

To: Ancram Town Board
From: Art Bassin 
Date: February 17, 2013
Subject: Monthly Supervisor's Report

Financial Report: Revenues in January totaled \$68,000 including \$63,000 in 4Q 2012 sales tax receipts. Costs totaled \$105,000, including paying \$20,000 for the full year 2013 property and liability insurance premium. Cash in the bank at the end of January totaled \$618,000. If we adjust for the insurance premium, we are running about \$15,000 better than the running rate budget. We are benefitting again this year from a mild winter, which requires the highway department to spend less on salt, sand, fuel and overtime. We received our property tax money (\$805,000) last week from the Town Tax Collector (thank you, Monica), so we will be seeing our bank balances increase sharply in February.

Here is a brief update on our 2013 Priorities:

1. Complete the zoning and subdivision regulation revision effort: The continuation of the Package 4 public hearing on 2/21 is the next step. Following the public hearing, we will have a better sense of where we are with Package 4, hearing from the ZRC about where they are with the environmental and ridgeline protection issues that have been raised.

If we are not yet ready to deal with the ridgeline regulations, one approach we can consider is to adopt Package 4 without the ridgeline regs, and deal with them separately. As part of this, we should decide if we want to notify all property owners who will be affected by the proposed ridgeline regs and schedule a meeting for that group prior to adopting the proposed regs. I was rereading the Comp Plan last night, and came across the following ridgeline protection strategy on page 27 of the Comprehensive Plan, which we should keep in mind as we consider the proposed ridgeline regs:

2.11 Ridgeline Protection

Establish guidelines to protect designated ridgelines. Designated ridgelines should be determined by the zoning revisions committee based on their topographical prominence and scenic importance. On these designated ridgelines, locate structures so rooflines do not extend above the existing tree line or ridgeline. Use the NY State DEC guidelines for assessing and managing visual impacts of development, and selective tree removal instead of clear cutting to the maximum extent. These requirements will be mandatory for major subdivisions, and encouraged for minor subdivisions.

2. Improve the sight line and safety of the 82/7 Intersection: The carve-back of the retaining wall along the north side of 82 looking east from the north side of CR 7 should happen this spring.

3. Adopt and implement the Heritage Resources Plan: The Heritage Resources Committee has developed a draft plan, which you have seen, but decided to postpone the 2/21 public hearing until they could do additional research on what other communities have done in terms of revitalization, consult with the NYS Preservation League and organize a series of informal community public forums to solicit community participation and interest, which will be scheduled over the next 6 months. Lynne Perrella has developed a proposal to turn the TH vestibule into an additional historic display area. Lynne is working on this idea with Town Historians Clara Van Tassel and Robin Massa, and will present a formal proposal when she is ready.

4. Adopt the implement the Natural Resources Plan: CAC is working on this Plan.

5. Fix the barking dog and wind turbine noise problems: We will be considering resolutions at the 2/21 meeting to:

- adopt a new dog law which will make it easier for the Animal Control Officer to deal with habitually barking dogs, and
- revoke the special use permits granted in 2010 for the two wind turbines on Carson Road, which appear to have been granted based on incorrect information and possible misrepresentations about how noisy these turbines could be. In applying for the permits, the literature and representations from the manufacturer and a NYSERDA expert suggested that these turbines were did not make noise, and were virtually silent, which turns out not to be the case.

6. Increase financial reserves: We have about \$72,000 in contingency money in our 2013 budget, and if 2013 sales tax revenues come in at 2012 levels, we have another \$40,000 opportunity. So far, we have benefited again from a light snow year. The great uncertainty is what will happen to consumer confidence and federal and state revenue sharing from the fallout of a failure to solve the financial problems facing Washington. If the sequester takes effect on March 1, or the continuing resolution to keep funding the federal government is not passed and there are problems funding the Federal government, the State, County and Town are likely to feel the effects.

7. Keep taxes flats in 2014: Barring a major financial meltdown and a significant deterioration of sales tax, federal, state and county aid, we are likely to be able to keep town taxes flat again in 2014.

Other Town Issues

1. Elect or Appoint the next Highway Superintendent? Jim MacArthur has indicated he plans to retire at the end of this current elected term, December 31, 2015. While I am hopeful Jim will reconsider and stay on, we need to discuss and decide if we want to continue with an elected highway superintendent, or if we want to move to an appointed highway superintendent. If we decide to move to an appointed highway position, we will need to take that recommendation to the voters for a referendum.

2. Town Management Initiatives: Town Highway Superintendent Jim MacArthur has conducted a two-hour workplace harassment training program, using outside consultants. He is planning to conduct safety training and to implement a staff performance appraisal system. I plan to share the harassment training materials with all town departments and employees, and after the TB reviews the appraisal forms, we will adapt the highway department appraisal forms to other town departments.

County Issues

1. Financial Trends: County surpluses (2006-2009) have turned into deficits (2010-2013). I prepared this County summary using County financial information from 2006 – 2011 posted on Open Book NY, the NYS Comptroller's data base of municipal financial data, and the County budgets for 2012 and 2013. This analysis indicates that the County generated \$16 million in total surpluses between 2006 and 2009. Deficits totaling \$26 million from 2010 through 2013 will push the cumulative 8 year deficit to a negative \$7 million.

| Year | Revenues \$million | Expenses \$million | Surplus+ Deficit- \$million |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 06 | 113 | 105 | +8 |
| 07 | 131 | 123 | +8 |
| 08 | 128 | 128 | --- |
| 09 | 130 | 127 | +3 |
| 10 | 132 | 139 | -7 |
| 11 | 137 | 144 | -7 |
| 12Bud | 139 | 144 | -5 |
| 13Bud | 148 | 155 | -7 |
| 8 Year total deficit | | | -7 |

2. New County Cost Control Committee: BOS Chair Pat Grattan appointed a new committee at the last BOS meeting to focus on cost control. The new committee will be chaired by Rick Keavaney, Canaan Supervisor, and includes Grattan, me, County Treasurer PJ Keeler and County Controller Ron Caponera. No meeting has been scheduled yet.