

**Town of Ancram
Town Board
Regular Meeting
July 15, 2021**

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 Arthur Bassin with a salute to the flag.

Mr. Bassin asked if there were any items on the agenda 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 June 2021 meeting as read and have them placed on the record. Motion carried.

Paul Ricciardi of the Ancram Opera House addressed the board. He reported that the Opera House was in the process of purchasing the yellow “Stickle” house next door to their property to use for Artist in Residence housing and office space. The original feasibility grant that the Opera House was awarded for the Steele house had been transferred to this new property location. The Opera House asked for the town to pass a resolution of support for this project.

The following resolution was offered by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilwoman Hundt and moved for adoption. Resolution passed with a unanimous roll call vote.

Resolution #43 of 2021: Ancram Opera House Grant - Resolution by the Town of Ancram approving and endorsing Ancram Opera House Theater, Inc. in its application to NYS Homes and Community Renewal for funding under the New York Main Street Building Renovation program.

WHEREAS, the Ancram Opera House Theater, Inc. desires to apply for financial assistance in an amount up to \$375,000 through the 2021 Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) under the New York Main Street Building Renovation program; and

WHEREAS, the application proposes funding to support (1) the complete renovation to the property at 1326 County Route 7, located next door to Ancram Opera House, to provide intern / artist housing and a community meeting space; and (2) improving accessibility to Ancram Opera House main entrance and repurposing Ancram Opera House’s current office into an ADA-compliant restroom for patrons.

WHEREAS, the proposed funding will contribute to ongoing community revitalization efforts of the hamlet of Ancram, recognized as an Historic District on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, the grant application requires that the applicant obtain the approval and endorsement of the governing body of the municipality in which the project will be located.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Ancram approves and endorses the 2021 New York Main Street program proposal prepared and to be submitted by Ancram Opera House Theater, Inc.

Susan Flamm gave an update on the towns NYSERTA grant process. Ms. Flamm stated that she was at the meeting to get a final decision from the town board on how they wished to go forward in spending the \$71,000 remaining of the grant. The original scope of the grant had specified that the town have the grant funds completely used by June of 2021. That date has now passed. While an extension has not been officially granted, Ms. Flamm needs for the town to decide from two options so that she can return to NYSERTA with a plan. The first option is a cold climate ASHP hvac system. The system would heat 2/3 of the town hall building. With the incentives from the Solstice program and other small grants the town will have \$85,000 to put towards the project. The town will have to dedicate \$60,000 to the project. Mr. Bassin stated that the numbers from the RFP should be in around October or November. Ms. Flamm stressed that regardless, the town has run out of time and has to make a decision. Councilman Boice asked how long the proposed system will last. Ms. Flamm did not have an exact answer but felt from the committee's research it would be the same lifespan as any other heating system. Mr. Boice said that he has customers that have heating systems like this and that they are lasting on average about ten years. Ms. Flamm said that option number two would be the purchase of an electric vehicle. Mr. Boice has been working on this and said that the make and model Neighbors Helping Neighbors is interested in is a Dodge Promaster Van. The issue is that there are not prices available because there are no 2021 vehicles available and there are no prices listed for 2022 and you cannot get a price. The main issue is a supply chain issue. Cathy Redlich felt that NYSERTA would be understanding if the town made a choice and there is a wait time due to no supply from vendors. Mr. Bassin asked what would happen if the town chose to apply for both projects. Councilwoman Hundt noted several climate change issues including significant temperature changes and climate changes. She noted that these issues are due to the burning of fossil fuels and that as a government body, the town has the opportunity to lessen the carbon footprint of the town. Mike Citrin asked what happens if the town commits to the heating system and then the price the town has to pay comes in at \$180,000. Councilwoman Hundt said that then the town pays that amount. She felt that the town has the money to spend and just recently spent \$200,000 on a highway truck, that the town could spend the money to lesson the use of fossil fuels. Ms. Flamm said that while she can put in for both projects, they need to be prioritized. Ms. Mary Murfitt felt that this committee has worked on this project for two years and then the town board has the choice to decide against it. She felt that the heating system has to happen. Mr. Will Weiss addressed the board. He said that he has worked with state agencies for 40 years and that the state will understand that there is an issue getting supplies. He felt that NYSERTA will appreciate the dialogue and openness of the town.

Supervisor Arthur Bassin made a motion that the town submit both proposals to NYSERTA for approval. There was no second to the proposal and the motion did not move forward.

Amy Gold asked if the town could use COVID relief funds for the Van. Mr. Bassin responded that the town does not know at this time if the funds can be used for a vehicle. He believes that the town can donate the money for the van to NHN and then they can purchase the vehicle.

Councilwoman Israel asked if the town can afford the heating system without the grant. Councilman Boice said that while he supports the heating system project, he felt that it was wrong to say that the town would be fossil fuel free. The town, Mr. Boice noted, will still need a backup system that will run on electric and a generator (larger than what the town has now) which is run on propane.

The following resolution was offered by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilwoman Israel. The resolution carried by a unanimous roll call vote.

Resolution #44 of 2021:

Supervisor Bassin suggested that the committee put through both of the options with the heating system taking priority. Ms. Flamm will ask for feedback on the process to do this.

Town Pool

Jenn Boice reported that there is a voucher in the packet for the down payment for the handicapped lift for the pool. She is also in the process of getting estimates to make the bathrooms handicapped accessible and possibly put a small ramp up to the bathrooms.

BOCO

Carol Falcetti gave a report on the Boston Corners committee. She reported that they are waiting to hear from Consolidated. They have planned a wine party to celebrate the end of the pandemic. The committee has formed working groups. The committee reports that the parking issue has cleared up for the rail trail. Councilman Boice reported that he felt the parking for the trail head is still a growing issue.

Banners

The banner project is ongoing. Councilman Boice suggested that the town have the names of the people in the historic photos placed on the banners so those passing by know who they are.

Marijuana Law

Mr. Bassin asked the board if they wanted to act on this or wait. Justice Cathy Redlich was concerned with what this would do to the towns traffic issues and with people driving under the influence. Councilman Clark suggested that the town continue to wait on this decision as there have been no state regulations released yet. He felt the board would be wise to wait and see what may develop on this subject.

Rescue Plan Funds

Mr. Bassin noted that the amount of funding that the town is supposed to receive in rescue plan funding has decreased. Mr. Bassin suggested that the town seek all guidance available in this matter and to proceed slowly.

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

Resolution #45 of 2021: Broadband Consultant – Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board approves the decision of the Town Supervisor to retain a grant consultant to assist with a grant application for funds to expand broadband to all areas of the Town of Ancram that are not currently served by broadband.

Councilwoman Hundt asked if the town could use this consultant to help with applying for additional grants. Mr. Bassin felt this would be a good idea.

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

Resolution #46 of 2021: Cyber Insurance - Resolved, that the Town Supervisor is authorized to accept a proposal from Ascent through the Kneller Agency cyber insurance at an annual cost of \$2,599.44.

Supervisors Report

1. Financial Report – Normal financial month.

2. American Rescue Plan – We submitted our application to NYS on 6/22 and have been notified that we should expect to receive \$152,301, not \$160,000, in two installments – half around the end of July and half a year later. Projects that seem to be most likely to meet ARPA criteria are broadband expansion, support for not for profits like ANHNA and support for emergency first responders - the Ancram Fire Company and the Copake Rescue Squad. We are being advised to move slowly and carefully in disbursing the funds. The County will receive \$11.4 million over two years – it has already received \$5.7 million, will receive another \$5.7 million this time next year, and is working on a plan on how to use the funds.

3. CSCTF – CSCTF is recommending that the Town Board approve using the \$71,000 remaining NYSEDA grant money to support an investment of \$180,000 to install an air source heat pump system at town hall, or use the grant money for electric vehicles. CSCTF Chair Suzan Flam has requested that our NYSEDA grant be extended for 18 months to the end of 2022, to give us more time to use the funds. Solstice is doing well, with 69 sign ups.

4. Marijuana Law Survey Results – 300 responses to the survey. 61% in favor of allowing retail sales and smoking lounges, 39% in favor of opting out.

5. Enhanced Enforcement Patrol (EEP) in Ancram – EEPs have started, but scheduling is erratic as the Sheriff's Department is short staffed and is not able to attract volunteers to reliably cover our shifts.

6. Radar Speed Signs – We have resubmitted our application to NYS DOT for a permit to place radar speed signs on fixed poles on 82 coming into Ancram and coming into Ancramdale. When this permit is approved, we will purchase two new radar speed signs that meet NYS DOT guidelines. Our two trailer mounted radar signs have been positioned in the center of Ancram and Ancramdale slow traffic coming through the centers of the two hamlets.

7. 35 mph speed zone – No new news. We have requested that NYS DOT move the beginning of the 35 mph speed zone on 82 north of Ancram to the top of the hill approaching the 82/7 intersection, at about 2262 Route 82. We expect a response from NYS DOT soon.

8. Ancram Opera House – The Ancram Opera House is requesting that the Town Board pass a resolution supporting a grant application to get funds to renovate a house adjacent to the Opera House for staff housing.

9. Cyber Insurance – We have received a proposal for cyber insurance to protect the Town from ransomware attacks. Even though the risk may be small, this is probably a good thing to invest in, just in case. The policy costs \$2600.

10. Broadband – We have retained a grant consultant at a cost of \$4000 to assist us with a grant application for between \$300,000-\$500,000 to expand broadband to all areas of the Town that are not currently served by broadband.

11. Highway Staff – We still have one highway employee out on long term disability, and just received a resignation from a second employee, so staffing is now at 50%. Jim will be advertising for new staff, and we will discuss the need to increase our pay and benefits for the highway crew to retain and attract needed staff.

Town Board Member Issues

Councilwoman Hundt reported that the Housing Survey is nearing completion. They have asked Moore and More printing to print them. Options were discussed about how they will be submitted and if they will be mailed back to the town hall. That is an option and the committee will look into it.

Councilman Boice spoke about the Habitat House in Ancramdale. Mr. Boice said that one of the sticking points for a sale is the taxes. It is proposed that the mortgage will be between \$710-\$720 a month but in addition to that there will be an escrow for the taxes that is an additional \$450-\$500 a month. One option that was suggested was helping subsidize the taxes for the home or to help through the assessment of the properties. Councilwoman Israel noted that subsidizing, while a nice gesture, leaves out those residents who have a lower income and have to pay their full tax bill.

Councilwoman Israel reported that the Community Directory's proofs are back and while she thinks the directory looks nice, she would like to see different more Ancram personal photos included. She will circulate it when complete.

Councilman Boice noted that he is still waiting for quotes to come in for the electronic upgrades to the meeting and conference rooms.

Councilwoman Hundt made comments about her frustration with the email communication system. She felt that in group emails, with so many people being cc'd, and then those persons "responding all", many, many emails come through and they become hard to follow and jam up inboxes. Mr. Bassin said while he is trying for absolute transparency, he understands Ms. Hundt's concerns and will look for a way to streamline it.

Councilman Clark reported that he, John Ingram, and Art Bassin engaged in a Zoom meeting on June 8 with Dave Sherman, NYS DEC Flood Insurance Coordinator. Mr. Sherman is the town's NYS point of contact regarding the National Flood Insurance Program and periodically engages in an evaluation and liaison session with each community. The Town Planning Board is the Local Administrator implementing Local Law #1 of 1990, Flood Damage Prevention. Areas of special flood hazard were identified by FEMA on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM), which were incorporated into the local law. All agreed that the FIRM maps need updating. Mr. Sherman reported that FEMA is moving to bring NYS into the digital map era, but Columbia County is not yet digital and he cannot accurately project when updated maps will be available. Mr. Sherman noted that Ancram appears to be satisfactory, but he suggests all jurisdictions "keep an eye on bridgework."

Councilwoman Hundt asked if an assistant clerk had been hired for the Planning Department. Mr. Bassin said that Marie McDermott will fill the role and put in four to eight hours a week.

Highway Report

July Monthly Meeting Report

*Status of employee out on workman's comp is unchanged

*Diesel fuel used: 635 gallons

*Gasoline used: 393 gallons

*CHIPS

*We completed our Chip Sealing project 6/28 on the portion of East Ancram between intersection with Overmountain Rd to the Intersection with Fox Hill Rd and Overmountain Rd itself between East Ancram and Rt 3

*Repaved Dam RD in its entirety using our paver with shared services from Gallatin and Copake Trucks and manpower

*Roadside mowing has been on going

Did ditchwork in various roads fixing damage caused by Tstorms

*It is with great regret I must announce the resignation of Avery Heath who has served the town for nearly 15 years. He has accepted a position with a local contracting and road construction firm. I along with the rest of the department will miss him greatly. We wish him well.

I have posted an add in the paper listing our employment opportunities.

*I will be having knee surgery on 7/19. I expect to be out of the office for approximately 2 weeks. I will be available by email, phone or text. Jim MacArthur has agreed help out during my absence.

Councilman Boice noted that he had received a text from Avery saying that he was disappointed that no member of the town board had reached out to him.

The town board members discussed options to try and fill positions and to keep current employees with the town and not have them leave for the private sector. An increase in wages was discussed. Most private sector businesses that require a CDL license have a starting wage around \$27 an hour. Mr. Bassin also suggested that the town pay full family medical for the employees.

A motion was made by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilwoman Hundt to make the following pay rate changes: \$27.00 an hour and full family medical coverage for the deputy Highway Superintendent, \$26.00/hr for current highway employees and full family medical coverage, \$24.00 an hour and full family medical coverage for any new incoming highway employees. Motion carried unanimously.

Town Clerk

The town clerk noted that in the 2022 budget, the town assessor has asked that the board keep in mind that property sheets for each property in Ancram will need to be pulled, looked at and upgraded. This will mean more hours for the assessor and the assessor clerk. This work will be done in preparation for the 2023 revaluation.

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

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

Respectfully submitted by,

Monica Cleveland

Ancram Town Clerk