

**Village of Walden
One Municipal Sq. 3rd Floor
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting
April 21, 2026**

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

On roll call the following were: Mayor: Becky Pearson
Present:

Trustees: Deputy Mayor Lynn Thompson
Cheryl Baker - Late
Gerald Mishk
Kristie Hall
John Ramos

Absent: Ralph Garrison, Jr

Also Present: Ben Gailey, Attorney

John Queenan, Village Engineer

6:30 PM – Pledge

Capital Projects Presentation – Lanc & Tully:

John Queenan: Water, sewer, and general parks and roads projects for this fiscal coming year. For water we are looking at rehabbing well number six and providing a new variable frequency drive for that well, which is part of your annual program every year to make sure they are properly functioning, running, and bringing the capacity back to the well. The second one for water would be underground electric for wells five and six, we would like to bury that electricity, so we don't have any issues with trees down, down wires, etc. The third would be exploration testing for a well for future portable water supply. The board should consider looking at some sites for that action in the coming months. Now a long-term project that will not be a part of this capital year is the replacement of the water storage tanks; we will likely be looking for grant money to do that in the future.

Mayor Pearson: What is the amount for that site.

John Queenan: I put \$25,000, then the rehab for well six was about \$50,000, and the underground electric was about \$50,000. Moving on to the sewer category, with the sewer you are a little more limited in what you can do so this year we must continue the I&I program which is inflow infiltration into the sewer system. The approximate cost is \$100,000 for this fiscal year. As well as continuing to finalize the tin brook pump station wastewater treatment plant. For upgrades, that's looking like that is going to be more of a 2027 construction year. General fund, you have your parks projects listed as the Wooster's grove train station furnace, the Wooster's gym, building renovation of the bathroom, the foyer, the office, potential gym floor replacement, outdoor basketball courts, cracked ceiling, and repainting. And the skate park renovation which will be done over three phases, this year would be phase one and the upgraded installation of the Wooster Grove gym fire alarm. If you do all those projects, they total approximately \$172,000. Then you have whatever vehicles that you are looking to purchase this year, are not into that yet but you would have that in your general. Whatever is left over we are looking to do Gladstone Avenue sidewalks, curbs, and paving phase one. We estimated we would go from Scofield to Gladstone, that would be the replacement of the sidewalk on one side of the street and removal of the sidewalk on the other side. That is the proposal for this year. The salt barn project will be commencing in the next two months; that's the replacement of the salt barn down at public works. You did receive a grant for that for up to \$500,000. CDBG has funded a portion of the Pleasant Avenue sidewalk and curbing replacement project, that will likely begin early June. Then we are beginning the work on the sewage treatment plant primary walls, those pumps are just about to come in so that will likely start next month.

Mayor Pearson: Do you know how much CDBG is?

John Queenan: \$175,000. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Mayor Pearson: Thank you.

Minutes 3/17/2026:

Mayor Pearson: Moving on to minutes for March 17, 2026.

Trustee Hall: Did we ever find out about that.

Mayor Pearson: Yes, I did speak with the attorney he said the meeting was supposed to be posted but because there was action taken, we must redo those actions at tonight's meeting. Just the motions must be redone. I asked if the same person must re-make the motion, and they said no because it's now happening at this meeting. I have a few motions that need to be re-done.

Attorney Gailey: The motions need to be separate.

Mayor Pearson: Does anyone want to make a motion to approve the audited bills for the March 17,2026 meeting?

Trustee Mishk made a motion to approve the payment of audited bills. Deputy Mayor Thompson seconded. Trustee Hall and Trustee Ramos Abstained. 3 Ayes 0 Nays 2 Abstained. Motion not carried.

Mayor Pearson: That is probably going to happen the entire time so why don't we just table them until the next meeting.

Attorney Gailey: You can do that, that's fine.

Mayor Pearson: Okay, so we will table these minutes until the next meeting.

Minutes 3/31/2026:

Trustee Hall: I do have a question, Deputy Mayor Thompson I thought you weren't there in person? I thought you were on the phone?

Mayor Pearson: She was not in person this is the one where she was on the phone.

Trustee Hall: Does that count, even if you weren't allowed to vote?

Attorney Gailey: It's not permissible to meet or to participate from phone but you didn't vote at all.

Trustee Hall: We can do that now? We can call in for meetings if nobody is there? If I'm away or I'm in the hospital and I'm by myself, can I call in for this meeting?

Attorney Gailey: I found in that meeting to be a different situation.

Trustee Hall: A meeting is a meeting.

Attorney Gailey: It must be a special meeting.

Trustee Hall: That doesn't seem fair, a meeting is a meeting, because if you can do that at a special meeting where nobody can be privy of anything else then why can't you do it here where it's public? I would like you to look into that please.

Trustee Ramos: If you are calling a special meeting, don't you have to state what the meeting is about, or indicate what it is for?

Attorney Gailey: That's not a requirement, whereas in executive session it must be provided by the board before they go into executive session.

Trustee Ramos: So, the special meeting is convened and those who come don't know what kind of meeting it is. I understand there are issues with employees and attorney client, but it should state that for the people.

Attorney Gailey: Id be happy to look into that as well.

Mayor Pearson: We are going to table this one as well.

Minutes 4/7/2026:

Trustee Hall: I have a question on that one as well, for the public comment shouldn't it state who is speaking?

Mayor Pearson: We can do minutes verbatim or just a record of the motions. But we are going to switch back to verbatim. Does anyone want to make a motion?

Trustee Hall made a motion to accept the minutes for 4/7/2026. Trustee Mishk seconded. All Ayes. Motion carried.

Minutes 4/9/2026:

Trustee Hall: This was the one that was held at 10:00 in the morning, right? This is the one I saw on Facebook, I didn't know what time we were having it and that's when I texted Becky.

Mayor Pearson: I had said something the night before, so you knew there was going to be a meeting. My mistake I apologize for that. I'm not perfect, I try to do my best.

Trustee Hall: Not at all but when you have a special meeting like that you can just text me. I know that things are busy but just a text.

Trustee Ramos: I agree with Trustee Hall, my second issue is what is resolution 5-26-27?

Mayor Pearson: The resolution was to have a person from the village board be the person who will be doing the, not to be the manager but the responsibilities and duties of the manager.

Trustee Ramos: Since it was done in executive session why isn't it attached?

Mayor Pearson: We are going through some transitions in our office, and I hope that people can be forgiving. We have been without a clerk for quite a while; we have people doing double the duties. Not saying it's an excuse but we are trying our best to get where we need to be. That's all I can say, I can't talk about why people are not here. If you want to, table it for the next meeting to see the resolution that's fine.

Trustee Hall: I do have another question why were there no minutes for public comment?

Mayor Pearson: There were quite a few people here, and I allowed it, but I said there would be no minutes for that part of it. Everyone seemed fine with it because there is a lot happening. There was no clerk.

Trustee Hall: Is it legal for Deputy Mayor Thompson to vote for herself to be interim manager?

Attorney Gailey: Yes, it's not interim manager.

Trustee Hall: What's the difference between taking the responsibilities and roles vs. the title?

Attorney Gailey: She is still Deputy Mayor; she is not the interim manager but still holds the duties and responsibilities.

Mayor Pearson: She is not getting paid so it's a volunteer position, to get to where we need to go.

Trustee Hall: It was questioned by a lot of people so I figured I would ask. You are the lawyer so if you say so, I don't really agree.

Mayor Pearson: Okay, so we will table this one as well.

Payment of Audited Bills:

Trustee Hall made a motion to pay the audited bills, seconded by Deputy Mayor Thompson. Trustee Ramos states he did not sign some of them because they were before he was in office. All Ayes, motion carried.

Public Comment on Business of The Board:

Maryellen Matisse states she was disappointed in John Queenan's presentation. I wasn't sure if it was for the board or if it was for the residents. Whatever he was reading should have been on the tv or on a piece of paper that we could have taken. His presentation at the budget sessions was way more in depth but there were not as many people present at that meeting. We have a tough road ahead in terms of capital projects, and they are very expensive. I am disappointed with the way he gave the presentation because it really explained nothing to the public.

Budget:

Mayor Pearson: We are in a very good spot with the budget. We found a glitch in the formulas which brought the budget down, which is to our advantage. We make a resolution just in case we must pierce the cap. After we budget and we have a little money left over that's when we must decide how to use it, do we want services, more park things or this or that. We try to listen to the community when they come out and were hoping to have some suggestions. I know there is rumors that the Mayor and Trustees are getting a raise and that is far from the truth.

Diane Savage: You first state that the budget is under the tax cap and now you are saying it might be over, how much more do you think this community can take. You have lots of seniors here and people are struggling to keep their homes and feed their kids. You also have no clerk, and this young lady has taken over.

Mayor Pearson: She has not taken over. Marisa has not resigned from her position as village clerk, she is being held over until the position is filled. You might ask why that is, call New York state. There are some things I just cannot answer. So now we have three people in the office who are doing the job of about six people, so really try to understand what is happening here and be gracious with the people who are working hard.

Diane Savage: I am grateful the village is still running I've been here 30 years, but I can't go back to my job and say I need more money after I show them the budget. You hold meetings at 3

hours' notice, how is that fair to the rest of the board who cant make it, then there are four of you and you vote on things. How is that allowed?

Mayor Pearson: It's allowed because it's more of an emergency.

Trustee Hall: I understand John is on paid leave, but why couldn't he sit in on the budget if he is not touching a computer or anything that had to do with the subpoena situation, it's his budget, he had it under the cap. I understand there are things that need to be fixed on it, but it might have been beneficial to have him here.

Attorney Gailey: If the village manager is on leave, he is on leave from all his duties and responsibilities.

Basil Stewart: I have a question are we able to get a copy of the budget that we can review and see where things have changed?

Mayor Pearson: Yes, we are still working through that, we don't want to print and waste all that paper. The board is meeting tonight, and we are going to go over some salaries in executive session, and we will hopefully finalize some of it.

Maryellen: It's important for people to understand the full story. If you go to New York State Department of State, and everything about local government is on that website, you can also call someone and ask questions.

Trustee Ramos: Becky define glitch.

Mayor Pearson: The glitch had to do with one of the formulas in the budget. There was also a number that was in there at \$75,000 and it should have been \$7,500.

Park Use Request - Kaldon:

Trustee Ramos made a motion to accept the park use request, seconded by Deputy Mayor Thompson. All Ayes, Motion carried.

Flag Day Ceremony:

Trustee Ramos made a motion to accept the flag day ceremony, seconded by Deputy Mayor Thompson. Mayor Pearson Abstained. 4 Ayes 0 Nays 1 Abstained.

Remembering Our Loved Ones:

Deputy Mayor Thompson made a motion to let Jody change the day of her event to the 30th at 1:00, seconded by Trustee Ramos. All Ayes, motion carried.

Re-levy:

We are going to table this for the first meeting in May.

Public Comment:

Annmarie Sullivan: John Revella, Becky, and John Queenan were at my house December 4th to look at the ditch, and we have been talking about this for years. State says it's a village problem and the village says it's a state problem, but the attorney has never given us a reason why it's not the village's responsibility. I have the table of meetings from the plans that were made saying it is the village's responsibility. I also provided a packet and I'm not sure if everyone got that, but I have not gotten a response.

Mayor Pearson: You didn't get a letter?

Annmarie Sullivan: No.

Mayor Pearson: There was a letter emailed to you on January 29th.

Annmarie Sullivan: I didn't receive it.

Luis Ortiz: My car was hit near Scofield Street I called the police department because there was a camera on that street, they told me the camera only goes up that street and not down. There is a health center across the street from where I live and I'm sure there are a lot of valuable things in there. That camera should be operational. I would like someone to look into this and resolve the problem. My second thing is Becky the last time you were mayor we got grant money for Scofield Street but only half of it was completed, I was wondering when it was going to be completed. And my last comment is we need to do something with the village manager, if he is getting paid, he should work, unfortunately he can work for the village but there's other things he should be able to do. They got subpoenas for whatever, that's on him, he brought that upon himself. He is getting paid to do a job and we are paying for it. If he is getting paid at village time, he should be at his home during village hours, not taking trips.

Carolyn Wesenberg: I had come in to talk about cameras. One of my daughters staff also had a hit and run situation across from my house. I asked my neighbor to come tonight, and I must be honest sitting here tonight reality hit me, we've talked in that parking lot, we've done cupcake wars, I even did your pictures. We need to get back to what Walden used to be. I noticed with the hit and run that my neighbors had my back. I'm taking this moment to ask everyone, let's find a way to work together, to get along and get things to work out. I love living in Walden. Can we please try to get back to that Walden. Thank you.

Lainey: So, you're saying John was the one that started the budget and now he is relieved from his duties, why cant he be here answering the public's questions if he originally did it, he is being paid.

Attorney Gailey: I answered that question earlier, if he is on paid administrative leave he is relived of all his duties and responsibilities.

Correspondence:

Mayor Pearson: If the subpoenas do go through and we need a criminal attorney for support, J&G law does not do that so we may have to find someone for that. Also Mr. and Mrs. Parker sent a letter about a building issue they are having, I forwarded that to the building inspector.

Miscellaneous Comments From The Board.

Trustee Mishk: I want to thank everyone that voted for us and to please bear with us in what we are trying to do. We did not have much control over what occurred with the subpoena. I just want to add that Mr. Revella is not being accused of doing anything by that subpoena, that is for records held in the village. The idea of why he is on leave is basically to make sure the records do not appear in any manner to have been tampered with. We just must be safe, and we did this on the advice of the attorney, and it was not an easy decision.

Trustee Ramos reads his letter of resignation.

Deputy Mayor Thompson: I would just like to thank the community. I know this has been a very difficult time. I recently put something on social media that was not very nice, I immediately took it down because I thought about it and thought it wasn't very nice, so I took it down. I know I hurt someone's feelings, and I am very sorry about that Kristie Hall. I agree with Carolyn, we all live here and need to find a way to get along. I wish I could discuss everything that has been going on with the village board, but I cant. I will tell you I didn't want anything to do with village manager, but we must keep the village afloat.

Trustee Baker: Same as Lynn and Gerry. All of us are doing the best we can with the significant number of issues that some of the public knows. Just because someone posts something doesn't always make it true. Please ask questions and we will do our best to answer if we can. It's a bumpy patch but we will get through it.

Trustee Hall: My brain is on overload this month has been very stressful, and downright sucked and it's hard to say where to go from here. Somethings I just don't understand and maybe I should or don't agree with it, or how its being done. It's hard, it's not going to get easier for a little while unfortunately. One thing someone asked is when you switch from Facebook to YouTube, is it possible to do both?

Mayor Pearson: I don't think so, Katie did post a link on Facebook today, so I hope that helped.

Trustee Hall: I have a lot of questions and it's just stressful but please bear with me these days and we can figure it out. Also, the comments on YouTube go away, the clerk commented that it is okay to say she is on leave.

Mayor Pearson: We do need to go into executive session for personal history of a particular employee, salaries, and the budget.

Trustee Mishk made a motion to enter executive session, seconded by Trustee Baker. All Ayes, motion carried.