

Brighton-Pittsford Post – “From the Supervisor” column – April 16, 2015 issue
Submitted by Pittsford Town Supervisor Bill Smith

A Year’s Progress with New Town Board Format

Shortly after I assumed the duties of Town Supervisor at the beginning of 2014, the Town Board and I set about to revamp and improve the way the Board conducts business. Our goal was to make even clearer to Pittsford residents than previously the many factors considered, the many questions asked, and the depth of information examined that precedes and informs decisions of your Town Board.

Since February 2014, we’ve devoted our first meeting of each month to a public "working session" during which we discuss in detail matters coming up for consideration. The conversation includes the board members and supervisor, as well as town department heads and other staff involved in each matter. We ask questions, gather the information needed to understand fully the issues presented and decide whether matters are ready for a vote. These meetings permit department heads and staffers to propose and discuss new matters before the full Board.

Our second meeting each month is the legislative session. Here matters brought forward from the working sessions are presented for further discussion as required and for a vote. The legislative sessions address routine items as well, such as approving previously budgeted expenditures.

We want members of the public to understand the analysis and reasoning behind our votes and the factors that inform our reasoning. When we changed the format we started posting to the Town website by the preceding Friday each meeting’s agenda and all supporting materials provided to the board and supervisor. The link on our website provides a PDF document which includes a bookmarked table of contents that takes you directly to the materials for each agenda item. You can find quickly the information that interests you, without having to scroll tediously through the whole document.

It’s up to those of you who have attended our meetings to evaluate the quality of information provided and public discussion under our new format. I hope you have found it useful.

For my part, I’ve found it to be tremendously helpful. Our discussion at Town Board is one of our most productive exercises. Inevitably, new ideas emerge from the discussion as a board of people with different perspectives and backgrounds evaluates issues from different angles. It’s not at all uncommon for me to come into a meeting thinking a particular way about an issue and leave that meeting with a different point of view. That’s how it should work and I wouldn’t have it any other way. It underscores the value of full discussion and debate.

Come see for yourself. Our Town Board meets on the first and third Tuesday of every month at 6pm at Pittsford Town Hall, 11 South Main Street.

Supervisor Smith may be reached at bsmith@townofpittsford.org or at 248-6220.