

Village of Walden

Village Board of Trustees Meeting

August 3, 2026

*Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM
Total duration: approximately 1 hour, 20 minutes*

Attendance

Role	Name	Attendance
Mayor	Becky Pearson	Present
Trustee	Lynn Thompson	Present
Trustee	Gerald Mishk	Present
Trustee	Cheryl Baker	Present
Trustee	Kristie Hall	Present
Trustee	Jerred Sanusi	Present
Trustee	Jose De Jesus	Absent
Village Attorney	John Cappello	Present
Village Clerk	Anisetta Valdez	Present
Village Manager	Tony Cardone	Absent

1. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes

Mayor Pearson began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Minutes

All members of the Board were present except Trustee De Jesus, who was absent. Village Manager Cardone was also away and did not attend.

Transcript

Becky Pearson: So roll for everyone is here, thank you, except for Jose is not here tonight. We do not have a manager's report this evening — he has been away as well.

3. Public Hearing

No public hearing was scheduled for this meeting.

4. Manager's Report

No manager's report was given this evening, as the Village Manager was away.

5. Minutes – 7/21/2026

Mayor Pearson noted two carryover items from the prior meeting: the correction changing “she” to “he” for Mel Wesenberg had already been made by the Clerk, and going forward, whenever the Board enters executive session, the minutes should state the specific reason for doing so rather than simply noting “executive session.”

Transcript

Becky Pearson: I did have a couple of corrections... on the second page, the he/she again, and Anisetta corrected that already for Mr. Wesenberg... at the end, when we go into executive session, there should be some type of code for what we're going in for — going in for this, going in for that. It just says "going into session." We'll make sure that goes into the minutes from now.

Becky Pearson: I make a motion to accept the minutes.

Gerald Mishk: Second.

Becky Pearson: All in favor? Aye. Cheryl is abstaining.

Motion to accept the minutes made by Trustee Hall and Trustee Mishk. Trustee Baker abstained. Motion carried.

6. Payment of Audited Bills

Transcript

Becky Pearson: Payment of all the bills — there's been some question on some of the bills that just came about, and one needs to be paid by tomorrow, I'm hearing. Is that what I'm hearing?

Kristie Hall: Yeah, I'll make a motion to pay all bills found correct.

Gerald Mishk: Second that motion.

Becky Pearson: Any more discussion? No. All in favor? Aye.

Motion to pay all audited bills found correct made by Trustee Hall, and Trustee Mishk. All ayes. Motion Carried.

7. Public Comment on the Business of the Board

No comments from the public on the business of the board.

Transcript

Becky Pearson: Anyone from the public on the business of the Board? No?

8. Business of the Board of Trustees

8a. Park Use Request

i. Francisco Colon

Minutes

Motion to accept made by Trustee Hall and Trustee Thompson. All ayes. Motion carried.

Transcript

Becky Pearson: Park request, Francisco Colin for the park... any comments? We want to make a motion to accept and allow it.

Kristie Hall: Make a motion.

Lynn Thompson: I'll second.

Becky Pearson: All in favor? Aye.

8b. CDBG – Award Pleasant Ave – Resolution

Minutes

Mayor Pearson presented the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) resolution for the Pleasant Avenue paving/seal-coating project. The low bid was received from Consortie Brothers Paving & Seal Coating.

The Orange County CDBG award for the project had originally been set at \$175,000; Mayor Pearson reported that, after she followed up with Mr. Queenan, the county agreed to increase the village's share of CDBG funding, reducing the amount the village will need to finance separately.

Because CDBG funds are reimbursed only after work is completed, the village may need to bond the local share up front and repay the bond once grant funds are received.

The project was budgeted in the 2024–25 capital plan for Pleasant Avenue at \$475,000 (a separate, larger figure of roughly \$680,000 discussed earlier in the conversation was for the unrelated Gladstone Avenue project).

Project completion is required by October.

Transcript

Becky Pearson: CDBG award, which is new development block grant for Pleasant Avenue — there's a resolution we have to do here. The lowest bid came in with Consortie Brothers Paving Seal Coating at \$375,100. Our county award was \$175,000, but I emailed Mr. Queenan yesterday and he got back to me that the county is upping our part of the CDBG, so we'll have a smaller amount to finance.

Becky Pearson: Pleasant Avenue was budgeted at \$475,000... we do not get paid the money until the work is done, so if we need to bond it first, we can bond it and pay that off when the money gets here.

Lynn Thompson: This is going to begin September/October, correct?

Becky Pearson: Yes, it has to be done by October.

Lynn Thompson: I'll make a motion to accept the bid from Consortie Brothers.

Becky Pearson: All in favor? Aye.

Motion to accept the bid from Consortie Brothers made by Trustee Thompson and Trustee Sanusi. All ayes. Motion carried.

8c. Intro to Local Law – Nightsky – Discussion

Minutes

Trustee Sanusi and Trustee Hall reported on their meeting with Attorney Cappello to redraft the Night Sky (outdoor lighting) local law, balancing technical dark-sky standards with practical resident compliance.

Redline changes included new defined terms, revised fixture-height/finished-grade standards, and removal of a 'low wattage' standard. The board reviewed and was satisfied with the revisions.

Attorney Cappello noted the two zoning-related provisions in the law require referral to the county for a 30-day review period, and recommended scheduling the public hearing for the September 15, 2026 meeting rather than August 18 (which would not allow enough time).

Transcript

Becky Pearson: I thought it was great because you added definitions, which were great... you took out low wattage, so the things that were changed read very well to me.

John Cappello: The first two provisions relate to zoning changes, which have to be referred to the county — I'd set it for the September 15 meeting, because they have 30 days to review.

Becky Pearson: So we're looking to set a public hearing on the changes... make a motion to accept the changes for the Night Sky, the latest version.

Becky Pearson: Then we want to possibly set a public hearing as well — we had August 18th, I think it's too quick, only five days. September 15.

Motion to accept the changes made by Trustee Thompson, and Trustee Baker. All ayes. Motion carried.

Motion to set public hearing for September 15 made by Trustee Thompson, and Trustee Sanusi. All ayes. Motion carried.

8d. Intro to Local Law – Firepits & Burning – Changes & Discussion

Minutes

Trustee Hall raised a concern that, as written, the 'outdoor cooking' section could be read to still prohibit propane grills.

Attorney Cappello clarified that the law's ban applies to burning brush, lumber, paper, plastic, tires, chemicals, and similar materials; a propane grill does not burn any of those materials and is not prohibited. Trustee Thompson concurred with that reading.

Trustee Thompson raised a separate question about how residents would be notified if New York State issues a burn ban for the area (recalling a prior 'Code Red' notification system). Attorney Cappello advised that the notification method is better handled as a village policy/procedure than written into the local law itself, since the preferred method could change over time.

Transcript

Kristie Hall: The way this reads, you're still not allowed to have a propane grill... 'Nothing contained herein, however, shall prevent the operation of outdoor grills, hibachis, fire pits, or fireplaces for the preparation of food...'

John Cappello: I would read that — the ban is on burning brush, lumber, paper, plastic, tires, chemicals, etc. An outdoor propane grill doesn't burn any of those things, so I don't think that would be prohibited.

Lynn Thompson: We talked about how people in the village will know if there's a no-burn ban... we talked about a Code Red announcement if burning's not allowed.

John Cappello: I think you could do that without putting it in the law — it's up to you what your policy is for how you want to announce it. If you put it in the law and later decide a better method comes along, you'd have to modify the law again.

Motion to accept the changes made by Trustee Mishk, and Trustee Thompson. All ayes. Motion carried.

Motion to set public hearing for September 15 made by Trustee Mishk and Trustee Thompson. All ayes.

8e. Meeting Rules Presentation – Changes & Discussion

Minutes

Mayor Pearson reviewed proposed edits to the Village Board Meeting Procedures document: (1) confirmed that department/officer reports and other village-business agenda items from elected and appointed officials are due to the Clerk by noon Friday, as distinct from a Thursday deadline applicable to village staff submissions; (2) added 'I' or 'yes' as an acceptable affirmative voting response, for consistency with existing language.

Attorney Cappello confirmed the document can be adopted as village policy rather than as a local law.

Trustee Mishk raised a concern that the 3-minute public-comment time limit should be applied consistently regardless of meeting size or topic, unless the board votes to extend it. Mayor Pearson agreed, noting the policy already allows a majority of the board to extend a speaker's time.

Transcript

John Cappello: I thought you differentiated between what a board member would want to put on the agenda, which would be up to Friday noon, versus what a business or organization would want to put on — Friday is board members, Thursday is staff.

Becky Pearson: Under voting, the last sentence I added 'I' or 'yes,' because sometimes we don't say 'aye,' we say 'yes' — I added that, and I think the sentence before it should also say 'I' or 'yes' for consistency.

Gerald Mishk: If we're going to adopt these rules, the section on public comment — speakers limited to three minutes — I think we have to be consistent no matter the size of the meeting; we can't differentiate unless there's a big topic.

Becky Pearson: It's subject to a majority of the board — the majority board can make a decision to change anything they want to change.

Lynn Thompson: I would like to make a motion that we accept the changes as written to our village board meeting procedures, and accept it as our policy.

Motion to accept the changes as written to Board meeting procedures, and to adopt them as Village policy, made by Trustee Thompson and Trustee Hall. All ayes. Motion carried.

8f. Sewer Plant Letter

Minutes

The Village's engineer, Mr. Queenan, advised by letter dated July 30, 2026, that immediate repairs to pumps, motors, and controls at the Village of Walden sewer plant pumping station are needed to avoid failure and disruption of sewer service, and recommended TAM Enterprises to perform the work based on TAM's familiarity with the station and its equipment.

The resolution finds the repair need to be an emergency under the General Municipal Law's public-emergency procurement provisions and the Village's Procurement Policy, and authorizes the interim Village Manager or designee to contract directly with TAM Enterprises without competitive bidding.

Mayor Pearson noted the project had already been funded through two prior budget accounts (work initiated in November); this resolution formalizes moving forward on an emergency basis rather than going out to bid, at no change in price from what had previously been discussed with TAM.

Transcript

Becky Pearson: The Department of Public Works has identified an immediate and urgent need to repair certain pumps, motors, and controls of the Village of Walden sewer plant pumping station to avoid failure... the engineer has advised the interim village manager, by letter dated July 30, 2026, that TAM Enterprises is best suited to conduct the emergency repairs...

Becky Pearson: ...therefore resolved that the interim village manager or his designee is authorized to enter into the agreement with TAM Enterprises to obtain the necessary equipment and complete the emergency repairs at the sewer pumping station.

Lynn Thompson: I make a motion.

Gerald Mishk: Second.

Becky Pearson: All in favor? Aye. Any abstaining? Any noes? We will move forward with that ASAP.

Motion to accept made by Trustee Thompson and Trustee Mishk. All ayes. Motion carried.

8g. Code Review—Chapter Discussion

ii. Chapter 132 – Double Pole Utility Removal

Minutes

This was the final chapter of the board's code-review project. The revised language addresses not only double utility poles but also 'zombie poles' — poles left standing that are no longer connected to any utility.

Trustee Hall asked whether residents watching the live stream are able to view board packet exhibits as they are discussed. Clerk Valdez confirmed this is still not possible with the current camera equipment (glare issues); materials remain available in the printed board packet, available to the public in the binder on the third floor of Village Hall from the Friday before each meeting.

Transcript

Becky Pearson: The only change to that was changing and putting in 'zombie' as well — this is not just double poles, it's also a pole by itself that's not connected to anything.

Kristie Hall: I know we had said last time that residents at home were able to see this on the live stream — they're not able to see it?

Lynn Thompson: No, they can't — we talked to him tonight; with the equipment he has, it's not possible.

Anisetta Valdez: It is in the board packet that is in the binder that gets put out the Friday before the meeting. If anybody wants to view it, please come to the third floor, Village Hall.

Motion to accept the changes made by Trustee Sanusi and Trustee Thompson. All ayes. Motion carried.

Motion to set Double Pole Utility for public hearing on September 15 made by Trustee Thompson and Trustee Hall. All ayes. Motion carried.

9. Public Comment

Minutes

Robert Gailie, owner of Go Electric (together with his wife), addressed the board regarding a pending offer to purchase 150 East Main Street — the former dry-cleaners/antique-shop building, currently zoned residential (R-5) but operated historically under a legacy special exception for commercial use. Mr. Guilling asked about the timeline for the pending Comprehensive Plan update and whether it might resolve the zoning conflict, noting the alternative would be relocating the business outside the village.

Extended board discussion followed on the property's zoning history, the risk of 'spot zoning' versus a defensible rezoning tied to actual historical use, and possible paths forward — updating the zoning map through the Comprehensive Plan process versus a use-variance application through the Zoning Board. Attorney Cappello noted the village board itself sets zoning and could consider addressing the parcel (and similar long-vacant commercial parcels) as part of the Comprehensive Plan update, but that any zoning map change requires a local law and county referral (roughly a 60-day process), and any new commercial use would still need Planning Board review.

Attorney Cappello agreed to review the current and draft Comprehensive Plan language for this area; Kathy Stegenga agreed to send him the prior special-exception approvals for the property. No formal board action was taken; the matter will be revisited alongside the Comprehensive Plan discussion and an anticipated economic-development presentation at a future meeting.

Mary Ellen Matise commented on the fire pits/open burning local law discussed in Item 7, suggesting the 'outdoor cooking' section more specifically define which types of grills are covered (propane, charcoal, natural gas, electric) and recommending the outdoor-cooking provisions be separated from the fire-pit/fireplace and distance-from-structure provisions into distinct paragraphs, citing recent porch fires as a safety concern.

Transcript

Robert Gailie: We had put in an offer on 150 East Main Street... we knew we had zoning problems, so we were going to back out of the deal, and then we were told the comprehensive plan was happening... we're just here to get an understanding of what that process is going to be, or the timeframe.

Kristie Hall: It's never been a residence — it's always been a business. The fact that it's not [zoned] business district blows my mind.

John Cappello: The village board sets the zoning... the issue is spot zoning — if something has been there and established, and you zone to reflect that instead of granting use variances, that's not spot zoning, that's smart zoning. Your zoning has to be in compliance with your comprehensive plan.

John Cappello: You'd have to do it by local law, and you'd have to refer to the county — it's about a 60-day process — and even if the zoning is changed, it would be a new commercial use, so it would still have to go to the planning board.

Mary Ellen Matise: Outdoor cooking is a whole section — it could be a propane grill, charcoal grill, natural gas grill, even electric. I don't know if you want to delineate all of that, but what's more important is the distance from the building — we've had enough porch fires lately.

10. Correspondence

Minutes

The Police Chief paid tribute to Officer (Bill) Treco, who served more than two decades with the Town of Montgomery Police Department, the Orange County Sheriff's Office, the Village of Maybrook, and the Village of Walden, and who recently passed away; the Village took part in his services. The board observed a moment of silence.

Correspondence was received from James Sullivan.

Trustee Mishk reported that a livestream viewer had posted hostile and inappropriate comments during the meeting broadcast, directed at board members and law enforcement. Trustee Thompson characterized the comments as going beyond protected criticism into threatening/inflammatory territory, and suggested the board consider, as a future discussion item, whether to continue offering the livestream given the misuse. Other board members cautioned against ending a service used appropriately by the rest of the community.

Trustee Hall followed up on a previously reported, still-unresolved complaint concerning a business on Highland Avenue (water heaters or similar equipment stored outside) and a separate, anonymous report of possible illegal burning or burying of materials on a nearby street. Kathy Stegenga confirmed both had been received (anonymously) and are being looked into.

Transcript

Police Chief: Officer Treco dedicated more than two decades of his life to serving the people of Orange County with honor, integrity, and compassion... I wanted to publicly thank Officer Treco for his service, on behalf of the Walden Police Department and the entire village, and extend my deepest condolences to his family.

Gerald Mishk: We have one now that's reporting during the live stream — somebody... is posting hateful, hostile, and inappropriate comments in the live chat directed toward the village board members and law enforcement...

Lynn Thompson: Criticism is one thing — if it's constructive. That is very hateful speech... perhaps it's something for board discussion, whether we no longer provide [the livestream].

Kristie Hall: I know we've gotten a couple of emails in the past about a business on Highland — water heaters or something outside. Was that ever looked into?

11. Miscellaneous Comments from the Board of Trustees

Minutes

Trustee Baker offered condolences to the family of Bill Treco, noting she had worked with him while he was with the Walden Police Department.

Trustee Mishk offered condolences on the death of Jacob Freytes, a young village resident. He reported he has begun researching e-bike safety regulation, citing New York City pedestrian-injury data (up to 90 deaths attributed to e-bikes as of last year) and recently passed New Jersey e-bike laws as a point of comparison, and said he plans to work with the Police Chief on a possible local law, while noting some measures may require State rather than local action.

Trustee Mishk also asked that the traffic-direction lines/arrows around the municipal square monument be repainted, citing a recent incident where a tractor-trailer was unable to make its turn and drove into oncoming traffic around the monument; he asked whether the back parking lot striping could be done at the same time.

Trustee Thompson had no additional comments.

Trustee Sanusi noted he was looking forward to National Night Out the following evening.

Trustee Hall confirmed she would attend National Night Out, representing St. Baldrick's and the Coldenham Fire Department's boot drive (following the loss of Coldenham's firehouse).

Mayor Pearson thanked Trustee Hall and Trustee Sanusi for meeting with the attorney on code items, and Trustee Baker for her continued work with the Building Department; confirmed National Night Out details and thanked the Police and Fire Departments for their support.

Clerk announced: (1) a chicken barbecue fundraiser hosted by Walkill Lodge (Masons) at James Olley Park on August 15, 11:00 AM–5:00 PM, tickets \$25 each, with 100% of proceeds benefiting the Montgomery Food Pantry; (2) the Orange County Mobile DMV will be at Wooster Grove on August 19, 10:00 AM–12:00 PM and 1:00–3:30 PM; and (3) this Wednesday's Music in the Grove will feature the Maybrook Wind Ensemble.

Transcript

Gerald Mishk: I want to express my personal sympathy... in the unfortunate death of Jacob Freytes, a young person who lived here in the village... my thoughts and prayers are with the family. I also want to let you know I've started talking to the chief regarding e-bike rules and regulations...

Gerald Mishk: We need to get the lines in the square, especially the arrows around the monument, repainted... a tractor-trailer couldn't make the turn to go left on East Main, so instead of going around the monument it charged into oncoming traffic and made its turn on Orchard Street.

Anisetta Valdez: There's going to be a chicken barbecue fundraiser hosted by Senior Warden James Curry of Walkill Lodge #627 at James Olley Park on August 15 from 11 to 5pm. Tickets are \$25 each, and 100% of the proceeds go to the Montgomery Food Pantry. The Orange County Mobile DMV office is scheduled for August 19 in Wooster Grove from 10 to 12pm, closing for a lunch hour, and resuming from 1 to 3:30pm. Last, the musical guest for the Music in the Grove this week is the Maybrook Wind Ensemble.

12. Executive Session

Motion to enter executive session to discuss the employment history of a person under consideration for hire, and the employment history of another individual, made by Trustee Hall and Trustee Baker. All ayes. Motion carried.

Motion to exit executive session made by Trustee Thompson and Trustee Hall. All ayes. Motion carried.

13. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Trustee Hall and Trustee Baker. All ayes. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY
Anisetta Valdez, Village Clerk

DRAFT