To: Ancram Town Board
From: Art Bassin Art
Date: May 12, 2013
Supervisor's Report

Financial Report: Revenues for the four months ending April totaled $950,000, including $811,000 in property tax receipts and $120,000 in sales tax receipts, received in January and April. Full year revenues look like they will exceed budget by $25,000 to $50,000 due to higher than budgeted sales tax and mortgage tax receipts. Costs for the four months ending April totaled $392,000, or about 29% of our full year budget. Spending for the first four months is running slightly better than budget. Cash in the bank at the end of April totaled $1,220,000, with $8,000 checks outstanding but not yet cleared.

May 16 Town Board Meeting

1. **ZRC Package 5 -** We will hold a public hearing on the revised ridgeline protection regulations at 6:30, and consider adopting a resolution amending our January 17, 2013 Negative Declaration to reflect the changes in the proposed ridgeline protection regulations. We will defer adopting the revised ridgeline regulations until our June 20 meeting, to give the County Planning Board time to consider and respond to our revised proposed regulations.

2. **Wind Turbine Permit Revocation** – The Zoning Enforcement Officer issued Notices of Violation on the Gershon and Crocco wind turbines on Carson Rd on April 17, finding that the special use permits issued for the wind turbines in 2010 had been issued based on misrepresentations and a failure to disclose relevant information about noise problems during certain wind conditions, which are grounds, as stated in the permits, for a revocation of these special use permits. The ZEO has referred these NOVs to the Zoning Board of Appeals, which will decide on the revocation. The turbine owners have 60 days to appeal the ZEO finding. ZBA has set separate public hearings on each case for mid-June. Mr. Crocco has been in contact with the Department of Ag & Markets to secure a determination that his operation is a farm, and as such, his wind turbine is a "farm structure" and not subject to Town zoning. We do not believe Mr. Crocco's turbine will be granted "farm structure" status, because it produces more than 110% of the farm's electrical needs, which normally would exclude a farm turbine from "farm structure" status. Mr. Gershon is working with Bergey, the turbine manufacturer, to analyze the reasons for the higher than expected noise problems and is looking for "fixes" to mitigate the turbine noise.

3. **82/7 Intersection –** Work has started, and should be completed in the next few weeks.

4. **Grievance Day** – Grievance Day will be May 28, from 10-12 am and 6-8 pm. Assessor Ken Leggett mailed about 630 assessment change notices last week, lowering assessed values on properties under $400,000 by an average of 4-5%, with values for some manufactured homes being reduced as much as 10%. These assessed value changes result from the Assessors review of market value trends during the 12 month period ending July 1, 2012, which is the period that NYS uses to set values for July 1, 2013. Anyone who feels his assessed value is too high, or anyone interested in reviewing the Assessor's property card to see how your property is assessed should contact assessor Leggett at 329-6512 x 4.

County Issues

1. **Cash Flow –** The County's cash situation has become a major topic of concern over the past 6 months. Over the four years between 2010 and 2013 the county appears to have run a negative cash flow deficit of about $30 million, which effectively eliminated the County's cash position by the end of 2012. In 2013, the County could be facing a $10 to $15 million cash flow deficit, and run out of cash by November. There is an effort underway to increase revenues and reduce spending to

mitigate this cash flow problem. Causes for this growing cash flow deficit include a sharp increase in employee retirement costs, a dramatic increase in delinquent property tax receivables, a slowdown in State and federal reimbursements for mandated programs, and an inadequate understanding and tracking of cash flow. Now that the magnitude of the cash flow problems has become more widely known, non-mandated County programs that have been losing substantial sums of money for the past five years are under review for possible ways to reduce the losses, or exit the activities entirely. The County is also planning to accelerate its efforts to collect on delinquent property taxes, and is considering capping the Town share of the sales tax and raising property taxes in 2014.

2. **Pine Haven Nursing Home –** The County nursing home, Pine Haven, is one of five nursing homes in the County. Pine Haven has been losing $2 million to $3 million a year for the past few years. About 5 years ago a project was initiated to determine what to do with Pine Haven long term. One option was to sell it, and get out of the business. If we decided to stay in the business, we could either outsource the management of the facility to a professional management company to reduce costs and losses, or continue to run it as a County, looking for the same reductions of costs and losses internally. And regardless of the management structure we decide on, the facility needed upgrades, and the options are to either build a new facility at a cost of about $35 to $40 million, or to renovate what we have, at a cost of about $5 to $10 million over the next five years. The committee that has been working on the Pine Haven project has recommended we invest in a new facility, which will cost between $35 million to $40 million, with interest on the borrowing to build the facility adding another $12 to $15 million over 20 years. While the County would have to borrow the funds to build the facility, NYS would reimburse most of the cost, leaving the County with a construction & debt servicing cost of about $4 million to $6 million over the next 20 years. If Pine Haven continues to lose money on an operating basis at the rate of $1 to $2 million a year, that will add another $20 million to $40 million to the cost of the facility to the County over the next 20 years. There are some analysts who think the State and Federal payments to county nursing home facilities will continue to drop over time, and the cost of operating a County facility will always higher than a private operator, because of the higher costs of county salaries and benefits. The combination of lower reimbursement rates and higher operating costs may put the county nursing facility at a long term competitive disadvantage. Those in favor of operating a County facility cite higher quality care and the need to provide nursing home beds to an aging County population. Over the next few months the BOS will be wrestling with these issues, and will have to decide at some point, whether we build new, renovate, or sell. An immediate issue will be up for a vote in a couple of weeks concerning whether or not to spend $1.2 million on architectural work to get accurate cost estimates for how much building a new facility will be. If we decide to spend the $1.2 million to get the architectural work done and then decide to cancel the project, it appears the County will be reimbursed for most of the $1.2 million, and will only have a $14,000 out of pocket cost.