

**VILLAGE OF SOUTH BLOOMING  
GROVE  
REGULAR MEETING  
Tuesday  
October 26, 2020  
7:00 P.M.**

➤ **Call to order**

- Mayor Kalaj called to order the Village Board Meeting at 7:01 p.m. on October 26, 2020, at the South Blooming Grove Fire House Village Hall located at 819 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
- Johnny Belfort - Trustee
- Yitzchok Feldman– Trustee
- Scott B. Ugell, Esq. – Village Attorney
- Isaac Ekstein – Legislative Aide
- Joel Stern – Confidential Assistant

➤ **Correspondence**

- October 25, 2020 email from Michael Sussman, Esq. stating that Derech Emunah Bus Company wishes to drop their counterclaim against the Village of South Blooming Grove. Attorney Ugell advised that they will be filing a stipulation of discontinuance regarding that action.

➤ **Mayor's Comments**

- Our main issue is the water. We are under water restrictions. We are flushing the system. We are making improvements to the O & R Well. The filtration project is continuing and the Mayor visits the site multiple times a week.
- There was a water main break at Route 208 and Mangin Road and it cannot be completed until a Road Opening Permit is received from the New York State Department of Transportation.

➤ **Public Comment**

- **Sue Anne Vogelsberg, Prospect Road** – At the September 30, 2020 reorganizational meeting you had appointed Mr. Stern and Mr. Ekstein as volunteers. She did some research on this and has concerns and she is waiting to hear back from the State Resources Commission and from the county. Civil Service Law, Section 101 says that you need civil service approval to have any kind of position. She has emailed the mayor and received a response from Mr. Stern, how are the volunteers responding and speaking for the mayor when they are not sworn in as trustees and this should be researched and is putting the village at risk if they are privy to confidential information and the village could get sued.
- Attorney Ugell advised that given that they are volunteers and are not being paid and not receiving benefits, they do leg work and provide information, they do not speak for the mayor they gather

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information for mayor and trustees and help facilitate many of the issues that face this village. From what we can tell, there are so many critical issues in this village that need to be addressed and it takes a lot of people to gather information and help figure out what direction we can go weather it be meeting with senators and assemblymen.

- Sue Anne - The village has a temporary sign law and she filed out an incident form. Property has changed hands in June of 2019 and the sign remains on the property. The mayor advised he would look into this.
- **Bonnie Rum, Shore Drive** – At the reorganization public meeting held on Zoom with no public input permitted it was announced the Isaac Ekstein and Joel Stern were being appointed as Legislative Aid and Confidential Assistant respectively. However, since the Commission of Human Resources procedures were not followed, these appointments are not legal. She spoke to the Commissioner about that. There are steps that have to be gone through to become legal but it is not legal as of now. These positions do not exist in the Orange County Human Resources Guidelines. There are procedures that have never been followed. She doesn't know how you didn't know this, you should have been advised of this. In fact, these two non elected people have appointed to a total of 26 positions in the Village. That is really outrageous! Don't you agree that there is something fundamentally wrong with having people who are not elected having more control, involvement, decision making and input in the Village than those duly elected including you Mr. Mayor. What is being done to rectify that? Who decided on these appointments? Why are Isaac Ekstein and Joel Stern the only people listed for Orange County Office of Emergency Management and as liaisons to the Washingtonville School District. In addition they accompany elected officials Johnny Belfort for the Highway Department, the Blooming Grove Police Department, Water and Sewer District Operators, South Blooming Grove Fire Department and Orange and Rockland. They accompany elected John Ross as liaison to the Blooming Grove Ambulance Core and they accompany you the Mayor as liaison to the Town of Blooming Grove. Who is Governing the Village? Was the entire board involved in making these appointments and is any of that truly legal? The Village Lawyer, has informed you about these mistakes finally, but he should have informed you of them before you made them. Not to impune you but your expertise has been in bankruptcy according to the internet, not municipal. Also she heard that the lawyer is a Judge in Clarkstown, Rockland County so of course he doesn't quite know everything that is going on in Orange County. There could be a conflict of interest possibly in the future that would make this somewhat the best. The village should get somebody who is involved and knowledgeable in Orange County Municipal Law. Also Resolution 33, page 2 states "approving the form of undertaking to be executed by certain village officers" I have no idea what that means please explain. Everybody wants this to be successful. A lot of preparation should have come down before applying for the job, but you can catch up.
- **Sonia Ayala – Merriewold Lane North** – Regarding the volunteer positions, she sent an email on October 7, 2020 asking the following regarding these positions: 1. Why are these positions needed in a small village? 2. What legal process was following to make these positions? 3. I understand these positions are supposedly voluntary, will these positions be covered by insurance? 4. Were Trustees Belfort and Ross informed of these positions before the vote? 5. Was Orange County Human Resource Commissioner Steve Gross consulted in the creations of these positions? What are the job descriptions?
- **John Hickey – Merriewold Lane South** – Asked the Mayor to identify the two men sitting behind him. The Mayor introduced Isaac Ekstein and Joel Stern. Mr. Hickey asked what are their positions and if they were on the board. The Mayor advised they are Legislative Aid and Personal Assistant

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and they are not on the board of trustees. They are volunteers and are not compensated. Mr. Hickey asked the Mayor what criteria did you use to engage the attorney that you did, he apparently has no municipal law experience and that concerns us as a village.

- **Joel Wagschal – Kingsville Drive** – Advised he has lived here for the last 15 years. He raised his entire family of 10 kids in the village and really loved it. Last week at the meeting there was a complaint about the village election not being organized and they had to wait over 2 hours and someone said it had to do with the previous administration. One of the trustees got very offended when told it was the previous administration. Joel got offended because he also had to wait 2 hours and they would not open the polls 6 hours earlier, the request was refused and how dare you say it has nothing to do with the previous administration. He hopes the new administration will open polls at 6 am. He loves this village, he raised his entire family in the village. There are a lot of outside agitators from outside groups with rhetoric and they try to create chaos. He asked the new board to pay attention to who are constituents and who are outside agitators.

➤ **Business**

- **Resolution No. (64)** – Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove setting the effective dates and times of the juvenile curfew for the 2020 Halloween Season pursuant to Chapter 104 of the Village Code. Motion to accept by Trustee Weiss, seconded by Mayor Kalaj. *Resolution passed. 5 Ayes - Mayor Kalaj, Trustee Weiss, Trustee Feldman, Trustee Ross and Trustee Belfort.*
- **Resolution No. (65)** – Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove authorizing the County of Orange to collect delinquent Village Taxes. Motion to accept by Trustee Weiss, seconded by Mayor Kalaj. *Resolution passed. 5 Ayes - Mayor Kalaj, Trustee Weiss, Trustee Feldman, Trustee Ross and Trustee Belfort.*
- **Resolution No. (66)** – Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove scheduling a public hearing on the budget for the Village’s 2021 Fiscal Year. Motion to accept by Trustee Weiss, seconded by Mayor Kalaj. *Resolution passed. 5 Ayes - Mayor Kalaj, Trustee Weiss, Trustee Feldman, Trustee Ross and Trustee Belfort.*
- **Resolution No. (67)** – Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove scheduling a continued public hearing on December 3, 2020 regarding the Clovewood Project. Motion to accept by Trustee Weiss, seconded by Trustee Feldman. *Resolution passed. 5 Ayes - Mayor Kalaj, Trustee Weiss, Trustee Feldman, Trustee Ross and Trustee Belfort.*

➤ **Abstract**

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

➤ **Trustee Comments**

- Trustee Ross said it was nice to see people in person again. He welcomes all comments, he does not have to agree with all comments but that’s why the board is here. Your comments Mr. Wagschall

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were addressed to me, I wouldn't say I was highly offended, I just made a statement on how it could have been done better. I think it had little to do with the previous administration or this administration it was more to do with the board of election. Again, I welcome all comments, and thank you all for coming.

- Trustee Feldman he came to the village to live here and we have a lot of issues in this village that need to be taken care of. We have water, sewer, roads and lights. Lets focus on working together to get things done for us, our families and the village. We are working on water, sewer and all issues. Email any issues and we will respond. Thank you.

➤ **Adjournment**

- Motion to enter into executive session at 7:32 pm by Mayor Kalaj, seconded by Trustee Feldman. 5 Ayes - Mayor Kalaj, Trustee Weiss, Trustee Feldman and Trustee Ross and Trustee Belfort.
- Motion to enter into executive session at 7:57 pm by Trustee Weiss, seconded by Trustee Feldman. 5 Ayes - Mayor Kalaj, Trustee Weiss, Trustee Feldman and Trustee Ross and Trustee Belfort.
- Motion to close the meeting at 7:58p.m. by Trustee Weiss, seconded by Trustee Feldman. 5 Ayes - Mayor Kalaj, Trustee Weiss, Trustee Feldman and Trustee Ross and Trustee Belfort.

Minutes respectfully submitted by  
Kerry Dougherty, Clerk