

Supervisor and Town Board Seats Up for Grabs in Contested Ancram Election

By Cathy Redlich

On November 7, 2023, Ancram voters will decide the future direction of our town by casting ballots for the vigorously contested positions of Town Supervisor and Town Board Councilpersons. The Board is Ancram's legislative and governing body with responsibility for the annual budget, overseeing and approving monthly expenditures, adopting local laws, and setting policy for the town. The duties of the Supervisor include presiding over Town Board meetings and acting as the town's treasurer, as well as sitting on the Columbia County Board of Supervisors, which governs the entire county. The positions of Highway Superintendent and Town Clerk are uncontested, with each incumbent running for an additional term.

In this issue

Ancram Election pg. 1
Lift Every Voice pg. 4
They'll Be Back pg. 6
Creating Community pg. 10
Copake Rapid Center pg. 11
Invasive Pests pg. 13

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We welcome your comments and suggestions. Send to Cathy Redlich at AncramTownNews@gmail.com

In Their Own Words

The Town News invited Supervisor candidates to respond in writing to three questions, and Town Board candidates to respond to two questions. In alphabetical order, here is what they had to say.

Town Supervisor Candidates

Town News: The office of Town Supervisor comes with many responsibilities. The current Supervisor prioritized ensuring the town's financial well-being, maintaining its rural character, and protecting its environmental resources. What would your top priorities be? Do you envision the town changing course under your leadership and, if so, how?

Bonnie Hundt (D): My priorities as Town Supervisor will be:

- *Continue Ensuring the Town's Financial Well-Being:* I will continue the fiscally prudent path that we have been on under our current leadership. Having participated in the budget process for the last 6 years I have a good sense of the decisions we will be making for the future.
- *Maintaining Rural Character:* Growing up on a dairy farm in rural Wisconsin has given me a real understanding of what is happening to farm communities like ours. Across the whole country family farms are being replaced by corporate farms. We need to protect farms and farmers... without them open space and "rural character" wouldn't exist. I have done extensive work on the zoning laws to make sure we are protected from overdevelopment without stifling growth.
- *Housing and Food Insecurity:* We need to solve the housing crisis because it affects our whole economy.

Young and old are forced to relocate to afford a place to live. The work I have already done on the Housing Committee will lead to solutions in time. Creating housing for working people is complicated and time-consuming but it is crucial to get it done...everyone deserves a decent place to live! I will also continue the Town's support of Neighbors Helping Neighbors, which has done incredible work for those in our community who need help providing food for their families.

- *Town Leadership:* My vision of leadership is to be inclusive of all; to be proactive on climate change in any way we can; and to lead a totally transparent town government so citizens know exactly what the Town Board and our amazing Town Committees and Boards are doing. A good leader will listen to all points of view.

Jim MacArthur (R): If I am elected to the position of the Supervisor of the Town of Ancram, my top priority would be to continue the good work of our current town supervisor Art Bassin. For the past fourteen years, Mr. Bassin has kept the taxes flat which has been financially good for the taxpayers. I would like to see the taxes not only remain flat but to go one step further and give a tax reduction. I will do this with the help of our Town Board and financial savvy residents who are familiar with budgets. I am currently the Jr. Vice Commander of the department of NY VFW with over 40,000 members and a budget twice the size of the Town of Ancram. I also served the Town of Ancram as the Town Highway Superintendent for many years when I was in

(Continued on page 2)



From left, Democratic slate: Town Board candidate Colleen Lutz; Town Supervisor candidate Bonnie Hundt; Town Board candidate Bob Roche.



From left, Republican slate: Town Supervisor candidate Jim MacArthur; Town Board candidate John Ingram; Town Board candidate David Boice.

control of the highway budget. The highway budget is the largest part of the town's expenses. I worked with the state on Chips funding and filed for FEMA funds on many occasions.

I grew up in the Town of Ancram. I love this town and its rural character. But, we would be remiss if we ignored the fact that young people cannot remain here with the cost of housing. We need our young people to keep organizations like our Fire Department and churches operating. We need young people to serve on town committees and boards. We need young people for our workforce in this area. But with the cost of living so high and the prices of homes unobtainable for them, our young people are fleeing the area. I am open to ideas to fix this problem before it gets worse. One idea I have batted around is a small mobile home park. But this is an issue that needs everyone's input.

We need to have activities in town for children. If we want young families, we need to be a place where young families want to settle. I would work to continue to keep the pool and the camp operational and free to residents. But I would like to go one step further and reach out to teenagers and very young adults. I would like to find a way to offer them activities they would enjoy. Maybe it could be a winter trip for snow tubing or sponsoring a ski club. Or during the summer months having a youth group that takes trips the teenagers choose, and the town sponsors

them as a group. The children of this town are our future. I would like them to have a childhood they remember fondly, and which will give them a reason to stay and raise their families here.

We also have many elderly people in this town who are lonely and would like to interact with others. I propose a senior group at Town Hall for both social events and invited speakers such as a person from the Office of the Aging or a genealogist to teach how to research family trees or someone to help with catching oral histories of residents.

Town News: What skill sets, experience, educational attainments or personal attributes make you the best candidate for Town Supervisor?

Hundt: My extensive and varied experience in town government and business makes me the best qualified for this position. I have been a successful business owner for 27 years, employing numerous people from Ancram, so I understand how to manage budgets in changing and challenging economic times. I know how to manage people and employees. I served as Town Supervisor in Amenia 20 years ago and learned the complexities of the job. I accomplished the difficult task of cleaning up corruption of past administrations and brought trust and excitement about the future back.

In Ancram I have served on the Ethics

Board; Chair, Zoning Board of Appeals; Comprehensive Plan Committee; Zoning Revisions Committee; board liaison to the Climate Smart Task Force and the Committee for Respectful Behavior; and Co-chair, the Affordable Housing Committee. Having served on all those boards and committees has given me the chance to understand even more how town government works. And allowed me to work with and get to know so many wonderful people who give of their time.

I have lived in many places and am proud to call Ancram home. I want to see us grow and develop in a smart, thoughtful, and inclusive way. I am proud of how we handled the pandemic and I feel confident I can handle whatever challenges come next.

MacArthur: I have held many leadership positions in my life. I served in the United States military and am a Vietnam combat vet. Other positions I have held include:

- The Town of Ancram Highway Superintendent for 20 years.
- President of the Fire Company.
- President of the St John's Lutheran Church Council
- President of the Columbia County Town Highway Superintendent Association
- Current Jr. Vice Chair of the Department of NY VFW which has 348 posts in the State of NY and 40,000 members.

Town News: Community participation on committees and in volunteer capacities is vital to keep Ancram functioning, yet only a small percentage of residents engage in town government or attend town board meetings. Do you have ideas for improving community involvement?

Hundt: Community participation is crucial. When I was involved with developing Ancram's Comprehensive Plan, we realized that most people really want the same things. We need to improve our technology at the town hall so more people can participate. I will look for ways to improve internet and cell service. Especially for our first responders. And for all the home-based economy that is here now. We can improve our public parks and spaces for people to gather as a community. It is so important moving forward to find that sense that we are all in this together.

I sincerely hope that we find ways to bring civility and community to all Ancram. And I promise to continue the Ancram email list that helps find all of those lost pets!

MacArthur: Outreach is key. We need to continue to be consistent with posting information to the town website. We are also in the day and age of social media. We should not ignore the fact that most people under the age of 40 are social media savvy. While I can say that I am not of the age where I am comfortable with all that social media has to offer, I think it would be a great idea to reach out to some younger residents to oversee some town Social Media pages. If used correctly and not in a politically polarizing way, social media could be a way to reach those young people who do not read the newspapers or a newsletter. I also would like to continue the town email. This has been a wonderful addition to life here in Ancram and should continue to be a part of our governmental fabric.

I will work towards getting all residents of Ancram, no matter if you are a full time or part-time resident, more involved with town government. We need to be transparent with our leadership and all that is happening with the town.

Town Board Candidates

Town News: What prompted you to run for Town Board and what experience, skills, and personal qualities make you well-suited to be a councilperson?

David Boice (R): I have been on the Town Board for 8 years and had seriously intended to step back from that role. After being approached by many people I decided to run for another term. I believe that my willingness to listen to everyone and try to find a middle ground on most issues is the most important quality that I can bring to the town board. I also believe my many years of involvement with the many organizations in Ancram that I am involved with allows me to get a broader sense of what a large portion of the town's population is concerned about.

John Ingram (R): Since coming to Ancram through friends in 1970 and purchasing my first property in 1987, I recognized the uniqueness of the town. I have been involved with the Ancram Fire Company for over 20 years, served on the Ancram Town Hall Committee as the Clerk of the Works in 2001 and served on the planning board for 12 years (10 as chairman).

I have spent over 50 years in the public sector (46 years in management) overseeing \$10M budgets and numerous improvement projects in excess of \$20M. I was an elected school board trustee for 11 years, have served on countless committees for all of my professional organizations and still provide consulting work in the water industry since my retirement in 2010. I have a solid understanding of the workings of local government and municipal law.

Colleen Lutz (R, running as Democratic candidate): At the time I decided to run for the Town Board, there was at least one, possibly two council seats that were being vacated in addition to the supervisor position. I felt that my long-standing involvement in the town and local issues would be an asset to a new councilperson.

I have served on various committees, councils, and boards and realize how important their work is. They focus on

projects and issues intensively and provide the Town Board with the information they need to make critical decisions. I am sensitive to the time commitment and want to make it clear that the work they do is not in vain. They assess all sides of each emerging issue, which the Town Board would lack the time to do effectively and still manage the town.

Government, at a local level, should be non-partisan which is part of the reason that I accepted a nomination from the Democratic party as a Republican. The more I talk with people in the community, the more I realize that we share many of the same underlying values and goals. Our lifestyle and experiences may be different, but our underlying values are similar.

People may have different opinions on how we can achieve our community goals and that is okay! I think if we listen, deliberate, and act collaboratively our decisions and solutions will be more effective and relevant to our community. Governance should strive to have the best outcome for most of the population. I believe that my experience as a planning board chair and member have given me the ability to listen and negotiate for the best possible outcomes.

In my professional capacity, I work with multiple agencies and projects within the New York State. As a New York Natural Heritage Program biologist, I need to be able to facilitate communication and collaboration between multiple groups working on projects. My experience is well suited for serving on the Town Board, which requires good communication and interpersonal skills.

Bob Roche (D): I had heard that at least two people were not going to run for Town Board this term and then I was prompted by some of my fellow Democrats, who said they believed I would be a good Town Board member, so, I decided to run. I have been involved with town politics most of my life, never holding office, but now I would like to throw my hat in the ring. I have been on the Planning Board, a member since 2012, and the Zoning Revisions Committee for about the same amount of time. I also

(Continued on page 8)

“Lift Every Voice”: Keeping a Legacy Alive

By Lynne Perrella

Most evenings, Ancram resident Laura Ponkos can be found in the living room of her re-stored 250-year-old home, exploring her art form of choice: rug hooking. After a 40-year career as an educator, Laura retired and is able to devote more time to a hobby that continues to provide enrichment, relaxation, and a strong community of like-minded artisans. Her work is done on a linen background, using a tool to pull hand-cut loops of wool through to the surface. A lap-sized frame stabilizes the work-in-progress, and although each project begins with an imprinted pattern/diagram, the process allows for changes in stitch patterns and color choices as the design progresses. Ponkos’s interest in rug hooking was ignited years ago after seeing a definitive exhibit at the Berkshire Botanical Gardens, and she honed her skills through various workshops, eventually joining a regional group of artisans who meet regularly to share techniques and exchange life stories. She estimates that she has created dozens of rug-hooked projects as gifts or her own home décor over many years, and although many of her pieces are decorative in nature, her work took a narrative turn when she was invited to participate in an ambitious and timely art collaboration, “Lift Every Voice”.

An Homage to Artist Elizabeth Catlett

Fourteen artists (from the United States and Canada) created rug-hooked panels inspired by woodblock prints by African American artist Elizabeth Catlett (1915-2012). Although Catlett’s prints were created in the 1940s, her enduring themes of race, class, gender, and women’s advocacy are front and center in today’s world, and provided a rich, layered challenge to the rug hookers. Although Catlett’s art forms of choice were painting, print-making, and sculpture, these rug-hooked depictions are rendered in intricate, descriptive loops of woolen fabric and tactile stitches. Each artist selected a woodblock print to



Ancram resident Laura Ponkos was one of 14 North American artists invited to create rug-hooked panels inspired by the woodblock prints of African American artist Elizabeth Catlett for the travelling exhibit “Lift Every Voice”.

Photo by B. Docktor

interpret, and Laura’s chosen image of activist/feminist Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) is a powerful image, both in the original print and the rug-hooked version. The canvas took approximately one year to complete.

The Artist’s Statement

Ponkos reflected on her choice of Catlett’s woodblock print of Sojourner Truth as the inspiration for her exhibit piece. “I have much admired, respected, and been amazed at the life of

Sojourner Truth, a fellow Hudson Valley resident from the 1800s. Sojourner was born into slavery in the 1790s. New York did not abolish slavery until 1827. She was owned by six different masters during her childhood and youth. She bore five children, all of whom were sold into slavery. Her last owners, the Van Wagenens, opposed slavery and took her in to get her away from the abuse and cruelty she had suffered under previous owners. The Van Wagenens introduced her to religion,

and she became an itinerate Pentecostal preacher. Sojourner was a gifted speaker and a spellbinding singer promoting the abolition of slavery and women's rights. She was a remarkable woman in her time and served as a powerful role model of positive change that we can use in our world today."

A Window into the World of Catlett

The images included in the exhibit, as well as the source material, provide a window into the fascinating artistry of Elizabeth Catlett. Her depictions of women portray enduring strength, grinding despair, joyous exuberance, uncompromising determination, meditative introspection, and far more. Within her cast of characters are mission-driven heroic figures like Harriet Tubman, as well as anonymous working women lost in somber thought. Known for her "social realism", Elizabeth Catlett was heavily influenced by African and Mexican art traditions (in fact, the woodblock prints that inspired the rug hookers were done in Mexico in 1947). Her lifelong wish was to create work that is "spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually rewarding...to provoke thought and prepare us for change." Catlett was a visionary, an advocate, an activist, wife, homemaker, sister and artist.

Although the 200-year history of rug hooking in North America seems to suggest a domestic craft practiced by thrifty women to "re-use what they have" to create something for their homes, current-day artisans have elevated these traditions to a fascinating and narrative fine art form, reflecting Catlett's wish that "art must belong to everyone."

"Lift Every Voice", organized by artist Maddy Fraioli, has traveled to exhibition venues in Massachusetts, Vermont, and Ohio, and a video of the completed work can be found at: <https://youtu.be/L2BoSa28DTk>.



Ponkos chose Catlett's woodblock print of Sojourner Truth, a fellow Hudson Valley resident, who despite being born into slavery, went on to become "a gifted speaker and a spellbinding singer promoting the abolition of slavery and women's rights."

They'll Be Back! Will We Be Ready?

By Dean Irwin

When we think back to this past spring, many of us recall the unusually cool weather, the pleasure of hearing the birds sing again, and the gentle rain in the trees—not the rain of water droplets but the steady shower of caterpillar poop. As tiny black specks fell on our front walks, our outdoor furniture and on us if we moved slowly, an army of caterpillars above our heads munched leaves faster than the hot dog eating contest at Coney Island. They were the larval stage of *Lymantria dispar*, the spongy moth, formerly called the gypsy moth, and last year their numbers seemed worse than ever.

Spongy moth populations rise and fall in a cycle of ten to fifteen years, with big outbreaks like last spring's repeating for several seasons, then shrinking again due to a mix of environmental changes and viral diseases which target the moths. While it's impossible for us to eliminate spongy moths entirely next spring, there are some techniques used in other locales that have been proven to reduce their numbers. Here's what we can do:

September and October: The Fall Egg Hunt

Look at the tree trunks near your home, the underside of branches, wooden surfaces like garages and outdoor furniture for the spongy egg masses that gave the moth its new name. They look like fuzzy oval shaped spots, the color of a manilla envelope. They can appear as single spots or a mass of spots. Oaks are their primary target, but Maple, Willow, Crab Apple trees and many others are also on the menu. Each egg mass contains 100 to 600 future caterpillars, so getting rid of them now removes thousands from next year's invasion. The egg hunt is our most effective way to put a real dent in the spongy moth population before they hatch out next April and May.

Wear gloves because some people have an allergic reaction to the eggs, but they are otherwise not dangerous. Bring a



The distinctive spongy moth caterpillar begins eating leaves and defoliating trees in April and May, but several environmentally safe techniques can be used to eliminate them. These include organic sprays and techniques to capture the caterpillars as they travel up and down tree trunks.

flat container, a bucket and a scraping tool. A plastic tool like the ice scraper from your car is best to avoid damaging tree bark, but a metal paint scraper is fine. A bread knife will do too. Place your small container under the egg mass and gently scrape the fuzzy eggs into it. They come off the tree easily. Try to get into the crevices of the bark to remove as many as you can. When you've scraped one area clean, dump your container into the bucket and move to the next location. Don't do this on a windy day because the eggs are light and will blow away. When you're done, fill your bucket of moth eggs with some dish soap and warm water. Swirl them around and let the bucket sit for a couple of days to kill them. Then strain out the eggs and dispose of them in the trash. Simply scraping the eggs onto the ground doesn't work because the eggs can survive the winter. Snow actually insulates and protects them. But soap kills them.

April and May: Spray, Wrap, and Flap

Btk-- The egg masses we haven't scraped will hatch into young caterpillars in late April to early May. That's when leaf eating, pooping and defoliation begins. There is an organic spray that kills young spongy moth caterpillars; its active ingredient is not a chemical pesticide, but a naturally occurring bacterium called *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki* or **Btk**. It is specific to the caterpillars' digestive tract, paralyzes their gut and kills them in one to five days. This bacterial preparation will not harm humans or pets and has been used for decades. It breaks down and disappears from the environment within a week. Btk is available from plant nurseries under various brand names, and many are packaged as concentrates in hose-end applicators which can be sprayed high up in the trees. Young caterpillars eat the sprayed leaves, become infected and die.

The bacteria are much more effective on newly hatched caterpillars, so spraying is best in early May when spongy moth caterpillars are small, black and thin, rather than the big green adults with blue and red spots. Two applications five to ten days apart are best because not all caterpillars hatch at the same time.

Sticky Bands--Adult spongy moth caterpillars travel up and down tree trunks to feed, so we can catch them by wrapping tree trunks with two bands of duct tape. Choose the same trees you scraped eggs from in the Fall, because they will once again be targets of the caterpillars in the Spring.

Take a roll of silver duct tape and wrap it around the trunk twice, sticky side towards the tree trunk at chest height. Then twist the roll of tape so the sticky side faces outwards and wrap another two times to form a sticky barrier. Repeat the process ten inches below the first band. When the bands fill up with caterpillars, cut them off and rewrap the tree.

You can buy a commercial product called Tanglefoot Insect Barrier from hardware stores, which lasts a little longer than duct tape, but tape works fine.

Burlap Flaps--For that rustic Arts and Crafts look when catching spongy moth caterpillars, consider the simplicity of an 18-inch-wide burlap strip that can wrap around a tree trunk with a couple of inches to spare. Put a piece of twine in the middle and tie the burlap in place, folding it over on itself from the top in a double layer. Caterpillars crawling up the tree are stopped inside the flap and can't figure out how to back out. Home owners can lift the flaps in the late afternoon and brush the bugs into a container for disposal in soapy water.

June: When Caterpillars Turn Into Moths

After about seven weeks, the caterpillars look for a protected location and grow a cocoon known as a pupa or chrysalis, dark brown with a tough outer skin. Inside the pupa, their bodies undergo metamorphosis and are completely reorganized. Ten to 14 days later, in one of the miracles of nature, they emerge as moths. Male spongy moths are brown

and have an erratic, zig-zag flight pattern. You might have seen hundreds of them fluttering around last June, and they're difficult to catch. Female spongy moths are mottled white and larger in size. Females don't fly but remain where they've hatched.

Pheromone Traps--These commercially produced devices are available online from companies like TreeHelp and Arbico Organics. They are hung in tree branches to attract and collect male moths before they can mate with females to produce the next generation. The traps mimic the strong chemical signal or pheromone that females produce, luring males to spend the ten minutes it takes for spongy moths to have a meaningful relationship. Male moths fly into the traps for a good time, then find themselves with other males who can't get out. Not unlike a Singles Bar for insects. Pheromone traps work best when combined with Btk spraying and tree banding to lower moth populations. Each trap can catch up to 50 male moths a day, so they can help.

Late June and Early July: The Final Chapter

Female moths that mate deposit hundreds of eggs on the spot where they hatched. The female moth can be discovered on trees and wooden surfaces near our homes, scooped up with a rag or paper towel and disposed of in the trash. After that, tree scraping begins again.

Male and female moths live just two weeks. They cannot eat and exist only to mate and produce the next generation. Brief though their lives are, the spongy moth has become a very successful species, far too successful. We can't stop them completely, but we can certainly blunt their destruction to our trees and reduce next June's shower of leaf poop. Happy hunting!

You Tube has an impressive array of videos available online that demonstrate the various techniques to control spongy moths. If you enter the search term "spongy moth egg removal videos", you will have your pick of informative demonstrations.

First published in *The Long Laker*.



In autumn, spongy moth egg masses on tree trunks can be removed with a scraping tool to destroy the eggs before they hatch into a caterpillar invasion in the spring. The eggs should be placed into a bucket of dish soap and warm water for a few days to kill the eggs.

ANCRAM ELECTION

(Continued from page 3)

was involved with the Comprehensive Plan while it was being formed. Having run my own business and then worked in supervisory capacities for other businesses, I think that my management skills and my people skills would be an asset to the Town Board and the Town of Ancram.

Town News: What, in your view, are the 2-3 most critical issues facing our town today? What part can town government play in addressing these challenges and finding solutions? Examples welcome.

Boice: I think after talking to many people there are a variety of important issues to most people in town. A great many people are very concerned about the amount of taxes that they pay, and how those taxes are spent by the Town Board. The thing that I hear from the majority of people is that they want to have more input on how everything is being done and possibly having more chances to vote and voice their opinion on the Town Board's actions.

The second concern that I am hearing the most about recently is the fact that national and state politics are being brought into Town Board functions. We all live in too small of a community to not be able to sit down and talk with each other and come up with rational solutions to any problem that faces us in an amicable and friendly manner.

Certainly not the least of the problems facing our community is affordable housing. This is a problem for our community for many reasons. I believe that again we have to come together as a community, talk to each other, and figure out some intelligent commonsense solutions that fit the problems of Ancram. I do not believe following models prepared by the state or federal government will settle the problems that Ancram has. One of the greatest problems than anyone has trying to find affordable housing in this area is finding small parcels of land. This was even a problem when I was looking to

purchase a small piece of land in the mid-80s. This is one issue along with other zoning issues that I believe we could work on to make it easier to build an affordable home in Ancram.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these thoughts and issues that people have been speaking to me about recently. There are many other things that people are concerned about and that I am certain our Town Board will work hard to accomplish and address for the betterment of Ancram in the coming months and years.

Ingram: The affordability of living in the town is most important. Residents who have lived here all of their lives are having trouble staying here, mostly because of taxes. In addition we are unable to retain the younger generation as workers and volunteer firefighters.

Affordable housing has been a major talking point for many years with no results. It can't be accomplished solely through grants or in cooperation with the county. The town must be aggressive in establishing zoning that will permit affordable housing, not as a drawing card for outsiders but for those who are here and wish to remain here.

While I commend the Town Board on holding the line on taxes, they should not be sitting on a \$1.2M surplus while local residents are struggling. It is not the purpose of government to be holding taxpayer money for unreserved purposes. The town should create reserve funds for various purposes, *i.e.*, highway repairs, equipment replacement or building repairs. The NYS Comptroller recommends a two month unreserved fund balance for emergencies, which in Ancram's case would be approximately \$225,000. Note that school district's recommended unreserved fund balances are 4%.

Having served on the Planning Board for 12 years, it has become apparent that while Ancram has an extremely comprehensive zoning code, there are many requirements that make it extremely difficult and expensive for certain applications to move forward. My goal is to simplify the process while adhering to all the applicable laws. Our

residents should not be overly burdened on simple projects.

Lutz: I want my children to continue to call Ancram home. I want them to become involved in the community, rather than leave because they can't find/afford a place to live. We need to work locally and regionally to bring housing costs down to align with income levels of the people living and working in the town. Jobs and job creation will keep the youth within the community. Failure to address these issues will continue to drive young families to areas with more opportunities and lower cost of living. I will continue to support the work of the Affordable Housing Committee, allowing them to explore ways to address this crisis. I am in favor of creating a community land trust to acquire property appropriate for affordable housing or open space conservation and recreation.

I am passionate about natural resource conservation in the face of climate change. These issues are not mutually exclusive, and as such, should be considered together. Conserving or protecting the environment usually reduces climate change impacts. Our planning and zoning laws, which are adopted by the town government, have the tools to help us achieve this. These laws should be continuously reviewed and evaluated, every five to ten years, to make sure they are relevant to our community.

Ancram should be proactive in planning for climate change, rather than being reactive when climate issues arise. We can't predict everything but developing a plan and implementing it can help guide us in the event of a true emergency. In 2022, I applied to have Ancram join Columbia County and Cornell Cooperative Extension in the process of Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Planning. When completed, this plan will provide a roadmap for our community to respond during and rebuild after extreme weather events. Having a plan in place with clear goals and solutions will make it much easier for the Town to apply for and receive state and federal disaster assistance, if needed.

Roche: The number one issue facing our town today is affordable housing, after that I would have to say allowing our

town to grow and still keep it's rural character and last, but not least, adding some type of employment to Ancram. If we had jobs here, our children would stay here.

Regarding affordable housing and growth, zoning can play a huge part in that and as I said earlier, my experience on the Zoning Board would help with insights into these matters. Zoning would also greatly affect any new businesses or types of employment that we could entice to our town. For example, Long Lake Development was built and laid out so well that you don't even know it is there, so, if we can do that type of thing for high-end housing, why not for affordable housing? I look forward to the challenge.

Statements of Candidates for Highway Superintendent and Town Clerk

Jim Miller, Highway Superintendent (R):

It has been my privilege to serve as Ancram's Highway Superintendent for the last 8 years and I look forward to serving another 4 years. I have strived to keep our roads in the best possible condition in all seasons no matter what Mother Nature throws our way.

Working with the Town Board, we have upgraded and modernized our facilities



*Highway Supervisor candidate
Jim Miller*

and equipment, while staying within the confines of our budget. Ancram's road network consists of 55 miles of town roads, another 15 miles of County owned roads and another 12 miles of State highways. The crew and I look forward to continuing the tradition of superior service to our community with minimal impact to our taxpayers.

Monica Cleveland, Town Clerk (R):

I have been Town Clerk and Tax Collector since 2003. I strive to treat every person who enters my office with kindness and understanding. It has been my honor to serve the Town



*Town Clerk candidate
Monica Cleveland.*

of Ancram, the home my family has chosen for 200 years. I would not wish to live any place else. My experience includes:

- Notary Public
- Assessors Clerk
- Highway Secretary
- FOIL officer
- Register of Vital Statistics
- Records Management Officer
- Payroll Clerk
- Elder and Clerk of Session of the Ancramdale Presbyterian Church
- Volunteer with Boy Scout Troop #128 of Rhinebeck
- Recently honored with Registered Municipal Clerk (RMC) designation

2023 General Election Information

When: Tuesday, November 7

Where: Ancram Town Hall,
1416 County Rte 7

Polls Are Open 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

What's On the Ballot?

Ancram voters will not only be electing candidates for town positions, but also for the following state and county positions:

- Columbia County District Attorney
- State Supreme Court Judge (3)
- County Judge (2)
- County Treasurer
- County Coroner

Can I Still Register to Vote?

Yes! Mail and in-person registrations must be received by the board of elections no later than **October 28, 2023** to vote in the upcoming general election. There are multiple ways to register, including online through the NYS Online Voter Registration Portal; in person at the Columbia County Board of Elections at 401 State St, Hudson; or by calling 1-800-FOR-VOTE (1-800-367-8683) hotline to request a voter application. For more information, go to: <https://www.elections.ny.gov/VotingRegister.html>.

**Additional Election 2023
Information can be found
on Page 16**

Creating Community, One Stitch at a Time

By Lynne Perrella

If you enjoy knitting and other handcrafts, stop by the Copake Town Park Recreation Building almost any Thursday between 1 and 3 p.m., and join with like-minded neighbors. The Knit Club of Hudson Valley was founded almost 20 years ago by Theresa Haldane, and the earliest meetings were held at the (former) Saint Bridget's Church for the purpose of teaching children to knit. Eventually, the group's demographics and focus changed, and nowadays the members create beautiful knitted, crocheted, and quilted work that is sold at their various events.

Ancram residents Jane Holdridge and Gloria Kearney, members of the Knit Club, explain that not only does the Club promote fellowship and create a space for people to share a love of handcrafts, but all proceeds from the sale of their knitwear goes to philanthropic causes. Over several years the Club has donated over \$40,000 to various local programs, including the Taconic Hills backpack program, a local food pantry, the Columbia Greene Domestic Violence program of Community Action of Greene County, the fresh food program sponsored by the Columbia County Recovery Kitchen, the Community Rescue Squad, and much more. The Club has also donated handmade blankets to nearby nursing homes, scarves and hats to Veteran's residences, and provided countless items for children.

Holdridge and Kearney shared with the *Town News* some impressive examples of knitted garments by Club members, all reasonably priced to sell. There is literally something for everyone at their sales, and popular items include warm hats and neck scarves for men, colorful cozy cowls and wraps for women, and adorable sweaters and mittens for children. Everyone is welcome to join the Thursday afternoon gatherings, and participate in crafting activities or just stop in and enjoy meeting neighbors.

At the recent Columbia County Fair, Club members demonstrated sewing, knitting and crocheting at the Heritage Building, and spread the word about the Knit Club's two upcoming holiday sales. The November sale offers knitted, crocheted and quilted items, while the December sale adds baked good and soups to the offerings. Raffle prizes will also be awarded, including a large granny-square-style afghan. Here's all the details:

**Knit Club Craft Fair and Fundraiser
First Saturday in November and
December
10 AM – 3 PM**

**Copake Town Park Recreation Building
305 Mountain View Road, Copake, NY
12516**

Any questions, contact Jane Holdridge
(518-329-0631) or
Gloria Kearney (518-929-7682)



Knit Club members will be selling their wares at the holiday sales in November and December, with all proceeds going to help local organizations and causes. Newcomers are welcome to stop by on Tuesday afternoons from 1-3 p.m. when the group gathers.

Scarves, hats, gloves, and other artistically knitted and crocheted creations showcase the sophisticated handwork of the Club's members.

Hospital Commits to Reopening Copake Rapid Care

By Bobbie Slonevsky

Remember when medical care for a tick bite, or a fall off a bicycle, or a sudden spell of dizziness was just a short ride from Ancram to 283 Mountain View Road in Copake? Columbia Memorial Hospital's Rapid Care facility there was efficient, effective...and welcoming. Sadly, its closure in November 2022 has left southeastern Columbia County in a healthcare lurch. Urgent care is at least a half hour to 45 minutes away, with dismaying wait times where a particular resource is overcrowded.

But take heart. Help seems to be on the way. An unrelenting group of town leaders has collaborated with CMH administrators to pave the way for an eventual reopening—proof that collective effort can turn even the most discouraging story around.

The Backstory

Copake Rapid Care first opened in 2016 after the Copake Hamlet Revitalization Taskforce convinced CMH of the dearth of, and need for, urgent medical services in the immediate area. CMH in Hudson, Sharon Hospital in Sharon, CT, and Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington, MA, were the go-to emergency care facilities, but each of them was a good half hour away. Callan Family Care in Copake provided an area doctor, but was not a walk-in resource.

Rapid care was clearly the answer. In addition to the hospital's own investment, local fundraising plus \$350,000 capital funding in the State budget provided start-up monies. The Community Rescue Squad, an independent ambulance service, offered rent-free space for two years in its Mountain View Road building. And a basic staff made up of a supervising physician, physician assistant, nurse and receptionist delivered care for all the minor injuries and complaints for which an ER was unnecessary.

Over the course of a year, it is estimated the clinic treated some 5,600 patients. Southeastern Columbia County, for the first time, enjoyed the sense of security that comes with knowing we have an emergency medical resource nearby.



Columbia Memorial's Rapid Care Center in Copake was forced to close after the combined effects of the pandemic, staffing shortages, and the loss of its supervising physician made it impossible to continue in operation. Now a concerted effort by town officials, CMH, and other stakeholders has revived hope for a reopening of this critical facility.

Enter the Pandemic

During the scourge that was Covid-19, CMH had an "all hands on deck" approach. Personnel from the clinic were redeployed to help manage the hospital's onslaught of very ill patients. Starved of staff, the Rapid Care had to cut back significantly on its hours.

Even after the pandemic had receded, staff was difficult to find, not just in this region, but throughout the country. Many health workers were simply burned out and sought jobs in other sectors; factors such as a lack of affordable housing and an aging population requiring more medical care created personnel shortages on their own. Understaffed, the clinic's hours remained spotty and unclear. Frustrated residents found it difficult to rely on the facility and the volume of patronage never returned to its former levels. The final blow came when the clinic lost its supervising physician. The Rapid Care could not legally operate without a provider, and it was forced to close.

A Movement Materializes

Callan Family Care was still open. But then came the whisper. Apparently not rooted in fact, a rumor circulated anyway that CMH planned on closing or moving the practice to Chatham, a prospect that would leave the Roe Jan area a complete medical desert. Town officials were galvanized into action.

The first step was a meeting on May 17 of this year comprising leaders from Copake, Ancram and Hillsdale, members of the Community Rescue Squad and Copake Fire Company, CMH's President and CEO Dr. Dorothy M. Urschel, CMH Board of Trustees Chairman Kirk Kneller and CMH Trustees member Hila Richardson of Ancramdale. The goal was, once again, to stress the need for and feasibility of a Rapid Care facility in our area and to work with CMH to get it.

A persuasive presentation emphasized that: 25 percent of Columbia County's

(Continued on page 12)

RAPID CARE

(Continued from page 11)

population lives within 10 miles of Copake; 40 percent of that population is over 60, the age category requiring the most medical care. In addition to our permanent residents, the area attracts a large transient population, including 278,000 annual visitors to Taconic State Park and 125,000 to Catamount. Our Roe Jan neighborhood also has many second-home owners, campsites, and short-term rentals. In short, not only is there a compelling need for medical services east of the Taconic, the area has the wherewithal to richly support such an enterprise.

The Effort Expands

Since then, two more meetings have taken place and the towns of Gallatin and Taghkanic have joined the campaign. CMH has confirmed that Dr. Dorinda Midwood at Callan Family Care will continue to provide primary care by appointment at 283 Mountain View

Road (Monday–Thursday, 8 am to 4 pm, 518-329-3900), and Dr. Urschel has published a public statement in *The Columbia Paper* committing to reopening the Rapid Care Center, pending the recruitment of sufficient staff. “The hospital never wanted to close anything,” she explains. “Our mission is to supply comprehensive and quality care to all the communities we serve.”

To that end, many different people have undertaken many different tasks. A recruitment ad soliciting the services of a Physician Assistant or Nurse Practitioner and extolling upstate New York’s lifestyle has been created and placed in publications locally and nationwide, as well as on social media. CMH is working on budget support for the facility. In addition, the “team” has garnered the support of Assemblywoman Didi Barrett and State Senator Michelle Hinchey amid hopes that we can tap into government healthcare funds.

As it turns out, southeastern Columbia County does not qualify for the federal designation “Health Professional Shortage Area,” which would give rise

to money to set up the medical facility; nor is CMH’s financial situation precarious enough to be eligible for other federal dollars. Nevertheless, Barrett is convinced there is another way besides securing a grant or budget allocation, both of which only provide money on a one-time basis. She is researching donors for a possible endowment that could pay out an annual sum for a provider. Allied with this idea, CMH’s Foundation is considering the establishment of a fund that people, small or large donors, could contribute to.

There is a bit more work to do. Yet everyone involved in the project is now convinced that a well-publicized facility with regular hours could work and even be profitable. Will it happen? Given the determination and hard work already brought to bear, optimism is running high. Says Copake Town Supervisor Jeanne Mettler, “I am very proud of the coalition of five towns which has come together to insist on the accessibility of health care in this rural area...and we are hopeful that Copake Rapid Care will open its door again by the end of the year.”

The Five-Towns Team: Dedicated to Making Health Care Accessible

Copake

- Jeanne E. Mettler, *Town Supervisor*
- Tom Goldsworthy, *Copake Economic Development Advisory Committee, Chair*
- Larry Singer, *Copake Economic Development Advisory Committee, member*
- Rus Davis, *Clausson-Raught Community Rescue Squad, Board President*

Ancram

- Bonnie Hundt, *Town Board member*
- Amy Gold, *Town Board member*

Hillsdale

- Chris Kersten, *Town Supervisor*
- Tom Carty, *Deputy Supervisor*

Taghkanic

- Elizabeth Allison Craig, *Town Board member*
- Perry Ascher, *Resident (authorized by Town Superintendent and Board to participate)*

Gallatin

- John C. Reilly, *Town Supervisor*
- Lisa DeLeeuw, *Town Clerk*

What Is Lurking in *Your* Backyard?

Emerging Invasive Pest Species

By Colleen Lutz

Many native and rare species reside within New York's diverse habitats; however, they are impacted by ever-changing threats to their existence. Land-use changes, habitat loss, climate change, and **invasive species** are some of the many challenges these species face. According to an August 2022 publication by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and Department of Interior, the annual estimated economic and health-related costs of invasive species in the US is roughly \$21,000,000,000. But first...

What Are Invasive Species?

Invasive species are non-native species that can cause socioeconomic and ecological harm on the native species and habitats in the area that they invade. Most invasive species could be defined as generalists, meaning that they can thrive in a variety of locations and conditions. However, some invasives are specialists, and can damage or remove a specific native species from the landscape.

They are well adapted to out compete their native counterparts. Have you ever noticed that, in early spring, the under-story, or shrubs layer in a forest is dominated by invasive plants and shrubs, like Japanese honeysuckle and garlic mustard? They are adapted to begin growth and bloom before many native shrubs, jump-starting and maximizing their growth throughout the season.

How Are They Spread?

Invasive species can be spread by traditional methods, such as wind and water, but humans and animals can also increase the rate of spread. Many forest insect pests have been found to hitch a ride on or in wooden shipping crates from all over the world. Firewood transported more than 50 miles from its origin can harbor and spread pests across the region. Horticultural enthusiasts have



Adult elm zigzag sawflies lay eggs into the serrated edges of elm leaves. Once hatched, the larvae take up to 18 days to develop, during which time they feed on the elm leaves, leaving the distinct zigzag pattern shown here.

imported non-native species for centuries to be planted in landscaping and gardens, only to find out that without native predators, these imported populations can quickly become out of control.

What Can We Do?

Limit your landscaping and gardening to native species or purchase native seed mixes (Northeast or New England). If you purchase mulch or compost, make sure the producer has allowed the product to heat up enough so that invasive weeds, seeds, and pest eggs are destroyed. When hiking, prior to leaving your house, vigorously brush your boots

to remove debris. You may find that trailheads have boot brush stations; use them prior to entering the trail and when you leave. If you are planning to be in a wetland or swamp, it is also a good idea to rinse your boots in a 10% bleach solution. Invasive and native pathogens can be introduced from one amphibian population to another simply by contaminated boots.

Boaters can help reduce the spread of aquatic invasive plants and animals by inspecting their watercraft for loose plant fragments and debris before launching and retrieving their vessel. If your boat has a bait well, it should be cleaned and

(Continued on page 14)

BACKYARD BUGS

(Continued from page 13)

disinfected after each use. If you are travelling between waterbodies, take the time to thoroughly rinse the boat and motor with hot water, allowing it to dry completely between each location. Finally, if your boat is equipped with a bilge pump, empty it when retrieving your vessel.

Invasive Species You may Find in Your Yard

We have all seen or experienced a pest, or two, or one hundred in our environment! Here are a few new or emerging species you may want to be on the lookout for:

Spotted Lanternfly (*Lycorma deliculata*): This showy insect has been plaguing Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and areas of New York City and Long Island for a few years. We are slowly seeing this pest spread into the Lower Hudson Valley, Central and Western New York. This species is an agricultural pest and could threaten many of the fruit crops in the state. They are particularly fond of grapes, which could have significant impacts for wineries in New York State. They also have a co-conspirator in their spread, Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus*). This ornamental tree species was introduced to the US in the late 19th century. It is a preferred host for spotted lanternfly, so if you see Tree-of-Heaven, you might find spotted lanternfly too.

Jumping Worms (*Agrestis* sp.): Have you noticed that some of your earthworms seem to be acting a little crazy? They might not be the naturalized European earthworms we are accustomed to. Jumping worms have made their existence known to us in the last 5 years, but it is suspected that they were introduced prior to that. These large worms have a milky white band, called a clitellum near one end of the body. Unlike European earthworms, this band is not raised. They also move quite differently from European earthworms; they appear



Egg mass
(seen October-June)



1st instar nymph
(seen May-July)



4th instar nymph
(seen July-September)



Adult
(seen August-November)

The spotted lanternfly has slowly been making its way into the lower Hudson Valley and other parts of New York. This agricultural pest poses a real threat to New York's vineyards given its appetite for grapes and other fruit crops.



The jumping worm is far more destructive than its more familiar counterpart, the European earthworm, because of its ability to devour organic matter more rapidly and strip the forest of the layer critical for seedlings and wildflowers. It can be distinguished from common earthworms like the nightcrawler by its darker color and smooth milky white band (the clitellum) which completely encircles its body near its head. If you see a jumping worm in your garden, collect it and destroy it.

more spastic and wigglier.

Another tell-tale sign of Jumping worms is the change in the consistency of the soil. They are voracious eaters and tend to churn through the organic matter of the soil very quickly. As they do this, they leave behind castings (worm poop) which is very coarse, similar to the consistency of coffee grounds. This soil transformation, especially in forests, will impact how our forests regenerate, favoring species that require less organic matter.

Elm Zig Zag Sawfly: This is a newly emerging species which is just beginning to be found in areas around Columbia County. The impacts of this species are currently being studied and information about its lifecycle are relatively unknown. It is believed that they migrated from Canada into the Saint Lawrence Region of New York State. Foresters are concerned because due to Dutch Elm Disease, our native elms have already significantly low numbers, and this insect could threaten what remaining elm trees we have.

Want to Track Invasives? iMapInvasives is the NYS invasive-species tracking database. This all-species and habitat online program will allow you to record observations of invasive species. The information is shared with management professionals across New York State.

To find out more details and/or request a free account, please visit www.nyimainvasives.org

Helpful Resources

<https://www.usgs.gov/media/images/cost-biological-threats>

<https://www.capitalregionprism.org>

<https://www.nyimainvasives.org>

ANCRAM WINTERFEST



SING-ALONG WITH MARK RUST

LOCAL VENDORS & ARTISANS

PRIZE RAFFLE

VISIT FROM SANTA AT 4:30PM

COOKIE WORKSHOP FOR THE KIDS

REFRESHMENTS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2-5PM

ANCRAM TOWN HALL • COUNTY ROUTE 7

FOR INFO CONTACT STEVE OLYHA AT
SOLYHA@MSN.COM



Local
Postal Customer

Additional 2023 Election Information

How Do I Vote Early?

If you are unable to make it to the polls on Election Day, you can vote **early** at either of two early voting locations, no matter where in the county you reside:

Columbia County Office Building
401 State Street
Hudson, NY 12534

Martin H. Glynn Municipal Building
3211 Church Street
Valatie, NY 12184

Early voting is *every* day starting Saturday, October 28 through Sunday, November 5 from 9 a.m. to 5.p.m, except on October 30 and November 1, when the polls are open noon to 8 p.m.

What Is the Deadline to Apply for an Absentee Ballot?

If you will be absent from the county on Election Day, or meet any other criteria for voting absentee (e.g., disability), you may apply for an absentee ballot in person at the Columbia County Board of Elections on or before **November 6**. If you apply by mail or through the online absentee request portal, <https://absenteeballot.elections.ny.gov/>, the Board of Elections must *receive* your application on or before **October 23**. For more information and links, go to the:

<https://sites.google.com/a/columbiacountyny.com/elections/ttps>

Once you have received and filled out your absentee ballot, make sure it is postmarked or delivered in person to the Board of Elections no later than **November 7**.