

**Town of Ancram
Town Board
Regular Meeting
January 20, 2011**

Present: Supervisor Arthur Bassin Councilman James Miller
 Councilman John MacArthur Councilman Chris Thomas
 Councilwoman Madeline Israel Town Clerk Monica Cleveland
 Highway Superintendent James MacArthur

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

A motion was made by Councilman Miller and seconded by Councilman MacArthur to approve the minutes of the previous meetings (January 6, 2011 Organizational Meeting, December 26, 2010 Emergency Meeting on blizzard, December 16, 2010 Town Board meeting) as read and have them placed on the record. Motion carried with Councilwoman Israel abstaining as she has been out of town and was not able to read the minutes.

Supervisor Bassin gave the following report:

Financial Results: Preliminary December numbers indicate we ended 2010 ahead of Plan. Including the 4Q sales tax revenue of \$56,000, our cash on hand is about \$730,000 – about \$30,000 over where we had expected it to be. Revenues for 2010 came in about \$100,000 ahead of budget, and costs were under budget by about \$130,000. The general fund was about \$90,000 better than budget on the cost side, and the highway department came in about \$40,000 better than budget, even after allocating about \$50,000 of its budget toward labor & materials related to site prep and interior finishing work at the new town garage. Garage construction costs in 2010 totaled about \$450,000, excluding the highway department contribution and about \$30,000 in garage planning costs.

2010 Accomplishments: Looking back on 2010, we were able to get a lot of things done. Here is a summary of accomplishments:

1. Adopted the Comp Plan & set up the Zoning Revisions Committee;
2. Installed solar panels on the Town Hall;
3. Had an outside firm of professionals review the 2008 revaluation process and resulting property valuations, and verified that the process was consistent with NYS guidelines and the resulting property values were equitable;
4. Passed 6 laws: veterans property tax exemptions; term extensions for the highway superintendent & the town clerk; the telecommunications tower; the dog licensing; and the ethics law;
5. Set up the Conservation Advisory Council & the Financial Advisory Council;
6. Switched to a more cost effective health insurance policy;
7. Expanded community communications with email updates, and published 5 community newsletters, which are mailed to everyone not on the Ancram Email list;
8. Built a new garage at the existing site.

Community and Volunteer Activities and Accomplishments in 2010: Ancram's Community and volunteer organizations also had an excellent year in 2010, and added significantly to the quality of life in Town:

1. Jane Moore and her volunteers painted the Town Hall;
2. The Ancram Angels Christmas Gala raised money for the Rescue Squad
3. Neighbors Helping Neighbors, the Ancramdale Presbyterian Church and the community raised money to build a handicapped ramp for the Ancramdale polling place;
4. The Ancram Preservation Group donated the Mary Moon quilt to the Town;
5. The Youth Commission received over \$15,000 in contributions from the Ancram Angels and private donors for the playground fund;
6. Donations from the Ancram Preservation Group and residents allowed the Town to buy a 150 year-old school banner originally from one of the town's school houses;
7. Two residents donated land to facilitate the construction of the new town garage.

2011 Priorities are already underway: While we accomplished a lot in 2010, there are still a lot of things we are working on, and need to get done in 2011:

1. Build a new playground at Town Hall;
2. Convert the milk factory building into a salt shed;
3. Evaluate highway equipment needs and develop an equipment replacement plan;
4. Put Town laws on the internet;
5. Develop an employee manual;
6. Develop town policies & procedures manual;
7. Complete and adopt zoning revisions consistent with the new Comprehensive Plan;
8. Complete and adopt Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan;
9. Develop an emergency preparedness plan;
10. Get a cell tower and improve cell service;
11. Adopt a wind turbine law;
12. Hold a community clean-up day;
13. Review and revise town fees;
14. Develop ways to enforce town zoning and the NYS Building & Fire Code.

NY State Cutbacks Likely: Given the financial situation NY State faces, we can expect Governor Cuomo to take drastic action to close the State's \$10 billion budget gap. There will be financial consequences for counties and towns from whatever Cuomo does. What this means for Ancram is unclear. But we know that we will have to continue to be very careful how we spend town money, and continue to cut back in areas where we can find savings. We should know by mid-year how the State will plan to solve its \$10 billion budget gap, and how that may affect us in Ancram.

Regardless of what the State does, we should plan to hold property taxes flat again in 2012, which means we will have to continue to allocate funds from "business as usual" spending to our new priorities, without increasing total spending levels. With about \$730,000 in the bank, Ancram is in better financial shape than many towns in the county, and should be able to deal with any financial uncertainties in the near term.

Supervisor Bassin asked if there were any questions about the report. Councilman Thomas asked about the County Manager position and if Mr. Bassin felt it was an appropriate time with the State cut backs, to be adding another high paying job to the County Offices. Mr. Bassin stated that he felt that the County would be better off financially with a chief operating officer than with the current supervisor committee management system. The current process has a lack of continuity in that town supervisors can turn over every two years, and town supervisors typically do not have the background or experience to run large organizations like the county.

Mr. Thomas asked if there wasn't a substantial improvement in county spending after the county manager came on board, would the proposed position be eliminated. Mr. Bassin stated that he felt it would and that the person who takes the position would be serving at the pleasure of the Board of Supervisors. Councilwoman Israel asked that in the case that the person is relocating to the area to take the job, she supposed there would be a termination clause in the contract. Mr. Bassin felt there would be. Mr. Bassin also commented that this idea for a county manger is still in the early discussion stages. Mrs. Israel asked for a time frame. Mr. Bassin stated that they would like to have the position and person in place by fall. Clara Van Tassel questioned the \$150,000.00 price tag for the position. Mr. Bassin stated that this figure included benefits and was not comparable to the other numbers mentioned in the Register Star article. The number, he stressed, came from the Association of Counties and that Greene County pays a base salary of \$132,000.00 for the same position. Mr. Thomas made the statement that the tax base in Dutchess and Putnum are much larger. Sue Bassin asked what the operating budget is for the County. Mr. Bassin stated it is 150 million.

Mr. John MacArthur gave a report on his Light Project. He explained that Central Hudson is running a "New Year, New Lights" program and they came to the town hall and the firehouse to inspect the lights to see if they were energy efficient. The lights at the town hall are the most efficient possible for the building. The firehouse lights were older and not efficient and Central Hudson is going to replace them, allowing for a savings of \$1462.00 a year. Under the assumption that the Highway Garage is a new building, Mr. MacArthur did not bring the central Hudson man there. He will have the gentleman return to look at the Highway Garage.

Mr. Jim MacArthur, Highway Superintendent, gave his report. He stated that there was a great turn out for the Garage open house. He thanked the town board and the tax payers for the new building. He stated that anyone who wishes to stop and see the building is welcome at any time. Mr. MacArthur advised the board that he is expecting to get FEMA money for the December 26, 2010 storm.

Mr. MacArthur stated that the Town Clerk received letters from the state regarding the speed limit changes requested. The State will not allow a speed limit to be set on a dirt road. The speed limit will be posted as 35 on Crest Lane. Mr. Bassin asked if the dirt road could have rough road signs with suggested speeds. Mr. MacArthur suggested that he check with the Town Attorney.

Mrs. Cleveland gave Mr. Powell's animal report. To date, one dog was picked up and taken to the kennel, one lost dog with its owner found, and there was one call about horses on Sawchuck.

Mr. Bassin stated that the Town Board will be performing regular annual audits on the town departments. This will happen in February.

In regards to the Wind Turbine Law, Columbia County Planning Board has 8 recommendations for the board to consider. Mr. Bassin suggested that the board look at these and discuss them next month.

Mr. Bassin stated that the county is increasing the Senior Exemptions to a sliding scale of 29,000.00 to 37,400.00. Mr. Leggett stated that the impact will be minimal to the town if the board decides to increase the town as well. Less than 1% of the assessed value of parcels will be impacted, totaling 30 to 36 exemptions. The Town Board will hold a public hearing prior to the next meeting to discuss this.

Mr. Bassin opened up suggestions for the Senior Citizen of the year award. The nominations were as follows: Elwood (Woody) Hoyt, Nancy Bryant, George Wittlinger, Baxter Stickle and Avery (Prope) Dietter. Mr. Bassin asked that if there were any other nominations, to let him or a board member know.

Mr. Bassin stated that himself, Highway Super MacArthur and Jack Lindsey have been looking at Employee Handbooks from other towns and are working on a handbook book for Ancram. They hope to have something for the Town Board in February or March.

Mr. Bassin stated that the board is also looking at fees from other towns and will in the future go over the town of Ancram's fees.

There have been four applications for the position on the Board of Assessment Review. Councilman Thomas and the members of the BAR will conduct interviews on February 5, 2011.

Sue Bassin handed the board copies of the final draft of the Ag and Farmland Protection. She stated that the committee would like to hold a public meeting on February 12, 2011. From there the committee will make final changes before adoption. She stressed that the process has been underwritten by a grant. She also thanked the Conservation Advisory Council.

Mr. Bassin announced that on February 19, 2011 from 10 am to 12 noon the County will hold the first County Farmland Protection meeting at the Copake Town Hall.

A motion was made by Councilman MacArthur and seconded by Councilman Miller to allow the Assessment Department to purchase a computer within their budget allowance.

Mr. Bob Wilcox gave an overview of the justice department. (Cut and Paste)
Mrs. Wittlinger, Court Clerk, turned over to the town board the 2010 dockets for inspection.

The Zoning Board of Appeals stated that they had 9 to 10 meetings in 2010, and got a lot of work done.

The Youth Commission gave an update for the playground. Excavating for the project will begin April 13 through the 22, 2011 and will be ready for the Community build on April 28, 2011. The

Youth Commission stated that they had 68 people attend the Zume Flume trip in August, had on average 20 swimmers in the pool each day during the summer, collected \$2700.00 from the pool in fees for 2010, raised \$352.00 at the community days activities, and had 30 children at each the Christmas and Halloween parties.

Councilwoman Israel stated that there will be a newsletter coming out next month.

The Garage Committee gave a thank you to all of the people who helped with the project and who came out for the open house. It was estimated that about 200 people came through the building.

ZRC

Hugh Clark gave an update on the Zoning Revisions Committee and stated that they are moving along in the process.

Councilman MacArthur will chair the Emergency Preparedness committee. They will meet and update the 2002 plan.

AT&T are looking at 3 possible sites for Ancram and there is the possibility they will put up two towers.

Clara VanTassel, Town Historian, thanked everyone for their help during the year. She stated that the APG acquired the Mary Moon quilt for the town, she purchased the school banner and a 2nd quilt was donated. She also had a lot of success with the DVD and may produce a second one.

Building Manager George Wittlinger gave thanks to all who helped at the town hall this year. He said the painting of the building was a success due to donated money and donated workers. He was also happy with the acquisition of the solar panels.

Mr. Bassin said that the town will hold a clean up day in spring and that he will check with the Highway Department for possible dates.

A motion was made by Councilman MacArthur and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to pay the bills. Motion carried.

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

Meeting closed at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Monica Cleveland

Ancram Town Clerk