

To: Ancram Town Board

From: Art Bassin

Date: 8/16/2011

Subject: Supervisor's Report – July 2011



July Financial Report: Revenues and expenses continue on budget for the first seven months of 2011, in both the Highway Department and Town Government. Ancram's total spending for the first seven months was \$905,000, including \$98,000 for a plow truck and a front end loader for the Highway Department. Cash in the bank as of 7/30/11 was \$981,000. Major financial commitments over the next few months include the conversion of the Milk Factory building to a salt shed (about \$65,000) and the purchase of another used plow truck (\$25,000). Based on forecast revenue and spending for the rest of the year, we still expect we will end the year with about \$500,000 in the bank.

Town Projects, Activities & Issues

1. **Zoning Revisions:** We will schedule a public hearing on the second package of amendments to the 1972 Zoning Ordinance for 9/12 at 7 pm, and will then consider the proposed amendments for adoption at the 9/15 Board meeting.
2. **Summer Kid's Camp:** The six week Ancram Kid's Camp ended last week. By all reports, it was a fabulous success, and financially broke even.
3. **2012 Budget Process:** I will file the tentative 2012 budget with the Town Clerk before 8/18, and will have copies for you at the 8/18 TB meeting. The tentative budget proposes that we will transfer the \$84,000 EMS payment from the Town to the County in 2012, which is how all but 3 towns handle this cost. If we do this, town taxes will decrease by the \$84,000 we now spend, and County taxes will increase by the amount of the 2012 EMS fee. We would still be responsible for negotiating the annual EMS fee, and will know what this amount is before we finalize the 2012 budget. The major difference going forward will be that the cost of the EMS service will now be part of the county tax bill, not the town tax bill. While there are a variety of other line item changes in the Tentative 2012 budget, overall spending and revenues in 2012 are budgeted flat to 2011 in total. Excluding the adjustment for EMS costs, the town property tax will be flat again in 2012.
4. **Eagle Scout Project:** Carl Jamison has received approval for his Eagle Scout community service project, and will be at the 8/18 Town Board meeting to give us an update on his plans to build a walkway to and around the flagpole at Town Hall.
5. **Highway Employee Manual:** I will email you copies of the final draft of the Highway Manual, and will have hard copy at the TB meeting. Final step will be a legal review, and we will consider this manual for adoption at the September TB meeting
6. **Financial Policy Document:** I will email you copies of the proposed Financial Policy Document, and will have hard copy at the TB meeting. Final step will be a legal review, and we will consider this document for adoption at the September TB meeting.

County/State Issues

- 1. County Manager:** A resolution supporting the concept of a county manager for Columbia County was defeated at the last County Board of Supervisor's meeting. My impression is most Supervisors agree we need a full time county manager to help the BOS manage the county more efficiently, cut costs, increase non-tax revenues and improve the delivery of county services. But the vote last week indicated that the BOS is not yet ready to commit to this decision. Some supervisors are still concerned about spending the money to hire a county manager now, during difficult economic times. Some think we should consolidate the county manager and controller jobs before hiring the CM. Some just objected to the language in the defeated resolution, which suggested that we (the BOS) were not "professional", and some felt that the resolution itself was not well drafted or adequately reviewed by the committee process prior to being taken to the BOS for a vote. A revised CM resolution will be probably be brought back to the BOS at some point in the next few months. But now that the dialogue has started, it's just a matter of time before we get a full time professional county manager to help the BOS manage the county more efficiently. Hiring a full time professional County manager is an important decision, and may be the only way for the County to get better control of its operations, lower our taxes and improve the delivery of County services. We all should be watching this one closely, and encouraging the County to make this happen as soon as possible
- 2. DSS Space/Walmart Project:** The mayor of the City of Hudson has proposed to buy the DSS building at 25 Railroad Avenue and rent it to the County for half of what the county is now paying for up to two years. This could save the County \$180,000 a year. The County has decided to delay a decision to buy the Walmart building to allow time to evaluate the Mayor's proposal. Even if this deal gets done, it does not solve the County's longer term problem to find a home for DSS. If we do not move DSS to Walmart, the process to find a place for DSS will start again, and may take another 5 years to resolve. One option that was rejected about a year ago but which may make sense to reconsider is for the County to buy 25 Railroad Avenue and keep DSS there long term. This may be the least expensive solution for DSS, if a contamination assessment confirms that any contamination issues associated with the 25 RR Ave site are manageable. This DSS space decision is important because it is an opportunity to cut the costs for DSS space by several hundred thousand dollars a year. The risk is the DSS space issue could trigger a consolidation of 450 county employees at Walmart, which could cost the County an incremental \$600,000 a year over time.