

**Town of Ancram
Town Board
Regular Meeting
May 19, 2022**

Present: Supervisor Arthur Bassin Councilman Hugh Clark
 Councilman David Boice Councilwoman Bonnie Hundt
 Town Clerk Monica Cleveland
 Highway Superintendent James Miller (Via Zoom)

Absent: Councilwoman Amy Gold

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Supervisor Arthur Bassin with a salute to the flag. Councilwoman Amy Gold was absent from the meeting due to being out of town for work.

Mr. Bassin asked if there were any items on the agenda anyone on 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 and have them placed on the record. Motion carried.

Respectful Behavior- Next Steps

Mr. Bassin noted that there is a draft policy that has been turned over to the town board as well as a proposed resolution. Mr. Bassin said that the resolution allows the town to create a committee which, if there is a violation of the disrespectful behavior policy or code of conduct can be a place for a filer of the complaint to go to. Mr. Bassin said that the policy has been sent to the town attorney and edits have been made by the town attorney. Mr. Bassin asked if the Town Board members have comments. Councilman Boice asked what the qualifications for this committee would be, what the baseline is. Councilwoman Hunt, who was on the ad hoc committee which put the policy together, said that this is just a suggestion to begin with. She felt the aim is to get a balance of men and women, no history of harassment, maybe equal politically. She suggested sending an email to find people of interest. Councilman Boice felt that the town has multiple committees because people complained about something. He was worried that the people who apply to be on the committee would have an agenda to do so and questioned if we should bring in people from outside the town to sit on the committee. Councilman Clark said that he felt that what the town is looking for on the committee is a half a dozen diamonds. He noted that the committee needs to be balanced, for example, male and females, formally educated people and people of the “school of hard knocks”, people who are local (Mr. Clark noted this would mean people who came from families which have been here a few generations) and those who are new comers. Mr. Bassin suggested putting out an advertisement for people to make up the committee and see who applies.

The board now looked at the policy itself. Councilman Boice said that the town board needs to remember the diversity of the town. There needs to be an open mind in his opinion and to take into consideration where and how a person was raised, where the people are from. Mr. Boice noted that he was not at the last meeting and he regrets that as he has not missed any others leading up to this. He was concerned with how two newspapers had two totally different takes on the meeting. Councilman Clark said that he felt that it is clear a policy is needed. But, he noted that he felt the town needed a well balanced committee to make their own edits to the policy. He pointed out that there are no definitions for words found in the policy. He said that any alleged violator needs clear cut rules. He questioned the term “non-personal feedback” and what it means. He questioned the term “Excessive Yelling” and at what point does yelling become excessive. He questioned is the aggressor wrong if the intention wasn’t to be disrespectful. Mr. Clark felt that all comes down to judgement and the policy should be made to be compatible with the handbook sections 900 and 1200. Mr. Clark continued, saying he had concerns with the committee acting as the investigators of complaints. He had concern that if there is an interview, the accuser may not be as genuine and may be guarded if the interview is not done by, say, the town attorney. Councilwoman Hundt said that the committee wanted to not have to pay attorney’s fees and she asked Mr. Clark why he hadn’t emailed her his concerns before the meeting. Mr. Clark replied that he wanted to address his questions and concerns in an open forum. Councilman Boice noted the words “gossiping and spreading rumors” in the document. He wondered how that can be defined. He questioned how the town determines if someone is being treated less favorably. Mr. Boice pointed out that the January letter that was read had statements in it which were proven wrong by the town attorney. Councilwoman Hundt replied that if the board does not like the policy document then they can make changes.

Supervisor Bassin suggested that the town form a committee and allow them to sort the items noted tonight out and work on the draft. Mr. Bassin asked Councilwoman Hundt who was on the ad hoc committee. Ms. Hundt gave the following names: Councilwoman Hundt, Councilwoman Gold, Marie-Claude Stockle, Karen Davenport, Jane Plasman, Hila Richardson and Susan Flamm.

Jane Plasman, via zoom, addressed the board. She agreed with Mr. Bassin that the document should be turned over to the committee. She felt that by no means is this a final document. She said that it was critical that the criteria for the committee is as clear as can be that those serving not have an agenda.

Councilwoman Hundt asked if Councilwoman Gold would do the interview with her choice of people taking part. Mr. Bassin replied that the entire town board will do the interviews in the public forum. Mr. Lindsay, chair of the Ethics Board, noted that this was the way the Ethics Board and Law was formed. Mr. Bassin said that this process needs to be done carefully, thoughtfully and right.

Jim Stickles, who was attending in person, spoke to the board. He asked how this subject matter isn’t already governed by the Ethics Law, the Harassment Policy and the Employee Handbook? Mr. Bassin said it seems to be a gap between the three. Mr. Stickles asked if this is

just a local problem or something nation wide? He said that he felt it was “disgusting” that the town is in the paper so much and that there must be a different way to handle this that doesn’t include more policies.

The following resolution was offered by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilman Clark and passed with a roll call vote.

Resolution #23 of 2022: Committee for Respectful Behavior - Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board hereby creates a 5-7-member Committee for Respectful Behavior (CRB) to:

- a) recommend to the Town Board a Code of Conduct for Town of Ancram elected and appointed officials, employees, volunteers, and residents to guide respectful behavior in all Town activities and communications;
- b) recommend to the Town Board a process and procedure to report, receive and investigate complaints from anyone who perceives they have been treated with disrespect by a town official, employee, volunteer, or resident in violation of the Code of Conduct;
- c) recommend to the Town Board a process and procedure to report the results of the investigation, recommendation and subsequent action, if any, to the complainant, Town Board and other affected parties;
- d) recommend to the Town Board the content, timing, and audience for a series of training programs that introduce the new Town Code of Conduct and which focus on verbal and nonverbal communications (including examples of disrespectful behavior) to supplement the mandatory annual NYS Harassment Training

Supervisor Bassin made a motion to solicit applications using Ancramemail and the Town’s official newspapers from Ancram residents for membership on the Committee for Respectful Behavior. The Town Board will interview applicants who express an interest and will appoint 5-7 Committee members who have relevant background and experience and represent a balanced cross-section of Town residents. Applications will be requested prior to the June 16 Town Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Hundt and carried unanimously.

Ancram Water Issues

James Kennedy gave a report on the water issue in Ancram. He suggested that the town conduct a survey of the roughly 25 homes in the Ancram hamlet which may be affected by the water issue. He suggested that the town take oversight of the analysis of the well yields and water in the proposed Iron Star project. He also suggested a proposed ground water protection plan as well as hiring a hydrologist to do a survey of water issues. Councilwoman Hundt asked if there has been a study done on the water for the Iron Star project. Mr. Kennedy did not know. The Board thanked Mr. Kennedy and tabled the matter pending Planning Board action on the water issues related to the Iron Star project.

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

Resolution #24 of 2022: Public Hearing on Local Law #4 of 2022 – Support for Ancramdale Neighbors Helping Neighbors (ANHNA) Food Delivery Program - Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board will hold a public hearing at 6.45 pm on June 16, 2022 at the Ancram Town Hall, 1416 County Route 7, Ancram NY on Local Law #4 of 2022 to provide financial support and the use of a town owned vehicle for the weekly ANHNA food delivery program.

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

Resolution #25 of 2022: Public Hearing on Local Law #5 of 2022 – Virtual Public Meetings – Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board will hold a public hearing at 6.55 pm on June 16, 2022 at the Ancram Town Hall, 1416 County Route 7, Ancram NY on Local Law #5 of 2022 to allow the Town to continue to hold virtual public meetings.

NHN Van

The town board was presented the bid for the NHN Van which was due and opened in the Town Clerks office May 18, 2022. Only one bid was filed which was from Keeler in Albany, for a Mercedes 2022 van at a bid price of \$47,250.00. Councilman Boice, who was at the bid opening and has reviewed the bid, felt that it was a fair offer. He has looked at Sourcewell and found that Dodge still does not have vehicles available but at this time, the cost would be similar to that of the Mercedes. Mr. Lindsey has spoken to others who own this van and has gotten the response that the van is of very good quality. Councilman Boice asked where the van will be parked and if, as the van is a town purchase, can it be used by other town departments if needed? He also wondered if it would be a cleaner transaction if the town paid the entire price. Mr. Bassin said that the amount over the \$40,000 previously approved by the Town Board will be paid for by NHN through a donation to the town. Mr. Bassin felt that the van will be parked at a town site, either the town hall or the town garage.

The following resolution was offered by Supervisor Bassin and seconded by Councilwoman Hundt and moved for adoption by a roll call vote. Resolution carried unanimously.

Resolution #26 of 2022: ANHNA Van - The Ancram Town Board accepts the bid for a Mercedes van from Keeler Motor Car Company of \$47,270.50 subject to receipt of a Letter of Non-collusion and confirmation that the van will be delivered as soon as possible and prior to 12/31/22.

Climate Smart

Mr. Bassin reported that the new solar panel inverters have been installed at the town hall.

Kids Camp/Pool

Ruth VanWagoner has reported that the kids camp as 30 children enrolled. Jen Boice reports that the pool has hired 6 lifeguards.

Supervisors Report

- 1) Financial Report – April financial results were as expected, but we received a 1Q sales tax check in early May of \$100,000, which was about \$15,000 better than we expected. While this is good news, we are already seeing significant increases in the cost of highway materials, and given the likely continuation of a combination of high inflation, rising interest rates, supply chain uncertainties, oil price spikes, potential oil shortages and the situation in Ukraine, the economic environment is still unpredictable and is likely to negatively impact our costs and revenues. We should plan to be cautious and conservative in our financial planning until we see how things evolve, and what happens with sales tax and mortgage tax revenues over the balance of the year.
- 2) Respectful Behavior Next Steps - Bonnie Hundt and Amy Gold have been working on a policy dealing with respectful behavior and a code of conduct for all Town officials, employees and volunteers which we will review and discuss at our 5/19 meeting.
- 3) Ancram Water Issues – James Kennedy has asked to address the Board about his concerns related to the water supply in the Ancram Hamlet and Town-wide.
- 4) Kids Camp & Pool – Planning continues to open the town pool and Kids Camp this summer, as long as the Covid-19 situation does not force us to reconsider. Camp will be open from July 5 to August 12, and the pool will be open from July 1 to the end of August.
- 6) EEP Contract/Traffic Control – We have scheduled two EEP shifts per week from Memorial Day through Labor day – one shift on Saturdays and the other on either Monday’s or Fridays.
- 7) Solar Inverters – The inverters are scheduled to be replaced on 5/18.
- 8) Public Hearings – We will schedule public hearings at our June meeting on two local laws – Local Law #4 of 2022 providing support for ANHNA’s food delivery program, and Local Law #5 of 2022 allowing the town to continue to use virtual meetings.
- 9) ANHNA Van – We expect to open bids received for the ANHNA van that the Town Plans to purchase with ARPA funds later this year and allow ANHNA to use for their food delivery program.
- 10) CAC Appointment – CAC has recommended that we appoint Jay Lorenz as a member of CAC. Jay has an M.S. Zoology from University of Massachusetts and a Ph.D. in Resource Geography from Oregon State University. He is a retired environmental consultant with experience in wetlands and wildlife ecology; large-scale biological surveys, environmental permitting, and biological and environmental assessments. His experience will deepen and widen the Ancram CAC’s knowledge and talent.

Board Members Comments

Councilman Boice noted that with the costs of heating and food this winter, there may be people having to choose between the two. Many people are on a fixed income. Mr. Boice said that the town may need to think about a way to assist these people.

Councilman Clark asked that the town board be given a list of all the STR permits which have been given up to now.

Councilwoman Hundt reported that she is continuing to meet with other towns and groups concerning the affordable housing crisis. She said that the topic is picking up momentum. She said that one idea is finding land in each town and building 4-6 unit rentals as a group effort. She noted that 25 million dollars in funds is set to be released and felt that it was time to begin planning.

Highway Department

Diesel fuel used- 710 gallons

Gasoline used 635 gallons

-Myself and one other employee were out with Covid from 5/8-5/13.

-I have been advised by the state DOT that Ancram is slated to receive a total of \$298,011.37 of funding from the state this year. Slightly less than what I was anticipating.

-We completed the stump removal and drainage improvement project on a section of Overmountain Road.

-I have been forced to cut back the amount of road work due to rapidly increasing costs for fuel, blacktop and just about everything else. We will be doing our two large projects on Doodletown and Hall Hill roads that were scheduled to begin soon but the contractor has been held up elsewhere. I still plan to do some additional paving on smaller projects using our paver, but these costs are rapidly rising as well.... Everyone you talk to advises getting this work done ASAP before prices escalate further.

-Roadside mowing will begin soon.

-Tom Miller has retired from the department.

-Ruges has advised that they have a pickup ordered for stock that will be delivered and available sometime late summer. They have offered to give the town first refusal on it to make up for the snafu with the one canceled. It's a vehicle equipped like the one we ordered in March but was canceled. We will have to go through the bid process again to purchase this truck.

-Bucket truck.... No news.

-I will be attending Highway school June 6-8 in Ithaca.

Town Clerk and Tax Collector

The town clerk reported that to date she has collected 92% of the tax roll. This is on par for past years. She said that she attended her Town Clerk Conference in April. Some of the classes she took were FOIL, Open Meetings Law, Retirement reporting, Many duties of the Town Clerk, Hot Topics for Town Clerk's and Municipal Ethics.

A motion was made by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilman Clark to make the following budget adjustment. Motion carried.

From: Fund Balance

To: 1420.4- \$7000.00, 5132.4 \$6,701.00, 1620.41- \$1,100

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

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

Resolution #27 of 2022: Appointment to the Conservation Advisory Council – Resolved, that Jay Lorenz is appointed to the Conservation Advisory Council.

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

Resolution #28 of 2022: Pool Bathrooms – Resolved, that the Pool Director is authorized to arrange for the bathrooms at the Town pool to be made handicapped accessible at a cost not to exceed \$5,000.

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

Respectfully submitted by:

Monica R. Cleveland

Ancram Town Clerk