

**VILLAGE OF RED HOOK WORKSHOP SPECIAL MEETING
VIA RING CENTRAL
February 4, 2021**

Present: Mayor Ed Blundell, Deputy Mayor Bent Kovalchik, Trustee Jennifer Norris, Trustee Charlie Laing, Trustee William Noonan and Village Clerk Lara Hart.

Mayor Blundell opened the February 4, 2021 Village Board Special Workshop Meeting via ring central at 7:00 pm advising this was held over from original meeting dated January 28, 2021 that was cancelled due to technical difficulties. Mayor Blundell announced there was a quorum.

Mayor Blundell did a Roll Call for attendance.

Mayor Blundell – yes

Deputy Mayor Kovalchik – yes

Trustee Norris – yes

Trustee Noonan – yes

Trustee Laing – yes

Mayor Blundell stated the Village Board Workshop Meeting is held in compliance with Open Meetings Law per Executive Order 202.1 and 202.72.

Mayor Blundell said that Workshop meetings are less formal and asked that all be friendly and civil and advised that the Village has been working on a project that is near done. Mayor Blundell advised we are working on a short term project and have been working with the County to develop the Collaborative Plan and picking up a lot of expertise from larger agencies and having been working on our own “Plan” since mid-December and have a draft underway. Mayor Blundell said tonight the Board would like to wrap up and that the next formal Board meeting will be February 8th where the Board will schedule a public hearing on the “Plan” and then his personal plan is to keep the public hearing open for about 10 days for continued comments and move ahead to meet April 1 deadline.

Mayor Blundell said they took in a lot of input and asked all to look at what was circulated as working document draft dated January 27 and that they have picked 5 working categories 1) Transparency and Accountability; 2) Building Trust through Sustained Relationships; 3) Equity; 4) Clarity and Accessibility of Information and 5) The Future.

Mayor Blundell said we are not looking for this to be over and done by April 1 but just submitted.

Mayor Blundell said some changes were he added the Bard demographics.

Mayor Blundell said one concerns was finding the best way to put something up for parties and had conversation with the Human Rights Commission and in looking at their train and skill and what they can offer to get around that bottle neck of them not reporting to any entity or any enforcement agency or elected body which he feels is a short fall. How do fix whether a civilian on civilian issue or if something allegedly involving the police; and although we do have an existing complaint process and this same hang-up is appearing with other peers; he feels that natural body for that to rest is somebody who has a

discomfort or incident should call the Human Rights Committee and they have to look at volume and locale and communicate that out somehow.

Jodi Miller spoke at this time and referenced the "Plan" and was wondering what that meant and advised that the Commission does not have any regulatory power or investigative power so they do not take these formal complaints to be investigated and knows the issue of how does a small Department handle that, but wonders what roles and what this means in the "Plan" given the limitations of the role and that they are not an investigative body. Mayor Blundell said with all due respect that role needs to change and he would suggest to lobby the County and that people have to have a place to go. Ms. Miller said she understands the concern but at this time the Commission is not set up for that type of system, which is quite extensive. Mayor Blundell said this would be part of the "Plan". Ms. Miller said they do not investigate complaints. Mayor Blundell said he is not saying to investigate. Trustee Noonan said if there is a complaint this Board needs to know what it is to take action and we have to be able to hear the complaint and investigate whether between police and citizen or citizen to citizen. Mayor Blundell said he agrees and we are not just talking about police complaints but any bias, racist incidents. Mayor Blundell said they need to lobby the County and that everyone is having this same issue.

Melkorka Kjarval spoke and indicated in the "Plan" we talk about doing a human relations / or a community relations committee and wouldn't that work as an arm that would encourage trust and build relationships that people could feel they have the ability to approach the Village Board. Mayor Blundell said yes but sees that as a broader concept and does not have an end final answer and that is not specifically related to police complaints. Melkorka said it was not police complaints but community complaints and there should be a body to build trust instead of saying the Human Rights Commission should do this for us; if we are having an issue with people not feeling like they can report and avenues for reporting are not working and there is an issue and the Human Rights Commission is getting reports and we are not getting them it is not that the Human Rights Commission is broken, it is something not working on our side because they are not an investigative body and they are not set up for that and they are set up to create trust and make people feel like there is place to go to be heard. Amy Smith spoke at this time and said there are things we can control and things we cannot and one of the things we cannot control, and advocate for it, is how the County Executive chooses to legislative the identity of a human rights commission; we can plan to express but not a great use of time for tonight and we need to focus on what is going to happen in and for Red Hook. Mayor Blundell thanked all and said he feels the HRC has trained skilled folks and that is important and we need some level of expertise to make something happen. Melkorka advised we have 2 members of HRC that live in Red Hook. Amy Smith said training can be a requirement for participating. Mayor Blundell said he is not saying no, but his concern is advisory vs. enforcement ...is if HRC does not enforce he does see our advisory committee investigating or enforcing. Amy Smith said they would be reporting to other parts of the Municipal Government that have that ability and either way we cannot control what Marc Molinaro decides about the County. Deputy Kovalchik said in the draft "Plan" under the "Future" there is a plan to create a voluntary formal advisory committee to the Village Board specific to the Village of Red Hook to address issues of bias and racism and police activity and any type of form of concern by our citizens, and if we can work in partnership with the County to strengthen that ability and our ability to gather information to better

work with the public that would be great, but we have something in the Plan now that addresses a lot of these issues. Mayor Blundell said he thinks what Melkorka is suggesting is another phrase. Melkorka said what she is saying is focusing on changing what works well in the Human Rights Committee is maybe not what we should mimic and we should figure out what we can do to build that trust in our own Community and said they are non-investigate and they build trust in Communities that are marginalized, and that is important, and that is one of the reasons we are not getting the reports, because we are not making those efforts. Mayor Blundell said he does not know about that last part and asked do you mean from here locally or from HRC. Melkorka said no, locally you are not getting the same amount of reports that HRC is getting from the Red Hook locale. Deputy Mayor Kovalchik said then maybe we should be clear on what the HRC is actually receiving, and are there complaints about our Police and not to be defensive but feels there is mechanism within the Village Government and people hear a lot of stuff, so it would be good to know what the HRC hears that we don't hear. Melkorka said those are trusted relationships that take a certain amount of effort to build and you understand that a marginalized community needs outreach and we need to make commitments so people can build that trust. Deputy Mayor Kovalchik asked so would an advisory committee help serve that purpose. Melkorka said yes and the idea is to have people who have relationships with marginalized communities on the board that could act as somebody you trust based on the relationship you have, and said she does not have a relationship with anybody on this Board although she has lived here for 4 years and that is because we don't interact socially and there is a benefit to having people you know and building those trust relationships, and if the reports are not making it to the Board maybe we have to figure out a way to encourage and make a better avenue. Deputy Mayor Kovalchik said so with the Plan that we have to create a volunteer formal advisory committee would that serve the purpose. Melkorka said she feels it would but does not think we need to change the purpose of the HRC and should be in the Plan. Mayor Blundell said he will lobby the County. Mayor Blundell said in the Village world in March we have elections and official year begins April 1 and at that time is when we add committees.

Melkorka spoke on the Police Department website and if there was a time frame as to when it would be actually up. Sgt. Hildenbrand said it is not all there yet and in the works but does not have a time frame but that things are in place. Melkorka said this issue has been an ongoing issue that needed clarity and what is the time line. Mayor Blundell said in the "Plan" under Clarity and Accessibility of Information - it states complete the migration of the RHPD website to the latest platform and it will happen and the Board has spoken about adding more interactive points on the website. Melkorka asked for a deadline date. Sgt. Hildenbrand said it is at the top of his list to get done, but he is working on body cameras, Dems, but is working on it and asked the Mayor to set a date and he will try to meet that date. Melkorka asked if they needed support and what was holding it up. Sgt. Hildenbrand said no, it has to be reviewed and in place because once launched it cannot have flaws. Sgt. Hildenbrand advised that most Departments have 1-2 full time people to help with Dem reporting and they do not have that which falls on a patrol officer. Amy Smith asked what if this an opportunity for the Board to support the RHPD and does not want to see that the "Plan" is having Pat do this and Pat do that. Sgt. Hildenbrand said the Board support the RHPD but it is their job and they have important work and the website will

eventually get done. Mayor Blundell set a date for June 1, 2021 but will discuss with the Sgt. and the Sgt. said June 1 was ok with him.

Melkorka said a lot of the complaints at the Community Forum was that the RHPD did not have a website and needs a clarity part that needs to be prioritized. Mayor Blundell said it is in the "Plan" and will get it done.

Melkorka asked about under Equity ... Procedural Justice and Implicit Bias Training is underway for current staff... and asked if there was a way to get more specific on what those things are and what training is happening and what is being required and offered. Sgt. Hildenbrand said for procedural training both he and 2 other officers were signed up and it was cancelled due to COVID and as of right now no classes are being held due to COVID and the RHPD currently has 5-6 officers that are trained. Melkorka asked if that was an annual training. Sgt. Hildenbrand said as soon as that came out he sent 2 of his officers to get trained and it is something that he has not put into annual training and is working on body cameras but will work on that. Melkorka asked if that is something that can technically be set in place in this "Plan". Mayor Blundell said the "Plan" states... Require Procedural Justice and Implicit Bias Training in policy and labor contracts and consider other in-service training requirements or incentives" ... and a most important profession we deal with is the police professional and hiring the right one and then keep them up to date with the latest of everything. Amy Smith said it does not say if it will be required annually. Sgt. Hildenbrand said this is new and something that they did not have year after year and can be discussed at the next meeting but if you want to add annual procedural justice he has no problem with it and asked that it be noted in his training line. Sgt. Hildenbrand said they do a lot of training. Mayor Blundell said they will require it and it is already in the "Plan".

Mayor Blundell went to calendar of events and the next meeting will be the public hearing. Mayor Blundell spoke on rules of a public hearing and how it will work on February 8th.

Mayor Blundell said on February 8th he will have an assistant to help with the remote version of a sign-in sheet who wishes to speak and will allow each person 3 minutes to speak. Amy Smith said there is a model for this on the Board of Ed and can assist with that if needed, and asked if the Board needed assistance in reaching out to members of the Community that may not be aware of the public hearing and attest that the Village of Red Hook did seek public comment from all of these different groups of people, and she is willing to do that. Mayor Blundell said meeting/public hearing has been noticed in the paper, on the Village website and on the doors at the Village Hall and said they can talk about that tomorrow. Mayor Blundell said they have certain requirements and whatever anyone can do is fine.

Amy Smith asked to make a language request and in section at "Plan" identifying the graphics of Bard population she feels "non-resident alien" is generally not at all how people are referred to and asked to substitute with "international students" or something to that effect, which is far more less offensive. Mayor Blundell spoke on a story about that, and not disagreeing, but the data he pulled was from some reporting base that all colleges in the Country report to and those were the categories. Amy Smith said she understands but we can do better. Ms. Miller spoke and said in moving forward that we value and respect diversity that the word alien is not going to work. Amy Smith said they are students from other

Countries and Bard itself would never choose that category so the other alternative would be to ask Bard. Mayor Blundell said he likes International Students. Trustee Laing said he did not like being categorized as non-resident alien for a few years. Mayor Blundell said he will use International Students.

Melkorka said Kashan did not make the last meeting and asked if the Board went over his feedback that was sent. Mayor Blundell said yes they did.

Mayor Blundell said the Board will meet on February 8th and start discussing Sewer and other Village Department reports but the Public Hearing will be held first.

Mayor Blundell said current "Plan" is on the Village website and the public hearing will remain open.

Amy Smith asked if the meeting was Monday and said we have done the bare minimum in getting this out to the public and it doesn't seem quite cricket and to call it a genuine public hearing. Mayor Blundell said he disagrees and a draft has been out there. Melkorka felt perhaps the method we reach people needs work and giving more time to get the worked out. Mayor Blundell said it has to be held on February 8th and as discussed the public hearing will remain open for 10 days and the word is out. Lauren Cherry asked what does it mean that it will remain open for 10 days and is that for public comment or the platform. Mayor Blundell said good questions and a public hearing is a formal process and to take input and open for written communication either written, email or by calling and then the Board takes that into the February 18th meeting and Board will close the public hearing and the Board will work from February 18th and March 8th and this Board writes the Plan. Lauren Cherry asked if it is explained when you list the draft how people can communicate with you and the ways we accept the feedback and she has not looked at the website so not sure how it is listed. Mayor Blundell said yes.

Amy Smith feels this is the sort of thing that when Kashan was accusing us as a Community of being about things, and are doing what is exactly legally required of us but no more, and if we really want people to believe that we believe in inclusion we have to do more than that and feels very strongly about this.

Mayor Blundell said the Board Members understand what a Public Hearing is a the Village way of interacting and thinks we are doing all we can. Amy Smith said in this case, this is a public hearing about something that was in response to a State mandate and you read to us what the Village is agreeing that we did, and asked if she is only person on this meeting that thinks we have actually made a good faith effort at letting the public know that their input is part of this process. Mayor Blundell said the notice goes out and they will push in every form they can think of. Amy Smith disagreed and that was not pushing in every form.

Mayor Blundell asked Board members for comment. Trustee Noonan said Facebook Red Hook Happenings has a lot of reach. Deputy Mayor Kovalchik said it is listed in our public newspaper. Trustee Noonan agrees with Amy to get it out as broadly as possible.

Melkorka asked when is the draft going to be posted so people can review and comment. Mayor Blundell said the working draft is up there and will be modified by tomorrow afternoon and that will be the one up for public hearing and will remain open for 10 more days so people can read and attend

hearing and respond and in the end it is the Board that is writing the “Plan” and this is not a dead end and will be on-going and not over.

Melkorka said the commitments you make in this document are important so we are not giving even one business day for people to review. Mayor Blundell said the public hearing is set and there is a 10 day window. Melkorka asked is public comment will be shared. Mayor Blundell said a public hearing is directed to the Board and underlying legal perspective and all record is public record.

Trustee Laing felt all public comments received during the public hearing or afterwards within the comment period are part of the public record and available as part of the documentation of that hearing. Melkorka asked then we would have to request it and you will not be publishing them and reading the, so she would have send a formal request. Mayor Blundell said he would not say that and maybe create a folder of comments. Trustee Norris said people can still come to the meeting ten days later on February 18th and comment and there are two opportunities to talk. Amy Smith said how do we make that clear to people and can they make a plan for 5 different Facebook groups and she is willing to help. Mayor Blundell said to encapsulate the 10 day window and process. Jill Lindquist offered help in getting the information out. Discussion on the notice being put on the website in Spanish would be helpful and Mayor Blundell agreed.

Lauren Cherry felt it would be beneficial for the Village to have a newsletter or email for village to receive information and not have to seek out. Melkorka said the Town has an option to sign up for newsletter alerts and used under Civic plus platform. Mayor Blundell advised several times with water quarterly newsletters residents have been asked to please advise the office of their email and telephone contact and we get very low responses. Village of Red Hook website “sign’in” was discussed. Amy Smith went over the options under that “sign-in”. Mayor Blundell said when he needs to modify or add to the Website he uses that “sign-in” account.

Mayor Blundell said they will edit the 1/27/2021 draft “Plan” based on in-put from this evening.

Deputy Mayor Kovalchik made a motion to adjourn the Workshop meeting at 8:11pm. Trustee Norris Seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by,

Lara Hart
Clerk

