

Village of Oriskany

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Oriskany Board of Trustees Public Hearing and Monthly Meeting Minutes for January 10, 2023

PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing was convened at 6:00 pm in the meeting room behind the Oriskany Masonic Hall at 701 Utica Street on Tuesday, January 10, 2023 to discuss the village sponsoring the Waterbury Mill for a Restore NY grant, which seeks to remediate blighted properties across New York State.

In attendance were: Mayor Mick O'Connor; Trustees Paul Rieben, Christopher Burtch, John Kasprzyk, and Sean Fortnam; Clerk Alexis Albright; Treasurer Peggy Nugent; Street Supt. Chad Miller; Police Chief Rich Zabek; Zoning Chairman Ken Brown; Planning Chairman Mike O'Donnell; and Oneida County Legislator Bob Koenig.

Additionally, the following residents and presenters were in attendance: Hartley Bonisteel Schweitzer from LaBella Associates; two representatives from Mohawk Valley EDGE, Laura Cohen and Christian Mercurio; and the following residents, Larry Rieben, Carrie Moulton, Eileen Pierson, Amy Kasprzyk (Planning Board), Bill Panella (Planning Board, Barb Panella, Judi Moore (Planning Board), Lacey and Matt McConnell, and Kathy Humphrey.

The mayor called the hearing to order at 6:03 p.m. and invited Hartley Bonisteel Schweitzer of LaBella Associates to present about Restore NY and the plans for the mill. A handout was provided to attendees.

LaBella Associates and Mohawk Valley EDGE both believe the property is a prime candidate for remediation and have been working with the owner's representative, Adam Kernan, to develop plans to rehabilitate the property. The property would become a mix of store fronts and apartments, preserving some of the largest buildings on the mill campus while demolishing sections that are in poor condition or already falling in. The grant would provide up to \$2 million to "demolish, deconstruct, rehabilitate, and reconstruct." The developer would pay the \$500 application fee and be responsible for all liability. The state would oversee compliance. The village would disperse funds when the state deems the project meets the grant criteria.

Jan. 10, 2023

An artist's rendering of the three story River Street building with restored windows and improved landscaping was presented, as well as a map of the buildings to remain and the sections to be demolished. The main three story and five story buildings would remain.

Ms. Schweitzer said that LaBella and MV EDGE have been working on possibilities for the mill site since August. Over the summer, they set up a feedback table at the Oriskany Farmers Market to get community feedback about the site. She said that the many people expressed fond memories of the mill, hopes for new businesses, and a desire to take down the collapsed section on River Street.

To rehabilitate the site, she said they will need to take down some buildings/sections that are less historically significant. A Phase I EPA review of the site looked at environmental concerns. The Restore NY grant specifically funds up to \$2 million to address blighted eyesores in community centers. The grant is a 90% match with the developer putting up 10%. The grant requires environmental reviews, State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR), and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) clearance. It also must meet local zoning. (The mill already applied to have the site changed from M-1 manufacturing zoning to C-1 commercial zoning, which would allow housing of 4+ units and store fronts/offices.)

The state requires municipal involvement to ensure that the community supports the projects funded. Municipalities support the process through public hearings, newspaper notices, etc. The grant is reimbursable upon state inspection, so the developer must fund it first. This is referred to as a "pass through grant project." If awarded, the \$2 million would go toward what will become an estimated \$5 million project. The application is due January 27, 2023 and could be awarded as early as March or April.

Carrie Moulton inquired about parking, especially during construction. Would they block off Miller/Lansing Street to avoid traffic problems? Ms. Schweitzer said the construction plan would need to be sensitive to open local businesses and that ultimately they hope the site will feature indoor parking for apartment residents.

Currently the property is assessed at \$30,000. With 36 apartments and 50,000 sqft of retail/office space, it's estimated the property would generate about \$155,000 per year in tax revenue (village/town/county).

Judi Moore asked if the River St. building (old non-woven building) on River Street would become parking. Ms. Schweitzer said its not decided, but that it may become a courtyard to better fit a retail environment.

Barb Panella asked about installing additional parking near the post office. Supt. Miller said this is being looked into with other parks and grant planning.

Mike O'Donnell asked if all the money would be used for demolition. Ms. Schweitzer said it would be used for demo, stabilizing and facade improvements, as costs allowed.

Paul Rieben asked about asbestos and environmental concerns. Ms. Schweitzer said the EPA has reviewed the property for what they call Phase I and created a 657 page report. The main concerns cited were an old coal shed and asbestos in some of the newer sections (which would be cleared before demo). The older brick buildings preceded widespread asbestos usage and it is not a "typically dirty site." Mr. Rieben said he wants to make sure "we're being as honest as we can be with the public" so there are no worries about environmental contamination.

Trustee Burtch asked about the oil tanks that had been a previous problem for the site. Ms. Schweitzer said they had been cleared and MV Edge has been working with the developer on clean up.

Trustee Fortnam asked what the state's checklist is before they disperse money and what if the program was discontinued? Ms. Schweitzer said that existing programs would continue even if the program is no longer funded and that the state inspects for an internal board at the NYS Development Corp. The developer has to follow the plan they submit.

Christian Mercurio from MV Edge said that the mill has a very competitive application and that the last round of state funding supported \$14 million in the Mohawk Valley Region across Amsterdam, Ilion, Utica, and Rome.

Trustee Fortnam asked for copies of the site renderings and map.

There were no further questions. Attendees were invited to come forward to review the site map and renderings. The mayor closed the hearing at 7:03 pm.

MONTHLY MEETING

The Village of Oriskany Board of Trustees met on Tuesday, January 10, 2023 in the meeting room behind the Oriskany Masonic Lodge at 701 Utica Street for their regular monthly meeting.

In attendance were: Mayor Mick O'Connor; Trustees Paul Rieben, Christopher Burtch, John Kasprzyk, and Sean Fortnam; Clerk Alexis Albright; Treasurer Peggy Nugent; Village Attorney Steve Deery; Street Supt. Chad Miller; Police Chief Rich Zabek; Zoning Chairman Ken Brown;

Jan. 10, 2023

Planning Chairman Mike O'Donnell; Code Enforcement Officer George Farley; and Oneida County Legislator Bob Koenig.

Additionally, the following residents and presenters were in attendance: Hartley Bonisteel Schweitzer from LaBella Associates; two representatives from Mohawk Valley EDGE, Laura Cohen and Christian Mercurio; and the following residents, Larry Rieben, Carrie Moulton, Eileen Pierson, Amy Kasprzyk (Planning Board), Bill Panella (Planning Board, Barb Panella, Judi Moore (Planning Board), Lacey and Matt McConnell, and Kathy Humphrey.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:04 pm. The following minutes and reports were submitted and reviewed:

Report	Motion	Second	Result
Minutes	Burtch	Kasprzyk	Approved
Treasurer's Report	Rieben	Burtch	Approved
Police	Kasprzyk	Rieben	Approved
Fire	Rieben	Burtch	Approved
Museum	Burtch	Kasprzyk	Approved
Codes	Fortnam	Rieben	Approved
DPW	Kasprzyk	Fortnam	Approved

The mayor asked to move ahead to New Business on the agenda so the representatives from LaBella Associates and MVEDGE could be present for the decision on the Restore Grant that was the subject of the public hearing. Trustee Rieben made a motion to move forward with the RESTORE NY grant for the Waterbury Mill property and the SEQR (State Environmental Quality Review) review/negative declaration needed to proceed with application. Seconded by Trustee Fortnam. The mayor called a roll call vote. Trustees Rieben, Burtch, Fortnam, Kasprzyk and Mayor O'Connor all in favor. Motion carried.

Mayor O'Connor returned to the roll call portion of the agenda:

Highway Supt. Miller said the department is working on maintenance and clean-up at the garage. There is a street tree limb near a residence that is being surveyed for removal. They're also working on shutting down holiday lighting. (Clerk Albright will call to disconnect the extra National Grid hook-up.)

Trustee Burtch wished to thank the fire department for a wonderful job hosting their annual banquet. The mayor, clerk, treasurer, and several trustees attended the event at Hart's Hill Inn on January 7.

Trustee Rieben will be completing the court audit tomorrow. He also said the fire department wished to thank everyone who donated in memory of Gary Kraeger. He presented the names of two prospective Fire Department auxiliary members: Marlana Rieben and Kaitlyn Rieben for information and approval. Seconded by Trustee Burtch. All in favor. Motion carried.

Trustee Fortnam had heard concerns from residents about adding more street lighting near the Waterbury Church. Supt. Miller will look into it.

Trustee Kasprzyk had no library news since there was not yet a meeting. The library gala event is coming up and will be in memory of Theda Bowers.

Clerk/Historian Albright asked about getting an LED lighting quote for the overhead lights at the museum. Several are in need of repair, but LED lights would be more efficient and kinder to the artifacts as far as UV exposure and fading. The trustees gave the go ahead to get quotes.

The mayor opened the meeting to public comment. Bill Panella inquired if the village could replace the Manor Lane sign at Cider Street; the lettering is nearly worn off. Supt. Miller will add it to his list of signs to review and repair. Mr. Panella also had concerns about the intersection of Elm and Maple Streets. Cars parked on the southwest corner of the intersection (from the corner to the first driveway) are making it difficult to turn and the school bus has to cut the curb to round the corner. He asked if that area could become "no parking here to corner." The DPW and the board will look into it.

Mr. Panella also said that changes are coming to the Oriskany Post Office starting February 25, 2023. The post office has ordered that all vehicles be kept at the main hub in Utica and mail carriers will have to drive there to pick up their vehicles before they can begin their postal routes. There is very little information available about how this will impact post office employees or customers. Assemblywoman Buttonschon and Senator Schumer have been notified. Currently impacted are Oriskany, Yorkville, Whitesboro, and Little Falls.

There were no police reform questions or comments.

Continuing on to new business, the unified phone system is scheduled to be installed on January 13. Clerk Albright will send emails to department heads about how to set up voicemail boxes.

The village is still in the running for the Wadas Foundation playground grant, but the application needs a second quote for the equipment and installation price. Clerk Albright and Supt. Miller will look into getting new quotes and updating the grant application. Trustee Burtch reminded them that some equipment is available on state bids, but would be for only equipment not installation.

Trustee Burtch motioned to pass “A Resolution Identifying Polling Places And Their Hours Of Operation” for the March 2023 village election. It reads, in summary,

“the Village of Oriskany agrees that the Oriskany Public Library at 621 Utica Street in the Village of Oriskany shall be the polling place for all voters in the Village and that polls shall be open from 12:00 noon to 9:00 pm on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 for the election of two (2) seats on the village board of trustees; one (1) village justice; and one (1) mayor, each for terms of four (4) years.”

On the same motion he moved to appoint Glenn Block and Helen Block as election inspectors, with a third to be selected on the recommendation of Mr. Block to replace Theda Bowers. Seconded by Trustee Kasprzyk. All in favor. Motion carried.

Trustee Burtch then moved to introduce Local Law Number 1 of the Year 2023, A local law to override the tax levy limit established in General Municipal Law 3-c. This has been done annually in the event projected costs exceed the 2% village property tax cap. A hearing is proposed for 6:45 pm on February 14, 2023. Seconded by Trustee Fortnam. All in favor. Motion carries.

Codes Enforcement Officer George Farley brought to the board’s attention some upcoming changes in state zoning code that would impact what types of work can and cannot be exempt from building permits. Attorney Deery recommended that the community should review the zoning codes and potential changes, possibly in sections. The mayor said we don’t want to discourage people from improvements. This will be something for everyone to look into ahead of the state changes.

Supt. Miller and Clerk Albright are looking for feedback on the Oriskany Farmers Market. The market committee will meet at 6 pm before the next board meeting to start plans for 2023.

County Legislator Bob Koenig had some updates. He said the county is looking to define spending for expiring funds. He also said the new county clerk, Mary Finegan, is working on DMV changes that will be “hopefully positive progress in short order.”

Vouchers were signed. Trustee Burtch motioned to close the meeting, seconded by Trustee Fortnam at 7:44 pm. All in favor. Motion carried. The next meeting of the Oriskany Board of Trustees is scheduled for Tuesday, February 14, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. at Village Office, following a 6:45 pm hearing on Local Law #1 of 2023 (Tax Cap Levy).

Respectfully submitted,

Alexis W. Albright
Oriskany Village Clerk

Jan. 10, 2023