

**Town of Ancram
Town Board
Regular Meeting
March 17, 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 Board Meeting of the Ancram Town Board was called to order at 7:02 pm by Supervisor Bassin with a salute to the flag.

Mr. Bassin introduced Lynda Scheer who was at the meeting to speak about the Foundation for Community Health & Dyson Foundation. Mrs. Scheer read the following statement about the foundation that had been sent out to the Ancram e-mail list prior to the meeting.

Grant funding made available by the Foundation for Community Health, Sharon, Connecticut, has allowed the Healthcare Consortium to help residents in the towns of Ancram and Copake get financial assistance for their prescription medications.

In the past year, 12 residents have received prescription medications at no cost to them at local pharmacies. Participating pharmacies are Copake Pharmacy, Pine Plains Pharmacy and Walmart Pharmacy at the Hudson Supercenter.

The program offers financial assistance up to \$250 per month, per person for prescription medications to residents of Copake and Ancram only. Thirty-one different prescriptions were filled each month, on average, in 2010.

To be eligible for this program, residents of Copake and Ancram must have a household income at or below 300 percent of the Federal Poverty guideline, cannot be eligible for Medicaid, and must have exhausted all other local resources for funds. Each applicant is required to complete and sign an application form at the Healthcare Consortium. Documentation is also required, so please call 822-8820 to make an appointment.

The Foundation for Community Health is a private, not-for-profit foundation dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the residents of the greater Harlem Valley in New York and the northern Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. To accomplish its mission, FCH makes grants, conducts research, provides technical assistance, and supports collaborations and advocacy.

The Healthcare Consortium is Columbia County's rural health network and has been increasing access to health care since 1998.

She stated that she would leave her information and cards in the Town Clerk's office and if there is any interest by anyone they can call her personally and that she will sit down and help fill out the paperwork. She also stated that if wanted, she would be willing to have a presentation meeting at the Town Hall or the Firehouse.

A motion was made by Councilman Miller and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2011 minutes and the Public Hearing on Senior, Low Income and Disabled Property Tax Exemptions Minutes as read and placed on the record. Motion carried.

Supervisor Bassin gave the following report:

Financial Report: In February we received \$933,000 in town, highway and lighting district taxes from the Town Tax Collector, and incurred expected levels of spending. Spending on snow removal for January and February totaled \$47,000, leaving us with about \$18,000 in the snow removal budget for the rest of the year. We ended the month with \$1.4 million in the bank.

Looking ahead, the cost of cleaning up the debris and road damage caused by the recent ice & rain storms and resulting flooding will be significant, but at this point is a major financial unknown. We have learned that there will be FEMA aid for the December 26 storm, and that there may be FEMA aid to deal with the costs of the March storms, but the timing and amount of the aid is still uncertain. In terms of dealing with the extra expenses of the cleanup, the highway department will probably be spending most of it's time and money for the rest of the year on removing debris and repairing roads and culverts, and will probably have to cut back on paving to one mile from two to stay within budget. Once Highway Superintendent Jim MacArthur has a chance to evaluate the damage and the costs of the cleanup and repairs, he will let us know what the financial impact might be with and without FEMA aid.

Storm Report: The Highway Department and Fire Company did a magnificent job dealing with the emergency. Everyone worked long hours, with some firefighters not getting any sleep for 48 hours straight. The Fire Company responded to a fire in Copake, and pumped out over 40 basements. The Highway Department did emergency repairs on the 5-6 most washed out roads to keep them open. In terms of emergency planning, we will be making a list of lessons learned to incorporate into the town emergency preparedness plan. The most obvious lesson was that when power and phone lines are down for an extended period, it is virtually impossible to communicate and find out how people are without actually going to visit them.

2011 Priorities: Here is a brief update on how we are doing on our 2011 priorities:

1. **New playground at Town Hall:** The Youth Commission plans to do the playground construction on April 29, 30 and May 1. Volunteers wanting to assist with the construction should contact Bob Wilcox at rbwilcox@hotmail.com.
2. **Implement New Ethics Law:** The newly adopted ethics law will be distributed to all town employees, volunteers and vendors over the next few weeks, and training/orientation sessions led by the Ethics Board will be conducted for everyone subject to this ethics law.
3. **Convert the Milk Factory building into a salt shed:** The Garage Committee continues to explore converting the Milk Factory into a salt shed. Jim Miller suggested using concrete "silo blocks" to line the interior of the Milk Factory building, and Jim MacArthur has decided he can reduce the size of the salt shed to 40x40 from 40x80. These design changes should reduce the cost of the salt shed to under the \$50,000 we had targeted. Jim MacArthur has found a place in upstate NY which can make the concrete blocks and deliver them at an attractive price. Final plans and a recommendation will be coming to the Town board in the next month or two.
4. **Highway equipment:** Jim MacArthur has found two used plow trucks which he can buy for \$40,000, which could replace our two oldest trucks. If he buys these trucks, he will want to paint them, and will use the proceeds from the sale of two of our trucks to underwrite the paint jobs. MacArthur also has received a proposal for a 5 year lease/purchase deal for a new Case loader, which would cost about \$85,000 if purchased new on State bid, allowing for a trade in on our current loader. If we lease/purchase this loader over 5 years, we'll pay 4.5% interest and pay about \$19,000 a year over the 5 year lease period. This recent storm reinforces the importance of having good equipment in good working order...in an emergency, it's crucial that all the equipment works, and none breaks down. We will discuss these equipment needs and how to fund them within the current level of budgeted spending, and what the next steps are, at our meeting on 3/17.

5. **Town laws on the internet:** General Code has started the process of adding all town laws to the web site. I expect them to be done by the end of the year, at a cost \$1750, which has already been approved by the town Board.
6. **Develop an employee manual:** Jack Lindsey, Jim MacArthur and I continue to work on this, and should have drafts for the Town Board to review by mid-year.
7. **Complete and adopt zoning revisions:** Hugh Clark and the ZRC are likely to have the first part of the proposed revision to zoning ready for adoption before mid-year, and anticipate having the entire zoning revisions process completed and presented to the Town Board by the end of the year.
8. **Complete and adopt the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan:** The Town Board public hearing on the Ag & Farmland Protection Plan is scheduled for 3/17 at 6 pm. The TB will make any changes to the Plan we feel are appropriate prior to considering the Plan for adoption as an addendum to the Comp Plan.
9. **Develop an emergency preparedness plan:** We will incorporate "lessons learned" from our March 6-7-8 experience in the emergency preparedness plan, and have a draft for the TB to review by mid-year. We did use the existing 2002 plan, which John MacArthur had recently revised, during the recent emergency.
10. **Get a cell tower and improve cell service:** ATT's tower development company, Mariner, reports they have been in contact with 5 landowners, but jstill have not found any landowners willing to lease them land in areas ATT wants to put up a tower. Bob Roth and I clarified the payments a landowner could expect to receive for leasing land to ATT/Mariner – it's likely to be a maximum of \$750-\$1000 a month, with little opportunity for increases as additional wireless providers add their equipment to the tower. We learned that the cost of a tower was \$250,000 to \$300,000, and the tower developer did not make any money on the tower until the third wireless provider signed up...so there was no opportunity to pay the landowner more than the \$\$750-\$1000 a month.
11. **Adopt a wind turbine law:** This law was adopted at the 2/17 Town Board meeting and has been sent to the State for filing.
12. **Hold a community clean-up day:** Scheduled for Saturday, May 14...details will be coming out a month prior to the event.
13. **Review and revise town fees:** John MacArthur and Madeleine Israel have agreed to lead this effort, and will be reporting on progress over the next few months.
14. **Enforce town zoning and the NYS Building & Fire Code:** I am still looking for ways to enforce these laws without incurring excessive, unrecoverable legal fees for the town. Expect to have more to report in the next few months.
15. **Lighting District:** Costs for the lighting district are running about 12% higher than expected at about \$5500 a year. John MacArthur continues to work with Central Hudson to better understand our street lighting situation and develop plans to minimize costs of the lighting district.
16. **Acquisition of .65 acres adjacent to town garage:** We have received a draft deed conveying .65 acres of land from Tucked in Farm, LLC to the town, and also a draft right of way & easement proposal to permit Dan Slott to cross town garage land to get to the abandoned railroad bed to maintain the flow of water through the RR bed at the trestle/culvert. I have sent these documents to Attorney John Lyons for review, and will propose at our 3/17 town Board meeting that the Town Board approve a resolution authorizing me to execute these documents subject to the legal review.

County Issues: The County continues to work on developing a proposal for the County Manager position, and is still wrestling with what to do to solve the DSS space situation. I anticipate the County Manager proposal will go to the Board of Supervisors in May or June for a vote, after we secure additional information from two or three counties which have this form of county management, and after we resolve issues which have been raised by supervisors related to 1) the role of the BOS after a county manager is hired, 2) how we can be sure the county manager will be able to achieve enough in incremental savings to justify the salary, 3) what improvements in county government we can expect after a county manager is

hired, and 4) how we can balance the authority and power of the BOS and the County Manager to prevent concentrating too much power and authority in one individual.

On the DSS space issue, there is a sentiment among some supervisors that we should leave DSS at their current site at 25 RR Avenue, and buy that building for fair market value, which is about \$1.5 million. This is the least cost short term solution, since if we buy the building, we immediately eliminate \$400,000 a year in rent. As a longer term solution, people have expressed concerns that the DSS building is too small, and that the site it's on is contaminated, so the building cannot be expanded. The County is planning to do a contamination assessment to determine if there is any contamination, and the cost to remediate if there is. After we get the results of the contamination assessment, a solution to the DSS space situation will probably be reached by mid- summer, as the lease on the current site ends in late August.

Highway Superintendent MacArthur stated that the Highway department still is working to clean up the roads from the ice storm and the wash outs. Councilman Thomas told Mr. MacArthur that the Highway department has done a good job on the clean up.

Town Clerk Cleveland stated that she has purchased a new vacuum for the Town Hall, as the salt had ate the belts in the current one.

Mr. Bassin reported that Mr. Notro, retired state comptroller employee, had completed his Supervisor Audit. Mr. Bassin stated that Mr. Notro felt the town looked to be in good shape. There were a few suggestions and Mr. Bassin will make them available when the official report is received.

Councilman MacArthur gave a report on the Lighting District. He stated that he received a map from Central Hudson. There are 31 lights in the town. 24 appear on one bill for the lighting district. On a second bill are listed seven lights, four of which are in the district. There are two lights on this bill in Ancram and one in Boston Corners. The feeling of the board was to leave the lighting district as is for now.

Councilman MacArthur and Councilwoman Israel will meet to discuss going through the town fee schedule.

Councilwoman Israel stated that concerning the Senior Citizen of the Year award, the town has until March 25, 2011 to send the recommendations to the County.

In regards to the employee handbook, Jack Lindsey is making the final edits.

Mr. Mike Citrin stated that the town is developing new laws but that the penalties have no teeth. He suggested that the offenders should be warned that their names will be listed in the paper. Mr. Bassin stated that the fines for many of these laws were set years ago and have to be looked at and updated. He said that this is on the list of priorities and he is discussing it with the lawyers. Mr. Lindsey stated that according to the Association of Towns the towns can enact an ordinance to increase a fine and that the legal expenses incurred for the proceedings of a violation can then be a part of the given fine.

Mr. Bassin stated that the board has to make a decision on the question of placing Jerry Roberts on the Supervisor's plaque. Councilwoman Israel suggested that he be listed as the deputy supervisor so that it does not look as though the town had no representation. Mr. Lindsey said he had spoken to several people and that there is a lot of ill feelings on the way that Jerry governed. Mr. Lindsey implored people to look past their personal feelings and look to making the sign historically accurate. Mrs. Libby McKee stated that by being blank, it looks negative on the part of the town. Donna Hoyt stated that even though Mr. Roberts was not elected, he did serve in the capacity of Supervisor when there was a death in the town. Councilman MacArthur stated that he felt that a person who walked out of the town and left it without government for a time, does not deserve to be listed on the plaque. Mrs. Clara VanTassel said that the plaque is exactly as the County has it listed. She stated that he never served in the capacity of the supervisor at the County level. Ms. Jane Shannon asked if Mr. Roberts had stated his feelings on the subject. Ms. Bonnie Hundt stated that Mr. Roberts was an elected official and by leaving the plaque blank, it will look as though there was no head of the board when in fact there was. Motion was made and carried to add Mr. Roberts to the Plaque as deputy supervisor. Mr. Bassin will call Mr. Roberts to see how he would like his name listed.

Ethics Board Mr. Lindsey stated that there seems to be a problem with having the Ethics Law Orientation on Monday nights and that the committee is more than willing to change the night. It was suggested that the committee have their meetings at 6:30 on Monday nights and that the ZRC push back their meetings to begin at 7:15pm. Mr. Lindsey stated that the committee has received their first request for a ruling.

Bid Clerk Cleveland opened the one bid that was filed for the Outside Lawn and Pool Maintenance. The bid was from Boice Home Care services and amounted to \$17,200.00 for the 2011 season. A motion was made by Councilman MacArthur and seconded by Councilwoman Israel and moved for adoption. Votes: 4 ayes and one nay. Motion carried.

Garage Construction Committee Mr. Emil Racenet stated that the committee is working on the project of turning the Milk Factory building into a Salt Shed. It is suggested that there be concrete block panels installed inside the building. Once this is all figured out, the committee will put it out to bid.

ZRC Hugh Clark, Chair, stated that there was not much to report because a lot of meetings were canceled due to the weather.

Community Day Councilman Miller stated that there will be a meeting on Sunday at 4:00pm.

Emergency Preparedness Mr. Bassin announced that Monica Cleveland is typing the corrected/updated plan and that from this they will continue to make edits.

Cell Tower Mr. Roth stated that Kevin Brennan is leaving AT&T. If the town does not have a place to put the cell tower soon, Ancram may come off the budget.

Town Historian Clara VanTassel thanked the board for the new room for the historical department. She announced that the RoeJan Historical Society will be holding a Civil War Exhibit with a recently acquired uniform. Jack Lindsey stated that there was a snag with the Mary Moon Quilt in that Fed Ex damaged the plexy glass. When a new piece arrived, Sheldon Glass will transport it for free.

Animal Control There was no activity.

Community Cleanup Mr. Bassin set the tentative date of May 14, 2011.

Mr. Bassin stated that he and the Town Clerk are working with the company General Code to place all the Local Laws and Town Ordinances on the Ancram website. This should be done by the end of 2011.

A motion was made by Councilman Miller and seconded by Councilwoman Israel to make Budget Adjustment #1 of March 2011. Motion carried.

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

Highway Superintendent MacArthur stated that he has currently been looking for a new Loader for the Town. The current loader is 14 years old and has 10,000 hours on it. It is the town's most used piece of equipment. Mr. MacArthur is suggesting that we purchase a new loader priced at \$86,000 after getting a trade in on our current loader. The interest rate will be 4.5% for a 5 year term. Councilman Thomas suggested that the town look into using the reserve money to purchase the machine and save the interest. A motion was made by Councilman Thomas and seconded by Councilman Miller to pay for the loader from the reserve fund balance, not to exceed \$86,000.00. Motion carried by a unanimous roll call vote.

Mr. Bob Roth gave a thank you to the Fire Department for their work following the ice storm.

Donna Hoyt stated that this bad winter has proven that something has to be done with the intersection. Mr. Bassin stated that he has talked to Dave Robinson at the County and that there is an appraisal being done and the county would like to buy the Tin Smith house and carve back the corner.

Donna Hoyt asked if there was some way that the seniors of the town could be checked in on in a storm or bad weather. Mr. Bassin stated that the Emergency Preparedness Plan will cover this.

There being no more business, Mr. Bassin declared the meeting closed.

Respectfully submitted by,

Monica Cleveland
Ancram Town Clerk