

The Otsego Town Board held a 2017 Special Meeting on the 26th day of October 2016 at the Town Building, Fly Creek, NY at 6:30:00 PM.

Town Board Members Present:

Meg Kiernan	Supervisor
Thomas Hohensee	Councilperson
Carina Franck	Councilperson
Joseph Potrikus	Councilperson

Also Present:

Pamela Deane	Town Clerk
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Supervisor Kiernan called the Special Meeting to order. Everyone was asked to stand for the pledge of allegiance.

Supervisor Kiernan explained the reason for the Special Meeting was to give the Town Board an opportunity to explain to town residents the proposed referendum. The proposed referendum will be on the November Ballot changing the Superintendent of Highway position from elected to appointed. The Town Board has come to realize that highway expenses are approximately 75% of the budget and the duties of the Highway Superintendent are a lot more involved than residents may realize. That said, the Board felt an interviewing process to seek out the best-qualified applicant was a better option than elected. Supervisor Kiernan stated that the Board felt that this would be the appropriate time to put the referendum before the voters since the current Highway Superintendent, John Schallert, has already announced that he has no intentions of running for re-election next year. Residents will be given an opportunity to vote whether they are for or against the referendum.

Councilperson Franck pointed out that normally elected officials serve three duties:

1. A Watch dog function
2. Judicial function and
3. Policy-making function

None of these duties apply to the Highway Superintendent position. She felt the Town Board has a better understanding of what the job entails and qualifications needed to run the department most efficiently and safely. Voters don't always research the candidates to decide who is the most qualified, rather they just vote party. She pointed out that the School Board appoints the School Superintendent.

Supervisor Kiernan opened the floor comment to the eight people present.

Carl Wenner asked the Board happened to cause them to become dissatisfied with the current system.

Supervisor Kiernan stated that the position needs a full time person. As an elected position the Highway Superintendent is only obligated to work 2 hours/day.

Rick Hulse felt the referendum should state the salary and benefit package. Without it how would people know what they are voting on? He also was concerned with the low number of turnout to the informational meeting and felt maybe it could have been advertised better. Hulse had two major concerns. His first concern was that residents travel the town roads everyday making them, in his opinion, more qualified to decide whether or not the Highway Superintendent is doing his job and should or should not be re-elected. Hulses second concern was that he believes that the job would fall under Civil Service. If so it will be almost imposable to terminate the Highway Superintendent, if so desired. He respectfully disagreed with the position being changed from elected to appointed. Hulse did not feel the Town Board knows enough to hire the right person for the job.

Supervisor Kiernan commented that residents see the roads. The Town Board sees the budget.

John Phillips felt the residents are equally qualified to choose a Highway Superintendent. He would have liked to have seen on the referendum a proposed salary. That might be a deciding factor for him. He was not in favor of changing the position from elected to appointed.

Bill Hribar Jr. asked if the Highway Superintendent was appointed would they be able to run the department the way they wanted or would they have to consult with the Town Board on everything? Hribar felt the Town Board would be taking away a right from the public. He also asked how many

hours the Superintendent would be required to work.

Supervisor Kiernan felt the Highway Superintendent would work a 40-hour week and have guidelines set by the Town Board to follow.

Marshall Pederson wished the Board had more information available.

Highway Superintendent John Schallert admitted that the job requires far more than he ever realized. It is definitely a full-time job. Lots of paper work to keep up with, bills to be paid, bids to be written, State Laws to be followed, trucks and machinery to keep maintained, safety classes to keep current, getting up all hours of the night, and constantly watching the weather. As far as the spending, the Town Board holds the purse strings. You cannot put an ad in the paper and hire just anyone. He felt “the job is a pain in the” Another point he brought up was the unique position the Town of Otsego is in. The Village of Cooperstown will be voting on the referendum and he felt that they have no idea what goes on outside the Village or what the position entails. He was in favor of keeping the position elected.

Julie Huntsman felt the Town Board was best qualified to choose the best qualified Highway Superintendent. She would be most interested to learn the history of towns that changed the position from elected to appointed.

Councilperson Hohensee was glad for what, he thought, was good dialogue. He reassured the public that the Board had no intentions of keeping the referendum a secret or quiet. He agreed that the Board did not have all the answers or could have done a better job educating the public. He publicly acknowledged appreciation for all the work the Highway Employees do. Hohensee wished that Schallert had expressed his concerns and opinion earlier.

Supervisor Kiernan thanked everyone for their comments.

Meeting ended at 8:10PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pamela Deane/Town Clerk