

The Seneca Falls Town Board held a Special/Informational Meeting on Monday, January 24, 2022 at the Seneca Falls Community Center, 35 Water Street, and by Zoom.

Present were Supervisor Michael Ferrara; Councilpersons Frank Sinicropi, Kaitlyn Laskoski, Steven Churchill (by Zoom) and Dawn Dyson (by Zoom). Also present was Stuart Peensra, Police Chief.

Supervisor Ferrara called the Meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. A roll call of Board Members was taken and all were present, either in person or by Zoom; the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

New Business:

Resolution – Appoint Senior Account Clerk: A motion was made by Michael Ferrara and seconded by Frank Sinicropi to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Town Board created the position of Senior Account Clerk to serve in the Finance Office of the Department of the Town Supervisor and approved hiring same as of January 1, 2022; and

WHEREAS, after review of qualified applications and interviewing, the Town Supervisor has selected an appropriate candidate to fill the position.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Seneca Falls Town Board does appoint Heather Brown to the position of Senior Account Clerk with a start date of January 25, 2022, at the starting wage of the matrix for her position of \$21.72 per hour, with the provision that she place in the top three of the Senior Account Clerk list upon completion of the exam.

No questions. Motion carried 5 ayes, 0 nays.

Informational Session – Cayuga Nation: Mr. Ferrara noted ten questions have been submitted through Mrs. Laskoski's email. If anyone here has a question, we will try and answer it tonight. If we don't have an answer tonight, he will take your information and try to find an answer. Mr. Ferrara said the purpose tonight is to have the Community understand the situation and how we can get along altogether – the Cayuga Nation and the people of Seneca Falls and Cayuga County.

Mr. Ferrara gave a brief history of the Cayuga Nation. The Federal Government, under General Sullivan, came into the area and tried to obliterate the Cayuga Nation. Eventually, a Treaty was signed with the Cayuga Nation, and that Treaty established the Cayuga Nation in this area. The Federal Government recognizes the Cayuga Nation as the rightful people for this area, and 64000 acres of land was considered their homeland. The Federal Government recognizes the current leadership of the Cayuga Nation. Mr. Ferrara said the goal is to work together with the Cayuga Nation leadership to try and resolve issues and how we can move forward together as people of this County.

Mr. Ferrara said he is not speaking for Seneca County even though he is a Member of the Board of Supervisors - he is speaking for Seneca Falls in what he knows and what he doesn't know.

Question: If the Indians put up a tent in their driveway on Pumphouse Road and sells CBD and such things, why can't I?

Response: Mr. Ferrara said you can as long as you follow all zoning regulations that may apply. Any store can sell CBD oil; there is no restriction. As we move forward into 2022, the sale of marijuana has become legal in NYS. Anyone that wants to sell marijuana can open a dispensary and do so by following the proper permitting with NYS. You have the same opportunity.

Question: Who is the current leadership? The US Government recognizes Clint Halftown. However, the Cayugas have their process for choosing leaders; Halftown was removed by the Cayuga Clans Mother, and the Government is disregarding the will of the people.

Answer: Mr. Ferrara said the Federal Government recognizes the current Nation leadership as it currently is .

Question: In August 2021, the Board of Supervisors sent a letter to the Bureau of Indian Affairs which refers to the commitment to fairness and cultural values which offer a positive model for the future. Has the Town of Seneca Falls taken any initiative to cultivate a working relationship with the Counsel of Chiefs?

Response: Mr. Ferrara stated he has reached out to the current recognized leadership of the Cayuga Nation; we talk frequently. We are trying to set the path for open communication meetings to begin the process of moving forward to live together.

Question: Have we asked for the BIA to come here?

Response: Mr. Ferrara said the Town of Seneca Falls has not asked them to come here. At the County level, he believes it was asked, but he can't say that 100% for sure. Chief Peenstra stated Law Enforcement

representatives from BIA have been here multiple times in the past.

Question: I heard the Feds were here – do we know this as fact?

Response: Mr. Ferrara said he didn't know what that means. At one time, there were representatives here from the Federal Government other than BIA during recent situations.

Question: Does the Seneca Falls Police have a cooperative relationship with the Cayuga Nation Police?

Response: Chief Peenstra stated they work with the Cayuga Nation Police on criminal matters. We handle all law enforcement involvement within the Town, whether it's land owned by the Cayuga Nation or anyone else. They handle that in the same fashion as they would anyone else.

Jean Gilroy said she understands all questions had to be submitted in advance. It appears you are taking questions off of Zoom – which is which? Mr. Ferrara replied he is one to be accommodating as much as he can. He added the goal was to have time to prepare to answer the questions.

Question: Joseph Silver asked – what happens when both sides respond and the Officers from the SF Police Department get put in the middle? What is the directive?

Response: Chief Peenstra stated it is their stance as Law Enforcement, asking the Cayuga Nation Law Enforcement and Clint Halftown to abide by the BIA's recommendations; they have ways of handling internal disputes amongst themselves. Cayuga Nation has developed civil proceedings within their Nation so it is his recommendation that they go about handling evictions in a civil manner in the civil process they have adopted.

Question: I protest the Cayuga Nation fundraising to raise \$100,000 to pay taxes for the land. Why does the Cayuga Nation have to pay taxes on the land that belongs to them? Will they receive another tax bill in the future for the land now called Share Farm?

Response: Mr. Ferrara said it is in Cayuga County near Wells College. Some members of the Cayuga Nation feel this is sacred land. The current leadership of Cayuga Nation did not recognize that; it's not a Nation-owned property. Cayuga County foreclosed on the property because the recognized leadership of Cayuga Nation did not consider it Nation-owned property. No one filed with Cayuga County a stipulation of withdrawal to become a non-taxable property. Some members of the Cayuga Nation did fundraising to take back the property which they currently control.

Question: Do you not have the responsibility to know the history of the Cayuga people of the area?

Response: Mr. Ferrara said he does have the responsibility. That is why he was trying to find out answers earlier. He thinks he has a general grasp of what is going on – he can't answer for the whole Board.

Question: Can you do something about the traffic coming out of Cayuga Corners?

Response: Mr. Ferrara stated the Town has parking restrictions. The Nation Police are there most of the time trying to control in and out traffic. He believes the Cayuga Nation is adding a parking lot in the rear of the building which will help out with some of the traffic.

Question: Who are you reaching out to for answers to these questions?

Response: Mr. Ferrara said he reached out to two of the Board Members at the County level who have a much longer history than he does, plus his own research.

Question: Have representatives from the Nation's Counsel of Chiefs been invited to this Meeting?

Response: Mr. Ferrara replied no. There was no formal invite to anyone from the Cayuga Nation.

Question: What can neighbors do to help the situation given that BIA representative Clint Halftown positioned himself as leader of the Nation and makes decisions outside the traditional governance of the tribe.

Response: Mr. Ferrara stated call your Federal Representatives in Congress and write to the President.

Question: Is there any way the Town or folks can stand together to condemn Mr. Halftown's intimidation of Nation's citizens, evicting people from their homes in the winter, bulldozing Nation-owned property, and ceasing property.

Response: Mr. Ferrara stated we can try to keep the communication lines open the best we can. If people think the current leadership is not the right leadership or recognized leadership, that's a Federal matter.

Question: Could the Convenience Store tenant on Bayard Street have asked the Police Department to intervene and prevent the eviction and seizure of store property.

Response: Mr. Ferrara replied they could have asked, but the rightful owner of the property is the Cayuga Nation. If the tenant had an issue, take it up with their landlord. Chief Peenstra said the BIA has consistently

Question: Chief Sam George - does the Town Board know they live on Cayuga territory?

Response: Mr. Ferrara said he thinks so. Everywhere? he doesn't know that for sure.

Question: Chief Sam George – If and when the current leadership is replaced, is the Town Board going to deal with us as well as with the current leadership?

Response: Mr. Ferrara said whoever the Federally recognized leader is we will do our best to work with them.

Question: Has the total loss of property tax revenue been determined, and does the State make the Town, County and School whole?


Response: Mr. Ferrara stated the State doesn't make the County whole. The County is required to make the schools and towns whole as far as taxes, and if payments are ever made, it would go to the County. Frank Sinicropi added it is just under \$6 million in uncollected taxes and penalties..

Mr. Ferrara thanked everyone for coming – he hopes it was helpful. He added it's their goal to put this on the website for people who didn't participate. He reiterated that our goal is to try and foster a positive relationship with all people of the Cayuga Nation.

Being there was no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the Meeting by Kaitlyn Laskoski and seconded by Frank Sinicropi. No questions. Motion carried 5 ayes, 0 nays.

Meeting adjourned at 6:43 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



NICALETTA J. GREER  
Town Clerk