

**Town of Ancram
Town Board
Regular Meeting
January 21, 2021
Via Zoom**

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

The regular meeting of the Ancram Town Board was called to order by Supervisor Arthur Bassin via zoom with a salute to the flag.

Mr. Bassin asked if there were any items on the agenda from which any board member needed to recuse themselves of. There were none.

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

Councilwoman Hundt addressed an email that had come through from the Highway Superintendent and asked if the email had been directed towards her as she felt it was very inappropriate. Mr. Miller apologized to Ms. Hundt and replied that the response was actually a response for a personal email between him and a family member but that the town email had come through at the same time and he had responded to the wrong one. He apologized for the error and said that it was not meant for anyone on the town board.

At this time, Jamie Purinton gave the following report from the CAC:

2020 ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Due to the Corona Virus, the Conservation Advisory Council met largely by zoom in 2020. Although meeting by zoom has its limitations, we continued to be an active and productive council in terms of providing the town with advisory input and education on environmental conservation.

1. The *Columbia Paper* reprinted our 2019 Year End report.
2. Biodiversity Map and Work: We sent out an update to the town and invited landowners to contact us if they would like us to review any of the biodiversity habitats on their land. We did a field check at Helen Bodian's land on Carson Road and checked six areas, including vernal pools and hardwood swamps.
3. Planning Board: Erin Robertson provides monthly updates on activities of the Planning Board and seeks our advice on environmental issues. We reviewed a house site within the scenic corridor on Route 22 and wrote substantive recommendations to mitigate

environmental and visual impact of this new home. In our opinion, the current regulations need to be better enforced, and in some cases strengthened, to protect the scenic corridor.

4. The Roe Jan Watershed Association (RJWA) continued on with water sampling at 2 locations in Ancram. The results are posted on their website: <https://www.roejanwatershed.org/>.
5. CAC Ongoing Training: Seven of our members attended, virtually, the Fall Sexual Harassment town wide training. One member reviewed the training on their own and another member will schedule a future date. Jane and Walter attended the Hudson River Estuary Program's Conservation and Land Use 101 Webinar: "Best Practices for Local Environmental Reviews". Colleen attended the 5-hour credit, "Headwater Streams: identifying and protecting an essential resource" on August 3-6. Walter attended the CLC forest conservation workshop. Jamie attended 20 hours of seminars with New Directions in American Landscapes on how to create greater biodiversity in our landscapes.
6. We contributed multiple papers to the ZRC on environment-related topics including: solar farm regulations, logging regulations, major and minor subdivision regulations, and improving the ridgeline and steep slope protection regulations.
7. Following our nomination, Chaseholm Farm was awarded the EMC 2020 Good Earthkeeping Award.
8. We contributed to the Ancram newsletter on a paper (written by Bob Moss) on how to attract birds and we are contributing to the upcoming newsletter with an educational paper on forest conservation.
9. By public request and with the support of the Doodletown Road community, we prepared a July 29th letter asking DEC if they will reconsider their plan to clear and log 75 acres at the Doodletown Wildlife Management Area. Approximately 10 neighbors signed the letter with us. DEC responded to our letter in August and then we responded to DEC on September 2nd with continued objections to their forest clearing plans. We are awaiting a response from DEC on the September letter.
10. We made numerous calls to Dutchess County Transportation and DEC regarding their need to provide better protection for the turtles and snakes that were trapped on the new rail trail by the long sedimentation barriers—causing them in many cases to suffer and die. Our pressure was part of a larger response from the community to remedy this situation.
11. We provided input on the Town's updated procurement policy in order to strengthen the purchase and use of recycled paper and sustainable cleaning products.
12. We reviewed the Community Solar Programs and noted the needs for the buyer to beware in terms of where these farms are being located. Although Solstice's aim is to locate on brownfields and marginal land versus prime farmland, it is important that we are vigilant about this. We forwarded to the ZRC, Hudsonia's paper on locating solar farms with sensitivity to the environment.
13. CAC/ Art Bassin wrote a letter to the NYS Senate to pass A.8349/S.5612A that will extend state protections to 41,000 stream miles in New York. This legislation is vital to offset the impact of the Trump Administration's new Navigable Water Protection Rule (which replaced the Obama-era Clean Water Rule on June 22nd).

PLANS FOR 2021

1. Continue to meet primarily by Zoom until the Corona Virus threat is mitigated by widespread vaccinations.
2. Continue to provide input to the Planning Board on site plan reviews that have sensitive environmental factors.
3. Prepare public education memos on invasive Asian worms and the importance of reducing lawns and reducing the application of lawn chemicals.
4. Reach out to the town about the health of the Roe Jan watershed, providing recommendations on how we can improve the river water quality.
5. Continue to urge the town to take advantage of available grant money for culvert replacements. Since Trout Unlimited completed the Ancram priority plan on culverts that need replacement, Ancram continues to be in an exceptional position to win grants.
6. Continue the major review of zoning regulations and prepare additional advisory memos to the Zoning Revisions Committee on upcoming topics including forest conservation and stream protection.

Councilwoman Hundt asked about the possibility of Culvert Grants. Jamie Purinton felt that Colleen Lutz, who had written the last culvert grant, was key to the town applying. Mr. Bassin stated that Highway Superintendent Miller feels that there are no culverts at this time that needed to be replaced and that when a problem with a culvert comes up, the town can apply then. Ms. Hundt felt that there was the chance there would be no grants available at that time. Mr. Bassin reminded the board that Colleen Lutz was very busy with the Solstice project.

Carol Falcetti gave a report on the Boston Corners Committee. Ms. Falcetti said that the committee is looking into the Historic District possibility. She said there was much trepidation and there are very few pros and cons. They are looking at having the state historic representative speak to the committee about the process.

The CSCTF, represented at the meeting by Susan Flamm, has decided that it is in the town's best interest to turn their attention to installing a HVAC system at the town hall. There is \$71,000 left from the NYSERTA grant. The Geothermal system became too cost prohibitive. A formal RFP will be written for the Air Source Heat Pump HVAC system for the town hall building. Ms. Flamm gave an update on the Solstice project. She said that the company is pretty close to offering the program to residents. The marketing material and dedicated webpage is complete. The committee is looking at the project completed at the beginning of February.

Supervisors Report

1. Financial Report – December numbers were as expected, and our ending year end cash balance came in as expected at \$1,150,000. The Highway Department contributed about \$250,000 to this year-end cash balance by coming in under budget by about \$250,000 in 2020, while the General Fund contributed about \$230,000 caused primarily by not using the \$130,000 contingent funds and because we did not operate the kids camp or pool. YTD sales tax receipts are about flat to last year, and the 4Q sales tax check which we expect to get later this month or early in February may be 3% over last year. While our financial situation is strong, it is not clear how we will do in 2021. Early

indications are that state highway aid may be down substantially, and sales and mortgage tax revenues are still uncertain.

2. HVAC at Town Hall – CSCTF Chair Suzan will give us an update on where things are with the town Hall HVAC project, which is not focused on evaluating the feasibility and economics of an Air Source Heat Pump system. Next step is to develop and issue an RFP for bids.

3. Solstice – Colleen Lutz is working with Solstice on developing the marketing materials to support the roll out of the community solar program, Target date for communicating with the town is late January or early February.

4. Retiree Health Insurance – I have had the retiree health insurance resolution approved last month turned into a policy statement for inclusion in the Employee Handbook. We will consider the policy statement for approval at our meeting next week.

5. STR Permit Process – The Building and Planning Departments are working on developing the process for reviewing and approving STR permit applications. We hope to have an email and application forms ready to be sent out to the Ancramemail list by the end of the month. Host Compliance, a company that tracks STRs for municipalities has proposed a \$2500 annual fee to provide us with information on the 22 STRS they believe are operating in Ancram.

6. Boston Corner Historic District – Carol Falcetti has initiated the process to designate Boston Corner as a Historic District. Carol is working with historian Ruth Piwonka and NYS Historic Preservation Office project manager Jennifer Betsworth to develop the Boston corner historic district proposal. Funding for this effort will come from the \$7800 we have left in the Town Heritage Resources Fund which was originally collected when we started the historic district process for Ancram and Ancramdale back in 2011-2012.

7. Highway – Jim Miller will present the annual 284 Agreement for Town Board approval, and will be recommending that we approve the purchase of a pre-owned bucket truck for about \$15,000. If we do not buy this bucket truck, Jim will have to spend \$1000 a day to have a tree service do routine tree work, which could cost the town \$10,000 a year.

Mr. Bassin reported that the town has \$1,150,000 in the bank and will received a 4Q2020 sales tax check for about \$93,000. Mr. Bassin remarked on the Short Term Rental issue. Mr. Bassin said that the town has the opportunity to be a part of a Host Compliance contract with the County. This would track all of the STR's and give the information to the town. Mr. Bassin reported that there are apparently 22 STR's in Ancram at this time and it would cost \$2500 for the town to do a separate deal with Host Compliance. Councilwoman Hundt commented that this would be a waste of money for the town if the county is contracting.

Mr. Bassin noted that the new retiree Health Insurance policy has been included in the Employee Handbook update. Mr. Bassin said he was just bringing this to the board members attention. Mr. Bassin asked if the members had any comments on the town documents and handbooks. There were none.

Carol Falcetti asked about the Planning Board advertising fee. Mr. Bassin said this was to cover publishing public notices.

Councilman Clark reminded the board that STR owners have a grace period of 6 months in order for them to meet the legal requirements. This will expire on June 7th. An email will be drafted urging the STR owners to contact the Planning Board secretary and the Zoning Enforcement Officer. The town is waiting on the Planning Board and the Building Department to draw up the forms for STR applications. Councilwoman Hundt asked if the fees were still being determined? Mr. Bassin replied that at this time, it is looking as like the STR's will be handled like a normal special use permit which costs \$150.00. Then, there will be a \$250 inspection fee. This can always be changed if the town board does not agree. Councilman Clark stressed that there no be any double dipping in the STR fees, that the ZRC was very adement about this. Councilwoman Israel asked what the building department charges for a commercial CofO, and after looking up the amount, found it much lower than the proposed STR fees. She felt that they should be similar. Councilman Clark said that the fee should make sure it reflects the amount of time the inspections and paperwork takes. Mr. Bassin also noted that some of these properties may need building permits for updates or construction done to them. Councilwoman Hundt suggested that the town also ask other towns how they handle STR's as to applications and fees. Mr. Bassin replied that this is all in the thought phase still.

Councilwoman Israel is working on updating the Community Directory.

Town Board

Councilman Clark reported that the ZRC is working on Solar Law. A draft has been sent to John Lyons to look over. They expect a response by February 10th.

Councilwoman Israel reported that the newsletter will be completed sometime in mid February. Councilman Clark asked if there was a possibility of the Town of Ancram gateway sign being put at the 22/County Route 3 Citco intersection. Mrs. Israel said that this could be possible and that she will look into it.

Councilwoman Hundt reported that she had attended an Economic Development Committee meeting. The committee discussed data collecting for housing purposes and the housing needs. She reported that she has seen action at the Ancramdale Habitat House. Ms. Hundt also gave thanks for the new Federal administration and looks for some unity within the community.

Councilman Boice spoke about the town pool. He said that the pool operation depends on the summer program this year. Mr. Bassin asked if there were any updates or repairs the town needs to look into this year in anticipation of opening. Mr. Boice stated that the pool had been cleaned and serviced in the fall. If the pool is to open, it needs to be painted, some attention to some cracks and the pool deck looked at. Councilman Clark asked if there was value in doing work on the pool if it is not opened. Mr. Boice felt that there were issues that needed to be addressed even if the pool does not open this summer.

Councilwoman Hundt and Councilwoman Israel both volunteered to be on the Pandemic Emergency Plan Committee.

Highway Department

Mr. Miller noted that the 284 agreement had been emailed to all board members. The road work is scaled back this year because there is still a question as to state funds. The town is expecting to receive \$108,000 in Chips money. The 284 includes 1.3 miles of chip sealing of Carson Road and Oil and Stoning East Ancram and Overmountain roads.

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

Resolution #9 of 2021: 284 Agreement

Resolved: that the Ancram Town Board approves the 284 agreement for 2021 as presented by the Highway department.

Mr. Miller reported that the weather has been quiet. Mr. Miller reported on the proposed bucket truck. The department has looked at a 2008 truck that has 80,000 miles and is for sale for \$16,500. Mr. Miller said it was a former Verizon truck and has no rust on the undercarriage. The bucket truck is used to trim trees. If the town hires this done, is a \$1000 cost per day. If the town rents a truck, Mr. Miller found that they are \$300-\$450 a day. Councilwoman Israel asked if it was true that the town only uses this truck 10 days a year? Mr. Miller said that the last truck was only used by the town about 10 times in the last year because each time they try to use it, it breaks down. Councilman Clark said that he supported the idea of replacing the truck. He felt that in addition to items the town has to see to, there are also other items, like putting up the axillary flags, banners and other ideas that come up. He felt it was a helpful piece of machinery to have on hand. He also felt that purchasing a used truck makes best economic sense. He felt that the town is in a position with the year end balance to handle this expense regardless of if the truck is in the capital plan. Councilwoman Hundt noted that she had done some digging in regards to the expenses in the Highway Department. She noted numerous purchases in the past half dozen years or so, which equaled over the million dollar amount, several of these purchases not in the capital plan. Ms. Hundt reported that this truck has had \$19,000 in repairs in the last five years. She feels that this is bad money management and reminded the town board members that the capital plan had been put on hold with spending due to the uncertainty of the pandemic. She noted that she had called the town of Pine Plains and found that they do not own a bucket truck. She said that the town may have money in the bank but that the town hall is having heating problems and roof problems. She felt she was not in favor of the purchase at this time and would like to plan this purchase better and buy a newer truck. Mr. Miller noted that this truck was in the capital plan. Ms. Hundt said it was, for 2024. Mr. Bassin replied that the truck is in the capital plan to be replaced for \$125,000. Councilman Boice said that because this is an aerial device, he was not in favor of purchasing a used truck. He felt the town would end up with someone else's problem. He suggested putting money into the one we own and limp along for a while. Mr. Miller said that the last fix was a \$5000 expense, before that it was \$3600. Worked okay for 7-8 months and then when the town goes to use it and it won't work, it begins having the same issue that was fixed. Mr. Miller feels the

town has put too much money into it already. Mr. Miller said that the noted \$19,000 includes a \$1000 NYS inspection each year, new tires, brakes and upkeep work that any truck would need. Councilwoman Israel suggested moving the truck up on the Capital Plan. Mr. Miller remarked that he would rather buy new machinery that is used more often than a bucket truck. Ms. Hundt felt that the proposed truck was rather old. Mr. Miller said he can look for newer trucks and get prices. Councilman Boice noted that of the \$19,000, really only about \$8,000 was spent on truck issues. The rest is normal upkeep. He suggested looking for a truck that is newer than 2005, maybe a 2015. Ms. Hundt asked how the town proposed to pay for the truck. Mr. Bassin reminded Ms. Hundt that there was 1.2 million in the bank. Ms. Hundt remarked that there are also issues with the heating system and the town could lose the grant. Mr. Bassin said that this truck, in the 2024 Capital Plan, was not a financial problem at this time. He agreed with David's point of looking at newer ones or pricing out rentals. Mr. Miller noted that the Highway 2020 budget added \$100,000 to said fund balance. Mr. Bassin felt that the town should not be about accumulating money but instead taking care of the community.

Councilwoman Hundt asked about the staffing situation at the Town Garage. Mr. Miller said that Mr. Hay is still out.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Israel and seconded by Councilwoman Hundt to approve the budget adjustments. Motion carried. Adjustments will be on file with the town clerk.

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

The Board spoke among themselves regarding the roll out of the Covid vaccine. The County is receiving 300-400 shots a week at this time.

There being no more business, a motion was made by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilman Clark to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Monica R. Cleveland
Ancram Town Clerk