

**Town of Ancram
Town Board
Regular Meeting
October 15, 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 by Supervisor Bassin at 7:00 pm with a salute to the flag.

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

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

Supervisors Report

1. Financial Report – September numbers were as expected, and our year end cash forecast continues at about \$1.1 -1.2 million. We received \$15t,000 in CHIPS payments last week, and sales tax receipts have stabilized at about 5-6% below last year.

2. 2021 Budget – We will have a public hearing on the 2021 Preliminary Budget prior to the 10/15 Board Meeting. The 2021 Preliminary Budget keeps property taxes flat at \$752,000. Sales taxes are budgeted at \$300,000, down \$25,000 from this year, and our contingent accounts are at \$100,000, \$30,000 less than this year. 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 -1.2 million fund balance available if we need to make unbudgeted capital investments in 2021.

3. Geothermal HVAC at Town Hall – Next steps include developing an RFP to solicit geothermal bids and looking for additional grant funding to cover 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. I recommend that we retain CPL Engineering to work with us to develop a formal RFP for geothermal.

4. Historic Markers – The Ancramdale Hamlet Historic District Marker was installed at the 8/3 intersection in Ancramdale 10/3. We will need to discuss the proposed location of the Ancram Hamlet Historic District Marker when we meet on Thursday. The four possible locations are the triangle at the 82/7 intersection, at the Little Store or on CR 7 by the Freeground Cemetery by Hall Hill Rd or opposite the old town hall on CR 7.

5. Traffic Safety – A) Speed limits – We need to decide how we want to deal with speed limit reductions - whether we want to continue to deal with specific requests on a road by road basis, or whether we want to request speed limit reductions to 35 or 40 mph on all town roads now posted over 40 mph or not posted, and from 55 mph to 45 for all county roads in town that are currently posted at 55 mph. Key to making any decision on speed limit reductions is an understanding about whether lower speed limits actually slow people down, and whether there are any negatives to lowering speed limits. B) Radar speed signs - Permits for the two new Evolis radar signs we plan to install on 82 coming into Ancram and Ancramdale are in process with NYS DOT.

6. Town roof – The heavy rain last week caused a roof leak and some damage to the ceiling in the meeting room. George is arranging additional roof repairs as a short-term fix and is getting estimates for replacing the roof. If we replace the roof we will have to decide if we want to install new, higher efficiency solar panels, or just reinstall what is there. We will get a proposal on costs and benefits of new panels versus reinstalling current panels.

7. Community Rescue Squad Budget – The Community Rescue Squad has proposed a 5% increase for 2021 to \$106,500. We will consider this request for approval at our 10/15 meeting, along with a county chargeback agreement to pay for this for service.

8. Town Insurance – We will be soliciting competitive bids for town insurance this year. FAC will review bids in November and will present a recommendation to the Board in December

A motion was made by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to approve the preliminary budget with no changes. Motion carried.

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

Resolution # 37 of 2020: 2021 Final Budget Public Hearing: Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed 2021 Final Budget at 6.45 pm on November 19, 2020 via ZOOM.

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

Resolution # 38 of 2020: 2021 Community Rescue Squad Budget – Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board approves the 2021 Community Rescue Squad budget request for a payment from

Ancram of \$106,528 for rescue squad services in 2021, and it is further resolved that the Ancram Town Supervisor is authorized to enter into a chargeback agreement with the Columbia County Treasurer's Office to charge Ancram property tax payers for \$106,528 as part of the county tax levy and disburse these funds to the Community Rescue Squad.

Mr. Bassin noted that the town hall roof is leaking again. The roof has been patched for the time being. The roof is a 30 year roof and with the patching should not need to be replaced.

Climate Smart Community

Colleen Lutz gave a small update on community solar. She will give a more detailed presentation at the next meeting. Colleen said that the town has been approached by a company named Solstice. Every residential property that opts in, the town will receive \$100. Councilwoman Hundt asked what the town's part in this would be. Colleen thought that it would be a resolution.

Mr. Bassin noted that the LED street lights have been installed.

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

Resolution #39 of 2020: Geothermal RFP – Resolved, that the town Supervisor is authorized to enter into an agreement with CPL Engineering to assist the Town in the development of an RFP for a geothermal HVAC system at Town Hall for a cost not to exceed \$1500.

Mr. Bassin reported that the town hall heating system had been inspected for the winter.

Mr. Bassin spoke about the retiree health insurance issue. Mr. Bassin noted the county policy which includes that retirees can begin opting into insurance at 62 or retirement. They have to be an employee for a minimum of 10 years. 50% of insurance is covered for those who have worked 10-25 years, 75% coverage at 25 years. Councilwoman Hundt felt that this sounded reasonable. Councilman Boice noted that this was a change at what the town was initially talking about and that he felt that a person has to work 15 years to get 25% more coverage. The town board will continue to discuss this and hope to have it included in the 2021 employee manual.

Local Law #2 of 2020

Mr. Bassin asked for comments on the public hearing. Mr. Clark noted that Mr. Steve Olyha had been sitting in on the public hearing and that he would like his comments. Councilwoman Hundt felt that there were many good comments. Councilwoman Hundt agreed with the regulations of the STRs and parking at STR's. Mr. Bassin noted that the County Planning Board had no objections to LL#2. Mr. Bassin will keep written and emailed comments as well for the record.

District Marker

Mr. Bassin stated that the Ancram Hamlet Group prefers to place the district marker at the Ancram Little store. The owner is okay with this. Councilman Boice did not like the idea of placing the marker on private property. There was discussion and all board members were in agreement with Mr. Boice and decided that the triangle is the place where it belongs.

Radar Signs

The radar signs are being ordered. There is a new permit person for the State but once the signs are installed, the town will not have to renew the permit. It was questioned if the town should also have small signs on residents property as previously suggested. Councilman Clark suggested holding off until spring.

Mr. Bassin asked the board members feelings on making all town and county roads 45mph. All board members felt opposed to this idea.

In regards to Boston Corners and the Alander trail head, the parking continues to be an issue. The neighbor will not sell a small piece of land for parking. The rail trail parking is not planned out either. Mr. Miller did not want the town involved with upkeeping the rail trail.

Mr. Bassin reported that the quote from the County IT department has come in at \$7500. The board seemed satisfied with this. A motion was made by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to approve the purchase of new IT equipment for the town hall departments at a cost of \$7500. Motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Boice asked if the town was continuing to look into the smart tv. Mr. Bassin said that Steve Olyha had received a price of \$6000. Mr. Boice suggested that the town work into this a camara and microphones as the digital meetings will be continuing for a time.

Mr. Bassin reported that the town is bidding out the town insurance.

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

Resolution #40 of 2020: Building Inspector Compensation – Resolved, that Ed Ferratto will be paid \$2600 in compensation for the extra hours he worked as the Town Building Inspector during the months of June, July and August 2020.

Board Member Comments

Councilwoman Hundt asked about the nomination of a person from Ancram to the County Planning Board. Councilman Clark said that he had emailed four or five possibilities.

Councilwoman Hundt stated that she has continued ahead with looking into affordable housing and is concerned that COVID has seriously impacted this issue. There are bidding wars taking place and homes are going for much more money.

Naomi Wolf asked if she could speak. She had concerns regarding the changes to local law #2 of 2020. She is concerned with the double density change and wanted to know how to oppose it. Mr. Bassin stated that the public hearing had just happened where the board listened to concerns and comments. Ms. Wolf was concerned that the town board had not noticed the meeting properly. Mr. Bassin said that that town had run public notices. Ms. Wolf wanted to “lobby” the town board. Mr. Bassin said that in local government, the public gave their concerns at the public hearing, which Ms. Wolf had missed but that she could submit written comments.

Councilman Clark gave the following statement to Diane Valden:

In a family, an affliction, a trouble, a reversal that affects one sends ripples that affect all.

This Town Board, and this Ancram community, have some features that make them akin to a family. We know, and share, the pain of other family members.

And so, to you Diane and to your family, I speak on behalf of all here to extend our condolences and deepest sympathy on the death of your brother, David.

Mr. Clark gave the following statement for Peter Paden:

In the 2019 Ancram Comprehensive Plan, Goal #1 (Agriculture and Open Space) seeks to “encourage farming and the rural, small town, scenic character of Ancram by promoting our town’s current farms, attracting new farming ventures, encouraging farmland protection through sustainable and organic farming practices, and supporting preservation of open space and important scenic views.”

Then, in complementary fashion, Goal #2 (Environment) focuses on protection of water, woodlands, wildlife habitats, and clean air.

Ancram’s goals match well the mission of another organization—the Columbia County Land Conservancy—to work “with the community to conserve the farmland, forests, wildlife habitat, and rural character of Columbia County, strengthening connections between people and the land.”

From 2007 until his retirement in September, Peter Paden has been the Executive Director, the voice, and the guiding spirit of the CLC.

Whether spear-heading the drive to purchase and protect the Thompson-Finch Farm and Chaseholm Farm, or working with the Kitchen, Baxt, and Gilmore families to create the

Overmountain Conservation Area, the largest public conservation area in the Columbia Land Conservancy portfolio, Peter Paden's exemplary leadership leaves a legacy to be treasured.

Accordingly, I move that the Ancram Town Board applaud Peter Paden and wish him well in his retirement.

Highway Department

Mr. Miller reported that the department is getting ready for winter. The salt shed has been filled. Mr. Miller noted that two weeks ago, a window had been broken at the garage by an eleven year old child. Mr. Miller did not want to press charges and the young person will give community service to the town. The department had installed video cameras.

A motion was made by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to approve the following budget adjustments:

General Budget: from Fund Balance to 1420.4 \$2,500

Highway Budget: from Bond Proceeds to 5130.21 \$209,143 and 5130.22 \$3,000

Light District: from General Fund Loan for Light District: \$1,730

Motion carried.

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

A motion was made by Supervisor Bassin and seconded by Councilman Boice to adjourn the meeting to executive session to discuss an employee matter which could result in legal action or dismissal. Motion carried.

Executive Session

A motion was made by Councilman Clark and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to reconvene the regular board meeting from the executive session where the town board discussed an employee matter which could result in legal action or dismissal. Motion carried.

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

Respectfully submitted by,

Monica R. Cleveland
Ancram Town Clerk