

**Town of Ancram
Town Board
Regular Meeting
January 18, 2024**

Present: Supervisor James MacArthur
Councilwoman Bonnie Hundt
Councilwoman Amy Gold (Present Via Zoom)
Town Clerk Monica Cleveland
Highway Superintendent James Miller

Councilman David Boice
Councilwoman Colleen Lutz

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

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

Mr. MacArthur asked that board members and those present silence their phones.

A motion was made by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilwoman Hundt to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion carried.

Mr. Ed Feratto, Town Zoning Officer, addressed the board. He would like to change his office hours from Wednesday and Saturday 10-2 to Tuesday and Thursday 10-2. The clerk will follow the same schedule. A motion was made by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilwoman Lutz to allow the ZEO to change the office hours for their office to Tuesday and Thursdays 10-2. Motion carried.

Mr. Feratto also addressed and asked that the board look into changing the following laws and practices:

- The Escrow law. Mr. Feratto would like his office to be able to also request escrow for large projects.
- That Nan Stolzenburg be contracted to give training on the new building forms.
- The restructuring of the driveway requirements. Fire code is 10% grade but the Subdivision law is 12%. This would need to be changed in the subdivision law.
- A local law to require a building permit to change a septic tank.
- Revisiting the fee list to change notable fees such as the special use permit of \$500 flat fee.

Mr. MacArthur will sit down with Mr. Feratto and Ms. Hoffman to look over the fee list and bring it back to the town board.

Brian Fitzgerald, the town accountant, addressed the board. Mr. Fitzgerald noted that the final sales tax check from the county has not yet been received. He asked that the town allow the

town Supervisor to set up a checking account designated specifically for the Escrow account funds.

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

Resolution #8 of 2024: Resolved- that the Town Board of the Town of Ancram allows the Town Supervisor James MacArthur to open a checking account which will be designated the deposit account for all Escrow accounts established by the Town of Ancram Planning and Zoning Board.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Lutz and seconded by Councilwoman Hundt to appoint Katie Hunt the Deputy Town Historian for the Town of Ancram. Motion carried.

Supervisors Report

1. County Assignments: I have been assigned to the following committees at the county: **Department of Public Works-** This includes the County highway department, Engineering, Solid Waste, Facilities, Sewer and Airport

County Government- This includes overseeing the County Clerk, Board of Supervisors Clerk, Human Resources, Real Property, Historian, Planning Department, Tourism, Civil Service, Veterans Affairs and Fair Housing.

2. Town Committees and Boards

I am in the process of meeting with chairs of the various Town Committees and Boards. I have asked that the Committees and Boards supply the Town Board with a monthly report. This will keep the town board up to date with what is happening on our committees.

3. Open Committee/Board Positions

The town is advertising for an alternate member of the Planning Board as well as an additional member of the ZRC.

4. Training

I will be attending AOT training January 17th through the 19th in Albany. Councilwoman Lutz is attending as well.

Mr. MacArthur also noted that Ann Rader has taken over the responsibility of the Ancram Email and is doing a fabulous job.

Town Board Members

Mr. David Boice noted that he is beginning his ninth year as a town board member. He feels that the town is very divided but hopes that all can come together to do what is best for all of Ancram.

Colleen Lutz read into the record the following from the CAC:

Conservation Advisory Council Notes on the Velazquez Project Site Visit on August 25, 2023

Observations:

Four CAC members attended the Velazquez Project site visit on August, 25, 2023 including Erin Robertson, Colleen Lutz and Jane and Jonathan Meigs. We witnessed an oversized, extremely large construction road that climbed up the hill and steep slopes at grades over 10-12% in several sections. We also witnessed many sections of the construction road that showed much erosion with diagonal erosion cuts present along the road that clearly have carried rain water, dirt, and stones down the hillside.

There did not appear to be appropriate space left for turnarounds for fire trucks and emergency vehicles.

There were numerous SWPPP violations including no regular logbook on site over much the duration of this project which would have noted dates of the work and weekly inspections. In addition to obvious and substantial erosion, there was no evidence of any stabilization of the massive steep cuts that had been made to the hillsides along the road. The contractor who met with us noted that there had not been any active work on the site since April, 2022.

There was particularly bad erosion at the hairpin turn near the top of the road where it was clear that water had been cascading down the hillside, directed towards a stream.

Apparently, there had been no permit for a trailer near the top of the road. In addition, Mr. Velazquez had the contractor extend an additional section of road (not approved by the PB) at a very steep grade for the placement of a trailer near the building site. This additional road section veered off and above the PB approved driveway near the top.

This construction road clearly went beyond and ignored the parameters which had been set by the PB. With PB approval, trees had been marked by CAC members which would have limited tree cutting. Although some trees were spared in siting the road, other marked trees were cut down in preparation for road construction and later chipped and ground.

Recommendations:

At a minimum and as a temporary emergency measure, hay should be dispersed along sides of the road to encourage growth of vegetation which might reduce erosion and help to stabilize banks. This dispersal should occur as soon as possible to allow for growth or vegetation well before winter.

Hay bales should be placed where there is evidence of erosion along the sides of the road, near hairpin turns, and at all vulnerable turn areas.

Check to see if there is an as-built survey for this project.

It is unclear if the final driveway would ever meet SWPPP guidelines. But what we currently have is a neglected construction road that has been abandoned for well over a year, so that now it truly is an unstable cut up the hillside with significant erosion.

We highly recommend that George Schmidt, the town engineer, be retained to examine any plans to mitigate this disruptive and negligent road project and to ensure that going forward all construction and work will repair and remediate the extensive damage. Mr. Schmidt would also ensure that SWPPP requirements are upheld and met. We suggest that due to his abandonment of the project and of PB guidelines with the resulting damage to the hillside, that Mr Velazquez should be charged for the town engineer's work and report.

Councilman Boice asked why this has been allowed to get this far and why Mr. Feratto has not addressed this. Ms. Meigs said that this has been before the planning board. Mr. MacArthur felt

Mr. Feratto should investigate this. Mr. MacArthur said he will address this with Mr. Feratto and bring more info back to the town board. Mr. Jim Stickle said that this is a building department issue.

Councilwoman Gold spoke about the Copake Rapid Care. She said that they are still in the outreach process but are planning on opening in 2024. \$125,000 has been collected so far. Letters went out to all Town Supervisors. The group is looking to receive \$25,000 from Ancram. Councilwoman Hundt would like to see what other towns are giving. Councilman Boice felt that this should go to a vote like the library. Ms. Hundt noted that this, unlike the library, would be a one time thing. Ms. Sharon Cleveland asked what this money would be going towards. Ms. Gold said it was to be used to get the facility up and running. It was noted by a resident that the facility can easily close again. Ms. Jane Plasman said that prior to the 414, the town donated to the library \$5,000 to \$10,000. Rapid care is a non for profit so if they do not open, the money will be returned. Mr. MacArthur will look into this more and report back.

Ms. Gold reported on the 82 and 7 intersection. She noted that Mr. MacArthur had spoken to the owners of the property on the corner with the staircase. They are in agreement to allow the town to move the staircase and carve back the corner. The next step would be a permit from the state for a right of way. NYSEG would need to move the pole.

Mr. Olyha suggested in reference to Rapid Care, a member of that committee attend the next town board meeting to present their case.

Councilwoman Hundt welcomed Ms. Lutz and Mr. MacArthur. She reminded people that the Housing Fair will be at the Roe Jan Library on the 27th of January. She would like the town to move ahead with the training proposed by the CRB. She also suggested that the town reach out to the state for a free audit.

Highway Superintendent

Diesel Fuel 345 gallons

Gasoline 387 gallons

-To Date, we have conducted snow and/or ice operations on two separate days in December and 6 so far in January as of 1/17.

-We have patrolled roads for tree limbs following periods of heavy rain and wind, we had many trees down this past Wednesday and Saturday.

-We have been trimming trees along various roads when weather conditions allow.

-We continue to do maintenance on the plow trucks to keep them ready for the next storm.

-We have been hauling in sand to keep our Salt and Sand shed well stocked and gravel to rebuild our stockpile.

-We will accept Christmas trees for chipping beginning 1/1/24 through 1/15/24 in an area designated in or yard by traffic cones.

-We welcomed Bob Wadman as our new part time seasonal employee recently. He is recently retired foreman from County Highway.

-The crew and myself have had a mild case of COVID. We have been able to work through it for the most part as the long weekend helped with minimal time lost.

Town Clerk and Tax Collector

The Town Clerk reported that there were 6 dogs licensed in the past month. 33% of the Tax roll has been collected so far. She also noted that Senior and Ag Exemption renewals have gone out and are due back by March 1st.

Planning and Zoning Board

J Hoffman asked that the town allow Nan Stolzenburg set up a training for the new forms in the building department. She also asked that the town allow Nan Stolzenburg or John Lyons to review the Escrow law.

Camp

Ruth VanWagner asked that the town consider placing a permanent pavilion on Blass Field for the Ancram Kids Camp. The cost would be between \$25,000 and \$35,000. The SIC will reopen the discussion on this project. Mrs. Donna Hoyt felt that this was a great project for the town as an investment in the children.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Lutz and seconded by Councilwoman Hundt to allow the SIC to begin the process of reopening the pavilion project. Motion carried.

Zoning Revisions

The ZRC, Ms. Hundt said, has a couple of good candidates and will be meeting to move forward and appoint a chair.

Ethics

Mr. Jack Lindsey reported that the alternate member of this board had taken the seat made vacant by the resignation of a member. Next week they will be having their reorganization meeting where they will discuss replacing the alternate.

Mrs. Jean Brant asked if the town plans to have an official thank you to Clara VanTassel for her years as Town Historian. Clerk Cleveland and Councilwoman Lutz will work on this.

Councilwoman Hundt asked if Mr. MacArthur had settled on a Deputy Town Supervisor. Supervisor MacArthur noted that he has asked Councilman Boice to take the position and Mr. Boice agreed.

Mrs. Donna Hoyt asked if the town board can sit up in the dias as she felt it was hard to see and hear them. The board will discuss this.

Mr. MacArthur noted that himself and Mrs. Lutz are attending AOT school in Albany this week and needed to return.

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

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

Respectfully submitted by,

Monica R. Cleveland, RMC
Ancram Town Clerk