

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

**Present:** Supervisor James MacArthur                      Councilman David Boice  
                 Councilwoman Bonnie Hundt                      Councilwoman Amy Gold  
                 Councilwoman Colleen Lutz                      Town Clerk Monica Cleveland  
                 Highway Superintendent James Miller

---

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

Supervisor MacArthur read the following statement:

*I would like to welcome the board and the public to our town board meeting for April. There are a few changes that we have made to the agenda and meeting layout after extensive conversations with our town attorney. Going forward, if a committee, board or department wishes to address something with the town board, I am asking that you supply us with a written report ten days prior to the Town Board monthly meeting. This will give time for review and will allow us to place the subject on the agenda. We will be sticking to the agenda of the meeting. We have been advised by the attorney that public comment should only happen at the end of the meeting during the public comment section. We are asking that public comment be limited to three minutes per person. We ask if you wish to address the board, after being called on, you stand, tell you name for the record and if pertinent, where you are from or who you represent. It is our hope that these changes will help our meetings to run more smoothly. We understand that we will not get this perfect immediately. I as the town supervisor, thank you for your understanding and help with this.*

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

Mr. MacArthur asked for a motion and a second from the board to approve the March minutes and have them placed on the record. There was no motion.

At this time, Supervisor MacArthur turned the floor over to the Town Clerk Cleveland. She read the following statement into the record:

I take this opportunity to read into the record my feelings on the matter of making an amendment to the March Minutes.

*Under NYS Town Law the “town clerk.... Shall attend all meetings of the town board, act as clerk thereof, and keep a complete and accurate record of the proceedings of each meeting, and of all propositions” (pg 41) The “town clerk is responsible for adequately protecting the minute book as a public record, while the town board is responsible for ‘maintaining secure facilities’ in which*

*the public records are kept.” (pg 43) Public Officers Law “provides that minutes must ‘consist of a record or summary of all motions, proposals, resolutions and any other matter formally voted upon and the vote thereon.’”(pg 46) “Beyond... (sic) serving as a historical record of the town, the town minutes book serves as the legal record of town actions and proceedings. It is recommended that the information be short and specific; adjectives and editorial comment should not be included in the official minutes.” (pg 46) “Errors will occasionally occur...(sic) Where corrections or amendments are needed, both the Committee on Open Government and the Office of the State Comptroller have opined that a town board member may not unilaterally alter or direct that minutes be altered; rather, minutes may be amended only pursuant to action taken by a majority of vote of the total membership of the town board. Most importantly, amendments or corrections may be made only if the changes accurately reflect what transpired at the meeting.” (pg 51)*

*That is how this book, The Town Clerk Manual, put together by the association of towns reads in regards to Open Meetings Law and the opinions of the Committee on Open Government and The State Comptrollers office lays this subject out.*

*I did not write up the March minutes on a whim. In total honesty, I really took my time thinking about how I was going to handle recording the way the last town board meeting played out. It was my opinion that in being respectful to those on the board and the residents of this town, I needed to do my due diligence. I spoke to several of my Town Clerk comrades in other towns. I spoke extensively to our town attorney. And, I leaned on opinions given by the Association of Towns and the Committee on Open Government. As usual when taking a poll, the comments and directions were varied.*

*I was still conflicted. And I felt like I was backed into a corner and there would definitely be those who disagreed with my choice for excluding certain conversations from the meeting in the official minutes. I will though tell you how I came to the decision that I did when putting the minutes together. At the end of the day, the minutes are a product of my office and I take that extremely seriously. Sometime, down the road, someone will be looking through old minutes and stumble across the minutes of March 2024. Do we want them to see the Town of Ancram conducting the business of this town in, if not comradeship, at least respectfully? I am the keeper of the history of this town and I take that very earnestly. I strongly feel that parts of our last meeting did not need to be included. There was no vote taken. There was no resolution passed on the subject. And so, after much deliberation and council by our attorney, I did as I was directed and I left the confrontation out. I could not in good conscious report one part and not the other.*

*And so I conclude with this. I remind each of us up here at this dais, we sit in these seats because the residents of this town put their trust in us that we would lead Ancram forward. How do we want to be remembered by future generations? We must remember that we are being looked at by other towns. How do we want them to view us? At the end of the day, I’m fairly certain that we all want the same things. A beautiful place to live, neighbors who we cherish as friends, a community that goes forward together, not divided. I leave you with a quote I heard many,*

*many times as a child. "Ancram is the most beautiful place in the world. This is Gods country. Why would anyone live anywhere else?" -Prope Dietter*

A motion was made at this time by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilwoman Lutz to approve the March minutes as prepared and placed on the record. The motion passed as recorded: Councilman Boice, Councilwoman Lutz and Supervisor MacArthur Ayes; Councilwoman Gold and Councilwoman Hundt Nays.

A motion was made by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilwoman Gold to approve the budget adjustment: To \$3,000.00 from Fund Balance \$3,000; Approve Warrants GF4 and HW4; and approve vouchers # GF1838-GF1871 totaling \$22,870.17 and vouchers #HW1018-HW1037 totaling \$24,131.65. Motion carried unanimously Ayes:5

### **Highway Report**

Diesel Fuel Used: 423 gallons

Gasoline used: 525 gallons

\*To date, we have conducted snow and/or ice operations on five separate days in March and one so far in April.

\*I have received word that the 2 bodies for the Kenworth trucks are to be delivered early May. We have taken #39 to Zwacks so they can remove the old body and do the work to prep the truck for the new one. The second truck will go as soon as the first one is returned.

\*I have received word that the new truck chassis build date has again delayed until July.

\*Replaced and upsized a culvert pipe on Woods ext to better facilitate storm water run off.

\*We have been sweeping sand from the roads.

\*We had another round of heavy rain and winds taking down numerous trees and branches on 4/3-4/4. The rain turned to sleet and snow. Some roads were temporarily blocked until wires entangled in trees could be removed. All roads were open by days end.

\*We have begun grading dirt roads when weather conditions allow.

\*We have been doing ditch work on various roads to improve drainage.

\*We continue hauling and stockpiling gravel.

\*I would like permission to attend the annual Highway School held at Ithaca College 6/2-6/5.

Mr. Miller said that he was planning on purchasing a mower for the John Deere Tractor to use along the roads to quicken the job. The mower will be for behind the tractor. Councilwoman Gold noted that the equipment was not on the equipment list. She asked if this was a new or preowned mower. Mr. Miller said it is new. It is in Mr. Millers digression to purchase the equipment because it is under \$5000 but Mr. Miller wanted the board aware that the department is acquiring it.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Gold and seconded by Councilwoman Lutz to approve the highway report. Motion carried unanimously. 5 Ayes

### **Town Clerk Report**

-For the month of March I collected \$40 in fees. 5 dog licenses and 1 certified copy.

-I am at 89% collection of the 2024 Tax roll. Second notices went out April 1<sup>st</sup>.  
-I will be attending my New York State Town Clerks Association Conference Sunday April 21<sup>st</sup> through Wednesday April 24<sup>th</sup>.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Gold and seconded by Councilwoman Lutz to approve the Town Clerks Report. Motion carried unanimously. 5 Ayes

### **Town Court Report**

The Town Court issued a letter to the town board asking to be allowed to bring their records and dockets to the May Town Board meeting to be examined pursuant to Uniform Justice Court Act 2019-a. A signed copy of this letter is on file with the Town Clerks office.

### **Departments, Boards and Committees**

#### Building Department

Correspondence from George Schmitt of CPL Engineering Firm. The letter addressed property sbl#205.3-1-24, Cantor aka: The Tinsmith House. The letter noted that the foundation wall is buckling and will need temporary bracing to take the structural load of the building. The letter is on file with the Town Clerks office.

The Town of Ancram ZEO/CEO Edward Feratto issued a letter to the town board asking for use of a town vehicle to carry out site review and inspections. The letter is on file with the Town Clerk.

#### CAC

Jane Meigs of the CAC gave a report to the Town Board on the Open Space Plan.

*An Open Space Plan for Ancram: Introduction and Request for Town Board Approval*

*The Ancram Conservation Advisory Council is recommending that the town of Ancram create an Open Space Plan to help guide development and planning for the town.*

*What is meant by the term open space?*

*Any space or area whose existing openness, natural condition, or present state of use, if retained, would add to the present or potential value of the surrounding area, would enhance quality of life for the community, and would maintain or enhance farmland, recreation areas, and the conservation of natural or scenic resources.*

*What is an Open Space Plan (OSP)?*

*An OSP would identify the most valuable areas for conservation and protection in Ancram. These areas can be scenic and historic places, parks and farmland as well as environmental areas. An OSP is an educational and planning document for the town. It is voluntary, makes recommendations, and is non-mandatory. In the OSP, we would delineate the highest conservation priority areas on maps as a way to protect these areas and to guide development to parts of the town where more development would be welcome.*

*Fortunately, Ancram already has important documents which serve as a foundation for an OSP. Our Comprehensive Plan states that we will "Encourage farming and the rural, small town, scenic character of Ancram... Develop policies and programs to protect ground water, watersheds, streams, wetlands, woodlands, ridgelines and wildlife habitats..." from the Town of Ancram, Comprehensive Plan, 2010.*

*Our Natural Resource Conservation Plan (NRCP), which was approved by the Town Board in 2015, was developed to guide the town's stewardship of the land and water that supports the people, farms, businesses, and natural areas of Ancram. Ancram's NRCP describes important areas for conservation and protection but does not prioritize them. An OSP would take the next step to prioritize and help preserve those areas. This would help ensure that Ancram meets its Comprehensive Plan planning goals. The NRCP already notes and describes six important Conservation Areas in Ancram. As a way to streamline the process for creating an OSP and to get broad community participation and support, the CAC suggests that we use these six Conservation Areas from the NRCP as a structure for open meetings/working groups where community members would be invited to offer input into identifying key spots for conservation in each area.*

*To lead the OSP process, Ancram would form an Open Space Plan Advisory Committee which would consist of members of the CAC, the Planning Board, the ZRC, present and past Town Board member, member(s) of the Agriculture Council and other qualified and interested community members. We are very fortunate that Gretchen Stevens, recently retired Biodiversity Director of Hudsonia, Ltd. and member of the Hillsdale CAC, has offered to advise us in all aspects of creating an OSP, including designing new maps, researching questions, and producing educational flyers, etc.*

*The CAC would like to apply for grants from NY State, from the Hudson Valley Estuary Program, and the Greenway Planning program to help cover costs for mapping and creating educational materials and to pay and recognize Gretchen Stevens for her consulting services. We would also like to use designated CAC annual funding.*

A motion was made by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilwoman Lutz to approve the forming of a committee to research and put together a Open Space Plan for the Town of Ancram. Motion carried unanimously. 5 Ayes

### Planning Board

Erin, Phillip and myself interviewed Jessica Lovelace for first alternate for the Planning Bd. Having lost Colleen to the Town Bd and Bob Roche to retirement, we are in need for two alternates.

We find Jessica to be an excellent candidate for first alternate, she has had prior Planning Bd experiences and sat in at the April meeting.

We respectfully request the Town Bd. appoint her at the next meeting.

Any questions feel free to contact me.

Joe C

Planning Bd Chair

PS

Please thank Bob and Colleen for their service on the Planning Bd!

The following resolution was offered by Councilwoman Hundt and seconded by Councilwoman Gold and moved for adoption.

**Resolution #17 of 2024:** RESOLVED: that the Town Board of the Town of Ancram does hereby, on recommendation from the Planning Board chair, appoint Jessica Lovelace to the seat of Planning Board alternate effective immediately.

Roll Call Vote: Lutz,Aye; MacArthur, Ayw; Boice, Aye; Gold, Aye; Hundt, Aye.

Resolution carried Unanimously.

### Housing Committee

Councilwoman Hundt gave the following report.

The Ancram housing committee has been very active this month.

As we learn more about the needs of our townspeople it becomes clear that we need to act .

**We are proud to announce that we are officially certified by NYS department of Homes and Community Renewal into the Pro-Housing Community Program!**

As a certified town we will now be eligible to apply for various discretionary funding programs with up to \$650 million available! I think we are only the second town to be certified in Columbia County.

In NYS rents have risen 40 -60 % since 2015 and home prices have risen 50-80%.

We have located a property for sale that we are exploring to be developed for possible rentals. There are many questions to be answered before we can make an official offer. We know that there are donors willing to help.

We are now working with Hudson River Housing to guide us through the process of possibilities. They have been doing it for over 40 years.

We also are being guided by Chris Brown who is the County Task force coordinator with Columbia Land Conservancy and Trillium Community Land Trust..

We have some designated funds to get initial perc tests and environmental study done.

We will report back our findings and progress.

The Town Board members were in favor of the committee to move forward.

### Pavilion Committee

Steve Oyha gave an update on the Pavilion.

*-Initial architectural drawings completed, will need shop drawings for trusses to insure they can bear solar panels.*

*-Discussions with S&L bilders (did Millerhurst barn), broad estimate of \$60,000, but they only do metal roofs. Have asked them if they can do everything else and we can have someone else roof it.*

*-Waiting for a detailed estimate from Wes Coons, gave a very broad estimate of \$100,000.*

*-Have reached out to Double-O Builders, awaiting expression of interest*

*-In all cases, assumption is the foundation will be installed by local contractor (J Stickle and/or others) doing the labor, cost of materials estimated at \$16- \$20,000*

*-Location will be set parallel to current BB courts, which will be refurbished*

*May also paint a pickleball court in blacktop and create a multi-use facility immediately*

*-Work on replacing culverts under the field and adjacent to location of pavilion to start soon.*

At this point, Councilwoman Hundt stated that there are infrastructure grants that the town can reach out to Didi Barretts office to be nominated for. Councilwoman Lutz noted that she has also applied to Mark Molinarro's office for possibly the same grant and that she has done all of the background work already for this.

The following resolution was offered by Councilwoman Lutz and seconded by Councilman Boice and moved for adoption:

**Resolution #18 of 2024:** RESOLVED; that the Town Board of the Town of Ancram does hereby authorize the Town of Ancram Highway Superintendent James Miller to attend Highway School with the expense not to exceed \$1500.00.

Roll Call vote: Lutz, Aye; MacArthur, Aye; Boice, Aye; Gold, Aye; Hundt, Aye. Unanimously passed.

The following resolution was offered by Councilwoman Gold and seconded by Councilman Boice and moved for adoption.

**Resolution #19 of 2024:** RESOLVED; that the Town Board of the Town of Ancram, after passing the 30 day requirement of the permissive referendum, does hereby authorize the Town Supervisor James MacArthur to enter into a Serial Bond with the Bank of Greene County for the purpose of purchasing a new plow truck and two dump bodies.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED; that the serial bond will be for the sum total of \$448,000.00 with the terms for six years at \$86,300.00 a year with an interest rate of 4.30%.

Roll Call Vote: Lutz, Aye; MacArthur, Aye; Boice, Aye; Gold, Aye; Hundt, Aye. Unanimously passed.

The following resolution was offered by Councilman Boice and seconded by Councilwoman Lutz and moved for adoption.

**Resolution # 20 of 2024:** RESOLVED; That the Town Board of the Town of Ancram does hereby approve the addition of Job Abandonment to section #601- Attendance section of the Town of Ancram Employee Handbook,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED; that the amendment will be added to the current version of the Town of Ancram Handbook and become effective at the passing of this resolution.

Roll Call Vote: Lutz, Aye; MacArthur, Aye; Boice, Aye; Gold, Aye; Hundt, Aye. Resolution carried unanimously.

### **New Business**

The following letter was read out loud by Supervisor MacArthur:

*Re: "Tinsmith House" and Intersection. This is the building on your right as you make the difficult turn from Rt. 82N onto Rt. 7N.*

*We are aware that the name "Tinsmith House," is not historically correct, but it seems that most people in town refer to it that way. For the sake of people understanding what we mean, we'll call it the "Tinsmith" House.*

### **THE INTERSECTION:**

*There are well-known deficiencies in sight lines in SEVERAL directions. Even those of us who are aware of the dangers of the intersection are reluctant to travel there.*

*We have heard that the town is exploring the possibility of purchasing the "Tinsmith House" from the current owner. If the town, or a private group of purchasers were to buy the property, it would give us the opportunity to cut into the front yard that butts Rt. 82 and Rt. 7. We could improve the sight lines and make the uphill turn from Rt. 82 onto Rt. 7 much easier. It would be a HUGE SAFETY IMPROVEMENT for all who pass through this intersection.*

### *THE HOUSE:*

*We propose to stabilize and restore ONLY the exterior shell of the building and repurpose it as an Ancram history display. We think that however the Town and Hiway Departments change the front yard to make for safer sight lines, the structure of the house does not to be destroyed.*

*We imagine keeping the vintage appearance of the structure, but design it as an open air "walk in" history building, with visual presentations that tell the story of Ancram as "Historic Farming Community". We foresee a place with a lovely, easy to maintain garden, benches, and informational, weather-resistant panels that tell Ancram's story.*

*This proposal would solve two problems:*

- 1. Fix our unsafe intersection which has been waiting for a solution so many decades.*
- 2. Save a building which has been un-savable to numerous recent owners, reclaim an eyesore and turn it into a handsome and useful historic structure.*

*We ask that the town consider options to preserve this building. One option is that it is directly purchased by the town and then restored by a nominated volunteer group responsible for securing its future through private fundraising campaigns. We think there are many grants available for projects like this. Since the building is in the Historic Hamlet of Ancram it is likely eligible for State and Federal funding. We urge that the town hire a grant-writer to obtain funds to preserve this historic structure. It would enhance the center of our town immeasurably!*

*Sincerely,*

*Ancram Hamlet Committee*

The letter was signed by numerous people and a copy of that is on file with the Town Clerk. Mr. MacArthur noted that he has asked the owner if he will sell it. The board was in agreement to here the communities input.

### **Public Comment**

D. Hoyt noted that there was no parking for the Tin Smith house if it is rehabbed as a town historic site. She also questioned why her building was forced to be tore down and not this one.

J. Kennedy noted that in regards to the Tin Smith project, a Gofund me or crowd funding could be sought to finance the project.

J. Stickle felt that the entire property of the tin smith house not just a strip.

J. Boice asked if the Open Space plan would make building more restrictive. Councilwoman Lutz reported that this is not a regulatory document.

S. Olyha said that for the pavilion project the next step is to find and decide on a builder.



B. Docktor asked if the ball field is the definite location for the pavilion. The answer was yes.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Gold and seconded by Councilwoman Lutz to move the May meeting to May 23, 2024 at 7pm. Motion carried unanimously. The Town Clerk will advertise this change.

With no further business before the board a motion was made by Councilwoman Lutz and seconded by Councilman Boice to adjourn the meeting at 8:15pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Monica R. Cleveland, RMC  
Ancram Town Clerk