

**Town of Ancram  
Town Board  
Regular Meeting  
January 16, 2014**

**Present:** Supervisor Arthur Bassin                      Councilman James Miller  
                 Councilman Chris Thomas                      Councilman Hugh Clark  
                 Councilwoman Madeline Israel                      Town Clerk Monica Cleveland  
                 Highway Superintendent James MacArthur

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The regular meeting of the Ancram Town Board was called to order by Supervisor Arthur Bassin at 7:00pm with a salute to the flag.

A motion was made by Councilman Miller and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to accept the minutes of the previous meeting as read and placed on the record. Motion carried.

**Fire District**

Chief Boice announced the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration this coming summer in July. There will be a parade on July 12. He stated that there is a slow period right now for the firefighters, and that they are doing training, including at the paper mill.

**Supervisors Report**

**Town Issues**

**1. Financial Report** - Preliminary December 2013 financials indicate we ended the year where we expected to. We have about \$745,000 in the bank, which represents two years of Federal, State and County payments to the Town, and slightly less than the \$799,000 annual town property tax levy.

**2. Ridgeline Protection** - The ridgeline and steep slope protection law has been referred back to the ZRC for additional review and a revised recommendation. ZRC will encourage Planning Board participation in the discussions to develop a revised ridgeline & steep slope proposal that will have the support from the Town Board needed to be adopted. I am inclined to go with a law that requires all new construction project to consider the guidelines, with major subdivisions with sites on steep slopes or visible portions of a ridgeline required to follow them, and minor subdivisions, single family and 2 family projects strongly encouraged to follow them. Under this framework, there would be no need to do a map of designated ridgelines or steep slopes, or list the parcels which might be affected, because each building site would be evaluated when it was presented to the Planning Board or Building Inspector for approval.

**County Issues.**

1. **Airport** – The Airport Committee continues to meet to determine if there is a less expensive, less disruptive way to install a FAA recommended (but not required) safety zone on the north end of the County airport. It appears that there are options that would preserve the Meadowgreens golf

course and minimize disruption on other neighbors. The Committee is on track to make its recommendations to the BOS in February or March.

2. **2012 County Audit** – The BOS was briefed on the County’s 2012 Audit last week. The audit was due to be filed with the State by 9/30, but because the auditors were new and the County is still operating on multiple accounting systems, things took longer. To their credit, one of the auditors commented that “you’re running out of cash”. The county ended 2012 and 2013 with about \$4 million in cash, half of it restricted...so we had about \$2 million available...and a biweekly payroll of about \$2 million. Until the County starts to get its property tax payments from the Town Collectors late in February, things will be tight.
3. **Pine Haven** – Looks like Pine Haven could lose \$3 million in 2014. It is budgeted to break even. Don’t ask me why. The County probably does not have the cash on hand to fund Pine Haven at this level of losses without borrowing. The County needs to form a committee to explore options to sell or outsource the management of Pine Haven. While it is important that we keep Pine Haven’s 120 beds available in the County, there are organizations that would be far more skilled at managing the facility than the County. We need to get Pine Haven into the strongest management hands we can, for the benefit of Pine Haven’s residents and the County’s taxpayers.
4. **Solid Waste** – This is another area that we need to look at outsourcing. The County loses about \$500,000 a year operating the County’s system of solid waste stations. We need to explore if private contractors could run the operation more efficiently.

Mr. Bassin asked what the town board wanted to do about the annual town audits. They decided to have the town board and FAC do the audits again for 2013, with bringing in an outside person every three years. This annual audit will be done in April.

## Highway Superintendent

The Highway Superintendent handed the Town Board the 284 agreement for the year to be looked at. He stated that the weather has been warm and he asked that people try and stay off the dirt roads if possible.

## Tax Collector

The Tax Collector gave a report on the collection of taxes thus far. Collections have been slower than this time last year.

## FAC

The FAC reported that they will be going over the Fee Schedule.

## Planning Board

Colleen Lutz stated that the Planning Board is working on entering items into the new Parcel Management System.

## ZBA

Bonnie Hundt is the new ZBA chair. There will be training on February 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## Youth Commission

The Youth Commission announced that they had had a good turnout for the Christmas Party for the Youth on December 22, 2014.

## CAC

The CAC gave the following year end report

### **2013 Achievements and Activities**

1. Biodiversity Map: We focused on completion of the northeast corner of Ancram including approximately 5,000 acres now mapped and digitized by Hudsonia. Hudsonia utilized funding from the DEC Estuary Project funds in order to do this mapping at no cost to Ancram.
2. Ancram Natural Resource Conservation Plan (NRCP)
  - Finished outline of NRCP with Hudsonia
  - Wrote grant request to Hudson River Greenway and received \$7,500 in October 2013
  - Wrote funding request to Hudson River Bank and received \$500 in November 2013
3. Regional Work
  - Met with Taghkanic's new CAC to provide start up guidance for their council
  - Participated in 3 meetings at the County CAC roundtables sponsored by CLC
  - Participated in 3 County Trails Roundtables sponsored by CLC
4. Informational fact memos/papers on these topics for public environmental education
  - Ancram Spring Newsletter contribution to bulletins on Vernal Pools, Delayed Mowing for Grassland Birds, Round Ball event, and CLC's land acquisition adjacent to Round Ball.
  - Prepared and sent bulletins on these invasive species: Asian Longhorned Beetle, Emerald Ash Borer, Ailanthus Tree and Garlic Mustard.
  - Responded to the herbicide permit application for Lower Rhoda Pond recommending best management practices.
  - Met with Long Lake representatives in May to develop alternatives to use of herbicides in Lake.
  - Updated paper on reducing use of road salt.
5. Prepared these review recommendation papers to the Ancram Town Board
  - Ridgeline Protection review and public hearing comments in April and in November
  - Zoning Package #4 review
6. Public Educational Events
  - February 9th—Round Ball Farmscape Ecology Program – we attended event and encouraged participation.
  - On April 28<sup>th</sup> the CAC hosted a public educational event and field visit to vernal pool led by the Farmscape Ecology Program. We provided handouts and informational books on vernal pools. There were 2 educational sessions: one attended by a local Girl Scout troop and one by the general public.
7. Training Session Attendance
  - Vernal pool all day workshop Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies, May 18<sup>th</sup>
  - SEQR Training, March 5<sup>th</sup>
  - Two CLC training sessions on environmental issues associated with road management
  - Day long biodiversity assessment training

- Conservation development seminar by CLC

8. New Members: Kim Tripp

#### **PLANS FOR 2014**

- Ongoing advisory role for Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Revisions Committee and the public on environmental issues and concerns
- Biodiversity map – continue our work on southern section of town
- Natural Resource Conservation Plan – work with Hudsonia throughout the year on completion of December 2014 Final Draft
- Improve the CAC role as advisors to the Planning Board
- Show Liquidity Film about importance of wetlands to public
- Develop paper or Ancram Newsletter article on healthier, natural lawns
- Provide information to public about the importance of biodiversity assessment and mapping

#### **ZRC**

They have had 2 meetings to look at the Ridgeline law. Mr. Clark stated that there has been good turnout of Planning Board members at the meeting.

#### **Heritage Resources**

The committee will meet on Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup> at 2pm. They will be looking again at the possibility of a community septic for the buildings in the center of Ancram, repair work on the cemeteries in town, and at needed repairs on the two historic churches. The APG and Fire House litigation over the Stiehle House has been conclude, with the deed being turned over the APG.

#### **Historian**

The next vestibule exhibit will be "Railroad Tales" and will be going up on Sunday, February 23, with a special presentation at 2 pm at town hall.

#### **Building Department**

The Building Department is in the process of taking applications and interviewing for the new deputy ZEO/CEO/Building Inspector.

A motion was made by Councilman Miller and seconded by Councilman Clark to make the General Fund Transfer #1 of 2014. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Councilman Miller and seconded by Councilman Clark to pay the bills. Motion Carried.

A motion was made by Councilman Miller and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Monica Cleveland  
Town Clerk