

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING OF
THE TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF NEW LEBANON
HELD ON DECEMBER 9, 2025**

Present: Tistrya Houghtling, Supervisor
Joanne Amlaw, Councilmember
Scout Metzler, Councilmember
Steve Powers, Councilmember
Craig Skerkis, Councilmember

Recording Secretary: Marsha (Marcie) Robertson, Town Clerk

Others Present: Susan Tipograph, Recreation Commission Member
Sharon Powers, IT Website Support, Shaker
Preservation & ZBA Member
Mary Young, NL Rep to CC Office For the Aging &
Traffic Safety
Ted Salem, ZBA Member & ZRC Chair
Josh Young, Planning Board Member, BEDC & Shaker
Preservation Committee Chair
William Shannon, Ethics Board Member & President of
LV Seniors
Peg Munves, CAC Co-Chair
Jim Carroll, Planning Board & ZRC Member
Members of the Public

CALL TO ORDER:

The regular monthly meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Supervisor Houghtling. The meeting was held in person at the New Lebanon Town Hall, 14755 State Route 22 North, New Lebanon, NY 12125 with members of the public also being able to view the meeting at the following link: https://townhallstreams.com/towns/new_lebanon_ny

A moment of silence was held, followed by the flag salute. The emergency exits were pointed out. Supervisor Houghtling made an announcement for attendees to not block any of the exits.

FINANCIAL:

Supervisor's Report:

The Supervisor's Report as of November 30, 2025 was available to the public via the Town Clerk's email and the Town website and the Town Board was emailed the Supervisor's Report by Supervisor Houghtling.

Councilmember Skerkis commented on just recently receiving information from a concerned resident. He commented on the Supervisor's Report showing the total cash balance of roughly \$306,000. Supervisor Houghtling confirmed. He stated, they need to figure out the \$625,000 for the landfill monitoring and the interest over the past twelve or fourteen years, he stated, tonight is not the night but he wants it on record that this is deeply alarming.

Supervisor Houghtling responded she can address it now. She stated there is about \$700,000 to \$1 million in landfill money out. The town pays it in full and is then reimbursed in full. The town had enough money in the accounts to cover that, instead of taking out a bond. Approximately December 3rd, the town received \$300,000 back from the last set of bills that were paid. That brings the balance from the \$306,000 to about \$600,000. She stated at the November meeting we paid about \$450,000 out that has not been reimbursed yet, bringing that total to about \$1,100,000. There is also sales tax revenue that is in 2025's budget that was used to pay bills but 4th quarter sale tax does not come in until January or February. That will be another \$300,000 approximately. Once we receive the 2025 revenue and receive reimbursement for the money paid out in the landfill that cash balance comes to about \$1.4 million, which is the \$625,000 for the landfill, the \$300,000 in the capital reserve account, the fund balance for the highway and the general fund.

Councilmember Skerkis replied, he can follow that logic but his concern is he understand the \$625,000 is a reserve or special account of some kind. He stated, hypothetically what if the reimbursement did not come. He just wants it on the record that there are thirty plus pages of information provided that gives him pause. He stated, that is just one of a number of topics in the document received.

Supervisor Houghtling responded, the alternate option that the Town Board could have discussed was bonding the \$2.5 million project. The board knew they were putting out \$2.5 million in chunks of large payments and waiting approximately six weeks for reimbursement. The state did require that the Town show that they could pay it, which the town could because the money was in the account.

Councilmember Skerkis continued, all of that is fine but there are legal parameters on where they can use certain funds. It is concerning to him. He stated, it is his understanding the \$625,000 was allocated specifically for the landfill monitoring and to be used for nothing else and it was in an interest bearing account, and he does not see where that interest is, it is all lumped into one.

Supervisor Houghtling responded, this came up at a board meeting before Attorney Tingley was here and he was going to look into it. She stated, she was not the Supervisor or on the Town Board when this got set up. Mike Benson was the Supervisor when the money came in. Discussion continued between Councilmember Skerkis and Supervisor Houghtling.

A motion was made by Councilmember Powers to accept the Supervisor's report for November as typed. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Houghtling.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Powers -	Aye
Councilmember Metzler -	Aye
Supervisor Houghtling -	Aye
Councilmember Amlaw -	Aye
Councilmember Skerkis -	Nay

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

In addition to an in-person privilege of the floor, Supervisor Houghtling will read all comments, questions and concerns emailed to supervisor@townofnewlebanon.com during the meeting.

Supervisor Houghtling read the rules for privilege of the floor.

Susan Tipograph: Susan commented on the inappropriate comments made during privilege of the floor at the November Town Board meeting towards the Town Supervisor and to apologize for not responding at the time it was happening.

Bonnie Lichak: Bonnie commented on her concerns with the ethics related to the Tilden Project.

Supervisor Houghtling: Supervisor Houghtling clarified that the Town Board does not have discretion or oversight over the Ethics Board or the Planning Board.

Scott Metzler: Scott spoke regarding the mud bog pit at the race track in New Lebanon. He stated, they are polluting the creek.

Mr. Muadin (Online): Mr. Muadin spoke, he is opposed to the proposed Local Law regulating trash containers alongside of the road and the fine. He feels it is unnecessary and possibly burdensome.

Supervisor Houghtling: Supervisor Houghtling read an email from Tammy Warner regarding the town accountant.

BUDGET AMENDMENT #13 OF 2025:

General Fund:

\$ 235.00	from A-7270.4 (Bands Concerts: Music in the Park)
\$ 480.00	from A-7310.2 (Youth Program - Equipment)
\$ 2,400.00	from A-7310.4 (Youth Program – Contractual Expense)
\$ 366.00	from A-8010.4 (Zoning – Contractual Expense)
\$ 1,025.00	from A-8020.4 (Planning - Contractual Expense)

\$ 134.00	to A-1330.4 (Tax Collector – Contractual Expense)
\$ 82.00	to A-1650.4 (Central Communications)
\$ 122.00	to A-1670.4 (Central Printing & Mailing)
\$ 314.00	to A-1680.4 (Central Data Processing)
\$ 985.00	to A-7110.4 (Parks – Contractual Expense)
\$ 1,391.00	to A-8020.41 (Planning - Attorney)
\$ 1,350.00	to A-8797.4 (Climate Smart – Contractual Expense)
\$ 128.00	to A-9055.8 (Disability Insurance)

Highway Fund:

\$ 4,120.00	from DA-5110.4 (General Repairs – Contractual Expense)
\$ 4,000.00	to DA-5130.4 (Machinery– Contractual Expense)
\$ 120.00	to DA-9055.8 (Disability Insurance)

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling to approve the above noted budget amendment #13 of 2025 as typed. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Powers.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Powers -	Aye
Councilmember Metzler -	Aye
Supervisor Houghtling -	Aye
Councilmember Amlaw -	Aye
Councilmember Skerkis -	Aye

AUDIT OF BILLS:

2025 Bills:

General Nos. 529 through 530, in the amount of \$20,959.00; and
Highway No. 162, in the amount of \$78,581.00;
As listed on Abstract No. 11A dated December 9, 2025.

General Nos. 531 through 585, in the amount of \$515,703.05;
Highway No. 163 through 171, in the amount of \$15,527.36; and
Escrow No. 11, in the amount of \$1,100.00;
As listed on Abstract No. 12 dated December 9, 2025.

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling to pay the bills. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Amlaw.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Powers -	Aye
Councilmember Metzler -	Aye
Supervisor Houghtling -	Aye

Councilmember Amlaw - Aye
Councilmember Skerkis - Aye

COMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORTS:

Supervisor Houghtling stated, committee reports as received to her office by Friday afternoon were sent out to the public and the Town Board. She asked if any board members had any questions or need for clarification on any of the committee reports?

Supervisor Houghtling asked the committee chairs that are present, do any of the committees have any further updates or action that is needed by the Town Board?

Mary Young: Mary updated the board that the NL Seniors raised \$500 at the craft fair and donated it to the High School Choir.

OLD BUSINESS:

EV Charging Station Agreement:

Supervisor Houghtling reported, she has not heard back from Attorney Tingley yet on this matter. Tabled for now.

2026 Contract with Chatham Rescue Squad:

A motion was made by Councilmember Skerkis to authorize the Supervisor to sign the contract with the Chatham Rescue Squad for 2026. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Amlaw.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Powers - Aye
Councilmember Metzler - Aye
Supervisor Houghtling - Aye
Councilmember Amlaw - Aye
Councilmember Skerkis - Aye

A motion was made by Councilmember Powers, seconded by Councilmember Amlaw, and approved unanimously to authorize the Supervisor to sign the charge back agreement with the County.

Letters of Interest – Recreation Commission:

Supervisor Houghtling reported, they received six letters of interest. The Recreation Commission is a seven member board, many members are moving to a new Events Committee. Four of the seven wanted to move to the new committee. One of the seven wanted to resign and not move. Two of the members, Susan Tipograph and Danielle Patterson wanted to stay on the Recreation Commission, so there are five vacancies and six letters of interest. Interviews will be scheduled later on the agenda.

Request for Qualification – PB & ZBA Legal Counsel:

Supervisor Houghtling reported, they received one RFQ. The Town Board held discussion regarding who will participate in the interview and agreed that Ted Salem, Tony Murad, and Elizabeth Brutsch will conduct the interview with the applicant and make a recommendation to the Town Board before the Organizational meeting.

Letters of Interest – Human Resources Support Services:

Supervisor Houghtling reported, they received three letters of interest.

Councilmember Powers asked Councilmember Skerkis if he could clarify what the need was for HR. He stated at the last meeting he separated out Supervisor Houghtling's bookkeeper role and then put the ad out for HR instead of bookkeeper.

Councilmember Skerkis replied, Supervisor Houghtling cannot be her own bookkeeper so that money never had anything to do with the bookkeeper. He stated, the \$15,000 was moved from the A-1220.1 to A-1340.4 for HR, which he thinks is more important. He stated, the Town Supervisor is not the Human Resources Department. Councilmember Skerkis commented, they did receive a number of letters of interest and he is glad that Councilmember Powers brought it up. Over the next couple of days he would like to set up an interview process with the applicants.

Councilmember Powers stated, this is a new position to the town.

Councilmember Skerkis responded, the function is not new.

Supervisor Houghtling commented, it would have to be created through the civil service process.

Councilmember Powers stated, there is civil service, he would need to contact the union, and asked Councilmember Skerkis if he had done these things yet.

Councilmember Skerkis replied, he has not yet.

Supervisor Houghtling commented, the last time this was mentioned she reached out to the Association of Towns (AOT) and shared the email with the Town Board. HR is a blanket term and can involve many things and AOT stated that there are some duties that can be removed from the Supervisor's Office and contracted out or create an HR position within the town through all the Civil Service requirements but you need to work with the Town Attorney. She feels it might be premature to interview when they do not know for sure all of the facts. Discussion continued among the board.

Councilmember Powers presented the Town Board with a proposal for an alternative at no cost to the town. Board of Investigation (BOI) was presented and Councilmember Powers went over it all for the board.

BOARD OF INVESTIGATION (BOI)

Consists of five members so there is never a tie in a decision.

For complaints regarding non-elected employees, this consists of the four members of the Town Council plus the Deputy Supervisor.

For a complaint regarding an elected official or a volunteer, this consists of the Supervisor and the four members of the Town Council. If the complaint is regarding a member of the town council or the Supervisor, then that person is replaced by the Deputy Supervisor.

Responsibilities of the BOI

- 1. Gather information – collect specific details about the incident, including the complainant's name, what happened, when it happened, and any witnesses*
- 2. Hold a hearing*
- 3. Make a determination*
- 4. Refer the matter to another agency, i.e. the Ethics Board or the judicial system, as appropriate*

Service Law § 75 provides that a covered employee may not be removed or otherwise subjected to disciplinary penalty except for incompetency or misconduct shown after a hearing on stated charges. Such employee is entitled to representation and to summon witnesses to testify on her or his behalf at the hearing. If the employee is found guilty of any charges, the Town may take disciplinary action ranging from a formal letter of reprimand to a fine, a temporary suspension, demotion, or dismissal from service. The disciplinary action taken against an employee shall be based on the nature of the disciplinary violation and/or the employee's employment record with the Town.

Councilmember Skerkis responded, thanked Councilmember Powers for his effort but he read the first couple of lines and thought it is a partisan body that does not solve the problem. He stated, they need someone who is not an elected official, completely nonpartisan. He stated what was proposed is very partisan and he will not support it.

Councilmember Metzler commented, based on his experience he agrees that this proposal is less of a benefit to the town than having an outside source for HR.

Supervisor Houghtling stated, one of the challenges of not having a model to follow or a job description or knowing what is allowed to be contracted and what is not is that no other town in Columbia County has an HR department. It is the Town Supervisor or maybe the bookkeeper within the Supervisor's office that does the HR.

Councilmember Metzler commented, that he thinks an outside HR service is a better idea.

Councilmember Powers stated, that his proposal was grabbed from experiences in other towns outside of Columbia County.

Letters of Interest – Forensic Accountant/Audit Services:

Supervisor Houghtling commented, there was a discussion last month that may have left an impression that the town has not been audited in years. She wanted to clarify for the record, for all local governments in New York State, the Office of the State Comptroller is the body that is responsible for doing their audits. Every year as a town we file our annual financial document with NYS OSC and they, in turn, audit towns when there is a concern or when it is the towns turn in the Queue. Supervisor Houghtling stated, the town performs internal audits every year in January for anyone that handles money within the Town of New Lebanon and gave a brief explanation of the process. She stated, the town has a Bank Reconciliation Policy and any department that handles money is required to reconcile their bank statement and send it to the entire Town Board.

Supervisor Houghtling discussed the best practices put forth by the NYS Comptroller's Office that the town is following.

Supervisor Houghtling reported, they received three letters of interest for audit services. Every company that applied stated they looked forward to getting a scope of work or an RFQ.

NEW BUSINESS:

Policy Review – Social Media Policy:

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling, seconded by Councilmember Amlaw, and approved unanimously to mark the Social Media Policy as reviewed with no changes.

Introductory LL#6 of 2025 – Garbage Cans:

Supervisor Houghtling stated, this was at the request of Highway Superintendent McCagg. Ted Salem worked with Highway Superintendent McCagg and Attorney Tingley on drafting a local law. Town Board discussion took place with Ted Salem included.

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling to introduce Introductory Local Law No. 6 of 2025. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Powers.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Powers -	Aye
Councilmember Metzler -	Aye
Supervisor Houghtling -	Aye
Councilmember Amlaw -	Aye
Councilmember Skerkis -	Aye

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling to authorize the Town Supervisor to execute Part 1 of the Short Environmental Assessment Form for Introductory Local Law No. 6 of 2025. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Powers.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Powers -	Aye
Councilmember Metzler -	Aye
Supervisor Houghtling -	Aye
Councilmember Amlaw -	Aye
Councilmember Skerkis -	Aye

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling, seconded by Councilmember Powers, and approved unanimously to schedule a Public Hearing for Tuesday, January 13th, 2026 at 5:55pm and ask the Town Clerk to advertise.

Town Historian Resignation:

Supervisor Houghtling reported, unfortunately Bitsy Sheffer Winig is resigning as Town Historian. This is an appointed position by the Town Supervisor.

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling to accept the resignation from Bitsy Sheffer Winig as Town Historian effective immediately.

It was noted that her letter stated effective 12/31/2025. Supervisor Houghtling retracted her motion because it is an annual appointment meaning her term will just expire and she will not be re-appointed in January.

PB, ZBA, CAC, & Ethics Board 2026 Re-appointments:

The Town Board held a brief discussion regarding the process for appointments and/or re-appointments.

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling, seconded by Councilmember Amlaw, and approved unanimously to go out for letters of interest for Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Advisory Council, and Ethics Board with various terms and expiration dates with letters of interest due on or before 4:00pm on December 29th, 2026, and ask the Town Clerk to advertise accordingly.

Schedule 2025 Year End Meeting for Paying Bills and Holding Interviews:

Supervisor Houghtling stated, she did not see any bills that needed a year end meeting to be paid. She is more comfortable waiting until the January meeting. No one on the board stated a need for a year end meeting.

Schedule 2026 Annual Organizational Meeting:

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling, seconded by Councilmember Powers, and approved unanimously to schedule the 2026 Annual Organizational Meeting for January 2nd, 2026 at 6:00pm.

Schedule 2026 Annual Audit Meeting:

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling, seconded by Councilmember Powers, and approved unanimously to schedule the 2025 Annual Audit Meeting for January 20th, 2026 at 5:00pm.

Mobile Home Park License Renewals:

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling, seconded by Councilmember Amlaw, and approved unanimously, to approve the 2026 Mobile Home License Renewal of Sherman's Mobile Home Park, Ski Lodge Mobile Home Park, Shaker Flats Mobile Home Park, Shaker Meadows Mobile Home Park, Adams Crossing (Garden Homes) Mobile Home Park, and Hanson's Mobile Home Park per the recommendation of our Code Enforcement Officer.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

JANUARY:

Friday, January 2nd, 2026 at 6:00pm – Annual Organization Meeting & Swearing In or Elected Officials

Tuesday, January 13th, 2026 at 5:55pm – Public Hearing (Intro. LL#6 of 2025)

Tuesday, January 13th, 2026 at 6:00pm – Regular Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, January 20th, 2026 at 5:00pm – Annual Audit

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

In addition to an in-person privilege of the floor, Supervisor Houghtling will read all comments, questions and concerns emailed to supervisor@townofnewlebanon.com during the meeting.

Jim Carroll: Jim spoke regarding the forensic audit and who will do a scoping document.

Margaret Robertson: Meg thanked Councilmember Metzler for his service and presented him with a thank you.

Pat Metzler: Pat acknowledged Councilmember Metzler for serving on the Town Board and thanked Councilmember Skerkis for "Talk of the Town".

Mr. Muadin: (Online) Mr. Muadin thanked Councilmembers Skerkis and Metzler for serving on the Town Board. Mr. Muadin shared information from the Town of Harrison, NY regarding a personnel department.

Susan Tipograph: Susan commented for the record, she looked online and the Town of Harrison, NY has a population of 31,000 people.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling, to adjourn the meeting at 7:16pm.
The motion was seconded by Councilmember Powers.

Roll Call Vote:

- Councilmember Powers - Aye
- Councilmember Metzler - Aye
- Supervisor Houghtling - Aye
- Councilmember Amlaw - Aye
- Councilmember Skerkis - Aye

Respectfully submitted,

Marcie Robertson
New Lebanon Town Clerk

