Village of Walden

Village Board of Trustees Meeting

October 20, 2026

Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM – adjourned at 8:43 PM
Total duration: approximately 2 hours 13 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	Kate Luciani	Present

1. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Pearson at 6:30 PM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The Mayor asked those in attendance to silence their phones.

2. Roll Call

Roll was called. Six of the seven members of the Board were present. Trustee De Jesus was absent.

3. Public Hearings

There were no public hearings scheduled for this meeting.

4. Manager's Report

Village Manager Kate Luciani reported on the following:

- **Roads and sidewalks:** Sidewalks on Pleasant Avenue are complete and road work is continuing. George Street is underway, with corner sidewalks complete and asphalt work starting.
- **DPW and Parks:** DPW has been doing a great job with recent cleanups. Parks staff are getting plantings underway and are already planning for Thanksgiving and Christmas. The park pathway at Olley is complete.

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- **Department head meeting:** The next department head meeting is being scheduled for November so everyone is on the same page.
- **Public safety:** The Police Department has been out enforcing speeding and stop-sign violations. School has been open about a month, so drivers are asked to slow down and watch for children. Halloween is approaching and drivers should be careful.
- **E-bike law:** The Village is working on an e-bike law. Ms. Luciani asked parents to talk with their children about it: no one under 16 should be operating an e-bike, helmets should be worn, and speeds should not exceed 15 miles per hour. She noted this is a growing problem in many communities.
- **Harvest Fest:** Despite a weather delay, the event went very well. She thanked Parks, DPW, the Police Department and the Board for pitching in.
- **Veterans Day:** The Town of Montgomery's Veterans Day celebration is on 11/11 at 11:00 AM at Montgomery Town Hall.
- **Economic development:** The Village will be working with the Orange County Partnership to bring new businesses to the community. Ms. Luciani noted her door is always open to residents.

Mayor Pearson added that **Walden's** Veterans Day observance will be held on November 8 at 1:00 PM at Veterans Park, and that it will be discussed again at the next meeting. There were no questions for the Manager.

5. Minutes – October 6, 2026

> **Motion** to approve the minutes made by Trustee Mishk, seconded by Trustee Hall. 5 ayes, 1 abstention. Motion carried.

6. Payment of Audited Bills

Taken up after the presentation (Item 8), at Trustee Hall's request.

> **Motion** to pay the audited bills made by Trustee Hall, seconded by Trustee Sanusi. All ayes. Motion carried.

7. Public Comment on the Business of the Board

No members of the public offered comment on the business of the Board.

8. Presentation by the Wallkill River Watershed Alliance

Mark Palczewski, a board member of the Wallkill River Watershed Alliance and chair of the Town of Montgomery Conservation Advisory Council, thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. He invited all board members, village employees and officials, and the public to the **2026 Wallkill River Summit** on November 12 from 4:00 to 8:00 PM at the Rally Center, SUNY Orange (Middletown campus). A light dinner, snacks and beverages will be provided, and architects, engineers and municipal officials can earn three PDH/CEU credits for attending.

Six speakers are scheduled, including a DEC presentation (Tony Prestigiacomo) on the total maximum daily load, and presentations on harmful algal blooms, agricultural flood mitigation in the Black Dirt, the history of the Black Dirt, "Black Dirt Futures," and paludiculture (flooding peatlands to preserve them). Mr. Palczewski stressed that algal blooms in the area, such as the one a few years ago, are a serious hazard to people and animals. Donations and business sponsorships are welcome, and he has a sponsor sign-up sheet.

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Mayor Pearson asked him to leave the information with the Clerk so it can be posted on the website for the public and shared with the Planning and Zoning Boards, whose members sometimes need training credits. She also reminded Mr. Palczewski that the Village needs to continue work on wellhead protection (DWSP2), and he agreed it is a priority.

9. Business of the Board of Trustees

a. Park Use Requests

i. Xiomara Ortiz – park birthday party.

> **Motion** to approve made by Trustee Hall, seconded by Trustee Thompson. All ayes. Motion carried.

ii. Sara McMillen

> **Motion** to approve made by Trustee Mishk, seconded by Trustee Baker. All ayes. Motion carried.

b. Approval of Budget Transfer

Mayor Pearson presented a budget transfer received from the Treasurer for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, effective October 1, 2026, for the Pleasant Avenue ADA sidewalk replacement, under an agreement between Orange County and the Village. The agreement term runs from March 2026 through December 31, 2026. The original agreement was for $175,000; the County agreed to Amendment One increasing the funding by $120,000 to cover actual construction costs, for a new total of $295,000. The Mayor thanked the CDBG grant committee and former Village Manager Tony Cardone for his work in securing the increase.

> **Motion** to approve the budget transfer made by Trustee Mishk, seconded by Trustee Thompson. All ayes. Motion carried.

c. Authorization to Sign – CDBG Amendment Agreement

Following the vote on the Local Law (Item d), Village Attorney Cappello noted that the CDBG amendment agreement includes a non-collusion certification and requested a motion authorizing the Village Manager to sign the amendment agreement and any other necessary documents.

> **Motion** to authorize the Village Manager to sign the CDBG amendment agreement, including the non-collusion certification, and any other necessary documents made by Trustee Hall, seconded by Trustee Thompson. All ayes. Motion carried.

d. Intro to Local Law – Fire and Burning

Mayor Pearson explained that this item was returned to the agenda to allow additional time for review and questions, and that the changes discussed previously had been made. She asked for further comments; there were none.

> **Motion** to approve the Local Law #12 on Fire and Burning made by Trustee Hall, seconded by Trustee Mishk. All ayes. Motion carried.

e. Time Off – Presentation & Discussion

Mayor Pearson opened the discussion by noting that the Village's recent Office of the State Comptroller report, covering 2021–2023, cited problems related to time off, including work without supporting documentation, errors in separation agreements, unsupported overtime, unauthorized leave and payroll errors. The Village's new Treasurer prepared a response outlining corrective steps, including forms that must be completed and signed so that time off is requested and approved properly. The Comptroller accepted the Village's response, and the

Mayor confirmed by phone that the response was acceptable. She asked Trustees Sanusi and Thompson, who reviewed the policy, to report.

Committee report. Trustee Sanusi explained that the committee focused on the hierarchy and process for requesting time off for non-union employees (union employees are covered by Civil Service rules and contracts). The proposal is a standard form submitted to the Clerk, who routes it to the appropriate approvers and moves it to the next approval level if not acted on in time, with the requester receiving written approval within two days. The goal is to protect the Village without making it difficult for employees to get approvals. He also noted that some New York State holidays are not listed, that the policy is unclear on whether benefits renew on a fiscal or calendar year, and that the sick leave provision, which requires notice "within an hour," should read "up to an hour before" the shift.

Trustee Thompson stated that most of the rules are already in the employee handbook and that the real problem has been enforcement and documentation. Every department uses a different form, so the committee wants a standardized, user-friendly form and a central location for tracking, ultimately reviewed by the Village Manager. She also raised the problem of too many staff, particularly department heads, being off at the same time, and the question of who approves time off for the Manager, Clerk and Treasurer, who report to the Board. A standardized shared calendar is being considered so the Manager can see who is working on any given day.

Time clocks. Manager Luciani reported that the Treasurer, distributed the standardized timesheets at the last department head meeting and instructed department heads to use them. The Village was looking at time clock vendors when it learned that the Police Department already has a contract for a time clock system. The PD system uses a wall unit and phone check-in that works only within a short distance of the unit, and can be integrated with Edmunds to feed payroll directly and reduce errors. The Chief provided pricing for extending the system to other departments. Several loose ends remain and another department head meeting will be held in November. Trustee Thompson said she would like to move forward with time clocks; the Mayor noted the cost would need to come before the Board. Trustee Thompson noted that the Village has long been told time clocks are a contractual issue; the Mayor said she has read the CSEA contract several times and has not found a prohibition, and that the labor attorney will review the CSEA and PBA contracts. Trustee Mishk suggested also looking at biweekly paychecks, which the Mayor noted would be a contractual matter.

Approval of time off for Village officers. Trustees Hall, Baker and Mishk, and the Mayor, agreed that requests from the Clerk and Treasurer should go to the Village Manager first rather than waiting for a Board meeting, with the Mayor approving requests from the Manager. Clerk Valdez commented that her requests and the Treasurer's could reasonably be submitted to the Board with two weeks' notice but that vacation approvals should go to their direct supervisors.

Next steps. The Mayor asked that Manager Luciani review the draft with the Treasurer and send it to the labor attorney for review, including hire-date versus fiscal-year renewal issues and consistency with the CSEA and PBA contracts. No vote was taken.

f. Park Use & Hall Rental Policy for Non-Profit Organizations – Discussion

The Board discussed what to charge non-profit organizations for park use and hall rental. Trustee Hall had contacted two local municipalities: one charges non-profits the resident fee, which is not much of a discount; the other charges the resident rather than non-resident fee. Mayor Pearson circulated a sample tiered policy under which 501(c)(3) organizations and local groups would receive 50% off the standard commercial hourly rate plus the security deposit, and limiting any one group to one discounted booking per month (12 per year). She spoke with Mike Bliss of the Parks Department, who said date conflicts are rare, that a 50% discount for local groups and the school district is feasible, and that the Board can always consider requests above the policy.

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Village Attorney Cappello advised the Board to use objective categories such as “non-profit” or “501(c)(3)” and a defined meaning of “local,” rather than naming specific groups (which risks favoritism). Trustee Hall noted the definition must account for groups such as scout troops based locally but part of organizations located elsewhere. Trustee Mishk supported opening the hall to local non-profits but cautioned that the policy could bring a flood of requests, raised priority over paying customers, noted the cost of building and maintaining the facility, and asked whether alcohol would change the fee. Trustee Hall responded that the Parks Department can use discretion on scheduling and that more use would increase visibility. Trustee Thompson asked whether current fees should also be reviewed and said she wants to take time to get the wording right.

Trustee Sanusi observed that since village taxes paid for the building, non-profits based in Walden should be treated differently from non-profits outside Walden, as with the resident and non-resident rate. Trustee Baker agreed and added that non-local groups should still be welcome at the non-resident rate. The Mayor called this a good idea.

Trustee Hall asked why the Manager and Parks cannot approve the alcohol waivers as well; the Mayor explained these have always come to the Board for approval of alcohol in a public park, while other requests are approved by the Manager and Parks.

Next steps. Manager Luciani and Mr. Bliss will review the materials and bring back proposed wording for one more Board discussion, after which the Village Attorney can draft the policy. Trustee Mishk asked that Mr. Bliss attend when the Board is close to a decision. No vote was taken.

g. Resolution for Tax Exemptions – Real Property

Mayor Pearson presented a resolution continuing the Village’s agreement with Orange County exempting certain Village-owned water system properties (well sites) in the Town of Montgomery from County taxation. There was initial confusion over the dates in the draft; Clerk Valdez read the County’s letter, which states that the current agreement expires December 31, 2027, and that the County requires a Village resolution stating the exemption year (2028) by December 15, 2026. The resolution was then read in full. (See Motions and Resolutions page.)

> **Motion** to adopt the resolution made by Trustee Mishk, seconded by Trustee Thompson. All ayes. No nays. Resolution adopted.

h. eBikes – Presentation & Discussion

Trustee Mishk presented the draft e-bike law, which builds on the Village’s existing law, developed with Manager Luciani and the Police Chief. The Chief provided input on legal issues involving officers impounding bikes and serving notice. Trustee Mishk asked that, if the Board is comfortable, it be sent to the Village Attorney for legal review, and urged action soon, describing a child of about 10 riding an electric scooter among children at the Halloween parade.

- **ATVs:** The Mayor asked whether ATVs should be included. Trustee Mishk responded that ATVs fall under the State Vehicle and Traffic Law and need their own provisions; the Board agreed to handle them separately.
- **Mobility devices / ADA:** The Mayor raised the treatment of personal assistive mobility devices (PAMDs), noting seniors use them on sidewalks. Manager Luciani cautioned against liability and Trustee Sanusi recommended an explicit ADA exemption. The Board agreed to add an ADA section and remove mobility devices from the restrictions.
- **Helmets / age:** The draft referred to operators and passengers “17 and under.” Attorney Cappello noted that the existing Village law already requires protective headgear for everyone operating an e-bike or electric scooter, so the Board agreed to remove the age from the safety equipment section.

- **Penalties:** Trustee Sanusi asked whether a State cap (about $50) limits home rule penalties; the Mayor stated that the Village sets its own. Attorney Cappello will review limits on what villages may add to State law. The existing law provides fines per Vehicle and Traffic Law §1242. Trustee Mishk drew the penalties from other municipalities (Town of Orange and Suffolk County). Trustee Baker asked whether first offenses should be a warning; the Chief supports penalties and bike seizure because the problem is ongoing, and Manager Luciani said fines are an effective deterrent and awareness tool.
- **Enforcement:** Trustee Baker asked what enforcement looks like. Trustee Mishk said police will not chase riders, but recently followed one home, issued a ticket and took the bike; the parents were unaware of the violation.
- **Outreach:** Trustee Baker suggested a pamphlet for the local shop that sells e-bikes; Manager Luciani suggested a flyer with the water bill or in the Village newsletter, and social media.
- **Signage:** Trustee Sanusi noted signage may be needed in each zone. Attorney Cappello advised that signage is required where the Village prohibits use entirely, but not to enforce the State law. E-bikes are already prohibited in Village parks; Trustee Thompson will ask DPW and Parks about posting "no e-bikes" signs there.
- **Park speed limit:** The speed limit in parks (believed to be 15 mph) is to be confirmed.

Next steps. Trustee Mishk will work with the Manager to finalize the draft with the changes above, then send it to the Village Attorney. No vote was taken.

The Mayor also noted that the Village Vehicle and Traffic Law and loading/unloading zones will be on the next meeting's agenda. The Police Chief is expected to attend to discuss locations with missing or unneeded signs. The local taxi company told the Mayor it does not need its Main Street space.

i. Appointing Rametta & Rametta – Discussion

Mayor Pearson reported that the Village Attorney will no longer handle property maintenance matters. Manager Luciani explained that Rametta & Rametta already serves as the Village's traffic court counsel at $150 per hour and agreed to handle other violation cases on the same terms. The Building Inspector intends to handle most violations herself and would bring in the firm only for larger matters, which Trustee Hall noted gives the Village more legal coverage.

> **Motion** to allow the Village Manager to sign an agreement with Rametta & Rametta at $150 per hour, on a case-by-case basis, expiring in April, made by Trustee Thompson, seconded by Trustee Baker. All ayes. Motion carried.

Mayor Pearson reported that she spoke with Alan Sorenson about state and county bridge funding expected in November and December, and that the Orange County Transportation Council would learn of it first. The Village's former manager served on the Council.

> **Motion** to add Village Manager Kate Luciani to the Orange County Transportation Council made by Mayor Pearson, seconded by Trustee Mishk. At Trustee Thompson's suggestion, the motion was amended so that the Village Manager and a member of the Board of Trustees, Trustee Baker, serve together. All ayes. Motion carried as amended.

10. Public Comment

Amy Sanusi, Vice President of the Walden Community Council, shared a flyer for the Walden Village Survey, open through the end of November. It can be completed anonymously, has had 45 responses in its first week, and the results will be shared with the Board.

Mary Ellen Matise supported Trustee Sanusi's suggestion of different rates for resident and non-resident non-profits on the hall rental policy, and asked the Board to consider how political

parties and committees, elected officials, and government agencies (such as the Office for the Aging and the Youth Bureau) would be treated. Mayor Pearson responded that the policy needs to be kept simple. Ms. Matise also provided the Clerk with a packet on the Community Foundation Impact Fund, which is raising money for town parks, with a donor recognition event on December 6, and asked that it be scanned and shared with the Board. She also commented that e-bikes fall under State vehicle and traffic rules like bicycles.

11. Correspondence

Trustee Sanusi reported he has been working with website developers on pricing, will invite the Board to a CivicPlus demonstration, and updated Mr. Sullivan. Trustees Thompson, Mishk and Baker each received a thank-you note from Mr. Cardone. Trustee Hall sent him a message.

Mayor Pearson read Mr. Cardone's card and thanked him for his work for the Village, noting accomplishments including:

- Reopening talks on the Hill Street Bridge and finalizing the 0% EFC loan.
- Receiving the acceptance letter for the wastewater grant for the sewer plant; the Village must continue to demonstrate progress.
- Helping hire the new DPW supervisor, who is doing a great job, including during the water main break on Sunday.
- Working with the Treasurer to complete the bonds and BANs, and bringing in Fran to bring water and sewer billing up to date.
- Supporting grant work, including with Mike Bliss, and filling the Police Department, which is nearly at full staffing.

She added that the Salt Barn bid came in higher than expected; the deadline was extended to June, and the engineer will discuss rebidding with Manager Luciani. Trustee Thompson noted that PBA negotiations need to resume. The Mayor thanked the Manager, the Clerk (for her work on Civil Service reports), staff and Board.

12. Miscellaneous Comments from the Board of Trustees

Trustee Hall: Thanked Mr. Cardone, mentioned the Pumpkin Promenade at Bradley Park and Hot Dogs for Heroes at the firehouse, and asked for a list of open projects (what is in progress, in limbo or complete); the Mayor said the Manager keeps one and it can be compiled. Trustee Hall will be absent from the next meeting and will send comments, including on parking and emergency vehicle access.

Trustee Baker: Nothing.

Trustee Mishk: Thanked Mr. Cardone for keeping the Village running, and praised the Halloween parade, the costumes, and the Parks crew.

Trustees Thompson and Sanusi: Nothing.

Clerk Valdez: Reminded residents of the Mobile DMV on October 28, extended Finance Department hours (until 6:00 PM) on October 28–29 for property taxes, drop box locations (in front of Village Hall by the PD and on the third floor), and the October 31 final due date. She also noted the village newsletter on the website and the semiannual hydrant flushing, which may cause low pressure or discolored water.

Manager Luciani: Thanked Mr. Cardone and the Board for their trust.

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13. Executive Session

> **Motion** to enter executive session to discuss the employment history of a certain employee made by Trustee Hall, seconded by Trustee Baker. All ayes. Motion carried.

Attorney Cappello asked whether the Board intended to return to open session; the Mayor stated that no action would be taken.

> **Motion** to end executive session made by Trustee Hall, seconded by Trustee Baker. All ayes. Motion carried.

14. Adjournment

> **Motion** to adjourn made by Trustee Mishk, seconded by Trustee Hall. All ayes. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Anisetta Valdez, Village Clerk

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Village of Walden

Motions and Resolutions

Village Board of Trustees Meeting – October 20, 2026

Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM – adjourned at 8:43 PM
Six of seven members present (Trustee De Jesus absent)

Summary of Motions

Item	Motion	Moved	Seconded	Vote	Result
5	Approve minutes of October 6, 2026	Mishk	Hall	5 ayes, 1 abstention	Carried
6	Pay the audited bills (taken up after Item 8)	Hall	Sanusi	All ayes	Carried
9a-i	Approve park use request – Xiomara Ortiz (birthday party)	Hall	Thompson	All ayes	Carried
9a-ii	Approve park use request – Sara McMillen	Mishk	Baker	All ayes	Carried
9b	Approve CDBG budget transfer (Pleasant Avenue ADA sidewalk replacement)	Mishk	Thompson	All ayes	Carried
9c	Authorize Village Manager to sign CDBG amendment agreement, including non-collusion certification, and other necessary documents	Hall	Thompson	All ayes	Carried
9d	Approve Local Law #12 on Fire and Burning	Hall	Mishk	All ayes	Carried
9g	Adopt resolution continuing real property tax exemption for Village-owned water system properties (Orange County)	Mishk	Thompson	All ayes, no nays	Adopted
9i	Authorize Village Manager to sign agreement with Rametta & Rametta at $150 per hour, case-by-case, expiring in April	Thompson	Baker	All ayes	Carried
9i	Add Village Manager Kate Luciani to the Orange County Transportation Council (amended to add Trustee Baker as Board member)	Mayor Pearson	Mishk	All ayes	Carried as amended
13	Enter executive session to discuss the employment history of a certain employee	Hall	Baker	All ayes	Carried
13	End executive session	Hall	Baker	All ayes	Carried
14	Adjourn	Mishk	Hall	All ayes	Carried

Resolution – Real Property Tax Exemption (Item 9g)

Presented by Mayor Pearson. Resolution continuing the Village's agreement with Orange County exempting certain Village-owned water system properties (well sites) in the Town of Montgomery from County taxation.

Per the County's letter, as read by Clerk Valdez, the current agreement expires December 31, 2027, and the County requires a Village resolution stating the exemption year (2028) by December 15, 2026.

> **Motion** to adopt the resolution made by Trustee Mishk, seconded by Trustee Thompson. All ayes. No nays. Resolution adopted.

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