

To: Ancram Town Board
From: Art Bassin
Date: August 11, 2013
Supervisor's Report



Financial Report: Revenues for the seven months ending July totaled \$1,076,000, including \$811,000 in property tax receipts and \$182,000 in sales tax receipts. Building permit fees exceeded \$12,000 in July, and are over \$20,000 YTD through July, \$5000 ahead of the \$15,000 full year budget. Full year revenues for sales and mortgage taxes look like they will exceed budget by \$25,000 to \$50,000. Expenses for the seven months ending July totaled \$673,000, or about 49% of our full year budget. Cash on hand at the end of June totaled \$1,058,000. Barring any extraordinary events, I expect revenues and spending for the rest of the year to be slightly better than budget, resulting in a year end cash position of about \$680,000, which is about \$25,000 better than we budgeted.

Town Issues

- 1. Ridgeline Protection** – Hugh Clark and I have been meeting with Don Meltz to better understand how visible each of the designated ridgelines is. We are finding that there are entire designated ridgelines and portions of some other of the designated ridgelines that are either not visible, or substantially less visible than other more prominent ridgelines. We will review this “visibility mapping” analysis at the next TB meeting, and discuss how to use the visibility analysis maps to decide which of the designated ridgelines to include in the ridgeline protection zone and which not to include. I have also asked members of the Planning Board for their comments on the implementation of the ridgeline law. I will summarize the comments I get from PB members for the TB Board prior to the TB meeting next, and we can discuss PB member comments. So far I have heard from four PB members. Two have suggested that we consider going back to the major-minor distinction, one suggests we expand the ridgeline protection guidelines to all site plan and abbreviated site plan reviews, to make the principles of ridgeline protection (rooflines under the ridgeline or tree line, screening, blending, light discipline) apply to all construction in Ancram, and one expressed concern that “blending in” colors would be hard to establish given the seasons change and what blends in in the winter may not in the summer. Based on the results of our discussion on ridgeline protection at next week’s meeting, and whether we have revised language and a revised map to look at, we will consider scheduling a public hearing on the next draft of the law for the September TB meeting.
- 2. Carson Rd Wind Turbine Permit Notices of Violation** – We are still waiting for information from both turbine owners regarding how they propose to mitigate the “hovering helicopter” noise at high wind speeds. If we are able to resolve that issue, we may be able to settle this matter before the scheduled ZBA public hearings in mid-September. If the “hovering helicopter” noises cannot be eliminated through additional maintenance or automatically “furling” the tail at a wind speed lower than wind speeds that cause the hovering helicopter noise, we will go through the ZBA public hearing on the revocation of the permits in September, and hear from the County Board of Health on their investigation into the health issues related to turbine noise. Regardless of how the NOV revocation process plays out, we probably need to review the Wind Turbine law to make sure that setbacks from neighboring homes are sufficient, that the building Inspector has ways and funds in escrow to monitor the quality of the installation, that we establish preventative maintenance requirements, and that we give the Building Inspector the power to shut down a turbine if it is making unusual noises and the owner is not fixing the problem in a reasonable time.
- 3. 2014 Tentative Budget** - The first draft at the 2014 budget, which we will discuss at the next TB meeting, shows a property tax increase of about 4.6%, or \$37,000. This is caused primarily by a \$25,000 increase in library funding assuming the 414 referendum passes, and by expected increases in health insurance and retirement fund payments. I have not budgeted any fund balance carry forward for 2014, which reduces revenues by about \$65,000, but have budgeted increases sales tax and mortgage tax revenues to expected 2013 levels, which adds \$40,000 in 2014. The 2014 Tentative Budget assumes no salary increases, but makes provisions for a deputy historian position at \$500.