

**Town of Ancram
Town Board
Regular Meeting
February 17, 2022**

Present: Supervisor Arthur Bassin Councilman Hugh Clark
 Councilwoman Bonnie Hundt Councilwoman Amy Gold
 Town Clerk Monica Cleveland
 Highway Superintendent James Miller

Supervisor Arthur Bassin called the regular meeting of the Ancram Town Board to order at 7:00pm with a salute to the flag.

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

Mr. Bassin noted that Councilman Boice is absent tonight due to a family obligation. His son Matthew is graduating with his masters degree and tonight is a recital concert where he will be playing his Bassoon.

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

Mr. Bassin reflected on the previous town board meeting and how the town board is thinking through how to effectively deal with the issues that were brought to the town's attention regarding harassment and treatment of women. Mr. Bassin said that the town has retained an independent Albany attorney who is doing an investigation into the issues raised made at the January 20, 2022 Town Board meeting and should have a report before the April meeting. Decisions about next steps will be made after the final report.

Councilwoman Gold gave the following statement:

First, let me acknowledge that we, as a Town Board, are taking this matter very seriously.

Following the January TB meeting where Art tasked Bonnie and me to look into policies and practices that Ancram could add to its Handbook that would address respectful behavior in the workplace, including committees, meetings, etc.

As it exists, the Handbook does not adequately address civil discourse. a procedure for complaints and a disciplinary procedure should the need arise.

We have begun our research and with the help of an ad-hoc group of concerned community members (none of whom are involved in any of the complaints before the Board), we researched a variety of "best practices" for towns and businesses, and discussed what would make our town a better place to live.

We are also coming up with a plan to move forward with recommendations for the Handbook, which may, or many not involve the formation of a committee on respectful behavior.

But first we are required to investigate the comments and complaints that were made. We have hired an independent law firm to do this and we hope to have their report by the April meeting.

In the meantime, we are looking into potential areas of policy improvement, including ethics, harassment, civility and respectful conduct.

We know how fortunate we are to live in a community where so many people care and work for its betterment, and we want everyone to feel safe and included. Please be assured that we, as the Town Board, will take responsibility to safeguard Ancram's future.

Councilwoman Hundt said that she agrees with Ms. Gold's remarks. She felt that the town should definitely form a small group to serve as a CRB (Committee for Respectful Behavior). She suggested that the town look at policies and human resource groups for codes of conduct the town can adopt. She also felt that this may go hand and hand with the Ethics Law. Councilman Clark felt that both Councilwoman Gold and Councilwoman Hundt are correct in their comments and emphasized that getting facts via the independent, objective investigation was a critical first step. Mr. Bassin felt that the board is taking steps in the right direction. He proposed that the board table the resolution on the agenda. Mr. Bassin said that he had spoken to Councilman Boice, who is absent, and that Mr. Boice suggested that the attorney be used in regards to these matters with an active role or that the committee be sourced with independent people outside of the town.

Hayden Geer from Ancramdale addressed the board. She thanked the board for taking the comments from the last meeting in regard to harassment seriously. She asked that the town also include in their addressing of this the discussion of racism. She noted some flags around town that are flying that either have a racial connotation or bad language. The board thanked her for her comments.

Colleen Lutz spoke to the board about the following memo:

CSC/TF and CAC Recommendations for Ancram's CSC/CEC Certification and Climate Preparedness

The following recommendations have been made to increase the resiliency and protection of the natural environment of Ancram in the face of climate change. After extensive work with Kelsey West from Cornell Cooperative Extension, we are making the following recommendations to the Town Board and the residents of the Town of Ancram.

Town Board Recommendations:

1. Floodplain Management Plan (PE7) -

This project would help identify, characterize, and prioritize the floodplains within the Town of Ancram. The town can identify vulnerabilities and projects that would help maintain the health and quality of these essential resources. Ordinances may be developed within the plan to augment the existing Floodplain Damage Prevention Ordinance (1985,1990). Eventually, the town could pursue restoration of floodplains and riparian buffers (CSC PE7), using the floodplain management plan as a guidance document to prioritize areas in need of mitigation. Additional Resources: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/24267.html> , <https://wri.cals.cornell.edu/hudson-river-estuary/watershed-management/watershed-planning/> FEMA Floodplain Management: <https://www.fema.gov/floodplain-management>

Example Management Plan(s): <https://www.townofunion.com/departments/flood-information/floodplain-management-plan/580-floodplain-management-plan-2011-revisions/file.html>
https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/Flood_Smart_Action_Plan_Cohocton_River_Online-compressed.pdf

Average Cost: TBD. These plans are generally developed by a certified planner or engineering firm. Requesting an estimate from Nan Stoltzenburg at Community Planning Associates might be a way to estimate costs prior to application for grant funds.

Funding Sources: USACOE may have the ability to provide assistance free of charge:
<https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Public-Services/Flood-Plain-Management-Services/>

FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grants through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

2a. Complete a Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CSC PE7-Priority Action) –

Using the Department of State’s Asset Inventory Worksheet and Risk Assessment Tool, the Town should identify its assets and determine how they could be impacted by current and future storm or weather hazards. A climate vulnerability assessment is a collaborative process which directly engages Ancram Town Highway Department, The Ancram Fire District/Company, and the Town Board. Additional information may be requested from the local school districts

(Taconic Hills, Pine Plains, or Webutuck), power companies (Central Hudson), NYS DOT, and Columbia County Highway Department. Other interested community groups and businesses such as Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Ancramdale Presbyterian Church, St. John’s Lutheran Church, and The Ancram Paper Mill should be consulted as well. Additional Resources: <https://www.nyclimatescience.org/highlights/problems>
https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00KZ84.pdf

Example Climate Vulnerability Assessment:
http://www.townofcaroline.org/uploads/6/2/7/8/62781479/caroline_cva.pdf

Average Cost: TBD

Funding Sources: The Town of Caroline received assistance from CCE of Tompkins County and Cornell CALS/WRI

2b. Complete a Community GHG Inventory (PE2-Priority Action) – A Community Greenhouse Gas Inventory is an accounting, analysis and report of the emissions within the Town of Ancram. It helps to identify where the community produces the most emissions so better policies and incentives can be developed to reduce the impacts on climate change. The GHG inventory is an essential part of creating a Community Climate Action Plan (PE2-Priority Action).

Additional Resources: https://climatesmart.ny.gov/fileadmin/csc/documents/GHG_Inventory/ghgguide.pdf

Example Community Greenhouse Gas Inventory (Town of New Lebanon):

Summary: https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.235/482.ab5.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/New-Lebanon-Greenhouse-Gas-Inventory_Summary-Report-.pdf

Draft Inventory: https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.235/482.ab5.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/New-Lebanon.Community-GHG-Inventory.DRAFT_.pdf

Average Cost: TBD

Funding Sources: Assistance from CDRPC adaptation and mitigation for Climate Action Plan

3. Public Outreach and Engagement (PE9) - This may be one of the most important tasks we can complete as a municipal agency. Sharing good, helpful information is one of the best ways to help reduce the carbon footprint of our community and be disaster ready in the event of an emergency. The town has a very nice website, which lends itself to having a page dedicated to local climate action (currently the CSCTF webpage). Additionally, the CAC has created guidance documents which provide resources for landowners/homeowners looking to reduce adverse

impacts to the environment. The new Flood Preparedness Guide for Residents and Businesses (CCE) could be added to the CSCTF webpage.

Average Cost: Elizabeth LoGiudice (Columbia Greene CCE) has offered to create a website mock-up free of charge. See Kelsey West for details.

Funding Sources: TBD

Councilwoman Hundt asked if there were any available grants that the town could apply for. Ms. Lutz noted that there may be. Councilman Clark asked if in regards to the Flood Plan Ordinance, is the Planning Board aware of this proposal? Ms. Lutz said that some members are because of their involvement on the CAC but the Planning Board has not been told formally.

HVAC Mr. Bassin reported that the HVAC contracts have all been signed but that at this point the lead time on the project is 30 weeks,

Kids Camp- There is nothing to report on the Camp. The town is still in need of a director.

Supervisors Report:

1) Financial Report – We received our December 2021 and January 2022 financial reports this week. 4Q sales tax at \$109,857 was stronger than expected, but other than that, December was a normal month. January also came in as expected.

2) Recognizing and Solving the Problem – There have been incidents over the past 15 years that have contributed to the perception that there is a culture of disrespect toward women by some individuals in Ancram town government. Some have been reported and investigated, and some have not been reported or investigated. As a Town and Town Board we must work to create an environment where we can disagree with each other without being disrespectful, and that we deal promptly and appropriately with specific complaints of disrespectful behavior. There is no excuse for disrespectful behavior, and if we want to eliminate disrespectful behavior, there is no excuse for not reporting it and dealing with it when it occurs. Jack Lindsey has done the Town an important service by bringing this issue to the Town’s attention, so we can all think about and work toward solving this set of problems.

3) Investigation of Disrespectful Behavior – The Town has retained Hinman and Straub attorney Elena De Fio Kean to investigate the issues raised by Jack Lindsey and others at the 1/20 Town Board meeting and two related complaints that the Town has received following Mr. Lindsey’s comments. Ms. Kean will interview individuals who have expressed concerns about experiencing or observing disrespectful behavior Per town policy, the investigation will remain confidential until completed at which time the Town Board will be briefed on the results in executive session, and the public will be provided with a summary of findings.

4) Committee for Civil Behavior and Respect (CCBR) – One of the ideas that Mr. Lindsey suggested to help resolve these issues and create more acceptance of diverse opinions was to create an “Equality Council”. To implement this idea, we will consider a resolution at the 2/17 Town Board meeting to establish a Committee for Civil Behavior and Respect to develop and recommend to the Town Board a Code of Conduct for all elected and appointed Town

officials, volunteers, employees and residents to guide respectful behavior, to recommend the processes and procedures to deal with complaints from individuals who perceive they have been treated with disrespect, and to recommend additional training for all officials, volunteers, employees and residents to introduce the new Code of Contact and make us all more aware of how our verbal and nonverbal communications are perceived and may be interpreted as disrespectful.

5) Membership on the Committee for Civil Behavior and Respect – We should plan to spend some time at our 2/17 Town Board meeting talking about the qualities and characteristics that members of the CCRB should demonstrate and how to identify candidates for the CCRB. I would suggest we aim at appointing the CCRB at our March meeting.

Mr. Bassin also reminded the board that they would need to be thinking about the Extra Patrol Sheriff and if the town would once again like to have extra patrols. The board discussed the radar signs and Mr. Miller noted that there will be permanent signs being installed on State Route 82 coming into Ancram and Ancramdale.

Board Member Comments

Councilman Clark said that he has coordinated with Nan Stolzenburg to produce updated hard copies of the Zoning Law that include all amendments through January 2022, and has contacted J. Hoffman to tabulate how many copies are needed for various boards.

Councilwoman Gold reported that she is taking classes on forestry and invasive species. She has also been in contact with the Sharon Housing authority in regards to affordable housing and will continue to work on this matter.

Councilwoman Hundt reported that the committee for affordable housing is going through a reconfiguration. She felt the need to get more people working on this committee.

Councilwoman Hundt asked when the large TV monitor would be installed. Mr. Olyha said that they have had a hard time finding one right now, but are hopeful that possibly this coming month to be successful.

Highway Report

Diesel fuel used: 1277 gallons

Gasoline used: 646 gallons

*We conducted snow and/or ice removal operations on a total of 13 separate days in the month of January and 8 days so far in February.

*This recent ice storm was a doozy.... We used approximately 400 ton of salt and sand on the one storm alone. That's about half of our current storage capacity. Deliveries of salt were slow to arrive during the recent cold and stormy period. This somewhat handicapped efforts to clear roads following the ice and sleet storm of 2/4.

*We have been hauling in sand to maintain our stockpile.

*We continue to check over, maintain and clean the plows, trucks and equipment and make repairs where needed.

*When weather has allowed we have been patching potholes that are appearing all over. Some roads are taking a beating.

*County sponsored rabies clinic scheduled for March 5 from 9-11.

*I solicited bids for the purchase of a pickup truck. We received 1 bid from Ruges Automotive for a Ram 3500 that were opened yesterday at 12 pm at the Town Hall. The bid was for \$51,722.50. Currently there is no fleet pricing available from any truck manufacturers and prices are increasing rapidly.

Mr. Miller said that the new pickup, if approved has a four month lead time. The plow and sander will have to be purchased and installed later on but that will be a \$5-\$7,000 price range and will be paid for from the Highway budget. The truck has a 3 year bumper to bumper and 100,000 powertrain warrantee. Mr. Bassin noted that the Highway budget ran \$55,000 under budget last year.

A motion was made by Councilman Clark and seconded by Councilwoman Hundt to approve the purchase of a 2022 Dodge Ram 3500 not to exceed \$52,000. Motion carried by a unanimous roll call vote.

Mr. Miller also noted that the Town Board may want to think about putting in the future, into the capital plan, a freestanding salt shed. The current facility, while practical at the time it was retrofitted, has become increasingly small for the volume of product it needs to hold. With the increase of ice storms, the need for the salt and sand mix has become imperative. Mr. Miller said this is not something that needs to happen right away. But he did suggest that the board discuss and think about adding it to the capital plan years down the road.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector

The Town Clerk reported that she has received 81% of her tax roll to date.

The Assessment exemption renewals are coming in. The office is beginning to get ready for data collection for the 2023 reval.

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

Resolution #8 of 2022: Code Enforcement Officer Conference: Resolved, That Code Enforcement Officer Ed Ferratto is authorized to attend the 2022 Code Enforcement Officer Conference in Lake Placid, NY from 2/28/22 to 3/3/22 and be reimbursed for expenses not to exceed \$1200.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilman Clark to approve the following budget adjustments. Motion carried:

From Fund Balance to 8810.41 Cemeteries: \$4,000

From Fund Balance to 5130.2 Equipment: \$5,000

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

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

Respectfully submitted by,

Monica Cleveland
Ancram Town Clerk