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Tuesday 30 September, 2008

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By: Erikah Haavie, Correspondent

08/14/2008

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MILAN - Town Board members appointed a new planning board chairman, outlawed outbursts and talked about what to do with an overabundance of church pews at town hall during Monday's meeting.

In a July 11 letter, former town board member and current planning board chairman Al LoBrutto resigned from his position on the Milan Planning Board.

"My work commitments make it impossible to fulfill my obligation," said LoBrutto in a letter read by Town Clerk Cathy Gill.

The town board unanimously appointed Peter Goss as chairman, with a term to end Dec. 31, and named Milan resident Douglas Cook, manager of Rhinebeck Convenience Stores, as LoBrutto's replacement on the board.

Town Board Member Roberta Egan expressed her regret over LoBrutto's resignation.

"He will be missed," she said.

During the public comment period, Town Supervisor Richard Barrett read sections of opinions from Bob Freeman, executive director of the state Committee on Open Government. Barrett indicated that the law is silent on public participation in board meetings and so the town isn't required to offer public comment periods.

Some community members have voiced their disapproval that, at the beginning of board meetings, they must limit their remarks to agenda items and wait until the end of sometimes lengthy meetings to offer general comments.

While he said he "will accept comments from anyone," Barrett said he has a problem with "a degree of disagreeableness.

"I'm not trying to stifle public expression," he said.

Barrett said he wants to see discussion carried on "with decorum," and spoke out against videotaping the audience while the board is in executive session in the next room.

In other business, town board members discussed what to do with an excess amount of seating at town hall. With the addition of new padded chairs for the justice court, the town has an excess amount of metal folding chairs.

Barrett suggested keeping about 85 folding chairs and then getting rid of the 40 to 50 extra chairs and dolly. He thought the town might also sell four or five church pews it

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has in the basement, but would keep the five or six antique deacon's benches.

"They simply take up a lot of room," he said of the extra seating.

Milan resident Rudy Vavra encouraged the board to keep the church pews, which have been in town hall at least 35 years.

"I don't think we'll benefit in any way by losing them," Vavra said.

Barrett also announced that a meeting, tentatively planned for Aug. 18 with the Durst Organization, is being scheduled for sometime in September to discuss Durst's development plans in the town.

He encouraged town residents to apply for the Rebuilding Together Dutchess County program, previously called Christmas in April.

Through the program, home repairs can be provided for the elderly, disabled, homeowner parents with young children, and some veterans.

The program requires applicants to meet income requirements and provide proof of home ownership. For more information, call 845-454-7310.

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