

**Town of Ancram
Town Board
Regular Meeting (Via Zoom)
September 17, 2020**

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

The regular meeting of the Ancram Town Board was called to order at 7:00pm by Supervisor Bassin with a salute to the flag. The meeting was held via Zoom due to the Covid Pandemic.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to approve the minutes of the previous meeting and have them placed on the record. Motion carried.

Deputy Joe Kilmer joined the meeting to discuss the on going traffic situation within the town's hamlets. Councilman Clark presented to the board his thorough thoughts on the subject that included an email the town board and deputy Kilmer had received titled: Solving Traffic and Speeding Problems.

Councilman Clark had shared the following outline with the town board members in regards to the traffic issues:

Solving Traffic/Speeding/Reckless Driving Problems in Town of Ancram

The Problem:

Drivers speeding (and being perceived as speeding) in Town of Ancram.

The Objective:

Cause drivers to stop speeding

The Situation:

Some actually are speeding;

Others may be speeding, but actually are DWI or DUI.

In both cases, threat to community.

Town not likely to do much about preventing or curbing DWI/DUI:

Requires police presence: right time/place/reason to stop & to suspect alcohol or drugs.

Yes, Roadblock Checks...but too little density/volume to make routine/worthwhile ROI.

But, Town can act to deter speeding:

Who's doing it? Truckers, outsiders passing through, locals

What will deter truckers and outsiders passing through?

Losing time/inconvenience due to being stopped;

Losing money via fines;

Inconvenience of going to court;

Points affecting insurance rates.

What will deter locals?

Losing money via fines;

Inconvenience & embarrassment of going to court;

Points affecting insurance rates;

Knowledge that neighbors are watching/noting.

To deter, drivers must know/suspect in advance that Ancram enforces traffic laws strictly.

How to build that knowledge/suspicion?

Regular rigorous enforcement builds word-of-mouth reputation;

But enforcement requires police on site, hence costly to Town.

Other supplemental, complementary means can be used.

To deter, driver must also know that he/she is approaching/entering a “slow down” area.

How to convey that realization?

Official traffic signs

Evolis radar traffic devices

Lawn signs

Individual noting, recording, reporting—albeit not for legal prosecution

Engineering devices, e.g. rumble strips, speed tables/humps—not bumps.

Plus enforcement—e.g. extra patrols (but examine ROI: cost vs benefit..& timing.

Mr. Clark also felt that the previous newspaper article in the Columbia Paper was helpful and will have a deterrent effect.

Mr. Kilmer stated that he liked Councilman Clark's thoughts. He felt also that more patrols, word of mouth and a bigger presence will have an effect to slow traffic. Mr. Kilmer reported that the detail at Bash Bish Falls had concluded so deputies can now give more time to road patrol during the weekends. Mr. Kilmer reported that in two days he has issued about a half dozen speeding tickets. Mr. Kilmer said that the speeders are both locals and outsiders. Mr. Kilmer has also been patrolling Bean River Road and Mr. Martucci has reported that the extra patrols have had a positive effect.

Councilwoman Hundt noted that following a ride in the Fire Truck, she felt that many of the larger trucks may not be going as fast as they seem due to their size. Mr. Kilmer agreed this is usually the case. Councilwoman Hundt asked if Mr. Kilmer felt that the radar signs worked. Mr. Kilmer said he felt that they did. People tend to see the signs and slow down. He said that the shifts can be modified to patrol and that the sheriff's office will do what they can to try and prevent.

Mr. Bassin reported that the company the town purchased the first two radar signs from has the same deal as before. Mr. Miller felt that the permanent signs should be placed going down the 82 hill into Ancram hamlet and into the Ancramdale hamlet. Mr. Miller felt that the State usually likes to do the installation. Councilman Boice felt that the permanent ones will be mounted and can stay in place throughout the winter which will be good.

Councilman Boice offered the following resolution seconded by Councilwoman Hundt and moved for adoption. Resolution carried unanimously.

Resolution #35 of 2020: Traffic Safety- Resolved, that the Town Supervisor is authorized to purchase two additional Evolis radar speed control signs at a cost not to exceed \$6000, and to apply for permits for these signs from the NYS DOT for installation on State Road 82 north of Ancram and Ancramdale.

Councilman Hundt said that some towns have opted for rumble strips, traffic humps and speed tables which are larger than speed bumps. Mr. Bassin will look into the cost for getting extra time from the sheriff's office. Mr. Bassin noted that the town of Austerlitz has picked up extra deputy patrols in this manner. The town may be able to have extra patrols for one month to try. Councilman Boice noted that there have been many extra state patrol cars all over recently. Supervisor Bassin will explore the idea and report back to the town board. Resident Carol Falcetti noted that lawn signs with sayings such as "Slow Down, We're Watching" could be effective. Councilman Clark also suggested finding out the revenues the town receives from traffic fines and see if the fees could cover the costs.

Supervisors Report

1. August Financial Report – August numbers were as expected, and our year end cash forecast continues to be at about \$1.1 million. We closed on the \$212,000 plow truck loan last week, and anticipate about \$136,000 in CHIPS payments later in the fall. Sales tax receipts seem to have stabilized at about 6% below last year, which is significantly stronger performance than the 40% drop we have been expecting and have built into the 2021 Tentative Budget.

2. 2021 Budget – We will have a public hearing on the 2021 Tentative Budget prior to the 9/17 Board Meeting. The 2021 budget assumptions, the 2021-2025 capital plan and the 2021 Tentative Budget have not changed from the versions you saw last month. The 2021 Tentative Budget indicates we are keeping property taxes flat but eliminating the \$130,000 in our contingent accounts for future capital spending, to offset a 40% sales tax revenue deterioration of \$130,000. If sales taxes are down 10% next year, not 40% as is now assumed in the 2021 Tentative Budget, revenues will be about \$90,000 better than budgeted and will allow us to restore funding to the contingent accounts. There are no new capital spending projects proposed for the next few years, but we will have about \$70,000 available as part of the 2019 NYSERDA grant to help fund a new TH geothermal HVAC system in 2021 if we determine geothermal is feasible for Town Hall. We also will have the \$1.1 million fund balance available if we need to make unbudgeted capital investments in 2021.

3. Geothermal HVAC at Town Hall – We recently received the attached independent study funded by NYSERDA and the Capital District Regional Planning Commission which analyzed the Town Hall geothermal opportunity. Ed Lohrenz, who did the study, is apparently one of the most respected geothermal experts in the world. The analysis concluded that a geothermal system for Town Hall would cost about \$194,000, which compares to about \$50,000 to replace the conventional propane system we have now. But when you include the utility incentives and NYSERDA grant funds we have available, the net cost to the town of a geothermal system is about \$107,000, or about \$57,000 more than a conventional propane solution. Fuel cost savings with a geothermal system is supposed to be about \$5,300 a year, making geothermal an 11- year financial payback with significant environmental benefits. The CSCTF will continue to evaluate the geothermal option and will look carefully at the projected \$5300 a year in propane savings to make sure that estimate is realistic. Next steps include developing an RFP to solicit geothermal bids and looking for additional grant funding to equalize the out of pocket cost

over a conventional propane solution. In terms of timing, we should plan to make a decision before year-end and plan to start work to replace our HVAC system with either a geothermal or conventional system next spring.

4. Historic Markers – The Pomeroy Foundation historic marker identifying the NY-Massachusetts boundary stone in Boston Corner was unveiled on Saturday, 9/12 at a ceremony attended by about 30 people on Boston Corner Road. Carol Falcetti and her husband Norm Osofsky found the boundary stone on their property with the help of Jim Makin of the Roe Jan Historical Society. John Hoffman, clerk of the Ancram Planning Board, worked on the historic marker application with the Pomeroy Foundation. John has also applied for and received Pomeroy historic markers for the Ancram and Ancramdale Historic Districts. These markers will be installed in the centers of Ancram and Ancramdale at some point over the next month.

5. Traffic Safety – We will discuss and decide whether we want to arrange for more sheriff department time in Ancram and Ancramdale, and if we want to buy two more radar speed control signs.

Mr. Bassin said that the town will be conducting harassment training for 2021. The question was raised if the town would be conducting another sensitivity training. Mr. Bassin said that the cost would be around \$600. Councilman Clark suggested town offer this training after the first of the year once all of the committees and boards had been appointed for the 2021 year.

Susan Flamm gave an update on the geothermal system for the town hall. Ms. Flamm reported that of the \$80,000 grant awarded to the town, \$8,000 had been used. The town had been given permission to use the remaining grant money to identify energy saving measures they could take to make the Town Hall more efficient. It was approved to use the remaining balance for a geothermal system. This work will have to be completed by the second quarter of 2021. The rough estimates for the system has been put at \$194,000. After credits and grants, there is a net cost of \$107,000. The town has established that to replace the current system will cost approximately \$50,000. That would leave the town with a balance of \$57,000 to allocate. The savings per year at placed around \$2,500 and the towns payback will be in 23 years. Supervisor Bassin suggested that the town look at ways to find the needed \$57,000, possibly through municipal incentives or donations. Councilwoman Hundt felt that the town should find a way to make this happen. She felt that this was a way for the town to make a good environmental impact. Councilwoman Israel felt that the town needed to find money to allocate to this project as the town seems to be able to always find money to purchase highway equipment when needed.

Mr. Bassin noted that in the warrant packet was the voucher for \$1700 to allow the Light District to change the lights out to LED's. Mr. Bassin remarked that the new bulbs would give a \$2,000 savings so that once the district had paid the general fund back, they will be able to cut the light district tax line in the 2022 budget.

Mr. Bassin announced that the town has been alerted by Consolidated that the towns cable franchise expired in May. The town has the opportunity to renew the contract. The town has

the option to attempt to negotiate a better deal. This is just the cable contract not the phone or internet services. Mr. Bassin said that if the town does nothing, the old agreement will stay in place until a new agreement is signed. Mr. Bassin suggested the board defer until the November or December meeting because a public hearing will need to be held. Carol Falcetti noted that in Boston Corners several issues have arisen and Consolidated has not responded to phone calls.

Mr. Bassin spoke about the issue regarding providing health insurance for retirees. Mr. Bassin said that in the past the town has provided coverage for retirees and their spouses. Mr. Bassin said that the board had decided some years back to stop the practice. Councilman Boice noted that the practice had stopped in 2011 when the town had a highway superintendent who was 62 years old. Mr. Bassin said that the retired highway superintendent did not take the town's health insurance and instead was on his wife's insurance. Mr. Bassin said that he would have a proposal at the next meeting. This could be a program that would be scaled on the amount of years an employee worked. The policy would be included in the handbook.

Mr. Bassin told the town board that he had spoken to the Dog Control Officer and that there is a barking dog complaint in the Ancram Hamlet. At this time he has the neighbors who are registering the complaint keeping a log of the barking. This may end in an appearance ticket being issued.

Mr. Bassin asked if any of the town board members had questions or comments about proposed Local Law #2. The county will not be done with their review until after their October meeting and will at that time issue an opinion. The town will look to adopt it in November.

Board Member Comments

Councilman Clark asked about the status on the Rail Trail. Mr. Bassin said that it opens officially in November but that there are questions about the maintenance of the trail and it is not clear as to who will be taking care of it. Councilman Clark asked about the section between Undermountain and Northern Copake. It is in bad repair and he wondered who was supposed to maintain it. Carol Falcetti noted that the rail trail is a State Park and that the State should maintain it.

Councilwoman Hundt noted that the lawn around the habitat house in Ancramdale was overgrown and that she had called and ask to have it cut.

Councilwoman Hundt reported that the response to the census has only had a 43.9% response. In 2010 the response from Ancram was 51% Ms. Hundt noted that second homeowners should also be filling out the reports.

Councilwoman Hundt reported that she had contacted Planning Board chair John Ingram and that Mr. Ingram will be attending all of the rest of the meetings for the year. For now, Joe Crocco will fill in as a vice chair until he can be officially appointed to the position in January.

Councilwoman Israel announced that a newsletter should be ready by the second week of October. The committee is also looking at the website.

Councilman Boice asked when the town board can begin meeting at the town hall again. He felt that it was not good that the board could not hear each other. Supervisor Bassin said that he was okay with going back to in person meetings but that they have to be open to the public. Due to covid, the board cannot have a large crowd and are limited to ten people. Councilwoman Hundt said that the public can attend the meeting via zoom but that they have to be able to hear the board members. The board members agreed that the board could meet in person as long as there was social distance, masks worn and each member used their own device to be on zoom for the public option.

Councilman Boice asked about the County Route 3 speed limit change request. Mr. Miller said that it has been given to the county and that the town is waiting to hear back. Mr. Boice stated that this was agreed on two years ago in October.

Highway

Mr. Miller reported that the town is helping other towns with road repairs to repay back their time. The department is down one worker until around the holidays. Two employees have six weeks of vacation to use up. Mr. Miller said that he has been approached by a resident on Crest Lane extension to abandon the road. Mr. Miller said that the road falls into the criteria to be abandoned. Mr. Bassin also noted that there is a resident who would like an abandoned road to be taken back by the town. This road runs between Catalano and Carson and that it would have to be brought up to town specifications. Even after this, the town board can still decide to not take the road back.

The following budget adjustment was offered by Councilwoman Israel and seconded by Councilwoman Hundt and moved for adoption. Motion carried. From Fund Balance to Ancram Lighting District \$1,730.00.

The following budget adjustment was offered by Councilman Clark and seconded by Councilwoman Israel and moved for adoption. Motion carried. From Fund Balance \$4,700.00 to 1420.4 \$2,500.00 and 7510.4 \$2,200.00.

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

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

Resolution #36 of 2020: Preliminary Budget Public Hearing: Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed 2021 Preliminary Budget at 6.45 pm on October 15, 2020 via ZOOM.

Councilwoman Hundt offered Diane Valden congratulations for her journalism award.

Supervisor Bassin offered congratulations on a great sign unveiling for the Boston Corners marker, to Carol Falcetti. Ms. Falcetti gave thanks to John Hoffman for his work on the project.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by,

Monica R. Cleveland
Ancram Town Clerk