

**Town of Ancram
Town Board
Regular Meeting
September 21, 2023**

Present:	Supervisor Arthur Bassin	Councilman Hugh Clark
	Councilman David Boice	Councilwoman Bonnie Hudt
	Councilwoman Amy Gold	Town Clerk Monica Cleveland, RMC

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

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

Monica Cleveland, Town Clerk, read a thank you to the town for their support during the recent passing of her grandfather Avery Prope Dietter.

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

Nan Stolzenburg gave an update on the progress of the application process review. She reported that she has finished the checklist and is waiting for comments back. The next step is to incorporate the changes. She has a draft of the responsibilities of the Zoning Enforcement Officer and the Planning and Zoning Clerk. She is sending word versions of the applications around and would like feedback.

Mr. Bassin gave an update on the 2023 Revaluation. 4 out of 5 SCARS have been resolved. None of the Article 7's have had court dates set. Councilman Clark remarked that Mr. DeLueew relates and works with people very well.

Carl Falcetti gave an update on the work of the SIC. She said that there has been no progress on any of the projects. The last meeting was used to talk about ways to reach out to the public and how to get information out. Mr. Bassin said that we have a report from Steve Winkley on the water study that SIC will review and recommend next steps, if any.

Housing

Councilwoman Hundt spoke about the affordable housing committee. The committee is exploring and idea of a housing trust. The tri-town group has been meeting. The town of Copake has recently passed 4 laws that are intended to make affordable housing easier to achieve. She is going to pass these ideas on to the ZRC.

Councilwoman Hundt noted that the area median income is \$68-\$80,000. HUD has a median income of \$103,000 for a family of 4. If a family is paying more than 30% of their income on housing then they are considered housing insecure.

Mrs. Donna Hoyt questioned how much a house is worth that is suggested for affordable housing. Mr. Jack Lindsey spoke about their qualifications for the food pantry in regards to income. Councilman Boice asked how many families receiving assistance from NHN are near the suggested income number for the area. Mr. Lindsey said that because they are in part privately funded, they do not need to stick strictly to the income qualifications. Councilman Boice felt that housing needs need to be based on Ancram numbers. He felt that Ancram needs to take care of Ancram. Amy Allen, resident, spoke. She said that the mortgage industry has a lot to do with the affordability and whether a person qualifies. Resident Santina Teroni said that she does not understand why Mr. Boice is questioning affordable housing. Councilman Boice said that the town may need to look at special zoning. Mrs. Hoyt said that the town should look at allowing smaller lots and smaller homes. Mr. David Hall, member of the affordable housing committee, noted that the committee is working on zoning, people tax breaks, etc. Councilwoman Hundt said that the laws that David is looking for are the ones that she supplied from Copake. Mr. Terry Boyles asked if there is any property for sale that can be used for the project. He felt that a lot of the town land is tied up in the Land Conservancy. Mr. Hall said that the committee has found some property but is not ready to identify it yet. Councilman Boice noted that Ms. Hundt said that the Fire Department had not responded to the Committee. Mr. Boice noted that a meeting on housing was held at the Fire House and that two firemen are members of the Housing Committee. Mrs. Hoyt agreed that the town needs to narrow down zoning and regulations for affordable housing. Mr. Lindsey noted that the town cannot give money to off set the cost of a private home. Public Money cannot be used for private purchasing of property.

Town Supervisors Report

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. **(This was discussed by the board. Questions were brought up about various things like noise, net, fencing.)**

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.

Tentative Budget

Mr. Bassin opened the floor up to discuss the tentative 2024 budget.

Mr. Bassin asked the town board's feelings about the EEP trooper program. Mrs. Hoyt felt there were enough troopers around.

Mr. Bassin asked the board their feelings on the proposed expense on harassment and CRB training. The county can do harassment training for \$50/hr and the company who gave the training last year can do the training for \$200/hr. Mr. Bassin asked what the thoughts were compared to the proposed CRB training for around \$9,000. Councilwoman Gold said that she cannot evaluate the difference without having done the new training. Councilwoman Hundt felt that the town had paid a lot of money on a harassment situation and she followed the recommendation to create a committee, which the town did. She felt the committee is doing good work. She questioned why the town would spend money on an attorney to investigate a harassment complaint and not do the proposed training. Mr. Bassin asked Ms. Hundt if at the end of the investigation, the attorney said that the complaint was not harassment.

Councilwoman Hundt said that the attorney said there "were problems". Mr. Bassin will have the attorney look at the proposed training and give advice. Isylan Connel, CRB member, said that the new training includes inclusion and diversity training. Councilwoman Gold noted that the committee had done an extensive search for training programs.

O&G Industries

The project is appealing the decision and going before the ZBA.

Town Board Comments

Councilman David Boice reported that the fire department landed a helicopter at the town hall this week. It is the second one in six months. Mr. Boice asked about the town putting in a

landing zone at the town hall. He will stake it out and have it so everyone can look at it before a decision is made.

Councilman Clark said that the ZRC will be looking at hospitality uses.

Councilwoman Gold reported on the Urgent Care in Copake. Staffing is the largest issue. She will continue to be a part of this discussion on behalf of Ancram.

Councilwoman Gold reported on the Route 82 and County Route 7 intersection. She is still trying to get through to the county highway department.

Highway Department

Highway Superintendent James Miller was not in attendance as he had surgery that morning. He sent the following report:

Diesel Fuel used: 734 gallons

Gasoline used: 493 gallons

-We have been doing shared services with the Towns of Pine Plains, Taghkanic, Hillsdale, Copake, Clermont, Gallatin and Northeast helping them with their projects in return for their assistance with our recent chip sealing and paving on Roche dr.

-Peckham will be applying a stone dust and fog seal to portions of East Ancram Road where is was not satisfied with their work. This will be done at Peckham's expense with no cost to the town.

-Roadside mowing is ongoing

-Town Cleanup day was this past Saturday. We filled 4 containers, the number of tires brought in was down some and we filled the metal dumpster

-I am told the new Salt Shed will be erected in late September early October time frame. The Town of Copake will be digging the foundation for us with their excavator. We will still need to install the pavement floor in it when construction is complete. We will be doing this ourselves with the help from other towns. UPDATE: The precast walls are scheduled to be delivered and set in place 10/4.

-I have ankle surgery scheduled for 9/21. I will be out 2-3 weeks and hopefully back in the office part time basis after that.

Town Clerk

The town clerk had nothing to report.

A motion was made to approve the warrant, pay the bills and make the following budget adjustment by Councilwoman Gold and seconded by Councilman Clark and moved for approval. Motion carried.

To: 1110.4 \$2,000; 1620.4 \$500; 1920.4 \$500; 7310.2c \$1200; 7310.4 \$1800; 8797 \$2900; 9050.8 \$500.00 From: Fund Balance \$9,400.00

The Following Resolution was offered by Council Boice and seconded by Councilman Clark and moved for adoption.

Resolution #41 of 2023: ZBA Alternate – Resolved, that on the recommendation of the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Ancram Town Board appoints James Stickle as the second alternate member of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Councilwoman Hundt asked if she could ask some questions. She asked Mr. Stickle why it was he resigned from the Planning Board but now wants to be on the Zoning Board. Mr. Stickle said that the Zoning Board does not meet as frequently as the Planning Board. He enjoyed being on the Planning Board but the frequent meetings were becoming a lot. Mrs. Hundt asked Mr. Stickle's feelings about the Zoning Laws. Mr. Stickle said as a member of the ZBA he would adhere to the Zoning Laws as written. He does feel that there could be some changes, but as a board member he would stick to the Zoning Law. Mrs. Hundt asked if Mr. Stickle would also adhere to environmental policies. Mr. Stickle said yes but that both sides need to be open to discussion.

As the resolution was offered already, Mr. Bassin called for a roll call vote. Councilman Clark, Yes; Councilman Boice, Yes; Supervisor Bassin, Yes; Councilwoman Hundt, Abstain; Councilwoman Gold, Abstain. Resolution passed.

Resolution #2 on the agenda will be further looked at.

J Hoffman had a question about the appointment to the ZBA and how it had been processed. Mr. Bassin said that the position had been advertised in both the paper and the Ancram email. There were two applicants that were interviewed by members of the ZBA and that the members made their recommendation.

The following resolution was offered by Councilwoman Gold and seconded by Councilman Clark and moved for adoption. Resolution carried with four yes votes and an abstention from Councilman Boice.

Resolution #42 of 2023: Town Hall Generator – Resolved, that the Ancram Town Board donates the 25,000kw Town Hall generator to the Ancram Fire Company for use at the Ancram Firehouse.

Resolution #4 on the agenda was put on hold to be considered next month. Councilman Clark questioned the wording of Supportive housing. Councilwoman Hundt noted that by passing this resolution it would give the town a leg up on grants. Mrs. Donna Hoyt asked if by passing this resolution would the town be required to offer section 8 housing. Councilwoman Hundt said she did not think so and that the town can choose what grants to apply for. Jane Meigs noted that the resolution supports walkable communities.

Public Comment

Mrs. Hoyt asked if the car charging station at the town hall is free or if people have to pay to use it. Mr. Bassin said that it is free and if the town wanted to charge to use the charger we would need a credit card machine. The town is not tracking how much is used by the charger, but at David Boice's suggestion has installed a meter to track usage.

Mrs. Hoyt asked about the upcoming election and if a councilperson seat becomes vacant after the election, what then happens. Mr. Bassin said that the Town Board can appoint a replacement. Mrs. Hoyt asked if the town can decide that the third highest vote getter can be put on. Mr Bassin said that this current board cannot make that decision. Ms. Mary Murfitt said that in the past this has happened and the town moved forward with an empty seat.

Councilwoman Hundt said that she was thankful that Mr. Bassin put out the note about political signs. She noted that the town residents need to be respectful of each other and that it is illegal to touch political signs on private property.

There being no more business a motion was made by Councilman Clark and seconded by Councilman Boice to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by,

Monica R. Cleveland, RMC
Ancram Town Clerk