

**VILLAGE OF SOUTH BLOOMING
GROVE
REGULAR MEETING
Monday
January 11, 2021
7:00 P.M.**

➤ **Call to order**

- Mayor Kalaj called to order the Village Board Meeting at 7:03 p.m. on January 11, 2021, via Zoom Meeting #951 5623 0307 for the South Blooming Grove Village Hall located at 811 State Route 208, within the Village of South Blooming Grove, and having a mailing address of Monroe, New York.

➤ **Roll call**

The following persons were present:

- George Kalaj – Mayor
- Abraham Weiss – Deputy Mayor
- John L. Ross - Trustee
- Yitzchok Feldman– Trustee
- Johnny Belfort - Trustee
- Scott B. Ugell, Esq. – Village Attorney

➤ **Correspondence**

- *January 4, 2021 NYS Department of Transportation regarding traffic signal at Route 208 and Mountain Road Intersection.*

➤ **Mayor's Comments**

- On September 30 at the first public meeting since being elected to this office, I gave an opening statement and made the priorities of this village board very clear to everyone, of the top priorities were clean water and a solution to the dangerous traffic situation on Route 208 specifically at the Mountain Rd intersection.
While there have been efforts from the previous administrations and other elected officials going back a couple of years to remediate the situation, the issue didn't take top priority and was faced with obstacles and delays on both local and state levels, and with every passing week the accidents and carnage kept piling up.
We immediately went to work and in the following days we met with Senator James Skoufis and Assemblyman Colin Schmitt even though they were both pre-occupied with their respective elections, we exerted maximum pressure to move forward with this initiative, We are also in touch with Katie Bonelli the Orange County Legislature for our district who made this issue a priority. Senator Skoufis who is on the State Transportation committee came through on his commitment and was in constant communication with the DOT inquiring about immediate action, we both pressed forward through the months of November and December and tonight I am happy to share the news with you that the DOT has finally reached a decision and will install a traffic signal at the intersection of Route 208 and Mountain Rd.
While the decision has been made, it will still take time until the DOT will arrange and schedule for the work to be completed, but please rest assured that we will do everything in our capacity to ensure that this is being expedited forthwith.
As with this traffic initiative, we will god willing bring you some positive updates about the water

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situation in the near future.

➤ **Business**

- **Resolution No. (01)** – Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove directing that there will not be a separate village voter registration day. Motion to accept by Mayor Kalaj, seconded by Deputy Mayor Weiss. *Resolution passed. 5 Ayes - Mayor Kalaj, Trustee Weiss, Trustee Feldman, Trustee Ross and Trustee Belfort.*
- **Resolution No. (02)** – Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove establishing the polling place and hours that the polls will be open for village elections. Motion to accept by Mayor Kalaj, seconded by Deputy Mayor Weiss. *Resolution passed. 5 Ayes - Mayor Kalaj, Trustee Weiss, Trustee Feldman, Trustee Ross and Trustee Belfort.*

➤ **Public Comment**

- John Hickey – The buses remained parked illegally and in violation, why has there been no action to remove them? He advised that he asked the same question two weeks ago and has not received a response.
- Trustee Ross
- Lydia Terwilliger – The buses are parked illegally, is this being handled efficiently. The water is very staining and brown.
- Susan Blakney – Traffic light at Seven Spring Road as it is not Mountain Road. She had multiple questions regarding the traffic light and feels that it will cause traffic back up and problems.
- Scott Morrice – He stated that line of sight may be an issue with the proposed traffic signal and he hopes they will be making changes to improve that as well.
- Sue Anne Vogelsberg, she complimented the building inspector on her response regarding an Air B&B. She is concerned about anonymous LLC's owing property within the village. She asked if there has been any progress regarding purchasing a village vehicle and if procurement was being followed. She is awaiting information regarding Reliable Computers and asked if we are paying for two IT services.
- Bonnie Rum – Timely response is a big issue. She stated that the village board cannot be a co-lead agency with the planning board; she is hoping that you would end that relationship as it is illegal and asked if there were any plans to end that relationship. What are you doing about your aged sewer system? She is concerned about the delayed response regarding buses.
- John Salka as South Blooming Grove Fire Chief stated that the buses parked up against the curb to the road are causing a safety issue making a dangerous situation as the buses limit the view for oncoming traffic to see emergency vehicles leaving the intersection.
- James LoFranco – There are three properties within the village that have garbage and need to be addressed. There is protocol in place in the village where you can have a hearing by the village board of trustees to address property maintenance issues. Mayor Kalaj advised that the building inspector has addressed his complaints regarding the properties. Mr. LoFranco advised learn the broken window policy.
- Brian Mullan – he advised that he is being impostered by another person in the Zoom Meeting. Six weeks ago Mr. Mullan asked for the Mayor to look into sold sign on property near Mountain Road and the sign is still standing. He read bus driver safety information regarding turning around, he

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asked if the school buses backing up has been addressed. 35 Duell was used as an Air B&B all summer, now has a Blooming sign that is broken and has fallen off. The Mayor advised that he is addressing the buses backing up and will address the sign by Mountain Road.

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- **Abstract**
 - Motion to adopt the Abstract by Mayor Kalaj, seconded by Deputy Mayor Weiss, 5 Ayes - Mayor Kalaj, Trustee Weiss, Trustee Feldman and Trustee Ross and Trustee Belfort.

➤ **Trustee Comments**

- Trustee Ross stated without saying too much about what happened in Washington, DC, no matter what side of the aisle you consider yourself, the actions of part of the group that were present were disgusting. However, it was also obvious, based on those that I've spoken to that were there, a very large contingent of citizens that went to our Nation's Capital to exercise their right to assemble peacefully. Some of those people were a busload of local, concerned citizens that were addressed by our Assemblyman Colin Schmitt prior to their departure, wishing them well, safe travels, etc. These were, by all accounts, law abiding members of our society. To then see accusations by Senator Skoufis, former Senator Metzger, the Orange County Democrats and others use the actions of those that caused the havoc in Washington and associate our local citizens and constituents with them is a despicable act in their own right.

Assemblyman Schmitt has been an asset and friend to our Village, helping us with our water needs, be it funding for the ongoing water filtration, helping arrange for delivery of water during our current pandemic or with the recent approval by the DOT for the traffic signal at Mountain Road and Rt. 208. Assemblyman Schmitt has been available for any and all issues.

To turn this into a personal attack against our Assemblyman and those constituents is absolutely deplorable and shameful!! This was taken to a disgusting level by the Senator, former Senator and the Democratic party! Shame on them!!!

Trustee Ross reminded the board that well as the village attorney that, although stated previously that board meetings are not for Q&A, the fact remains that it is indeed the time for our residents to ask questions and either receive an answer from the person being addressed, in most cases Mayor Kalaj, when asked the question(s), or receive a timely response. For the Mayor to consistently and continuously either respond with: "I'll get back to you"; "Next comment/question"; offer a condescending response ("Thanks for the education") or not respond at all, contradicts the standard of open, transparent government. One only need look at neighboring towns and villages to see the proper procedures of conducting a board meeting, with residents free to comment/question and interact with the local government officials, with proper time limits.

Additionally, regarding the Mayor's post on the Village's website as well as on facebook taking credit for the DOT recent approval of a traffic signal at the intersection of Mountain Road/Route 208. This approval was due to the efforts of former Mayor James LoFranco and his administration. Mayor Kalaj made absolutely no reference to the former Mayor, et al, with the exception of claiming that it was due to his efforts that this approval was received. As stated in the NYS DOT letter received it is

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clearly stated that the traffic study and ultimate approvals were due to the efforts of former Mayor LoFranco. It wasn't until Mayor Kalaj was alerted by numerous residents during this meeting that you begrudgingly acknowledged the efforts of form Mayor LoFranco.

- Trustee Belfort – addressed the garbage throughout the village and hopes that we can work as a group to keep the village clean. Mr. Belfort agrees with what Trustee Ross voiced.
- Trustee Feldman agrees with cleaning up the garbage and suggested exploring the option of picking up garbage twice a week.

➤ **Adjournment**

- Motion to close the meeting at 7:52 p.m. by Mayor Kalaj, seconded by Deputy Mayor Weiss, 5 Ayes - *Mayor Kalaj, Trustee Weiss, Trustee Feldman and Trustee Ross and Trustee Belfort.*

Minutes respectfully submitted by
Kerry Dougherty, Clerk