

**Town of Ancram  
Town Board  
Regular Meeting  
July 19, 2018**

**Present:** Supervisor Arthur Bassin                      Councilman Hugh Clark  
                 Councilman David Boice                      Councilwoman Madeline Israel  
                 Councilwoman Bonnie Hundt      Town Clerk Monica Cleveland  
                 Highway Superintendent James Miller

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Supervisor Arthur Bassin called the regular meeting of the Ancram Town Board to order at 7:10 with a salute to the flag.

The following resolution was offered by Councilwoman Israel and seconded by Councilwoman Hundt and moved for adoption. Resolution passed unanimously by roll call vote:

**Resolution # 14 of 2018: Town of Ancram Multi Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan**

WHEREAS, The Town of Ancram has gathered information and assisted in the preparation of the Columbia County Multi Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan which was approved by FEMA on 5/25/18; and

WHEREAS, the Columbia County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan dated 5/15/2018 has been prepared in accordance with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Ancram is a local unit of government that has afforded the citizens an opportunity to comment and provide input in the Plan and the actions in the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Ancram has reviewed the Plan and affirms that the Plan will be updated no less than every five years;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Ancram Town Council that the Town of Ancram adopts the Columbia County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan approved by FEMA on 5/25/18 as this jurisdiction's Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, and resolves to execute the actions in the Plan.

Mr. Bassin asked if there were any items on the agenda that any member of the Board would need to recuse themselves from. Councilman Boice stated that he is 25% owner on one of the buildings brought up in the vacant building discussion last meeting and that if the building was discussed, he would need to recuse himself. If the building is not discussed, he would like to comment on the other vacant building issue. Councilman Clark noted that all actions, including discussion would have to have recusal.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to accept the May 17, 2018 minutes as read and have them placed on the record. Motion carried.

### **Supervisors 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.

A motion was made by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilman Clark to move \$100,000 from TD Bank to Bank of Greene County. Motion carried.

A report was given to the board by Councilman Clark as to the progress of the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee.

Mr. Bassin gave an overview of the complicated Charitable Reserve Fund the town can set up to allow residents to make donations in lieu of taxes. In theory, residents could donate funds to this reserve fund if the town chooses to set it up, and then use 95% of it to pay towards their taxes. Mr. Bassin reported that the IRS has yet to say if this can be allowed as a deduction and that there are many questions. Questions include what the money can be used for and if it can be used for road paving and town expenses. Mr. Bassin said that he felt the town should wait and see how the schools and County approach this.

### **Board Members**

Councilwoman Hundt gave a report on LUCA. Ms. Hundt said that the lists were completed that that there were 52 new additions. She sent the list in yesterday via FedEx.

Councilwoman Hundt inquired about sexual harrassment training. Mr. Bassin stated that the training will take place late summer or in the fall.

Councilwoman Hundt also noted a solar article in the Town Topics magazine.

Councilwoman Israel reported that the town sign is being adjusted to fit on t-shirts. She also felt that the town should not put a town sign on Route 22 but instead on County 3 as traffic turns into the town.

Councilwoman Israel said that a newsletter is in the process.

### **Highway Department**

Mr. Miller reported that the paving of Wiltsie Bridge and Woods Drive are complete. The department is working on minor road repairs. Mr. Miller will be putting out to bid the Houghtaling house demo.

### **Camp Board**

The gazebo pad is complete and the gazebo will be delivered before the end of the month. New tables have been made and are in place.

The ending date for the pool will be August 31, 2018.

### **Assessor**

The assessor reports a 100% equalization rate.

### **Sawchuck Road**

The DEC is looking for additional information of the Flood dumping situation on Sawchuck Road. The town is looking at the zoning law as the practice started following the passing of the 1972 zoning law, and is not a permitted use fo land.

### **Unsafe Buildings**

Councilman Boice reported that he has spoken to Mr. Hoyt the owner of the old Porters Store. Mr. Hoyt is continuing to look into solutions to the issue of the building. Mr. Boice reminded the board that the town has been working for over a year to demo the Houghtaling House in town property, and that house is a quarter of the size of the Porters store building. Mr. Bassin said that while he understands the concern with the Porters Store Building, he is more concerned with the Stiehle House because of its proxcmity to the road. He was concerned that if the town was to take down any of the buidlings, there would be an issue with recouping the money expended. He said that the CEO would have to make the decision to take the buildings down and that there is no money in the budget for that office to do such a thing. So, the CEO would have to come to the town board to receive the permission to expend funds. In the end, Mr. Bassin stated, the decision will fall to the Town Board. He said that he would hate to declare a building unsafe when it is only unsightly. Councilwoman Hundt asked how long the town will have to wait. She questioned if it would take someone getting hurt for the town to address it. Mr. Bassin reminded the board that when there have been issues such as the tin roof hanging over the road, the owners have taken care of it. Ms. Hundt was of the opinion that the state of the building effects the property value of the homes surrounding it. Councilwoman Israel agreed with Mr. Bassin to keep out of the situation until it becomes a safety issue. Councilman Clark said that apperance has nothing to do with code and law and that while it would be nice to have it cleaned up, he would rather see that done with private funds.

### **Hamlet Traffic**

Mr. Bassin said that many issues will be discussed at the upcoming Ancram, Ancramdale and Boston Corner Hamlet Planning meetings on Saturday, 7/21. Mr. Bassin said that the town has investigated placing weight limits on County Route 8 and 8A. Mr. Miller cautions that this will drive people to use Poole Hill and Hall Hill roads. Councilman Boice stated that the real need is enforcement of the 35mph speed limit. Councilwoman Israel felt that the hamlet is a condensed area where people walk and there are bikers. She felt the hamlet is different than a stretch of road. It was suggested to put a blinking light in, like in Ancram. Councilman Clark agreed that it would be productive to explore an ideas like a blinking light and divices to track speeds.

The following resolution was offered by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilwoman Israel and moved for adoption. Resolution carried unanimously.

**Resolution #15 of 2018: Town Credit Card** - . Resolved, that the Ancram Town Supervisor is authorized to apply for a Town credit card to be used as a payment card which shall be paid off monthly so as not to incur any interest costs.

A motion was made by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to approve the warrants and pay the bills. Motion carried.

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

Respectfully submitted by,

Monica R. Cleveland  
Ancram Town Clerk