



Saratoga County Board of Supervisors Public Hearing

Tuesday, May 14, 2024 4:30PM
40 McMaster Street, Ballston Spa, NY

Minutes

Roll call was taken:

PRESENT –Philip C. Barrett, Joseph Grasso, John Lant, Michele Madigan, Ian Murray, Scott Ostrander, Kevin Tollisen, Kevin Veitch, Matthew E. Veitch, Cynthia Young – 10

ABSENT – JD Arnold, David Ball, Eric Butler, Eric Connolly, Diana Edwards, Jesse Fish, Ed Kinowski, Bill Peck, Jean Raymond, Thomas Richardson, Angela Thompson, Sandra Winney, Arthur Wright – 13

Chairman Barrett called the public hearing on a Local Law identified as Introductory No. 1, Print no. 1 of 2024, relative to a local law authorizing property owners to request the removal of unlawful occupants from dwellings to order at 4:34pm.

Chairman Barrett asked the Clerk to read the notice of public hearing.

Chairman Barrett asked if there were any requests to speak

Dio Kaufman – Saratoga

Hi, I'm Dio Kaufman. I live on stolen land at 1438 Route 9P Lot 15. I've been following this social panic for a while now, and I noticed that no one has provided statistics on the incidence of squatting in Saratoga County. I've heard it described as something that could become an issue in coming years. However, I can tell you about real property expropriation that has occurred in Saratoga County. Yes, it's true. Actual people have been forced out of their homes, their property destroyed by an unwelcome intruder. This intruder is not the person you imagine when you say the word squatter, yet he has engaged in systemically depriving people of their homes the action you claim to care about in proposing this ordinance. Mike Giovanone owner of Saratoga Boat and RV Condos, purchased my community Saratoga Lakeview mobile home park and 2021. He used what I believe to be fraudulent maneuvers to bypass tenant right to purchase the park and preserve our affordable homes. Despite certifying that he would keep the park open for five years, Giovanone has engaged in the pattern of behavior described as bullying, harassing and intimidating in an apparent attempt to force families from our home sooner than 2026 so he can expand his neighboring business sooner. My family are the only ones remaining out of over a dozen households. Recently, he evicted my last neighbor you may have read about it in a story headlined "court rules tenant can be evicted for nonpayment of rent her attorney says was paid to County Treasurer office at judges direction". You say your proposal does not infringe on tenants rights, but this assumes a non-existent honor system. Just ask Ian Murray. He tried to do the right thing for my community and my landlord sued him or I should clarify the Town, the Planning Board

and the Zoning Board. People like my landlord are the Frankenstein's monster the development and Realty industries have created with the help of corrupt and naive officials. They are the threat not the apparition of a squatter that only exists in the minds of anxious suburbanites. This ordinance creates a shortcut by which unscrupulous landlords like mine can bypass due process when evicting tenants, landlords like mine already bully tenants, and in this case, even the town. Empowering them with the redundant tool to claim they are victims of trespassing only further enables them. My landlord accused me of trespassing. What he was referring to was my going door to door with flyers about the ERAP program. He raised this as an argument to try to evict me in Court in a case that was thrown out after his own witness testified about his slimy tactics. This property owner has gotten away with numerous illegal lockouts. Laws like this would make it easier for people like him to continue wasting resources and potentially endangering low income families. Giovanone claimed he locked a family out of their home because he was concerned about squatting which has never occurred in my neighborhood. Your proposal stipulates property must be vacant. One of my former neighbors was illegally evicted and his property damaged despite no one technically residing in the home that he owned, his family still owned at the time. Your resolution includes stipulations warning of potential lawsuits and granting immunity to police officials. So be aware and expect this law to be abused. My former neighbors who would be hurt by this legislation are overwhelmingly Republican. By ideology they are your people. By class, they are my people. I stand with them. Why don't you? By passing this legislation you prove to my former neighbors, Saratoga County residents that you don't need their votes. If you must pass this ordinance, I request that you clarify your intention is to protect the property of the rich and I request that immediately get the headline right. Saratoga Supervisors to tenants drop dead.

Jane Chasin – Malta

I'm very concerned. If I go away for a month, two months, six months, do I have to worry that some squatter can come into my house live there, and it will take years for that to be removed, and they could damage my property? I mean, I just find this to be ludicrous that I'm even up here to discuss this situation. I also want you to know that Governor Ron DeSantis, he just recently passed this squatters bill. And in July it's going to take effect, which I think is pretty good. It took him three months to get this together in July 1st it's a law that anyone has to be thrown out if they are a squatter. We also did some other few things that I wonder why we can't do about smash and grab. You know, we're up here and it's pretty safe. But what if it happened to a business where someone like in the city, you know, smashes the glass and goes in and starts taking things out of the store? That's another one that should be considered. But let's focus on the squatters rise. I would like something to be done, and I did write to Governor Hochul, and I did write to Mr. Chuck Schumer and I would advise anyone who's here could rally them to. Thank you.

Toni Holbrook – Greenfield Center

I too am concerned about people's dwellings being taken over by squatters. My question also is though, is it possible to add an addendum to what you're putting together right now, to keep people off of vacant property that we're all taxpayers and own our properties? If people come in and squat on our property, can you evict them also? And that's basically my question as well as the dwellings of people's homes, but also vacant land too. Thank you.

Robert Killeen - Charlton

I'm not a big proponent of laws, we have too many laws. We are a nation of laws, however. And we do have laws. Sometimes we have too many of them for the wrong purpose. However, sometimes incidence arises when you need a lot to solve a problem, or take care of a problem. I think this law is a viable law, but it needs some teeth to it. I know how I would feel if I found squatters in my house, and in my support buildings and on my property. I will take care of it myself, I would not file a law suit while people trash my house. This is one of those instances where somebody goes away, work detail for 90 days, or is in the hospital, or goes for surgery, rehabilitation, whatever it may be, and comes home finds people living in their house, trashing it, stealing from it, and they have to file paperwork? What we need is a couple sheriff's deputies, well trained and well versed in squatters removal. When a person says we have squatters in my house, I can move as my house *INAUDABLE*, whatever, the Sheriff's deputies remove them immediately, put them in a van and they could squat in the County lockup. That's my approach to this. Whose property is and while the squatters are taking over the property who continues to pay the taxes, the homeowners insurance? And then when it's all over with weeks or months later, deal with a clean-up and the insurance company who says sorry, you don't have squatters insurance. Bang you're on your own. I think it's atrocious. Only in New York, California would this be an acceptable procedure where somebody can take over your property that you bought that you paid for, or in my case, you built, and take it over and occupy it? If you get a law with some good teeth to it, regardless what Albany and Washington say, I think Saratoga County should follow the Cattaraugus County in the western part of state and we are a constitutional County. Protect our citizens and our Constitution. And that's what ought to be doing. Follow the lead of Cattaraugus County, our citizens come first, we abide by the Constitution, and have legitimate legal wants. So I do support this squatters law. Like I said, I know how I would react if I found my house being destroyed by squatters. Thank you very much. Good afternoon. Thank you.

Charman Barrett provided remarks on the proposed Local Law.

Chairman Barrett asked if there were any requests to speak or if any written communications were received.

The Clerk reported that there were none.

Chairman Barrett closed the public hearing at 4:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Clerk of the Board