

## **Town of Fowler January Organizational Meeting Minutes held on January 12, 2026, at 6:00 PM.**

The regular scheduled January Organizational Meeting was held on the above date, with four board members present. Councilperson Bishop was not in attendance. Also present were Town Clerk Tami Gale, Deputy Town Clerk Kimberly Reed, Highway Superintendent Randy Durham, Code Enforcement Officer Glen Besaw, Town Justice Tim Knowlton, Assessor Chair Kathleen Besaw, Maintenance Worker Byron Woodward, Code of Ethics Committee member Vivian Goodman, Richard Clement, and Deb Walsh.

Supervisor Newvine called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM, then proceeded with the pledge of allegiance followed by a moment of silence to honor our military men and women, all healthcare workers, and for the families of those who have recently passed: Elaine McGill and Mary Towne.

Supervisor Newvine asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Town Board meeting. A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons, seconded by Councilperson Knight. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Supervisor Newvine asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Special Town Board meeting. A motion was made by Councilperson Knight, seconded by Councilperson Simmons. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Supervisor Newvine asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the Special Year-End Transfer Meeting held on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025. A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons, seconded by Councilperson Walsh. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

### **RECOMMENDED APPOINTMENTS FOR 2026**

Supervisor Newvine asked the board if they all had the list of Recommended Appointments for 2026. Supervisor Newvine asked the Board if there were any questions or concerns about the appointments. With no questions voiced, Supervisor Newvine asked for a motion to approve the recommended appointments for 2026 as follows: Budget Director - Ricky W. Newvine, Deputy Supervisor - Karen M. Simmons, Deputy Town Clerk, Tax Collector Donna Brown, Deputy Town Clerk, Tax Collector - Kim Reed, Court Clerk - Irma Ashley, Town Hall Custodian - Rosalee Thornton, Maintenance - Byron Woodward, Official Lawyer - Case & Leader, Code Enforcement Officer - Glen Besaw, Tax Collector - Tami Gale, Registrar of Vital Statistics - Tami Gale, Deputy Registrar of Vital Statistics – Donna Brown, Board of Assessment Review Member – Candy Brown, Official Depositories - Community Bank, Official Newspaper - Tribune Press & Watertown Times, Investment - CLASS – MBIA, Deputy Highway Superintendent - Nelson Bice, Historian - Karen Simmons, Dog Control Officer - Dan Moyer, Bookkeeper - Barbara Finnie, Ethics Board Member – Vivian Goodman, Health Officer - St. Lawrence County Public Health Department, Planning Board Member – Vicky Cappellino.

A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons, seconded by Councilperson Knight, to accept the appointments listed. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

### **OATHS OF OFFICE**

Town Justice Timothy Knowlton administered the Oath of Office to those in attendance.

## **BOARD MEETING DATES & TIME**

Supervisor Newvine reported on the 2026 Town Board Meeting Schedule. All Town board meetings in 2026 will be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday each month at 6:00PM except for the month of October, which will be determined at a later date.

### **2026 TOWN BOARD MEETING DATES**

**Meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month at 6PM at the Town Hall**

<b>January 12, 2026</b>	<b>July 13, 2026</b>
<b>February 9, 2026</b>	<b>August 10, 2026</b>
<b>March 9, 2026</b>	<b>September 14, 2026</b>
<b>April 13, 2026</b>	<b>October (TBD)</b>
<b>May 11, 2026</b>	<b>November 9, 2026</b>
<b>June 8, 2026</b>	<b>December 14, 2026</b>

Supervisor Newvine asked for a motion to approve the meeting dates for 2026. A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Knight. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

### **2026 SALARY SCHEDULE**

Supervisor Newvine read aloud the Town of Fowler Salary Schedule for 2026 and asked for a motion to approve the Salary Schedule. A motion was made by Councilperson Knight seconded by Councilperson Walsh to approve the Salary Schedule. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

### **RESIGNATION**

Supervisor Newvine read aloud a letter of resignation from John Walsh from the Planning Board, reporting that as an elected member of the town council, he can't serve on the planning board.

Supervisor Newvine asked for a motion to accept the letter of resignation. A motion was made by Councilperson Knight seconded by Councilperson Simmons. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

### **2026 TOWN BOARD COMMITTEES & DEPARTMENT HEADS**

Supervisor Newvine asked for a motion to approve the 2026 Town Board Committees and Department Heads reporting they will discuss what newly elected Councilmember Walsh will preside over at a later date. A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Knight to approve the Committees and Department Heads. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

<b>Supervisor Ricky W. Newvine</b>	<b>- Sylvia Lake Beach, Hailesboro -Ballpark, Solar Projects</b>
<b>Councilperson Leo Knight Jr. Councilperson Karen Simmons</b>	<b>- Highway Department - Animal Control, Cemeteries, -Food Programs, Beaver Control - Pavilion &amp; Playground, Use of -Town Hall and Pavilion</b>
<b>Councilperson Lynn Bishop Councilperson John Walsh Audit Committee</b>	<b>- Mowing - TBD - Supervisor Newvine, Bookkeeper Finnie, Councilperson Simmons</b>
<b>Union Contract Negotiations</b>	<b>- Supervisor Ricky W, Newvine, Councilperson Knight</b>

### **MILEAGE RATE**

Supervisor Newwine asked the board for a motion to approve the mileage rate as is set by the State at .72.5 cents per mile for 2026. A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Walsh. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

### **2026 AGREEMENTS**

Supervisor Newwine presented three Agreements that are executed yearly to the Town board for their consideration, and asked for a motion giving him permission to sign the following:

1. **CEMETERY AGREEMENT** (HAILESBORO CEMETERY ASSOCIATION) IN THE AMOUNT OF \$5,000.
2. **READING ROOM AGREEMENT** IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,400.
3. **RECREATION CENTER AGREEMENT** IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,200.

A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Knight and carried.

### **3- YEAR FIRE CONTRACT 2026, 2027, 2028**

Supervisor Newwine reported the Gouverneur Fire Company is proposing the following for fire protection services in the Town of Fowler for the above referenced contract years:

- **January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026 - \$50,595**
- **January 1, 2027 to December 31, 2027 - \$53,125**
- **January 1, 2028 to December 31, 2028 - \$55,7802**

Supervisor Newwine asked for a motion to approve the 3- Year Fire Contract. A motion was made by Councilperson Knight, seconded by Councilperson Walsh. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

### **AGREEMENT TO SPEND TOWN HIGHWAY FUNDS**

Supervisor Newwine asked for a motion allowing the majority of the Town Board Members and Hwy. Superintendent Durham to sign the agreement to spend Town Highway funds. The sum of \$55,000 for general repairs on 56.52 miles of town highways. \$280,000 will be spent commencing at the double culverts on the Country Club Rd and leading to Pike Rd, a distance of 2.1 miles, \$164,000 will be spent commencing at Town of Hermon Line and leading to North Woods Rd, a distance of 2.69 miles.

A motion was made by Councilperson Knight seconded by Councilperson Walsh. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

### **RESOLUTIONS**

#### **RESOLUTION # 1 of 2026**

#### **AUTHORIZE PAYMENT IN ADVANCE OF AUDIT**

A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Knight to adopt Resolution #1 of 2026, a resolution to authorize the payment in advance of audits of claims for public utility services, postage, freight, express charges, and health insurance premiums. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

**AYES: 4 NEWVINE, SIMMONS, KNIGHT, WALSH**

**NAYS: 0**

**ABSENT: 1 BISHOP**

#### **RESOLUTION # 2 of 2026**

#### **PROCUREMENT POLICY FOR THE TOWN OF FOWLER. NO CHANGES.**

Supervisor Newwine discussed resolution #2 of 2026, a resolution to adopt the Town of Fowler Procurement Policy with no changes.

A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Knight to adopt Resolution #2 of 2026, a procurement policy for the Town of Fowler, its officers, agents, and employees required by Section 104-b of the New York State General Municipal Law to apply to the purchasing of all goods and services which are not required by law to be publicly bid. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

**AYES: 4 NEWVINE, SIMMONS, KNIGHT, WALSH**

**NAYS: 0**

**ABSENT: 1 BISHOP**

***RESOLUTION # 3 of 2026***

***OFFICIAL UNDERTAKING OF OFFICERS OF THE TOWN OF FOWLER***

A motion was made by Councilperson Knight seconded by Councilperson Walsh to adopt Resolution #3 of 2026, a resolution for the respective officers of the Town of Fowler; Supervisor, Bookkeeper to the Supervisor, Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerks, Tax Receiver, Deputy Tax Receivers, Registrar of Vital Records, Deputy Registrar of Vital Records, Deputy Supervisor, Highway Superintendent, Town Justice, and Court Clerk to undertake with the Town of Fowler that they will faithfully perform and discharge the duties of their office and will promptly account for and pay over all moneys or property received as a Town Officer, in accordance with the law. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

**AYES: 4 NEWVINE, SIMMONS, KNIGHT, WALSH**

**NAYS: 0**

**ABSENT: 1 BISHOP**

***RESOLUTION #4 of 2026***

***HOLDING HARMLESS AGREEMENT WITH ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY***

A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Knight to adopt Resolution #4 of 2026, a resolution to hold harmless the County of St. Lawrence County for providing service for the year 2026. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

**AYES: 4 NEWVINE, SIMMONS, KNIGHT, WALSH**

**NAYS: 0**

**ABSENT: 1 BISHOP**

***RESOLUTION #5 of 2026***

***HOLDING HARMLESS AGREEMENT WITH THE TOWN OF HERMON***

A motion was made by Councilperson Knight seconded by Councilperson Walsh to adopt Resolution #5 of 2026, a resolution to hold harmless the Town of Hermon for providing service for the year 2026. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

**AYES: 4 NEWVINE, SIMMONS, KNIGHT, WALSH**

**NAYS: 0**

**ABSENT: 1 BISHOP**

***RESOLUTION #6 of 2026***

***HOLDING HARMLESS AGREEMENT WITH THE TOWN OF GOUVERNEUR***

A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Knight to adopt Resolution #6 of 2026, a resolution to hold harmless the Town of Gouverneur for providing service for the year 2026. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

**AYES: 4 NEWVINE, SIMMONS, KNIGHT, WALSH**

**NAYS: 0**

**ABSENT: 1 BISHOP**

## Town Department Reports

### **Justice Department**

Justice Tim Knowlton reported:

- Court Clerk Irma Ashley has broken her foot and is restricted from driving and not able to work on her scheduled days. She will continue to keep the court caught up for proceedings.

### **Bookkeeper**

Bookkeeper Barbara Finnie was not in attendance.

### **Assessors**

Assessor Chair Kathleen Besaw reported:

- She provided board members with copies of a newly signed bill by Governor Hochul, which establishes a new real property tax exemption related to Veterans with a 100% disability rating.
- She reported that when you read the scope of the legislation, it is very specific and is not automatic.
- She discussed there are 5 Veterans in the Town of Fowler, which none of them would qualify for this exemption, as to qualify a Veteran must meet all of the criteria and is not a blanket exemption for all Veterans with a 100% disability rating.
- It was discussed that the board would need to adopt this exemption as a local law for it to be applied.

Highway Superintendent Randy Durham asked to make a comment and reported that he, being a 100% disabled Veteran, thinks the town should adopt the exemption just in case, as we don't know if someone who may actually qualify for this exemption, may move into the Town of Fowler, and if it were to be adopted it will be in place and available.

After some discussion, the Board asked Assessor Chair Besaw to research the legislation, discuss it with the Town Attorney, and to see what needs to be done to adopt the legislation.

- Reported she had received the paperwork on appraisals that were done in the Town of Fowler by New York State.
- Reported that 50 parcels had been completed in this process, and they had found that everything is under assessed.
- Discussed the amount of revenue that the Town of Fowler is missing out on and recommended to the board that they consider and discuss having a re-valuation completed.
- Reported that Empire State Mines was supposed to have been one of the 50 parcels appraised by New York State, and they would not touch it, and reported that she would not be able to complete such a fine-tuned special assessment.

Supervisor Newwine asked who the town could have complete an assessment of the mines. Assessor Chair Besaw stated that if the town did a re-valuation, then the State would tackle it.

- Gave an example of a business in the town that is assessed for \$200,000 that is worth almost a million dollars and was recently sold for half a million dollars, and that she can know what the business is worth, but can't change the assessment, unless she changes everybody in the whole town, and the only way she can do that is through a re-valuation.
- Reported that we are stalling the inevitable and the town is losing money.

Supervisor Newwine asked Assessor Chair Besaw if the assessor department could handle completing a re-valuation or if an outside party would need to be hired.

- Assessor Chair Besaw reported the assessor department knows the values of the properties in the Town of Fowler and they could complete a re-valuation.

Councilperson Simmons asked Assessor Chair Besaw what the Board would need to do to have the assessors start a re-valuation. Assessor Chair Besaw reported the Board would need to adopt a resolution, and if even one Board member holds out then we can't move forward with it.

- Discussed, she would have the residents put on notice and hold town meetings so that the residents understand that this is not going to bring their taxes up, but it's going to equalize the playing field and the big businesses in the town are going to be appropriately assessed.

Supervisor Newwine asked if the Town would need to notify the County. Assessor Chair Besaw reported that the County would need to be notified when a resolution is passed and then the Town could apply for funds to be reimbursed by the State, which is a small amount of reimbursement per parcel.

Supervisor Newwine asked Assessor Chair Besaw to provide the board members with information on the incorrectly assessed parcels and what they really should be assessed at and stated maybe at the next meeting we could start the ball rolling, stating that he thinks it is time.

### **Historian**

Historian Karen Simmons reported:

- It has been quiet in the Historian's Office.

### **Dog Control**

Councilperson Karen Simmons reported for Dan Moyer who was not in attendance:

- The dog that was picked up on November 20, 2025 had been taken in by the Potsdam SPCA who volunteered to find it a home.
- Thanked Debbie Andrews and Clover Forsythe for their assistance in getting the animal accepted by the SPCA.
- One complaint had been received regarding animals on County Route 22 who are staying in a house that has been vacated by their owners. Dog Control Officer Moyer had made a welfare check on the animals and had determined that the animals in the vacated home are being fed daily.

Supervisor Newwine thanked Editor of the Gouverneur Tribune Press, Rachel Hunter, who is always there for the Town of Fowler and her great article she published on the now adopted dog.

### **Beaver Control**

Councilperson Simmons reported for Moyer's Wildlife Control who was not in attendance:

- Beaver control continues on Swiss Hill Road. He has removed one beaver so far from the site.

### **Code Enforcement**

Code Enforcement Officer Glen Besaw reported:

- He continues to find missing files that were not transferred over to his new computer and is working with the program's IT department to recover the lost files.
- He cannot close-out last year's permits until the files are restored.
- Discussed, he has learned that a building permit is considered to be a legal document and when people do not contact him to do the necessary inspections, they will be receiving tickets answerable in court.
- Reported every ticket that he writes as a Code Enforcement Officer is a misdemeanor.
- **Town Clerk**

Town Clerk Tami Gale reported:

- DEC Gross sales for the month were \$2,065.00 with the Town of Fowler Commission being \$22.73.
- She had licensed 13 dogs, issued 2 Certified Marriage Transcripts, issued 3 Death Certificates, issued 3 building permits and had collected \$1.00 in photo copies.
- She began collecting taxes on January 2<sup>nd</sup> and as of meeting time 10.2% of the tax warrant has been collected.
- Reported the NYS Tug Hill Commission Annual Government Conference is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, April 21, 2026 at the Turning Stone Conference Center if anyone is interested in attending, she has informational packets to distribute.

## **Maintenance**

Maintenance Worker Byron Woodward reported:

- He had no maintenance concerns.

## **Highway Department**

Highway Superintendent Randy Durham reported:

### **AGREEMENT TO SPEND TOWN HIGHWAY FUNDS**

- Hwy. Superintendent Randy Durham asked to re-visit the earlier discussion on the agreement to spend town highway funds. Hwy. Superintendent Durham reported that the sum of \$55,000 to spend in general repairs was coming straight out of the 2026 town budget.
- Discussed the improvements in the amount of \$280,000 that were being done from the double culverts on the Country Club Rd leading to the Pike Rd reporting that the Pike Rd is the last 150 feet of the Country Club Rd, and the Town of Rossie is going to take that part of the burden off of the Town of Fowler.
- Discussed the improvements in the amount of \$164,000 being made at the Town of Hermon Line (Chub Lake Rd) to North Woods Rd, stating that they might not have quite enough to do them all, but it looks like we are getting more money from FEMA all of the time.
- Discussed, it looks like we will have some funds left over and not spent from the highway account DA5130.
- Discussed, he is expecting payroll from December to have been a large sum as they plowed nearly every day.
- He is sending a letter to Don Chambers, St. Lawrence County Highway Superintendent requesting the County to provide our paving service this year.
- Reported he has been working for 2 years on trying to get the ability for new drivers to be trained at the highway department. He has been shot down in the past on the Federal level and now has an opportunity in Albany to try to obtain a municipal license to allow us to train our drivers. He discussed this would open us up to a larger candidate pool to choose from, possibly including the heavy equipment operators from our local BOCES.
- Hwy. Superintendent Durham asked the board for their support and if they would help him out with his expenses as he will have to go to Albany in February to speak with legislators. He will need to go again in March, which will be paid for by the highway association.

Supervisor Newwine reported that Hwy. Superintendent Durham forgot to mention that in addition, the license will only apply to municipalities, and they can not leave for another position unless it is with another municipality.

After further discussion, it was the consensus of the board to approve the expenses as requested. Hwy. Superintendent Durham thanked the board for their support.

- Discussed he had updated his highway reports that are turned into the board monthly to include some new data. He has added a section to include the costs. He gave the example showing what the cost is for the plows to go out as being \$1700.00 during a regular shift and it also will include what it costs if it was an overtime "call in" for the service. He reported that his friend Jason Malar came in to help him set up the new formula to record the information at no charge to the town.

Supervisor Newwine asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham how he thought the shift work was going. Hwy. Superintendent Durham reported that he liked it, and he will review it next summer to see what everyone's thoughts are. He reported it could use some tweaking, and the highway department employees are working good with it.

- He discussed that no one has had to work over 12 hours, and we have had 2 ice storms.

## **COUNCILPERSONS**

### **Councilperson Walsh:**

- Had no further questions or comments.

### **Councilperson Bishop:**

Councilperson Bishop was not in attendance.

### **Councilperson Knight:**

- Thanked Highway Superintendent Durham for fixing the sign on Sylvia Lake Road.
- Asked if the 2026 MACK Truck was still at the highway department. Hwy. Superintendent Durham stated it was as the parts are not at Viking yet.

### **Councilperson Simmons:**

- Reported in the month of December, the HAP food pantry had a total of 16 visits in the two weeks that it was open.
- 113 care packages were delivered on December 16th to senior citizens through the SOS Program. The next delivery for the SOS Program will be in March.
- Asked if anyone knew where the movie projector that is sitting on the floor in the board room of the Town Hall came from.
- Reported that Fowler Family Day meetings will begin in February on a date to be determined if anyone is interested in attending.
- Reported that the Chicken BBQ to support the SOS and HAP Programs was held this past Saturday. The event was well attended with \$1,400 in chicken BBQ sales and \$122.00 received in donations.
- She reported that they didn't sell out this time and had 3 chicken dinners left. Highway Superintendent Randy Durham reminded Councilperson Simmons that he had sold the 3 remaining chicken dinners.
- Reported the meal included chicken, baked potatoes, cole slaw, and a roll. Debbie and Katie Andrews made cookies and brownies for dessert.
- Reported she is going to place a card of thanks in the Gouverneur Tribune Press but wanted to thank everyone who helped.

Supervisor Newvine asked Councilperson Simmons to be sure to include the highway department crew as they had cleaned the entire area up.

Supervisor Newvine discussed that we don't advertise the event properly, and that the detour might have led to fewer attendees.

- Asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham if the bridge on CR 22 was going to have work completed this summer. Supervisor Newvine reported that the bridge on CR 22 will be worked on at the end of July.

### **Supervisor Newvine:**

- Congratulated Lynn Bishop, John Walsh, and Robert Theriault on their recent elections.
- Reported the furnace in the highway department is up and running and the cost was \$469.00.
- Asked Councilperson Knight if he had inspected the highway department trucks. Councilperson Knight reported that he had looked at the highway vehicles, and they were found to be kept in better condition.
- Reported that NYMIR has sent a form to be completed in regard to vehicle battery disconnect switches, that needs to be signed by him and Hwy. Superintendent Durham, stating that the switches are installed.
- He had received a thank you card from Elizabeth Brunson for all of the care packages that she has received over the years.
- He had received a card from Delores Hartle thanking the Town for her SOS Christmas delivery and the bag that it came in.

- He received an entertainment flyer from Mark Rust that we will save to discuss as a possibility for family day.
- Thanked Hwy. Superintendent Durham for the invitation to attend the Superintendent of Highways event.
- Reported that Randy is actually the President of the Superintendents of Highways and Rick is the President of the County Supervisors.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Byron Woodward asked if the Town of Fowler actually needed the extra money to spend \$100,000 on a re-valuation. Supervisor Newvine discussed that the cost is not going to be anywhere near \$100,000 as the local assessor department is going to provide the service instead of an outside contractor.
- Glen Besaw asked if a re-valuation was completed if the town would pick up more revenue. Assessor Kathleen Besaw stated that there is revenue in it for the town.
- Glen Besaw reported that the Town of Rossie had a re-valuation completed and had picked up three million dollars in assessments.
- Vivian Goodman reported her end of CR 24 is slippery and coated over and asked Hwy. Superintendent Durham who plows that end of the road.
- Randy Durham commented on a re-valuation stating that it would make properties that are similar pay the same, giving an example that all doublewide homes with a one stall garage would pay the same, singlewide trailers with a 2-stall garage would pay the same, \$400,000 homes would all pay the same, etc.

The next regular scheduled board meeting will be on Monday, February 9, 2026, at 6:00PM at the Fowler Town Hall.

A motion was made by Councilperson Simmons seconded by Councilperson Walsh to audit the bills. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

The bills audited for the General and Highway Fund for the remaining December 2025 bills were # 533 to # 546, with a total of \$2,638.27 and January 2026 bills #1 to #11 with a total of \$16,628.61.

With no further business, on a motion of Councilperson Simmoms, seconded by Councilperson Knight, the Organizational meeting was adjourned at 6:50PM. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Tami Gale; Town Clerk