

To: Ancram Town Board
From: Art Bassin
Subject: Supervisor's Report
Date: September 17, 2023



1) Financial Report – A normal financial month. The YE 2023 fund balance projection (cash plus T Bills) is \$1,119,500, down about \$5,000 from last months' estimate. Cash and T Bills at the end of August totaled about \$1,429,000. Our T-Bill portfolio was at \$1,138,000, and cash on hand at the end of August was about \$291,000. We received our NYS highway reimbursements totaling about \$195,000 last week, so as of mid-September we have about \$425,000 in cash on hand, and \$1,150,000 at maturity in T-Bills. We have a treasury bill for \$450,000 maturing on 9/26 which we will reinvest. I anticipate we will be able to continue to invest \$1 million in short term (1, 2, 3 month) T- Bills over the rest of the year. Yields on the 1, 2 and 3 month T-Bills are still around 5.4%, and our year-to-date interest earned on T-Bills totals almost \$50,000 compared to a full year budget of \$30,000. If yields stay steady, we could earn another \$15,000 in interest by the end of the year. **Building Department** activity continues to be strong, with fees continuing to exceed plan. We continue on track to hit about \$75,000 in building permit fees this year, compared to a budget of \$45,000. **Court Fines** in August were at \$2,650, which is back to the budgeted level of monthly fines, but because weak fines in the January to July period, we are likely to end the year with about \$12,500 in fines, which is about 50% of the 2023 budget

2) 2024 Tentative Budget – We will have a public hearing on the 2024 Tentative Budget at the 9/21 Town Board meeting. The 2024 Tentative budget targets a 2024 tax levy flat to 2023 at about \$714,000. Compared to the 2023 original budget, major proposed 2024 cost increases of about \$75,000 include salary increases in the 3-3.4% range (\$20,000), attorney fee increases (\$15,000), NYS retirement system costs (\$12,000), health insurance (\$10,000), utilities (\$7,000) and CRB training (\$9,000) are offset by about \$82,500 of cost reductions, including reductions in building equipment (\$30,000), contingent (\$30,000), assessor (\$20,000) and ZRC (\$2,500). Revenues are budgeted to decrease about \$19,000 due to a decrease in grant revenues of \$71,000 offset by revenue increases in interest (\$20,000), building department fees \$15,000), sales tax (\$12,500), planning fees (\$2,500 and franchise fees (\$2,500). To keep 2024 taxes flat at the \$714,000 level, we have budgeted \$114,500 in fund balance, which is an increase of \$14,500 from the 2023 budget. While we can and will keep town taxes flat again in 2024 by using fund balance, we may have to deal with a weaker sales and mortgage tax environment over the next few years, factor that reality into our capital spending plans and consider postponing some major strategic investments, or getting loans or grants to help fund essential projects. Major unknowns at this point are what 2024 sales and mortgage taxes will be, and how much health insurance will go up. I am using County guidance to expect sales tax revenues to increase about 3% along with inflation. We will get more clarity on all the numbers over the next few months as we see that happens with the possible federal government shutdown and levels of inflation. We will do public hearings on the Preliminary Budget in October and on the Final Budget in November.

3) O&G Industries – No new news on this. O&G Industries has filed an appeal of the ZEO's determination that O&G discontinued mining operations for more than two years in the 2018-2021 period, which the ZEO concluded terminates their right to continue mining as a pre-existing non-conforming use in the Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone and requires that they discontinue all future mining activities. O&G believes that because it was operating the mine under a SUP it was a conforming use, and "the no activity for over 2 years" rule does not apply. The matter will be reviewed by the ZBA.

4) Revaluation – Assessor Rene Deleeuw reports that the Town received 7 article 7s and 5 SCARS. Four of the SCARS are scheduled for review at the Columbia County Courthouse on 9/21. Assessor Deleeuw will be representing the Town in the SCAR hearings. The Article 7s will be handled by Attorney Jonathan Tingley. No information yet on the timing of the Article 7 cases.

5) Planning Application Process Review – Nan Stolzenburg will be giving us an update at our 9/21 meeting on her work to clarify and simplify the planning process application review process.

6) ZBA Second Alternate – The ZBA chair has recommended that we appoint Jim Stickle as second alternate on the ZBA. We will consider this appointment at the 9/21 meeting.

7) Surplus Town Hall Generator – When we replaced the propane HVAC units with heat pumps we also had to upgrade from 200 amp to 600 amp service and install a 60kw generator, making the 25kw generator excess. The Fire Company has expressed an interest in the 25kw generator, and I will be presenting a resolution at the 9/21 meeting to authorize this donation.

8) Accessory Residential Use Fee Reduction - We have discussed and tabled this several times in the past few months. Suggest we discuss it one more time and decide if we want to do this as presented, modify the idea, or drop the idea.

9) Pro-Housing Community Designation – NYS has established a Pro-Housing Communities program to give communities who qualify for the program preferential access to certain grant funds. We will consider the Pro-Housing Community resolution at our 9/21 meeting.

10) Pickleball – We have received a request to allow a pickleball court to be painted on the Town Hall parking lot. We will discuss and decide if we want to approve this.

11) Camp Pontiac Fireworks – We received a copy of a copy of a letter from the Lower Rhoda Lake Association complaining about the July 4 fireworks display done by Camp Pontiac. We will discuss and decide if there is anything we want to do. I checked with Copake, where Camp Pontiac is located, and was advised by the Copake CEO that Camp Pontiac applied for and was issued a permit for the fireworks display and Copake is not taking any action on the complaint.