

To: Ancram Town Board  
From: Art Bassin  
Date: July 15, 2018  
Subject: Supervisor's Report



**1. Financial Report** – Normal financial month in June. General fund spending through YTD June was about flat to last year, and Highway spending YTD through June, excluding the \$240,000 for the new grader, was slightly under last year. Cash on hand as of the end of June was \$1,155,000. YE cash projection is \$841,000, up \$17,000 slightly from last month's YE projection of \$824,000 and \$105,000 better than the YE budgeted cash number of \$736,000. The improvements in YE cash projections are primarily caused by better than budgeted sales tax receipts. Still have about \$1 million on deposit with TD Bank in their liquid investment account, which currently earns 1.6% and floats with changes in the Fed Funds rate.

**2. Comp Plan Review Process** – The Comp Plan Review Committee will review a revised Vision statement and revised Goals based on survey results and the workshops at its meeting on 7/16, and the Hamlet Planning Groups will review the revised Vision and Goals at a series of meeting on 7/21. Once the CPRC has finalized a revised Vision and Goals, it will start working on strategies to implement the Vision and Goals.

**3. 2019 Budget** – We will start the 2019 budget process in July. You have a draft 2019 Tentative Budget. We will hold public hearings on the proposed 2019 Budget at the September, October and November Town Board meetings. As we have done in prior years, I will schedule meetings with each of you individually to review any comments or questions you may have on the budget. These meetings will be in August and September, at your convenience. Our target for 2019 is to keep Town property taxes flat to down 1%.

**4. NYS Property Tax Related Charitable Reserve Funds** – To allow a way around the \$10,000 SALT cap in the new Federal Tax law passed last December, NYS has passed a law that allows municipalities and schools to accept "charitable donations" in lieu of property taxes, and provide a 95% property tax credit to property owners who elect to donate to the charitable funds as a way to pay property taxes. It is not yet clear if the IRS will allow donations to these property tax related municipal charitable funds count as tax deductions, and the software needed to account for and control these donations and link them to the property tax bill has not yet been developed. School districts will be dealing with this issue during their September school tax cycle, so we will benefit from their experience.

**5. Columbia County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan** – We will hold a public hearing on this Plan at 7 pm on Thursday, and will consider the Plan for adoption after the public hearing. The primary benefit to the Town of adopting this Plan is we will continue to be eligible for reimbursements from FEMA in the event of natural disasters that cause the Town to incur extraordinary cleanup costs.

**6. Sawchuk Road Septage** – Nothing new to report. DEC continues to review an application to renew a "registration" to allow Flood's Sanitation to continue to spread septage on a farm on Sawchuk Rd. Neighbors have contacted DEC to complain that Flood's has not been adhering to proper procedures in spreading septage. If DEC approves the renewal of the "registration" to spread septage, the Town may have the right to initiate an action to require the practice to stop, as it is not a permitted use under Town Zoning. If we were to do that, Flood's could apply for a variance to continue the practice, or request intervention by the NYS Department of Ag & Markets to protect their right to spread septage as an approved agricultural practice. My inclination is to wait for DEC to complete its investigation and review of the registration application before we

decide on a course of action, but we could retain an attorney now to advise us on how to proceed, so we are ready if and when the time comes to take further action.

**7. Unsafe Buildings** – Hugh Clark requested at our June meeting that the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) advise us as to if and how the NYS Property Maintenance Code (PMC) differed from the Town's LL#2 of 2015 in dealing with unsafe buildings. The basic difference seems to be that under LL#2, the Town Board has to make the decision to repair or demolish a property at the recommendation of the CEO, after a public hearing. Under the NYS PMC, the CEO can make the decision to repair or demolish, but would need Town Board approval for the funds to do the repairs or demolition. So the Town Board ultimately makes the decision under both the State and Town laws. Communications requirements and notices to the property owner are similar under the PMC and LL#2, and under both sets of laws, the costs of repairs or demolition can be charged to the property owner as a lien against the property. If the property owner stops paying taxes and the property is eventually foreclosed by the County the Town may not recover any of the costs of repair or demolition unless the property sells for more than the unpaid County taxes due. My inclination is to wait until an unsafe building becomes a more obvious threat to public safety before we take any further action, but here again, it may make sense to retain an attorney to advise the CEO and the TB as to how to proceed if and when the time comes to act, so we are prepared.

**8. Weight Limits on 8/8a** – Towns apparently have the right to pass a local law setting weight limits on county roads, so we could establish a 5 ton weight limit on 8 and 8a in Ancramdale. Jim Miller tells me we currently have weight limits on Poole Hill Rd and Wiltsie Bridge Rd, but that heavy trucks still use these roads as there is no effective enforcement. Weight limits on 8 and 8a would probably shift some of the heavy truck traffic from Ancramdale to alternate routes, which may be as disruptive to these other roads as truck traffic is through Ancramdale. This matter requires additional discussion, and an evaluation of alternatives, like lower speed limits, flashing yellow lights in Ancramdale, radar speed signs and more sheriff department patrols to enforce speed limits. As a related issue, the County and State do not agree about who "owns" the large culvert in the center of Ancramdale connecting 8 and 3 to 82. Because the Ancramdale culvert is not on either the State or County inventory, it has apparently never been inspected. The County is working to get the culvert inspected, to determine if it's safe for heavy truck traffic. If it's not, a weight limit on the culvert would solve the heavy truck traffic problem for Ancramdale, but negatively impact our Highway Department, as they will not be able to cross the culvert on the way to their normal plow routes or when hauling material.

**9. Town Credit Card** – Recommend that the Town Board approve applying for a Town credit card. This will simplify the payment process, reduce the number of manual checks for small, routine expenses, will allow Town charges to be organized in one place for review and will eliminate the need to use personal credit cards for Town spending. We currently have a Lowes card, but it is only useful at Lowes.

**10. Neighbors Helping Neighbors Scholarship Awards Presentation** – NHN will be awarding 6 college bound students \$1500 scholarships. The awards ceremony will start 6.30 pm on Thursday, 7/19.