

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

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

The regular meeting was called to order by Supervisor Bassin at 7:00pm with a salute to the flag.

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

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

Revaluation Report

At this time the board heard from Suzette Booy of the Columbia County Real Property Office and the Town of Ancram assessor Rene Deleeuw in regards to the 2023 Town Of Ancram full revaluation. Ms. Booy noted that the last time the town had invested in a full revaluation for assessment purposes was in 2008 when the towns equalization rate had dropped to 56%. The town had taken part in a maintenance reval due to changes in the market in 2016 which had caused the equalization rate to go above the 100% mark. Currently the equalization rate for 2022 is 74%. The updates this time will include new photographs for the assessor's computer program, a full update of each property and the data collectors will be looking at each parcel. Suzette stressed that the data collectors are not making the assessments but are only collecting information. Mr. Deleeuw also noted that residents are asked to return data sheets that they will be receiving in coming months. This will ensure correct information is being input into the computer. Councilwoman Hundt asked if the data collectors will be coming inside homes. Mr. Deleeuw stressed that they are not. Councilwoman Gold asked if homes are assessed on their view. Suzette said that while there is not an assessment on view, the property, if it is where there is a beautiful vista, a market value of a property will take that into account.

Town Court Report

Court Clerk Ruth Wittlinger gave a report on the 2021 Court transactions. Mrs. Wittlinger reported that there was a 45% increase of traffic tickets due in part to the EEP program. There was no in person court in 2021 due to the pandemic regulations. Mrs. Wittlinger says that she keeps track of all of her photo copies and gets reimbursed by the State. This year she has collected \$1200.

The town board discussed the EEP program and renewing the contract. Mr. Bassin noted that even if the town board decides to renew the contract, the town is in no obligation to schedule patrols. At this point in the process there is no money involved.

The following resolution was offered by Councilman Clark and seconded by Councilwoman Gold and moved for adoption. Carried unanimously by a roll call vote.

Resolution #10 of 2022: Enhanced Enforcement Patrols – Resolved, that the Ancram Town Supervisor is authorized to enter into an agreement with the Columbia County Sheriff’s Department to provide Enhanced Enforcement Patrols in the town of Ancram during 2022 during days and times to be determined for a cost not to exceed \$12,000.

Mr. Bassin noted that the town will have two Judge seats on the 2022 ballot, both for a four year term.

Disrespectful Behavior Investigation

Mr. Bassin reported that the town attorney is finishing up interviews. There should be a written report by the April meeting. There will be a copy of the report that will be able to be distributed to the public. Councilwoman Gold reported that the working group is drafting a policy that after reviewed and the report comes from the town attorney, may be placed as part of the town handbook.

Climate Smart Planning

Mr. Bassin reported that there is an issue with several of the inverters for the town hall solar panels. To replace them will cost \$7800. Mr. Boice asked about the solar panels and if they too needed to be replaced and their life expectancy. Mr. Bassin indicated the solar panels had another 9 or 10 years of useful life. The town board decided to table this discussion for now.

Councilwoman Gold gave a report on the NY-NJ Watershed Protection Act. This Protection Act will allow for annual funding of up to \$50 million in federal grants to restore and protect critical watersheds. Projects that are possible include water testing, floodplain management among others.

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

Resolution #11 of 2022: NY-NJ Watershed Protection Act : H.R. 4677 - WHEREAS, protecting our region’s exceptional natural resources, economy, and quality of life requires active investment in conservation and restoration actions at the local level; and WHEREAS the Town of Ancram hereby gives support to the proposed NY-NJ Watershed Protection Act, which would provide federal grants through local partnerships to fund projects that protect fish and wildlife habitats, improve water quality, mitigate flood risks and support related ongoing plans and restoration projects in local communities; therefore it is **Resolved**, that the Town of Ancram supports the passing of the NY-NJ Watershed Protection Act and will communicate this support to Representative Antonio Delgado.

Climate Smart Tools

Colleen Lutz of the CSCTF gave an update on filing with the state to receive the Bronze listing. The following resolution will be used to file the amendment to that matter.

The resolution was offered for adoption by Councilman Clark and seconded by Councilman Boice. Resolution carried by a unanimous roll call vote.

Resolution 12 of 2022: Amendment of Resolution #23 of 2016: CREATION OF THE CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES TASK FORCE AND CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES COORDINATOR/CHAIR

WHEREAS, the Town of Ancram took the Climate Smart Communities Pledge in February of 2016 by Resolution #11 of 2016; and

WHEREAS, climate change will have devastating impacts and the Town of Ancram must reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

WHEREAS, we must prepare for climate change variability by identifying and deploying adaptation strategies.

WHEREAS, the Town of Ancram established a Climate Smart Communities Coordinator/Chair and Climate Smart Communities Task Force in February of 2016 by Resolution #23 of 2016, which remains in force; and

WHEREAS, Resolution #23 of 2016 is amended to include the duties and responsibilities of the Climate Smart Communities Coordinator/Chair and Climate Smart Communities Task Force; and

WHEREAS, the Climate Smart Communities Coordinator/Chair position shall serve as the single point person to serve as liaison among the governing body and chief executive, Chair all climate smart task force meetings and shall have a commitment to local climate action, good communication and organizational skills, demonstrated ability to motivate volunteers and the ability to manage relationships among elected officials, municipal staff and volunteers; and

WHEREAS, the Climate Smart Communities Task Force members will assist the Climate Smart Communities Coordinator/Chair in completing climate mitigation and adaptation actions, providing community education, and compiling documentation for the certification.

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Town Board of the Town of Ancram hereby amends Resolution #23 of 2016 to include the duties and responsibilities of the Climate Smart Task Force Coordinator/Chair and Climate Smart Task Force members.

Historic Banners

Lynne Perrella gave an update of the Historic Banner project. Lynne reported that she is working with B Docktor to create a 4 minute video what will identify the people, places and events depicted in the banners. The video will also have added images that town historian has provided as well as some current photos. Lynne requested that the town allot a budget to \$2500 for B Docktor's work on the video.

Councilwoman Gold asked for a time frame for the project. Ms. Perella said it will be soon. Councilman Clark questioned the original cost of the project. Mr. Bassin gave the numbers and reminded the board that there is still \$2600 in the heritage resources fund budget line that will be used for the banner project.

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

Resolution #13 of 2022: Historic Banners Video – Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board approves the creation of a video that will describe the 18 Historic Banners that will be hung around the Town of Ancram at a cost not to exceed \$2500.

Kids Camp

Ruth Van Wagner introduced herself to the board. Ms. Van Wagner addressed the board as the new Camp Director for Ancram. She noted that the theme for camp this year will be Farming, Agriculture and Farm to Table. Betsy Manzi will serve as Ruth's co-director. The camp will have 7 counselors and will enroll 60 kids. Ruth proposed that the town think about building a possible 30x60' pole barn at a cost of \$25,000. This would mitigate the need for the camp to have an emergency evacuation point. At this time the firehouse cannot be used and Ms. Van Wagner was worried about the stability of the church hall building as it is old. Mr. Bassin asked when the town will have to decide this. Ms. Van Wagner felt the decision would need to be made by April. Mr. Bassin did not know if that was possible because something of this proportion would need to go to bid, would have to be built to specifications, go before the planning board, etc. Councilwoman Hundt felt that this is a completely new idea and that the town will have to figure out funding. Councilwoman Gold asked if the building required a foundation. Ms. Van Wagner said it did not. Ms. Hundt asked if the building, which is metal, would be hot in the heat of the summer. Ms. Van Wagner said it would have windows for ventilation.

The following resolution was offered by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilman Clark and moved for adoption. Resolution carried by unanimous roll call vote.

Resolution # 14 of 2022: Camp Director & Deputy Camp Director – Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board appoints Ruth Van Wagner to be Camp Director of the 2022 Ancram Kids Camp at a salary of \$23/hr, and appoints Betsy Manzi to be Deputy Camp Director of the Ancram Kids camp at a salary of \$22/hr.

The Town Pool is currently seeking lifeguards and conducting interviews. They are also working on the handicapped accessibility

Supervisors Report

1) Financial Report – February financial results were as expected, but given the combination of high inflation, supply chain uncertainties, oil price spikes, potential oil shortages and the situation in Ukraine, the economic environment has become unpredictable and could negatively impact our costs and revenues. We should plan to be cautious and conservative in our financial planning for the next three to six months until we see how things evolve, and what happens with sales tax and mortgage tax revenues.

2) 2023 Property Revaluation – We have started the data collection phase of the 2023 revaluation. Suzette Booy, Director of Real Property at the county will be joining Ancram Assessor Rene Deleeuw at our 3/17 meeting via Zoom to brief us on the project.

3) Court Report – Court Clerk Ruth Wittlinger will be presenting the 2021 Court report. We had hoped to also have the 2021 Court Audit done by 3/17, but the snow storm on 3/12 caused the audit to be postponed for a week. We will get the results of the court audit at our April meeting.

4) Town Audits - FAC will begin the annual audit process on 3/19 and over the next 60 days or so will audit the Town Court, the Town Supervisor, the Town Clerk/Tax Collector and the Building & Planning Departments. The FAC audit process is conducted in accordance with the OSC audit guidelines.

5) Kids Camp Director & Deputy – We will consider Ruth Van Wagner for appointment as Camp Director, and Betsy Manzi as Deputy Camp Director. Ruth plans to address the Board with some of her ideas for the 2022 Kids Camp.

6) Town Pool – Jen Boice is actively recruiting lifeguards, and is arranging for installation of the handicapped access chair, handicapped access to the bathrooms and pool repairs. The plan is to open the pool around July 1.

7) Historic Banners Video – Lynne Perrella and B Dockett have been working on a video to help explain the Historic Banners. Lynne plans to present the video idea for approval.

8) EEP Contract – We will consider approval of the 2022 EEP contract with the Sheriff's Department. We have \$12,000 in the budget for EEP, which will cover two shifts a week for 12 weeks or one shift a week for 24 weeks.

9) Solar Invertors – We have received a proposal to replace the 11 year old solar invertors at Town Hall for a cost of about \$8000. The invertors are out of warranty, and the form that made them may be out of business, which means they are not repairable. And the invertors are making a buzzing noise that is not normal

10) Investigation of Disrespectful Behavior – Attorney Elena De Fio Kean is finishing up her interviews and expects to have a written report for us before our April meeting.

Town Board Members

Councilman Boice said that he will be attending the April meeting via zoom as he will be out of town inspecting the new Town Firetruck.

Councilwoman Hundt said that the EDC committee is looking to propose a town wide meeting in April regarding the housing situation in Ancram.

Highway Superintendent

Diesel Fuel used: 1277 gallons

Gasoline used: 646 gallons

We conducted snow and/or ice removal operations on a total of 11 separate days in the month of February and 4 days so far in March.

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

The snow removal and fuel accounts are probably going to be in danger of overruns this year. Last delivery of fuel was approximately 4x of 2 years ago.

There have been a couple heavy wind events bringing down trees and limbs.

The new radar signs have been installed on Route 82 southbound into Ancram and Ancramdale.

I received a more accurate estimate on the cost to upgrade our sand and salt storage facility. Hybrid Building solutions will erect a 50'x80' with 9' concrete sidewalls for \$280,000. This price is through the Sourcewell Coop.

When weather has allowed, we have been patching potholes that are appearing all over. Some roads are taking a beating, especially Poole Hill which is going to require some emergency paving this summer.

Rapidly escalating oil prices are heavily impacting asphalt prices. Quotes are 25-30% above last year. This could go much higher as these quotes were given in February before this recent increase in oil prices. This is going to impact the amount of roadwork will be able to perform this year. Bucket truck: I exchanged emails with the company and am told that Ford hasn't scheduled a build date on the chassis. I suspect that we won't be able to get the truck at all given the whole new vehicle situation and escalating prices. Manufacturers simply are not offering municipal discounts when there is such a demand. Nobody seems to have an answer as to when this may change. This years school will be held June 6-8 in Ithaca.

Councilman Boice thanked the Highway department for help with a tree that came down in the cemetery.

Councilman Clark noted that the articles which had been sent to the board by Jamie Purinton regarding the use of salt for road purposes was very helpful. Mr. Clark noted that the articles both touched on the need for building better storage sites and proper salt storage. Mr. Miller noted that the State and County used pure salt on the road. If the town was to change to a brine, all of the trucks would have to be equipped for that. The town board will continue to look at this issue.

Councilwoman Hundt reported that the Radar sign on 82 heading into Ancramdale was not working when she passed it this morning. Mr. Miller said that he would check it out. Mr. Miller said that the department will be putting out the radar signs that the town has on trollies. Councilman Boice noted that the sign that was in the intersection last year was good because it alerted drivers of other vehicles coming down 82 into the intersection. Mr. Miller said the department can put a movable sign in the same spot.

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

Resolution # 15 of 2022 Highway School - Resolved, that the Ancram Highway Superintendent is authorized to attend the annual Highway School in Ithaca, NY at a cost not to exceed \$1200.

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

Resolution #16 of 2022: Town Clerk Conference – Resolved, that the Ancram Town Clerk is authorized to attend the annual Town Clerk Conference in Albany, NY at a cost not to exceed \$1200.

Town Clerk

The town clerk noted that a man was in the town hall today proclaiming he was a First Amendment Auditor. The man was dressed all in black and wore a hood and a non medical mask that covered almost his entire face. The man wandered the town hall videoing all the open offices, all of the doors and exits. Mrs. Cleveland noted that even her desk was video tapped. Mrs. Cleveland said that the entire episode unnerved her and that she is in the building alone a lot and feels unsafe after this incident. Mrs. Cleveland said that in the past it had been approved for her to have a dutch door so that when she is in the building alone, she can regulate who can come into her office. The Board felt a good plan was to go ahead and have the door installed.

The following budget adjustment was offered by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilwoman Hundt. Budget adjustment passed.

From: Heritage Fund \$2,860 and Fund Balance \$4,330. To: Climate Smart 8797 \$4,480 and Banners 7510.4 \$2,710.

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

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

Resolution # 17 of 2022: Building Department Clerk – Resolved, that the Building department is authorized to hire a Clerk at a salary of \$21 per hour.

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

Respectfully submitted by,

Monica R. Cleveland
Ancram Town Clerk