

Caroline Town Board Meeting Minutes of April 17, 2024

A Public Hearing on the Purchase of a Proposed Recreational Trail Easement and the Town Board Business Meeting was held hybrid at the Caroline Town Hall and was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Supr. Witmer

Attendance:

Supervisor Mark Witmer
Councilmember Cal Snow
Councilmember Tim Murray
Councilmember Kate Kelley-Mackenzie
Councilmember Michele Brown

Also Present:

Recording Secretary:

Jessie Townsend, Town Clerk

Public Present: 36 **Zoom:** 18

Supr. Witmer opened the meeting with a Pledge to the Flag.

Before opening the Public Hearing Supr. Witmer gave a brief statement outlining tonight's Public Hearing to receive comments on the purchase of the proposed Recreational Trail Easement. He further described the next steps should the Board approve the purchase, which include applications for grant funding and the formation of a Trail Advisory Committee. Also noted, of the total 7.8-mile extension, 5.1 miles are in the Town of Caroline.

Public Hearing on the Purchase of a Proposed Recreational Trail Easement and Entering a 3-year Memorandum of Understanding with the Towns of Ithaca, Danby, and Dryden for Development and Maintenance of a 7.8 Mile Extension of the South Hill Recreation Way Trail

Supr. Witmer opened the Public Hearing at 7:11 p.m.

16 people spoke in favor of the purchase of an Easement from NYSEG for the proposed extension to the South Hill Recreation Way Trail.

6 people spoke in opposition to the proposed Recreational Trail extension.

2 people shared general concerns surrounding the trail extension due to cost, liability, potential hazardous materials, and other general upkeep.

Supr. Witmer closed the Public Hearing at 8:02 p.m. and opened the Business Meeting.

Zoning Board of Appeals Interviews

Dave Makar – Served on the Town of Dryden board for many years when he resided there. Supports the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and zoning/planning.

Robin Cisne – Served on the ZBA in the Village of Cayuga Heights for about 18 years.

Supr. Witmer described that he expects the meetings to be infrequent. Upcoming training in May.

Committee Reports

Supr. Mark Witmer – Supr. Witmer provided the following:

Correspondence of Note:

- Mailed letters to forty property owners residing along the proposed Caroline extension of the South Hill Recreation Way Trail notifying them of the project and the public hearing.
- Five comments received very supportive of proposed trail extension.

Supervisor's Notes:

- Countywide Rapid Emergency Medical Response Program began operation on April 2.
- Superintendent Spencer and I met with the LaBella team on April 15 to discuss the revised functional program for the Highway Facilities Project.
- Code Officer Cliff Babson has resigned because of increased obligations of his other job, effective today. We wish him well in his other endeavor.
- The contract for our Old Town Hall Renovation Project with the New York State Historic Parks Office is nearly complete.
- Energy Independent Caroline is interviewing Community Solar providers and will soon be making a recommendation to us for our town utility accounts and a community campaign.
- Working with Ithaca, Dryden, and Danby on identifying trail funding opportunities.
- Broadband update. We should hear about our ConnectAll grant application very soon. Tompkins County is preparing to apply to a ConnectALL grant opportunity for counties to provide service to all unserved addresses.
- Submitted Report of Caroline 2023 accomplishments to Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative (TCCPI)*.
- Newsletter 1 of 2024 mailed and posted to website.

Town Clerk, Jessie Townsend – Tax Collection records have been turned over to Tompkin County – all unpaid tax bills must now be made at the Finance Office on E. Court St. in Ithaca (more info on the back of your tax bill). March Report – Fees collected in March were as follows: 37 dog licenses, 1 impoundment, and 5 building permits. Fishing Licenses are for sale as of April 1st. Beginning in August, the DEC will no longer be printing licenses or tags on special colored paper, regular paper will be used with the option to have them emailed rather than printed. This is due to the State saving on production costs, and eventually becoming paperless.

Resolutions

Resolution 84 of 2024. Appointment of Review Board Members

Motion by: Witmer Second: Kelley-Mackenzie

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby appoints Jean McPheeters to the Review Board with a term effective immediately and extending through December 31, 2027; and further be it

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby appoints John (“Jack”) O’Reilly to the Review Board as the Alternate Member with a term effective immediately and extending through December 31, 2025.

Motion carried.

Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown

Nays: None

Resolution 85 of 2024. Authorization to Sign a Recreational Trail Easement with NYSEG and to Sign an Intermunicipal Agreement with the Towns of Dryden, Danby, and Ithaca for the South Hill Recreation Way Extension

Motion by: Witmer Second: Murray

WHEREAS, the Town Caroline wishes to cooperate with the Towns of Ithaca, Danby, and Dryden to develop an extension of the South Hill Recreation Way from its present terminus at Burns Road to the Tioga County line; and

WHEREAS, this trail extension is on a former railbed which is now owned by New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG); and

WHEREAS, a draft easement with NYSEG has been prepared for this project and has been presented to this Board; and

WHEREAS, an intermunicipal agreement with the Towns of Ithaca, Danby, and Dryden has been drafted setting forth the responsibilities and liabilities regarding this trail extension project and has been presented to this Board; and

WHEREAS, NYSEG has offered to sell a trail easement to the Towns based on a fair market appraisal price of \$36,667, with the Town of Carolines’s proportional share being \$16,416; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (“SEQRA”) and its implementing regulations at 6 NYCRR Part 617, it has been determined by the Town Board that acquisition of an easement from NYSEG for the future South Hill Recreation Way Extension project is a Type II action pursuant to 6NYCRR Section 617.5(c)(39), and thus the acquisition of the easement is not subject to review under SEQRA; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held pursuant to General Municipal Law Section 247; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Caroline Town Board hereby authorizes the execution of the proposed easement agreement with NYSEG for the extension of the South Hill Recreation Way, and further be it

RESOLVED, that the Caroline Town Board authorizes the payment to NYSEG of \$16,614 for the Town of Caroline’s portion of such easement upon closing the transfer and receipt of the executed deed of the easement, and further be it

RESOLVED, that payment of said funds are to be made from the Community Services Account, A8989.4, and further be it

RESOLVED, that the Town pay the incidental costs (recording fees and other similar expenses) as incurred in order to complete such closing, and further be it

RESOLVED, that the Caroline Town Board hereby authorizes the execution of the proposed intermunicipal agreement with the Towns of Dryden, Danby and Ithaca regarding future development, operation, and maintenance of the trail, and further be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Supervisor is hereby authorized to execute said easement, intermunicipal agreement, and other related documents on behalf of the Town.

Motion carried.

Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown

Nays: None

Resolution 86 of 2024. Authorization of Change of Use of Clean Heating & Cooling Campaign Grant Funds

Motion by: Witmer Seconded: Murray

WHEREAS, the Town of Caroline received a grant award from NYSERDA for their successful first Clean Heating & Cooling Campaign of \$5,000 to support installation of Air-sourced Heat Pumps at one of the Town's community centers; and

WHEREAS, the Town has engaged with the Speedsville Community Center and Egg Geothermal on a Feasibility Study for a Thermal Energy Network in the Hamlet of Speedsville as a result of that initiative; and

WHEREAS, if successful, this will result in grant funds to support clean heating and cooling for the residents and businesses of Speedsville; and

WHEREAS, the Town is currently working on envelope improvements to the Old Town Hall to make it more energy efficient and has engaged with M/E Engineering through the County's Business Energy Advisors Program; and

WHEREAS, the effectiveness of any envelope improvements needs to be indicated by an ASHRAE Level II analysis to be recognized by NYSERDA; therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Caroline Town Board hereby redirects the \$5,000 award for its Clean Heating & Cooling Campaign to supporting an ASHRAE Level II assessment of the Old Town Hall.

Motion carried.

Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown

Nays: None

Resolution 87 of 2024. Approval of Vouchers for Payment of Town Bills

Motion by: Witmer Second: Snow

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby approves payment audited vouchers with the following totals for each fund:

A Fund: \$33,032.79

DA Fund: \$33,579.62

SL Fund: \$385.52

Motion carried.

Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown

Nays: None

Resolution 88 of 2024. Approve 284 Agreement for Expenditure of Highway Moneys

Motion by: Witmer Seconded: Murray

Resolved the Caroline Town Board hereby approves of the expenditure of highway funds, not to exceed \$300,000, for paving White Church Rd from Caroline Depot Rd to Belle School Rd.

Motion carried.

Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown

Nays: None

Approval of Minutes

The Town Board approved the Minutes of April Agenda Meeting, as prepared and submitted by Town Clerk, Jessie Townsend.

Agenda Items for May Meeting

2024 Budget Review

A motion to enter Executive Session to discuss Code Office personnel was made by Supr. Witmer and seconded by Clm. Kelley-Mackenzie and carried unanimously at 9:09 p.m.

Resolution 89 of 2024. Appoint Brian Buttner as Interim Code/Fire/Zoning Officer

Motion by: Witmer Second: Snow

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby appoints Brian Buttner as the Town's Interim Codes/Fire/Zoning Officer, effective immediately.

Motion carried.

Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown

Nays: None

A motion to exit Executive Session was made by Supr. Witmer and was seconded by Clm. Kelley-Mackenzie and carried unanimously at 9:57 p.m. and was followed by a motion to adjourn by Supr. Witmer and seconded by Clm. Murray and carried unanimously at 9:58 p.m.

---Meeting Adjourned---