

**Town of Ancram
Town Board
Regular Board Meeting
September 15, 2022**

Present: Supervisor Arthur Bassin Councilman Hugh Clark
 Councilman David Boice Councilwoman Bonnie Hundt
 Councilwoman Amy Gold 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 Bassin with a salute to the flag.

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

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

CRB

Councilwoman Gold gave a report on the Committee on Respectful Behavior. She reported that the committee is working together wonderfully and that with their two meetings they are making progress. At this time they are reviewing and redrafting the proposed code. Councilwoman Hundt said that they will be inviting Jack Lindsey, the chair of the Ethics board to their meeting to make sure that they are in line with the Town Ethics and the Town Handbook. She said that the committee is concerned about the investigation portion and would like to do some training on this issue to sort through if and when a third party will be needed. Ms. Hundt asked how the committee will be budgeted. Mr. Bassin said that the committee can use monies from the Fund Balance. Ms. Hundt also reported that the chairperson has been appointed and will be Jaclyn Ryan. Mr. Bassin asked how much this third party training would cost. Ms. Hundt responded that the firms that the committee is looking at around \$15,000. Councilman Boice noted that the attorneys fees were less then what the proposed training is. Councilwoman Hundt disagreed.

Water Study

Mr. James Kennedy reported that the committee has sent out the water study questionnaires. He noted that the study will also be available to be filled out on line.

Housing

Councilwoman Hundt reported on her work on housing. She continues to attend many meetings with housing groups. She noted that she would like Mr. Bassin to meet a man who runs a large housing fund in Salisbury and hear how it works.

Pavilion

Mr. Clark reported that he had attended the committee's discussion with the engineer on Blass Ball Field in regards to the building of a pavilion. Mr. Clark said that it was a broad discussion and that there are

two locations, including the Town Hall property, that warrant consideration and review. The town will know more in two weeks.

Garage Solar

Susan Flamm said that Frank Palumbo and his firm are putting together a plan for the town.

Pool

Mr. Boice reported that he is working with the same outfit that did work on the pool in 1979 and 1996. The town is looking at replacing the decking and resurfacing the pool. The company is busy closing down pools during this season but they will put together a plan and a cost evaluation.

CSCTF

Colleen Lutz spoke to the board about a community solar campaign that has been brought to the groups attention. This is through NYSERDA and is an opt out campaign. She really did not know many of the details and said that she was going to do research and return to the board with her findings.

Ms. Lutz spoke about grant funding available to the town to adopt a plan on Climate Vulnerability Assessment. Mr. Bassin asked if this was covered under the Columbia County payment for the County performing this assessment for the entire county. Ms. Lutz said that it was.

Ms. Lutz also asked if the board would be in support of the committee seeking funding to hire an intern to assist the task force. The funding would be 90% reimbursed and the intern could work up to 480 hours. A motion was made by Supervisor Bassin and seconded by Councilwoman Gold to authorize Colleen Lutz to apply to NYSERDA for approval for a grant to cover 90% of the cost to hire an intern from the NYSERDA approved intern list to assist the Town of Ancram Climate Smart Community Task Force on a variety of projects.

As was noted in last months meeting, Susan Flamm is stepping down as the Chairperson of the CSCTF. For now Colleen Lutz will intern as the co-chair. The committee is actively looking for another co-chair or a full chair.

NYS Climate Action Council Scoping Plan Resolution

Mr. Bassin asked for thoughts from the town board members in regards to the support from Ancram for the NYS Climate Action Council Scoping Plan Resolution. Councilman Clark gave the following thoughts: *Concerning the NYS Climate Scoping Plan and the Proposed Resolution Supporting the Plan, Councilman Clark stated that climate change is real, the need to combat it is legitimate, and actions in the plan are warranted. He cautioned, however, that how the ends are achieved is equally important.*

He remains concerned that the Scoping Plan does not address local control, nor does the proposed resolution address local control. By failing to address—and by failing to even mention—this omission, the Town’s resolution implies acceptance of projects whose size, intensity, and impact on rural character would otherwise be unacceptable in, by, and for the Town of Ancram.

He noted that the CAC memo of 18 August also mentions such a concern.

He suggested that inserting one additional entry would at least signal such concerns to the NYS agencies at the center of this scoping plan. Such an entry might be:

“Resolved, the Town of Ancram supports the New York State Climate Action Council Scoping Plan if that Council explicitly agrees that any proposed physical action that affects local landscape and character will be executed only upon acceptance by the municipality in whose jurisdiction that project is proposed.”

Mr. Clark also noted that other features of the proposed resolution merit thoughtful interest, including one dealing with protecting low and moderate-income households from an “undue burden” during

transition from the utility gas system. He wondered how much the “burden” must be before NYS deems it an “undue burden.” Also, at a time when building affordable housing is a constant topic, it will be interesting to learn whether a feature that phases in prohibitions against on-site combustion of fossil fuels in new buildings prompts increases in construction costs and time.

Referring to another addition which mitigates agricultural GHG emissions that had been added in red type to the original resolution, Mr. Clark noted interest in determining the effects on farmers and ultimately on open space. Citing that same red proposed addition, he expressed curiosity about the definition of, and the process for achieving, “well managed healthy soils.” Similarly, he cited “related regenerative land use practices on private properties and gardens?” Noting that he and consultant Nan Stolzenburg had the same question—“What does this mean?” Mr. Clark mentioned a recommendation that the Climate Justice Working Group had provided to their NYS colleagues in June 2022—“Provide greater clarity, reasoning, and purpose—Edit jargon to plain speak, and remove vague, squishy language and strive to provide key details.”

He also noted that public hearings on the Draft Scoping Plan were conducted April-May 2022 and that the comment period had ended in June, so there appears to be no substantive reason to hastily endorse such a supportive resolution at this point.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Clark stated: “Some will contend that the Scoping Plan merely conveys “intent” or “is only policy.” They need to remember that policy gets turned into programs and regulations. Will our town or any town be merely the recipient of those regulations, or also a partner in their creation?”

Councilwoman Gold said that she supports Mr. Clark's views. Councilwoman Hundt agreed as well and felt that given that the comment time is over, support or not would be a moot point. Councilman Boice felt there was no need to move ahead with passing the resolution. Susan Flamm noted that she did not support passing the resolution with the added paragraph supporting home rule. Councilwoman Hundt asked who had written the resolution and if any other towns had supported it. Ms. Flamm said that while she was not sure on the author, she knew a few towns had supported it.

A motion was made by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilwoman Hundt to table the resolution in support of the NYS Climate Action Council Scoping Plan Resolution and to instead write a letter supporting the goals and intent of the resolution but noting that the town is in favor of retaining home rule related to any actions designed to reduce the impact of climate change. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.

Treasury Bonds

Mr. Bassin said that after much discussion the FAC is in favor of investing \$500,000.00 in Treasury Bonds. The town is trying to decide if they want to invest through Key Bank or Bank of Greene County. The County Treasurer suggested that Key Bank may be the better option. Mr. Clark suggested that the town possibly put half in each bank for the first round and then make a decision going forward. This will all depend on the rate of interest.

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

Resolution #37 of 2022: Key Bank Brokerage Account for T-bill Investments - Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board authorizes the Town Supervisor to open a brokerage account and any necessary additional accounts for the Town with Key Bank to allow the Town to buy treasury bills in order to increase the return on the Town's fund balance, and be it further resolved that Town Supervisor Arthur

J. Bassin and Deputy Town Supervisor Hugh D. Clark shall be authorized signers on these accounts, and that each may act independently to buy or sell investments in this account.

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

Resolution #38 of 2022: Greene Investment Services/Infinix Brokerage Account for T-bill Investments - Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board authorizes the Town Supervisor to open a brokerage account for the Town with Bank of Greene County and its affiliate Infinix to allow the Town to buy treasury bills in order to increase the return on the Town's fund balance, and be it further resolved that Town Supervisor Arthur J. Bassin and Deputy Town Supervisor Hugh D. Clark shall be authorized signers on this brokerage account, and that each may act independently to buy or sell investments in this account.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilwoman Gold to approve the Tentative 2023 Town of Ancram Budget. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.

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 #39 of 2022: 2023 Preliminary Budget Public Hearing - Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed 2023 Preliminary Budget at 6:55 pm on Thursday, October 20, 2022 at the Ancram Town Hall, 1416 CR 7, Ancram NY 12502. 2023 salaries for elected Town Officials are budgeted to increase by on average 5% to the following amounts: Town Board members \$3200; Town Supervisor \$5250; Town Justices: \$6125; Town Clerk: \$35,650; Town Highway Superintendent: \$67,300. In addition, the Ancram Town Board will consider and may approve a one time, lump sum, non-recurring, inflation adjustment payment of up to 5% for all employees, including elected officials, at the December 2022 Town Board meeting to be paid in 2023 if the rate of inflation continues at current levels. The 2023 Preliminary Budget will be available from the Ancram Town Clerk, will be posted on the Town website at www.ancramny.org and will be circulated to the Ancramemail list.

Supervisors Report:

1) Financial Report – August financial results were as expected. Our 12/31/22 cash position is still forecast at about \$1.45 million. Given the likely continuation of a combination of high inflation, rising interest rates, supply chain uncertainties, oil price spikes, potential oil shortages, food and fuel cost increases and the situation in Ukraine, the economic environment is still unpredictable and could negatively impact our costs and revenues. We should plan to continue to be cautious and conservative in our financial management until we see how things evolve, and what happens with costs, sales tax and mortgage tax revenues over the balance of the year.

2) 2023 Tentative Budget – We will have a public hearing on the 2023 Tentative Budget prior to our 9/15 Town Board meeting. The Tentative Budget indicates our 2023 property tax levy will be about the same as our 2022 tax levy at \$714,000. We will hold public hearings on the Preliminary Budget in October and on the final budget in November. Major uncertainties continue to be the magnitude of price increases for general goods and services, highway materials, health insurance and the risks to our sales tax and mortgage tax revenues from an uncertain economic environment. As we get more clarity on these issues over the next few months, we will refine the budget and finalize it by our November meeting. An overview of the 2023 Tentative Budget is attached.

3) T-Bill Investment Program- We will consider resolutions at our 9/15 meeting to allow the town to invest in t-bills through both BOGC and Key bank. Yields on the 90 day t-bill are currently at about 3%, compared to the 10 bp rate we have been getting on our money market funds. By investing about \$1million of our fund balance in 90 day t-bills we should be able to earn an additional \$30,000 in interest in 2023.

4) New York State Climate Action Council Scoping Plan – We will be considering a resolution in support of the NYS Climate Action Council scoping Plan that has been modified by Susan Arterian and supported by CAC and CSCTF. The public comment period for the Draft Plan ended in July, and the final Plan will not be released until January. So the issue is whether we express support for the Plan now, before it is finalized, or wait until the final Plan is released, and express support for that.

5) Ancram Hamlet Water Survey - We will also consider a resolution supporting the Ancram Hamlet water survey which will be conducted in September.

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

Resolution #40 of 2022: Water Survey – Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board approves conducting a survey of water quantity and quality issues in the hamlet of Ancram at a cost not to exceed \$3000.

Town Board Members

Councilwoman Hundt asked if Mr. Bassin could give a report on the Board of Supervisors actions on the resolution opposing the recently passed NYS gun law and the resolution opposing lowering the farm worker overtime threshold to 40 hours from 60 hours over the next 10 years. Mr. Bassin said that both of these resolutions were last minute additions to the agenda and had not gone through the normal committee & public review and discussion process, and many supervisors felt there had not been enough time to review and understand the issues before acting, so both resolutions should be table until the October BOS meeting. The supervisors discussed and made revisions to the resolution dealing with farm worker overtime to support further study of this issue so the interests of both farmers and farm workers could be fairly dealt with. There was no agreement on tabling the resolution opposing the recently passed NYS gun laws and no efforts to modify the resolution and this resolution was passed on a part line vote, with the supervisors opposing the proposed resolution abstaining because they did not have enough information to vote for or against.

Councilman Boice noted that he had had several complaints about dogs barking from the same residence in the Ancram hamlet.

Highway Report

Diesel Fuel used: 819 gallons

Gasoline used: 455 gallons

We Repaved sections of Woods Dr, Woods Ct and Tims Road

We have been adding gravel where needed to various dirt roads and have begun regrading getting them in shape for winter.

Responded to report of tree down on 9/7

Continuing shared services with other towns with their projects when called upon.

Took delivery of a new pickup on 8/30

The 2008 GMC was sold via Auctions International for \$4150.

Learned that this winter's OGS salt price is up about 16% over last year. Not including any fuel surcharges. I'm expecting a 5-10% increase for sand as well.

We have begun getting the Plow and Sanding equipment ready for the approaching winter season. David Handlowich has informed me that he intends to resign effective 9/30. I have advertised the position and have had 2 applications. I hope to fill the position by 10/1

Town wide cleanup day is Saturday 9/17

I will be attending the Highway Superintendent Conference in Ellicottville NY next week 9/20-9/23.

James Miller- Highway Superintendent

A motion was made by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilman Boice to approve the following budget adjustments. Motion carried. To 5110.4 \$500, 7020.4 \$500, 7310.4 \$500 from Fund Balance \$1500. To: 5130.2 from Fund Balance \$60,000.00.

A motion was made by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilman Clark to approved the warrants and pay the bills. Motion carried.

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

Respectfully submitted by,

Monica Cleveland
Ancram Town Clerk