

**Town of Ancram
Town Board
Regular Meeting
March 18, 2021
Via Zoom**

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 Arthur Bassin at 7:00pm with a salute to the flag.

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

A motion was made by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilman Boice to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2021 meeting as read and placed on the record. Motion carried.

Jay Corcoran of the Ancram Hamlet Planning Group spoke to the board. He noted that there will be landscaping done to the Steele House site. The owners of the Tin Smith house have expressed that they do not want to proceed with obtaining permits to fix the house and are looking for reasonable offers to sell it. They have been put in touch with the APG. The Ancram Little Store continues with restoration and looks to a possible opening in the Fall. The Ancram Opera House is setting their summer series but has a lot of uncertainty due to the continuing pandemic. The committee is concerned about the traffic issues in the intersection of the hamlet. There is a lot more traffic and more people. There is a more pronounced sheriff presence. The committee has several ideas to mitigate the concerns including 20 mph in the hamlet, signs for hidden driveways, one way in front of Simons Store and four-way stop signs. Mr. Bassin reported that this intersection has been looked at by the State several times in the past few years. Following a note to the NYS DOT making these suggestions for the intersection, the DOT rejected the suggestions. Councilwoman Israel suggested that all concerned write letters to the State DOT. Councilwoman Hundt noted that the speed limit through the intersection is 35. She questioned if the town could put up dangerous intersection signs. Mr. Bassin replied that to put up signs on the State Highway, the town would have to have permission from the NYS DOT. It was noted that the turn coming from County Route 7 and the Town hall, onto Route 82, the site line is blocked by a light pole. It was suggested to ask the light pole be moved.

Councilwoman Hundt asked about the status of the Tin Smith house. Mr. Bassin reported that the owners had begun repairs but had not gotten any building permits. Due to the fact that the work was structural, Mr. Ferratto visited and asked for them to file a building permit. The owners refused so Mr. Ferratto put a stop work order on the building. James Kennedy suggested that the town “buy time” on the Tin Smith house as it is such a historic structure. He suggested maybe a crowd funding endeavor to possibly purchase the house and turn it into a community building.

Mr. Bassin noted that in regards to the State DOT, the department is either really slow or really busy. But, he said, it is a very hard relationship due to the turn over of staff and the regulations.

At this time, John Ingram, chair of the Ancram Planning Board, addressed the board. He announced that Terry Boyles has asked to step down from the Planning Board after many years of service to the town. Mr. Ingram read the following resolution into the record:

Resolution #19 of 2021: RESOLUTION OF RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION FOR TERRY BOYLES

Whereas, Terry Boyles, a lifelong resident of Ancram, has dedicated his life to community service as a Volunteer Firefighter and Captain of the Fire Police of the Ancram Fire Company, and as Chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Ancram Fire District, and

Whereas, Terry contributed countless hours of his time to the Town of Ancram for over 20 years serving on the Planning Board and the Zoning Review Committee, and

Whereas, Terry's vast knowledge and understanding of the community provided immeasurable guidance to all who served beside him on the Planning Board, and

Whereas, Terry, has decided to step down from the Planning Board to spend quality time with his family;

Now, Therefore be it resolved that the Ancram Town Board and the Ancram Planning Board offer their sincere thanks and gratitude to Terry for his untiring and dedicated service to the residents of Ancram.

Resolution was offered on a motion by Councilman Clark and seconded by Councilman Boice and moved for adoption. Resolution carried by unanimous vote.

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

Resolution # 20 of 2021: Appoint Planning Board member - Resolved, that Ann Rader be appointed to fill the unexpired term of Planning Board member Terry Boyles, who has resigned from the Planning Board.

Mr. Bassin spoke about the proposed HVAC system. He reminded the board that one of the three units at the Town Hall has a broken air conditioning unit and because of the way the unit is built, the entire unit will have to be changed. The town hall will have to have the machine as a backup to the Air Source heating system. The cost of replacement is approximately \$15,000.00. Councilwoman Israel felt that with the Covid money that will be coming to the town, she suggested that the board revisit the geo thermal option. She felt the town would be doing good for the environment and that \$2,500 would be saved each year in energy costs. Councilman Boice noted that the current heating system would still have to be replaced. This has to be done no matter what. Susan Flamm of the Climate Smart Task Force didn't think it

was a wise decision to go backwards. Mr. Bassin felt that the town board had gone through extensive fact finding for the geothermal system and when that seemed to be not a good option, the town board and the CSCTF had decided to examine the Air Source Heat Pump system. He also cautioned jumping into making hasty use of the COVID relief money. Councilwoman Israel felt that the geo thermal was the best use of the money. Councilwoman Hundt noted that the town is receiving \$70,000 in grant money that can be used for a energy efficient ssystems. Susan Flamm said that the town was okayed to use the \$70,000 for a Air Source Heat Pump system. Councilman Clark felt that while understanding the inclination for the installation of the geo thermal, he felt that the \$160,000 federal aid needs to be looked at with a number of discussions and a number of different proposals before it is spent. Councilman Boice said that the town board had arrived at the decision that the geo thermal was not cost efficient. He agreed with Mr. Clark that the board needs to look at this Covid relief money wisely. He noted that residents in this town as well as businesses need help. Councilwoman Israel said that the bill that was passed included provisions for people and businesses. Mr. Boice said that the town will receive \$160,000 when we really do not have a need for it. In regards to the replacement heating and cooling system, there will be a four to six week delivery and then installation. Councilwoman Hundt asked how the town decides who does the installation. Mr. Bassin said that he and Mr. Wittlinger have been requesting estimates and that he will have the Town Engineer review them over the next few weeks and recommend which one to go with.

The following resolution was offered by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilman Clark and moved for a roll call vote. Resolution passed with ayes from Councilman Boice, Councilman Clark, Councilwoman Hundt and Supervisor Bassin. One nay from Councilwoman Israel.

Resolution #21 of 2021: Replace one HVAC unit at Town Hall – Resolved that the Town Supervisor is authorized to secure estimates for and subsequently arrange for the replacement of one propane heating unit at Town Hall not to exceed \$15,000.00 in costs.

Climate Smart Community Task Force

Susan Flamm, Colleen Lutz and Alex Goldfarb from Solstice addressed the board. They reported that on March 12, 2021 the MOU was signed by the town. The committee has hosted one webinar and will be hosting additional webinars to explain the program. It will be available on you tube. The links to register with the program will be posted on the town website as well as the Ancram Bright Ideas website. The town will send out another email blast. Ms. Flamm felt that the town is off to a good start.

ZRC

The public hearing for the Solar Law amendments, proposed Local Law #1 of 2021, was held prior to this town board meeting. There were only a hand full of questions and comments. The Columbia County planning Board had no issues with the law. The Ancram Planning Board has not responded yet. The Town Board will hold the public hearing open to written comments until April 12, 2021 and will consider adopting the law at the regular town board meeting on April 15, 2021.

DOT Issues

Mr. Bassin addressed the radar speed signs on Route 82. The DOT has had the application for six months. The town was told that engineer drawings were needed which the town had done and submitted over a month ago. The town had not heard anything back.

As for the County Route 3 speed reduction, the County did not submit the request to the state until early 2021. Councilwoman Israel noted that she never sees any traffic on County Route 3. Mr. Bassin said that the issue is slow farm equipment.

Camp and Pool

Mr. Bassin announced that Samantha Mason and Catie Gomm have both agreed to co-direct the camp this year. They have begun planning in the event that camp is allowed to go forward. Jen Boice is beginning to look at the upcoming pool season and opening the pool. At this time she is looking at making the pool fully handicapped accessible and what that entails. The town has been requested to do this by the family of a new resident who is in a wheelchair.

Supervisors Report

1. Financial Report – February was a normal month financially. With the recently passed \$1.9 trillion Federal aid package, it is likely state and county programs will be better funded and towns should see more financial support than we expected during the budget process. More reliable federal and state aid coupled with stable sales and mortgage tax revenues suggest we may have a good year financially.

2. Broadband Committee Report – Broadband Committee Chair Sid Karmali will review the broadband situation in Ancram, Ancramdale and Boston Corner, and the actions he has taken to better understand and improve broadband access in all parts of the town. .

3. CSCTF Report

-ASHP System - We are still working on an RFP for bids on an ASHP system. Because ASHP systems do not work well in very cold weather, we plan to maintain our existing propane system as a backup.

-Solstice – Colleen Lutz will update us on where we are with the Solstice program, which is rolling out in mid-March.

4. Town Hall HVAC - The air conditioning feature of one of our three 20 year old HVAC units failed last summer. We decided not to replace it pending the outcome of the geothermal analysis. Having concluded that the geothermal solution was too expensive, and having subsequently concluded we will need a backup heating system if we determine that an ASHP solution is economically feasible, it's time to replace the one non-working propane HVAC unit, which will cost about \$15,000. We will secure three estimates and install the new unit in April or May if the Board approves the recommendation. Because this decision is under \$35,000, we do not need competitive bids.

5. NYS DOT Issues

-Radar Speed Signs – We are still waiting for permit approval from NYS DOT for the two radar speed signs proposed for 82 in Ancram and Ancramdale. We hope to get approval to install these radar signs in April.

-82/7 & 82/3/8 Intersections – In August, 2020 we requested that NYS DOT improve traffic safety by lowering speed limits through the 82/7 intersection in Ancram and the 82/8/3 intersection in Ancramdale from 35 to 20. We heard back from the NYS DOT last week advising us that they did not think lowering the speed limits were appropriate or necessary. The Ancram Hamlet Planning Group plans to object to the NYS DOT decision.

-Speed Limit on CR 3 – In 4Q2018 we submitted a request to the County to lower the speed limit on CR 3 from the 35 mph sign in Ancramdale to just past Dan Slott's farm from 55 to 45 mph. In 4Q2019

we learned that the County never received our request. We resubmitted the request in 1Q 2020, asking that the 45 mph speed limit be imposed for the entire length of CR 3 - from Route 22 to the 35 mph sign in Ancramdale. We have been informed by the County that they submitted the request to the State in 1Q2021. We are hoping for a decision sometime this year.

6. Camp/Pool Planning – We have started the planning process to get ready to open the Town pool and operate the Kids Camp this summer, contingent on the covid-19 situation and NYS and Columbia County Health Department guidance. Jen Boice will continue as Pool Manager, and Samantha Mason and Cattie Gomm will be co-directors of the Kids Camp. We have gotten a request to make the pool handicapped accessible and are looking at how to do that.

7. Planning Board Resignation – Terry Boyles has resigned from the Planning Board after over 20 years of continuous service. Planning Board Chair John Ingram has recommended that first alternate Ann Rader be appointed to fill Terry's unexpired term which ends in December, 2022.

Board Member Comments

Councilwoman Hundt presented the town board with the Health Emergency Management Plan. The board thanked her for her efforts and noted that the plan was exceptionally well done. Everyone was in agreement that they hoped it never would have to be used.

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

Resolution #22 of 2021: Health Emergency Plan – Resolved, that the Public Employer Health Emergency Plan mandated for adoption by NYS and based on a draft prepared by Columbia County and further tailored to the Town of Ancram by Councilwomen Bonnie Hundt and Madeleine Israel with technical support from Mary Murfitt, is hereby approved.

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

Resolution #23 of 2021: Appoint Co-directors of the Ancram Kids Camp – Resolved, that Samantha Mason and Catie Gomm are appointed to be Co-Directors of the Ancram Kids Camp for 2021.

Councilwoman Hundt suggested that the town board create a housing survey to send around to the residents of the town. She felt that it could be tailored to the town's needs. She is looking at possible drafts. The town board was in favor of this. Ms. Hundt also noted that the habitat house has a possible buyer for one unit and stated that the town had received an email from habitat on the progress of the project.

Councilwoman Israel remarked that the newsletter had gone out and that it was a very well done issue. She also reported that she is close to having a spot for the Ancram gatepost sign on County Route 3.

Councilwoman Hundt asked if it was possible to set up a town email for all town board members. She felt this may mitigate the issue that happened in January with the emails. Town

Clerk Cleveland said that she or Mr. Bassin would contact the webmaster and have this done for all Town Board members who wish to have it.

Councilman Clark reported on the Accident Review Committee. The committee is still working on the parameters of the committee and which accidents needed to be reported. The committee will recirculate the document when it is complete.

Highway Department

Highway Superintendent James Miller gave the following report:

Feb 2021 monthly report:

- Status of employee out on workman's comp is unchanged.*
- During the month of February, the department conducted snow and/or ice operations on 16 separate days. This included days with storms, days with windblown drifts and days cleaning up following storms*
- Between storms we continued to clean, inspect and repair our equipment. And refill the sand and salt shed.*
- We used approximately 700 tons of sand and 300 tons of salt during the month.*
- Diesel fuel used: 1358 gallons*
- Gasoline used: 631 gallons*
- When conditions permitted, we patched potholes on various roads. And we patrolled roads for downed trees and/or limbs following heavy wind events.*
- I have received a new quote on a bucket truck from the company that had the 2019 left over one that got sold. This quote is for a 2021 equipped the same. The price is \$86,528.*
- I have been researching rental prices and they are around \$650/day, \$1950.00/week and \$4,900.00/month. There are many drawbacks renting. Weather allowing its use being a major one. This is because we usually do tree trimming during late fall, winter and early spring WHEN WEATHER ALLOWS. These past couple months have been a perfect example. Decent weather during January and if I rented one for Feb we wouldn't have gotten much use out of it because we were busy plowing etc.... You can't rent one at a moments notice. It must be arranged weeks in advance.*
- There are rumors that State CHIPS funding will be restored to the level of past years. I have also heard that the state may also give us back 75% of the cut from last year. If this materializes, we could receive about \$30,000 in addition to this years allotment. We won't know any of this for certain until the state passes its budget. I have a list of roads ready to go that we can utilize these funds on once the state funding picture becomes clearer.*

Councilwoman Hundt asked about the employee on disability. Mr. Miller reported that the employee can be out a year as long as he has a doctor's note.

Councilwoman Hundt asked how a person can obtain an employment application. Mr. Miller said that if he knows someone is stopping by to pick one up, he can have it ready.

Town Clerk Report

Computer Issues

After many weeks of not having access to my computer programs on my new laptop, the county IT department and Edmonds (the software company) seem to have worked out most of the kinks. I am able to get into my programs and process tax bills, print receipts, etc. I have not attempted to bring the lap top home lately as it seems to be working in the office and I am worried that if I attempt to disconnect from the network at the town hall I will get locked out again. As the saying goes, why tempt fate, especially during the busy part of my year. When taxes start to significantly slow down, I will of course try from home with the computer.

Telephone

The telephone system has had its problems looked at and at the moment seems to be functioning as it should. Two weeks or so ago, our phone tech Tim came to the town hall and accessed the issues. It became apparent to him that when we switched from a one number extension list, to a three number extension list, two of the mailboxes got flipped. Many of the phone calls coming into the building were going to an extension which no longer had a phone yet was still an active jack. Tim cleared all of this out and corrected the extension numbers. Going forward, the fix seems to have worked. We no longer have residents saying they could not leave messages for the offices.

Tim also found that there had been another extension set up on the system from an outside source. For lack of a better term, the phone system had been hacked. The "hacker" had managed access to the administrative side of the phone system, set up a bogus line and could call in and use it to make outside calls. The phone company informed us that this happens often on multi line phone systems like ours. We were lucky that he happened to be here and found the problem. Tim checked the system and we checked the bills and no international calls had been made from the town hall. We have changed all pass codes on the system and Tim assured us that this will stop the problem and block it from happening again.

Heating System

When Art and I showed up for work this Tuesday, the building was very cold. Upon inspection, it seemed as though we were out of propane. Jeff Boyles was called and came right over. He confirmed that we were correct, the propane had run out. There was a slight odor in the building which was coming from the furnace attempting to push heat through. The propane company came and filled the tank within hours and checked to make sure the heat came on as it should.

Direct Deposit

The town has begun offering direct deposit to the town employees if they elect to have it. Last month was the first month this was enacted. We have five hourly employees and one salary employee who has

opted for this service. Following the town board meeting in February, the salary employees were not happy that the direct deposit did not hit their accounts until the Monday after the meeting. Our bookkeeper suggested that if the hours were submitted prior to the monthly meeting, he could then get the money into the accounts quicker. I asked that all timesheets be submitted to me the Saturday prior to the meeting. Then, that Monday of the board meeting week, when I process the Highway payroll, I also processed the Town Hall direct deposit payroll. I have made a three ring binder with all of the time sheets in the binder by the month along with the report that went to the bookkeeper. The hours will still

be on the monthly warrant, with approval from the various heads of each department. You may have noticed with the voucher packets, the binder on the table with the direct deposit payroll. I placed it there for you to look at in case you had a question about an individual pay voucher.

Taxes

It looks like I have collected 84% of my total warrant so far this year. April 1st, second notices will be going into the mail.

I have been having a lot of problems with the postal delivery. Many more receipts have been returned to me as undelivered as ever before. Some with no reason on them. Many I pop back into the mail and they eventually get to their designated destination. It is frustrating.

Exemptions

The Ag exemptions have been completed. Rene is working on getting them into the computer. Senior and disability exemptions will be rolled over from 2020 as per an executive order from the governors office.

The board discussed the Flat Screen TV that had been proposed for the town hall some months ago. Mr. Bassin said that he would speak to Steve Olyha, the person who was looking into this, and report back to the board. At the time, the tv that was proposed was not going to be wireless so the board had thought it may not be the best option. But, Mr. Bassin noted, the board can revisit the issue.

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

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

Resolution #24 of 2021: Ancram Opera House use of Blass Field – Resolved, that the Ancram Opera House is authorized to make use of Blass Field for the presentation of free concerts subject to the availability of the area and naming the Town of Ancram as an additional insured on the Ancram Opera House insurance.

Mr. Bassin announced that Lawrance Moss, the chair of the Trails Committee, has stepped down. The committee will seek a new chair.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to solicit a proposal from Zen Point Media to place a special mapping section on the Town of Ancram Website. Motion carried.

Mr. Bassin reported that the FAC has begun the audit process for the town departments.

There being no more business, 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