting experience, then this is on the

job training and the salary should reflect the cost of that training. The theory is that an organization runs at a production salary deficit for the 6 months to a year from hire. The learning curve will cost taxpayers money. It also takes time and productivity away from the staff. They'll have to do the training. This cost repeats itself with each new hire. All college degrees from basic to masters to PhDs, etc. are admirable. They require time, effort and money. Unfortunately, they are only valuable in their specific area of expertise. For the Treasurer's position, an accounting degree and solid accounting experience is the essential expertise. Yes, I've been repetitive. Please know it's not senility. It's to express how strongly I feel about the financial health of the Village and how hopeful I am that you will feel the same way. I can't remember if this is a mayoral appointment only or if the full board votes. If the decision is unanimous and you are all confident the person to be appointed meets the needs of the Village, without a doubt, then by all means go for it. The worst that happens is I just wasted your time and mine. If you don't agree and vote yes or stay silent, whichever is the action, then you have all tacitly approved in public's eyes. And don't say it's the Mayor's appointment and the Trustees have no say or no responsibility. It's not our job. It was all on him. Absolutely not. Remember, the Treasurer works for the board, the entire board. The Mayor is 1 member of the board, 1 of 7 people the Treasurer reports to. The future of the Village is on your hands. Thank you.

**Becky Pearson:** 167 Walnut St. Well, that was nicely said, Brenda. I'm in total agreement. She is charging you, this board, with what's right for this Village. When did this appointment become a mayoral pick? We work under old Village law. I get Village code 56-3 in our code book says that the Village Board appoints the Attorney, Clerk and Treasurer. We are working under the old Village law, which is for 4-400. We do not have current law. 4-400 says years ago, 2005, was written to an Attorney up for a General Attorney's opinion. "We conclude that the mayor has responsibility for the appointment of village officers, employees, subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees. I don't think our law has changed since 2005 because I've been coming to most of those meetings. This is the law that we're working under. Consolidated old law from 1933. These are the laws are working and were not working under current law. Show me in Village law, I just showed you where we found this, where it is and why the board is not approving this? Why the mayor is just the approval vote on this. Kelly started at \$60,000 5 years ago. In this year's budget, she was going to be up to \$72,000. And a new hire here with less experience, I'm hearing because I'm not sure, I wasn't sitting in on the appointments, is going to be making \$500 less than a Treasurer that just left here with experience, accounting degree, what you needed for this Village. So, where and when was the salary discussed by this board? The board is the one who has to approve the salary. We sit out here in the public and listen to everything that said. Salary is discussed for a position in the public. You're spending taxpayers dollars in order to have a salary. The last time you picked a clerk, the clerk salary, when you talked about it was going to be between X amount of money and this amount of money. None of those discussions happened here. Those discussions need to happen in public. So, I don't know how you can appoint somebody tonight without having the discussions in public. Unless I'm very wrong at that, I don't think I am. Again, unless you had those discussions in public with the whole board and decided what the salary was going to be, I don't think you can appoint somebody this evening. You may have to go back and retrace your tracks. If the mayor decided the salary on his own, why is that allowable? Again, you are the board. You have got to make the money decisions for this Village. Period. Done. And again, \$500 less than Kelly. That is just ludicrous. I'm sorry to say. You should have just kept Kelly and paid her the extra money that she wanted. As far as I'm concerned. Let's not make the same blunder of giving someone something that they shouldn't be getting, like that 21% raise. This is why we're here now. Kelly left because of that. So here we are continuing to the essentialness of the Village and we're not getting anywhere. So hopefully you will take time and maybe not appoint this person. I believe that there should be a discussion on salary and I think it should come from the board. If you need any old laws, your manager has them all. He has this whole packet of what we work under now, not new law. We work under old law. When I was mayor, I was told I can't do something

because I am working under an old law instead of a new law. I wanted to appoint an attorney. They wouldn't let me do it because the Village Board has to have a say so and that's the law we're working under right now. The same law has not changed in since 1933. So hopefully you do some research before you appoint and hopefully the attorney can guide you in a certain direction and maybe you will reconsider and wait to get the right answers you need to get. Thank you very much.

**Mary Ellen Matise:** 54 Gladstone. Any information about old village law, the consolidated laws of New York annotated. Under Section 373 appointment of village officers and employees, it discusses the Clerk, the Attorney and the Treasurer and concludes that they shall be appointed and their salary or compensation fixed by the Board of Trustees as provided in this chapter. That was added in 1927 and amended in 1933. Was the discussion about salary in executive session? And then never brought out of executive sessions so that the public would know what kind of salary you were talking about? As far as I recollect, the advertisement said salary commensurate with experience. There was no rate published to the public in the paper or posted. Where did the salary come from? And as Becky said, where was the discussion here among all the Trustees in public about the salary?

**Sue Taylor:** 84 East Ave. Hello, everybody. My purpose for coming here tonight was I thought as former Mayor, that I wanted to make a statement in public about Kelly Kelly. To thank her for her diligence, her financial prowess while she was employed here with the Village and to wish her well in her new endeavor. I've been out of the loop deliberately, not reading the newspaper, not watching anything. So, that was going to be my statement and I was going to sit down and happily go home and have a piece of cake and go to bed. Then I heard Brenda Adams speak. Yes, I did appoint her to the Board of Trustees and I always admired her financial prowess. She did participate in the search for the Treasurer, which ended up being Kelly Kelly. 1 thing I can tell those of you, who don't know, Brenda, is that I think her middle name is Ebeneezer. She knows finance better than probably anybody in this room. I'm not going to stand here and second guess the decision that was made by your current mayor. I wasn't privy to the methodology that he used and the criteria that he used to make his choice. But I will say in my experience that other than the Village Manager and maybe the Village Attorney, 1 of the most important decisions you will ever make is the Treasurer of this Village. We are all custodians of taxpayer dollars. And our main purpose is to make certain that we safeguard those dollars and to make sure that they are spent in a productive manner and that those dollars are not wasted or otherwise damaged during our tenure on this board. I have to agree with Brenda that when you do a search, you want to get at the best qualified person for whatever position that you're looking for. I don't know anything about old Village law, new Village law. I always depended upon council to lead me and my colleagues in the proper direction in regards to this Village. And I have to say, and I've said it to him, I happen to think that Dave Donovan is probably 1 of the best municipal attorneys that I've ever had the pleasure of working with. So, I would refer to his guidance. But I do hope that you all realize if this was the mayor's appointment for this temporary position to fill out the duties of the Treasurer until that appointment expires. I believe it's in April. The new appointment made in April falls to 7 people, whoever those 7 are in April, who sits on this dais. You are the ones that are going to make that decision, regardless of how you feel about this appointment. No appointment by this board is permanent. 2 years. Then in 2 years, whoever the board is gets to make that appointment again. So, if you believe and think about what Brenda Adams said, if you think about it, it is your duty and your responsibility to appoint a new Treasurer in April. So, I would implore all of you to think about that duty and responsibility in the coming months before you have to make that decision, because it's all about finance. This municipality runs on taxpayer dollars. You have a responsibility, as I said before, to protect those taxpayer dollars and make sure that they are spent well. And in the interest of this Village. It's great to see you all and I have to tell you, I'm glad I'm standing on this side of that plexiglass. Have a good night.

## **Action Items**

### **Veteran's Day Request**

Trustee Maher made a motion to approve the Veterans Day Request for November 14, 2021 at 1pm at Walden Veterans Memorial Park. Seconded by Trustee Thompson. All ayes. Motion carried.

### **Appointment of Village Treasurer**

**Attorney Donovan:** There have been issues raised. I can certainly speak to those issues briefly. The issue is when there's a vacancy in the office of an appointed position, who fills that vacancy? The answer is found not in the Village law but in the public officer's law. It states clearly when there is a vacancy in the office and there's many different reasons that would result in a vacancy, but 1 of which is a resignation, when there is a vacancy in an appointed office by way of resignation, the appointment for the balance of the unexpired term is the appointment of the Mayor, not the Village Board. The Village Board would have the power of the appointment at the expiration of that term. Typically done at your reorg meeting in April. Hopefully, if we're not in a pandemic and postpone like this year. But it is clear in the New York State Public Officers law, that when there is a vacancy in office of an appointed position, that is the mayor's appointment not subject to the approval of the board or Village Trustees. For those of you who were here a while, you will recall there was a resignation of the prior Village Clerk. And at that time, our new Village Clerk was appointed. I offered the same opinion at that time. And whether the appointment is controversial or not controversial does not change my opinion. It doesn't change the law. The law allows the mayor to appoint.

Deputy Mayor Carley read Mayor Ramos's letter announcing the appointment of Ms Elizabeth Skinner of Walden, New York as Treasurer for the Village of Walden.

### **Public Comment**

**Brenda Adams:** Thank you for approving the Veterans Day event. It will be nice and hopefully no Covid.

**Becky Pearson:** You didn't talk about the salary, were there any comments on the salary of the position and who decides that? I didn't hear any conversation on that. No board member asked. So, I want to ask, what about the salary, Mr. Attorney?

**Attorney Donovan:** So if asked by the board, I would indicate that I would report back to them on that issue. That issue was not raised with me prior to this evening.

**Becky Pearson:** Maybe the board needs to ask you that question instead of me, because I don't sit on the board. So, then the other thing, going back to 2009 organizational chart of the Village. This is basically what I was talking about last time and John said there wasn't one. This was in 2009 and how it worked. But what I was asking for is when someone is on vacation, where is the next thing fall, to what next person here that's in the Village? If something happened. I get you got cell phones but 100,000 miles away or 3000 miles away. If you're in California, it's not going to do us any good here to not have somebody on site. What I'm looking for is this board to possibly put something together with the manager that can say who's designated what? I know we have emergency management plan. But again, I don't see that anywhere.

**Manager Revella:** Depending on who is still around on staff, it depends and on who's away. There would be designees for each issue before I leave. So, before I go somewhere, I designate who's to take care of what issues and contact information is given out.

**Becky Pearson:** What if the second person is gone. You designate the third person. And does the mayor know that? Who knows that? Do you let the board know who's in charge when you're gone?

Say the chief and you are away at the same time, who would you leave next?

**Manager Revella:** It depends. For example, if there was an issue with the streets, I would say DPW Supervisor.

**Becky Pearson:** There wouldn't be 1 single person in charge?

**Manager Revella:** No.

**Becky Pearson:** Then your department heads are in charge?

**Manager Revella:** Normally.

**Becky Pearson:** Do you let the board know that you're both away at the same time and that those issues will be taken care of by other people?

**Manager Revella:** Normally.

**Becky Pearson:** That's what I want to know, whether the board gets memos or emails that you are away and so someone else away and this person will be basically in charge of this facility. I think the board should make that a practice that it is done so that you know, heaven forbid, a propane tank blows up or something and the Village is on fire. I get that there's firemen and everything else. But I'm just using that as an example. Maybe this board wants to know who's the next person in charge, even though you're not responsible for it, but you are responsible for what happens in the Village. Thank you very much.

**Mary Ellen Matise:** I'm wondering if I want to talk about the IDA for Falcon's Rest. The proposed senior project on North Montgomery Street that's before our Planning Board right now and that's before the Town of Montgomery IDA. That has a public hearing coming up on August 18th at 5:30. Last time I was here, I brought you some information from the town assessor's office. With the idea that basically we're talking about if and depending on how much of a pilot they give them. But the pilots usually not the same amount as the taxes that we would receive. We were talking about losing roughly \$47,000 at today's rate if it existed today, a year and probably going up over the course of 10 years in taxes and that those taxes would be spread out in the rest of the community. I called the assessor back. How many people in the Village receive aged exemption? 73 parcels. 65 and older. Homeowners. Owner-Occupied. How many receive enhanced star, which means they make that person or as a single person, makes less than \$32,399 a year to qualify? The school district used to be at poverty level, which was \$23,000. That figure is 224 parcels. Now that might include people who get the aged exemption, some of them, not all of them. So, it could be upwards of between 224-300 people. Of course there are seniors who make more money than that. There are some seniors who don't get aged exemption or don't get anything beyond basic star. The numbers of trying to track how many seniors own their own homes and live in their own homes in the Village of Walden is very difficult. You also have seniors who sign their houses over to their children, seniors who might be living in a house that belongs to somebody else besides a family member, but that they pay the taxes and upkeep on. So it's very hard to get an exact number. According to the last comp plan, roughly a little over 1400 owner occupied units in the Village of Walden. If senior units are 300 or more, you're talking about 20% of the housing units. Then you've got a project asking to pay no taxes and just pay a pilot. In addition to all the young people, middle aged people, people under the age of 65 who own their own home and are paying taxes and are going to pay the taxes for that project. There are all these seniors who are going to pay the taxes for other seniors to live in a project that's not paying their share of the taxes. And in a Town where we have the Town of Montgomery Seniors and Dependents Project, this has been ongoing for 15 years, where it's a

recognized desire by the Town of Montgomery that seniors stay in their own home, aging in place. How seniors supposed to do that if they have to carry the burden for a project that's not going to pay their fair share? How is that equitable to the seniors who live here currently and own their own homes? It's a big discussion and I know they were waiting for an opinion from the state. Do you know if they got that opinion?

**Manager Revella:** I don't know if they got it. I talked to them today. I didn't ask about the opinion. We were just talking about the agenda.

**Mary Ellen Matise:** They got the attorney general's opinion, which referred them to the comptrollers opinion. But I can't bring it up. But he said he's going to post it on the IDA website. They got an opinion from the comptroller's office. 1983 opinion where they consider rental residential units commercial. The IDA then can decide and there are certain parameters to it, some of it had to do with rehabilitation of properties, but if the IDA feels that they can fit in under that opinion, then they can go ahead and entertain this application and they can grant it if they feel they fit under the parameters of this opinion from 1983. That's sort of where we sit with this thing right now. I think that I would like in fact, I'd go and knock on people's doors and say, do you know that this project is before the IDA? Do you know that this is what we're talking about? Do you know you have a right to either tell me or tell this other board, your feelings and your opinion on it and what you think should happen? I felt that that was my responsibility as a Trustee to do that. Sometimes maybe I reached a little too far. You're allowed to go around and talk to people and you should go around and talk to people, because at this stage of the game and I shared both meetings Facebook and I don't know how many people responded. People in the Village of Walden should know what is going on here. They should be speaking up. And in fact, when I spoke to Connor, he said, please, please come to the public hearing. I said, don't worry, I'll be there. But all of us should be at the public hearing. All 7 of you. You can present a coordinated statement from the board, an official statement, and you can give your own statements. Those people sitting on that board, who are appointed by the Town Board, need to know how we feel about this project and the effect it's going to have on the Village. And if they grant a pilot that doesn't provide the compensation for the services that this project is going to require, then we're in trouble.

**Manager Revella:** I can say publicly that we have vehemently opposed any pilot for that project and at that location.

**Mary Ellen Matise:** More people have to come out and oppose it. I said to Connor, that if I had to spend 17 or 1800 dollars a month on rent for an apartment there, I wouldn't have any money left over to buy food. That would be my whole monthly income.

**Sue Taylor:** I do have one other item. I'm not sure about the code, but if you go up on East Avenue, there's been a pickup truck with a camper attached to it in front of a certain house all summer. I think it moves every once in a while because I think someone is residing in it, which is what I've been told. Haven't seen it. Don't know. I'll also tell you, when people on the opposite side of the street have company and cars park on the street, there is no way a fire truck can get through there or an ambulance. That street is narrow to begin with down on the 52 end and I don't know what the code is. I was told that as long as it's hooked up to a vehicle, it can stay parked there, which I think is ridiculous, especially given that there's an electric cord that runs from it that's attached to that house. For some reason, they need electric to go to that unit. But you may want to check that code and possibly consider making changes, because I'd hate to see an emergency on that end of the street and have an emergency vehicle not be able to get through there because of the trailer and the cars parked directly across from it. I believe Trustee Sebring can vouch for that situation.

**Manager Revella:** I can let the board know that that issue was brought up to the Police Chief and

to Code Enforcement.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Public Comment is for anybody that has a certain type of issue to address. They can address it. Is there anybody else that would want to make a public comment? When you come to the mic, please state your name and your address, please.

**Gillian Hedden:** 86 Capron Street. I'm the homeowner now since March of 2021. I'm here because I have been trying for quite some time, before I even purchased the home, to get some assistance from the Village about a tree that's in front of my property. It's about 5 feet off of my property line and I've written emails. I've called. I think I actually spoke to Mr. Revella a few times and nothing has been done and I haven't really gotten any answers from anyone. I was told that the location of the tree is actually on the right-of-way, but it's also off of my property. I got a property survey. I was told that once I had the survey in place and the survey showed that the tree was not on my property, that that would be enough. There's a code 256-9, in case of existing trees, shrubs or hedges located within the sidewalk area, there is no sidewalk, but it is the sidewalk area, the Village shall be responsible for their maintenance. There is a dead limb hanging directly over the street, which is a very narrow street. It's 2 way traffic, but several limbs have fallen in storms that have passed. They've hit my car. They've hit people passing by. There's a really big limb hanging directly over the street. It's just a matter of time before that limb is falling on someone or something. I'm trying to avoid any sort of legal issues, and I just really need the assistance of the Village to get that tree taken care of. I have pictures, I also emailed the board.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I received your email and I'm passing it around so that everyone understands what you're referring to. To be honest with you, they're going to discuss it and then we have to refer to our attorney to make sure everything is correct and then the Village Manager will reach back out to you and to make sure it's addressed and thank you for coming. We appreciate it.

**Elizabeth Skinner:** 35 Alfred Place. I just wanted to take a few minutes to introduce myself being with the appointment tonight. I wanted to take a few minutes to first thank the Board for their time while we were meeting before this decision was made. For those who live within the Village. I just wanted to also assure them that the decision for myself to come into this position and to even interview was not lightly. I understand I'm going to be handling everyone's finances. I take this position very seriously. I do have over 20 years accounting experience. 15 of which were at the controller level. I am confident that once I get to dig my hands in and start with the position that you will find that I am capable and very friendly.

**Mary Ellen Matise:** Just looking at pictures that I took the other day because a friend of mine asked me why are there these big signs at Olley Park saying "Park closed during summer camp"? I said I don't know and I went up and took some pictures. The question I have aside from, why is the park closed during summer camp? Then I decided to go around and look at some of our other signs. 1 that says "young ones at play no smoking, please". Why don't we have the code cited on the signs? Or the law that's enforcing these things? Either no smoking or park closed. The park closed during summer camp, what, Monday to Wednesday, Monday to Friday or July 1st to August 15th? There's no information on these signs. What do they mean? And why don't we have the appropriate codes cited on these signs so people can go online and look and see what the authorizing power is behind the issue? Why is the park closed during camp? We've never had a sign like that before?

**Manager Revella:** The issue came up because we never had to deal with Covid before or camp during a pandemic. That's why it's different.

**Mary Ellen Matise:** But I thought the restrictions were lifted.

**Manager Revella:** They were not when we started camp. And we decided that we would keep them intact until it's over. When a sign says during camp that would mean while camp was in session. A lot of signs don't have code numbers on them. There's no parking signs that don't have a code number on it.

**Mary Ellen Matise:** I know they don't. But I would think that the provision is in the code. So, why wouldn't we just by line it so that people can check? Because there might be other things in that code. For example, the Town of Montgomery just adopted a no smoking in their parks and they had a public hearing and there was a big discussion. The woman who provides the signs, she had these signs and I asked what is that other item on the sign. Well, it was a round can. She said that it's chewing tobacco. The law that they were going to write only said no smoking. It didn't say no smoking or use of tobacco products. So, they amended their draft law and passed it saying and use of tobacco products so that that would cover chewing tobacco, snuff or any other items like that that were smokeless. And so if they cite the code, then people will be able to know that the law also means any tobacco product. I would think that we would cite the law and plus our no smoking sign looks like we could use a new one. Maybe we should contact this lady and get one from her.

#### **Payment of Audited Bills**

Trustee Sebring made a motion to approve Payment of Audited Bills. Seconded by Trustee Elliott. All ayes. Motion carried.

#### **Correspondence**

**Trustee Thompson:** I received several emails from people in the community asking about the park use and what you forwarded me about the situation with the tree.

**Trustee Elliott:** All I received was the statement about the tree.

**Trustee Maher:** I also received the email. I've also been going back and forth with correspondence with the Negron family, who were here at our last board meeting.

**Trustee Baker:** Just the correspondence about the tree.

**Trustee Sebring:** Correspondence about the tree. I went up and looked at it myself.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Also received the same correspondence regarding the tree.

#### **Miscellaneous Comments from the Board of Trustees**

**Trustee Thompson:** On the Building Department's report, I saw that there were quite a few of the grass citations, but I noticed there were only 5 property violations. And my question is, if the department is out driving around looking for grass that needs to be cited. I find it a little amazing, especially the things I know when I'm driving around the Village, that there were only 5 violations for property maintenance issues. I would like to know perhaps we can do a little better with that? I would have to think most of my colleagues on the board agree, we have several properties in the Village that certainly need to be addressed by the Code Officer and the Building Inspector. I just have a few comments about parks that will fall under parks, the emails about the park use, my only question is on the report from the Parks Department. At our last board meeting, it said that the state has lifted all restrictions. Is there another reason why we are deciding to keep the park closed to the public?

**Manager Revella:** We anticipate further restrictions coming down to avoid any issues of transgression. It's easier to keep them in place until camp's over. It's another week.

**Trustee Thompson:** 1 of the comments in the emails, which I know, John, you also received email. People want to know why the entire park has to be closed. It's a very enormous park and we have residents that walk the trail that's way on the opposite side of the park. It's across the pond. The parking for that is very much removed from where the children are camping. The parking lot from where their families park. I guess that's what really has people very troubled. They enjoy walking the other half of the park through the woods where the trail is. I think they'd be happy to turn around and walk back through the woods. But usually then they walk along the grassy meadow again across from the park, very far away from the children. So that seems to be the thing that's making our residents very unhappy.

**Manager Revella:** Normally, that would be the case. That would be open during normal camp. But they do nature trail walking with all the different groups of kids as well. That's why this year it just wasn't feasible to do it. But normal years. That's correct. We would have the public allowed to use that section and the opposite side of the lake and we try to keep the campers on this side. They would also be monitored with counselors while they do the walking trail. But it was not as much of an issue prior, we would have it opened.

**Trustee Thompson:** Have the people who wrote in the emails, have they been made aware of that?

**Manager Revella:** I did email the one that I received back.

**Trustee Thompson:** I didn't see the comment about why the walking trails closed. I just saw that it had to do with Covid.

**Manager Revella:** I can clarify.

**Trustee Thompson:** I would just like to know, since we've increased police patrols in some of our parks and apparently some of our mischief makers, it's my understanding that the Police Department has been able to verify who some of these young people are. I'm just curious, since the children or young adults, teenagers have been spoken to, the family spoken to, have the problems in the park decreased? Have they stopped?

**Manager Revella:** We haven't had vandalism since that took place. And I know that the individuals involved were made aware of restitution request. We're trying to work through that now.

**Trustee Thompson:** Since that has all been taken care of, no more shenanigans that we know of in the parks?

**Manager Revella:** Nothing of the similar nature that we were having has happened since then, thankfully.

**Trustee Thompson:** I just want to let the community know if you've been down to Woosters Grove, there's a sign about a meadow project. Probably people are wondering what's happening, we still see the tarps on the ground. The tarps will be removed between the third week of August and the second week of September. Hopefully we can continue to move forward with the project. For 5 years, I've heard people in the community voice their unhappiness about the Village, not having a lot of aesthetic beauty in the summer, no plants, no flowers. I met with John and Mr. Bliss from the Parks Department and it has been agreed that we can form a small committee and assist the Parks Department and do some volunteer work. So far, there are 2 people that have volunteered, plus myself. If anyone else is interested, please contact me on my Village email. I would love to have a few more volunteers. 1 volunteer and I went around, we did measurements. I'm working on sketches. We put together a plant list. If John and Mike approve of all this, I will go ahead and start

to get some prices and hopefully we can get this started in the fall. But it's almost a moot point if we can't figure out how we're going to maintain everything. The biggest thing is watering. The volunteer committee is there to assist, but we certainly cannot do all of this by ourselves. I'm hoping that the board or John and Mike can come up with some type of a plan so we truly can do this and move forward with it.

**Manager Revella:** Just so the board is aware and the public, we talked about getting a small electric pump on one of the water tanks for the back of the truck so we can water. We're hoping that will work out.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Is this in addition to the beautification committee or is a beautification committee that we have before is disbanded?

**Trustee Thompson:** The beautification committee has not been in existence for quite some time. It shrunk because a lot of the people on that committee, they're getting older and it's a lot of work and they can't manage it so much anymore. I have spoken to those people and I encourage them to still participate. I even told them if you still want to be in charge or whatever, I will offer my services to help you. They were very happy that someone else wanted to get involved because they just feel like they can't do it anymore. So correct me if I'm wrong, but it's kind of like there really hasn't been a true beautification committee for quite some time. We have a woman from Community Council who does the bicycles that you see downtown, Mrs. Winum. And I don't really think there's anything else. Is there anything else in addition to that that's still a beautification committee?

**Becky Pearson:** I think they talked to Mike about planting plants out here in the square. The Fireman's Square.

**Trustee Thompson:** I think Mike does that.

**Becky Pearson:** They used to do the entranceways. But I don't know if Mike's taken that over.

**Trustee Thompson:** Mike's been doing that. And that's one of the things we had asked. If we can improve upon. Willie, an answer to your question, there's really not much of a beautification committee left, but I would love to still have those people because of their years of experience and they know the Village. I have absolutely no problem working together with them. I'm still working hard with the Climate Smart entries, that's a bit of a challenge, but I've been getting some excellent computer help from Marisa Kraus when she is not working for the Village. That's been very helpful. The biggest hurdle with that is just compiling all the data. I need people to turn in their data to me. We're working on that. It's a work in progress, but we're trudging along. As far as what Mary Ellen said, I have had several people in the community asked me about the project and the pilot, so people are hearing about it. I understand what she's saying about knocking door to door. I'm very familiar with that. I did it in my own neighborhood and was able to get a petition with 90 people in no time at all. They came before this board, probably between 20 and 30 of them appeared several times. Brian Sebring and I went all over the Village and got 500 signatures pertaining to the Hill Street Bridge. When residents in our community are aware of something going on, a lot of times they will step up, they will speak out. I think the biggest thing to let people know about this IDA and the pilot, maybe we need to really press it on social media and talk about the public hearing and encourage our residents to get out and hear what's going on and that they can speak up and have a voice. Maybe we can also put some type of an article in the Wallkill Valley Times to try and make people more aware. We should just communicate with our neighbors. We really need to let our neighbors and people in our community know how that type of pilot could really impact our Village for a very long time. And I do know John Revella and John Ramos are opposed to it and have made that very, very clear to the Town of Montgomery. But it's my understanding the ultimate decision is

theirs. As much as we can kick and scream and protest, hopefully they will listen and our voices will be heard. But the ultimate decision is theirs.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** Can we do an online petition and then have people sign more online so that they could have access to that versus walking door to door, which is very limited right now?

**Manager Revella:** You can certainly do the petition, but it's not something that would force a hand, it's just a matter of correspondence that can be given to them.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** I'm asking because, like what Trustee Thompson just said, if we do the online and we show as a Village Board that we oppose it and that the Village of Walden opposes it. And we get more than 500, that would add a little bit more weight. Once again, it's not our decision, but it's theirs. But we can demonstrate that. Would that be a big lift for IT to go ahead and do that?

**Manager Revella:** We'll definitely look into that.

**Trustee Thompson:** I just think we really need to be creative and find a way to get the message out there. I have a broken foot, so I can't be walking all around the Village with a paper petition. I like the idea of an electronic petition if we can manage it. I think that's a great idea.

**Deputy Mayor Carley:** What's the date of the hearing?

**Manager Revella:** August 18th 5:30pm at Town Hall, 110 Bracken Rd.

**Trustee Thompson:** I just want to say one other thing about the appointment of the Treasurer. It was a mayoral decision. I did correspond with our attorney to just double check on all of that. And I did some reading on my own. I'm absolutely confident that the law was followed appropriately. Although the board was able to sit through the interview process, we were allowed to ask some questions. The ultimate decision was the mayors. I hope the Treasurer, when she begins, settles into her role and does a good job.

**Trustee Maher:** Last board meeting, I raised my hand to be a board correspondent for the Hudson Valley Ride for Kids, which is a motorcycle ride that's going to help benefit the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation. That is going to be held on September 12th. I just wanted to update everyone, every board meeting just on the progress of that as it comes closer. They're really looking for Village of Walden participation. So far, we've been able to confirm Dunkin Donuts is helping with providing breakfast and coffee. We are also waiting to hear back from Orange County Bagels. Empanada Nirvana has also agreed to be involved in this. Currently, we're seeking volunteers to help with set up cleanup to do some afternoon shifts. The ride will go throughout the Orange County streets and it will come through the Village of Walden. Basically financially, they are looking to raise a goal of \$40,000. Last year during Covid, they raised \$30,000 and just wanted to encourage the board and residents to get involved. If you can share on the Facebook page and help this great organization that's asking for help. If anyone would like to volunteer or would like more information on the race, feel free to e-mail me at my Village email.

**Trustee Baker:** Last weekend, myself and Mike Bliss and our Mayor had attended a very lovely family barbecue hosted by the Breuderhof Community of Fox Hill. I wanted to thank them for a very lovely event there. It was well attended. On that same day, we had attended the ribbon cutting for Empanada Nirvana. I was very happy to see a very lovely turnout in support for Nelson and his business there and I'm very thankful that he decided to open up shop here and that he's doing well. I wish him much success. A couple of months ago, I had ridden around the Village with our Park Director and we had set up certain pet waste stations throughout the Village where we noticed there

was a pet waste issue. For the most part, the bags have worked out very well. However, as of late, we are finding that the boxes are being vandalized and the boxes of bags being stolen. I ask the community, please be mindful. The bags are there for everyone to be used. We want to keep our streets clean. It's unnecessary to break open those wooden boxes. They are built by the Parks and Rec Department and put up. 1 of them has been replaced. There are 2 others that are currently being repaired and will be put back shortly. Please be mindful. They're there for services to keep our streets clean and it makes it difficult when they're being damaged and the bags being stolen.

**Trustee Sebring:** I personally went down to Rockland County last week and I picked up 2 plastic water tanks and brought them back to the Village so they could have a portable watering station or the parks. when the girls want to water the flowers, they don't have to keep going to the building. I took him down a DPW then the next day. I donated a pump that I had from when I was working that I never used on anything. I donated that. And hopefully the water tanks can get put down there to help them water the flowers. Even though it's getting towards the end of the year. But the tanks are there for the use. Tilcon NY donated the tanks. I donate my time at the food pantry and they're in dire need of bags. They're having a shortage of bags. They've put it on Facebook that they need paper shopping bags. As many as you can get.

**Manager Revella:** I can get as many as they can fit. So, how many do they really need?

**Trustee Sebring:** Give them a lot. For the people that have them at their house, there is a box outside on 208 by Scott's Corners that you can put the bags in so it'll be dry when we need them to put the food in.

**Trustee Thompson:** We also had a vendor fair here in the Village this past weekend. The Merchants, a lot of them did not show up. Everyone is tribute it to Covid, but only 2 people on our board showed up and that was a little disappointing. There were a lot of comments about that. They're having another vendor fair in November, I believe it's the 13th. Hopefully a few more people from the board can stop in, say hello. You don't have to stay for a long time. The proceeds for this are to help with Harvest Fest. They're hoping that more vendors will show up and that people from the community will come out and people from our board will come out. I am just repeating what I was told. This family that's been waiting for quite some time about the tree, I hope we make that a priority and get an answer for them fairly quickly because it just feels like they've been waiting a very long time.

#### **Executive Session – Personal History of a Particular Employee**

Trustee Sebring made a motion to enter executive session to discuss personal history of a particular employee. Seconded by Trustee Thompson. All ayes. Motion carried.

#### **Reconvene**

Deputy Mayor Carley made a motion to reconvene the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees. Seconded by Trustee Elliott. All ayes. Motion carried.

**Village of Walden Board of Trustees  
Regular Meeting  
August 3, 2021  
Motions & Resolutions**

**Approval of July 20, 2021 Minutes**

Trustee Thompson made a motion to approve the July 20, 2021 minutes. Seconded by Trustee Baker. All ayes. Motion carried.

**Veteran's Day Request**

Trustee Maher made a motion to approve the Veterans Day Request for November 14, 2021 at 1pm at Walden Veterans Memorial Park. Seconded by Trustee Thompson. All ayes. Motion carried.

**Payment of Audited Bills**

Trustee Sebring made a motion to approve Payment of Audited Bills. Seconded by Trustee Elliott. All ayes. Motion carried.

**Executive Session – Personal History of a Particular Employee**

Trustee Sebring made a motion to enter executive session to discuss personal history of a particular employee. Seconded by Trustee Thompson. All ayes. Motion carried.

**Reconvene**

Deputy Mayor Carley made a motion to reconvene the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees. Seconded by Trustee Elliott. All ayes. Motion carried.