

To: Ancram Town Board

From: Art Bassin

Date: 3/16/2011

Subject: Supervisor's Report – February 2011



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 May1. 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.