

Caroline Town Board Meeting Minutes of February 2, 2022

The Town Board Agenda Meeting was held electronically via zoom teleconference on February 2, 2022, beginning at 7:03 p.m. and was hosted by Town Supervisor Mark Witmer

Attendance:

Supervisor Mark Witmer
Councilmember Cal Snow
Councilmember Tim Murray
Councilmember Katherine Goldberg
Councilmember Kate Kelley-Mackenzie

Recording Secretary:

Jessica L. Townsend, Town Clerk

Also present: Highway Supt., Bob Spencer and 18 members of the public via zoom

Privilege-of-the-Floor

Bonnie Crispell Hargreaves – Her family has operated a farm in Caroline for generations, dating back to 1850. Her brother is currently working more than 1000 acres of farmland. Spoke in opposition of a zoning law, stating that zoning limits choices that farmers have. They need flexibility with selling land. She recommended that the zoning commission members and the Town Board invite town farmers for their input on the subject.

Elisa Evett – Resident of 46 years. Expressed her gratification with the town's Comprehensive Plan. Neighboring towns such as Danby and Dryden have zoning laws and believes they are working for them. Would like people to be aware of the risk our town has, if we don't have rules and regulations in place to keep the town, we love the way it is. Believes that without zoning, our community is a target.

Holly Magee – Spoke in opposition to zoning. Stated that there were many questions at past meetings that were not answered. Believes that zoning is harmful and gave examples of towns across the U.S. that experienced negative consequences from residents that were upset about the passing of a zoning law. Hundreds of residents are in opposition of zoning. Asked how the board plans to respond and protect against these sorts of situations.

Supr. Witmer responded that he does not expect that to happen here and that the intent of zoning here is to protect all landowners with security of their lands, homes, and ways of life.

John Morse – Spoke in opposition to zoning. NY Open Meetings Law for remote meetings is a choice and not a requirement. Read from an online policy debate regarding the pros and cons of Land Use and Zoning Regulations. He requested that the draft law be drastically reduced and simplified, if not eliminated.

Supr. Witmer – in-person meetings decision was made to remove health risks to the public. He stated that the towns of Ithaca, Danby and Enfield were also participating in remote meetings. Town Board will be discussing open meetings later in tonight's meeting. Regarding Zoning - should be made appropriate for the community and that's what the zoning commission is working to do. The draft that is out for public review, is not the first draft, there will be more to come.

Charles Barnhart – Katherine read a statement from Charles. One way zoom meeting is not the way to discuss a topic that will affect the entire community, as zoning will. He is opposed to zoning and asked the Board why the town is pushing for zoning now.

Clm. Murray – The zoning commission has welcomed and encouraged feedback from residents. Questions have been responded to, in detail, and have been posted on the town zoning commission webpage.

Clm. Goldberg – Told the listeners that if they or anyone they know have difficulty joining the meetings because of access, to please let her know. She offered to take statements from any resident that cannot make it to a meeting so that they can have their voices heard.

Additions or Deletions to Agenda

Reconsider and reschedule monthly meeting days
Discussion on implementing hybrid meetings
Clarify Court liaison position
Appoint Mike Ludgate as webmaster services
Discussion on highway facility
Discussion on Old Town Hall
Discussion on Planning Board vacancies

Discussion of Agriculture Plans with Monika Roth

Presented and spoke regarding agriculture in Tompkins County and how everyone can protect farmland. Farmers are struggling with increased costs, taxes, too much work vs return, no next generations. With no farmers, land gets parceled up, more non-farm neighbors, land values increase etc. Speaking to the towns farmers to hear their challenges, needs and plan to preserve farmland and promote farming. Brief discussion regarding zoning work and if zoning supports agriculture? Monika recommended that farming land be permitted in all zones; be sure to largely define agriculture; and prohibit development of prime soils. Next steps for the town should be for Ag & Markets do a zoning review and explore and invest in economic opportunities. For additional resources visit:

<https://www.dutchessny.gov/Departments/Planning/Docs/FieldingFarmFriendliness-FINAL.pdf> ;
<https://ecode360.com/8661614> (Town of Ithaca Ag zone); or <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/apr-program-objectives-benefits>

Brief discussion with board members regarding small scale farming in Caroline and Monika recommended the town help the community promote farming and small-scale food production to help our local farmers.

Discussion on Monthly Meetings

Highway Superintendent, Bob Spencer has a conflict with the date of the monthly business meetings and has requested that they be rescheduled for a different day. Supr. Witmer asked and recommended that the Business Meetings be held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month and it was so agreed.

Resolution 53 of 2022. Amend and set the 2022 Monthly Business Meeting Day.

Motion by: Supr. Witmer Seconded by: Clm. Kelley-Mackenzie

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby agrees to amend the day of the Town Board monthly Business Meetings, now set to be held on the second Wednesday of each month in 2022, effective immediately.

Motion carried.

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

Nays: None

Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Goldberg, Kelley-Mackenzie
Nays: None

Resolution 55 of 2022. Approval of 2022 Memorandum of Agreement with the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization

Motion by: Supr. Witmer Seconded by: Clm. Goldberg

Whereas, the Town of Caroline finds that promoting watershed protections and stewardship is in the public interest of the Town and all municipalities in the Cayuga Lake Watershed; and
Whereas, the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (CWIO) represents a consortium of local governments in the Cayuga Lake Watershed formed in 1999 to implement a watershed Management Plan, now called the [Cayuga Lake Restoration and Protection Plan](#); and

Whereas, the Town of Caroline recognizes that collaboration amongst municipalities is essential to addressing watershed issues; and

Whereas, the CWIO has now adopted a Fair Funding Formula for municipal dues that factors in acreage within the Cayuga Lake Watershed, amount of shoreline, taxable assessed value, and population density, resulting in 2022 dues of \$306 increasing to \$612 in 2024; therefore be it

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby authorizes the Supervisor to sign the 2022 Memorandum of Agreement with the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization.

Motion carried.

Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Goldberg, Kelley-Mackenzie
Nays: None

Resolution 56 of 2022. Completion of Annual Accounting Audit of Caroline Town Court

Motion by: Supr. Witmer Seconded by: Clm. Goldberg

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby affirms completion of the 2022 audit of the Caroline Town Court on 25 January 2022. Present were Court Clerk, Diane Gair and Justice Gary Reinbolt, with the audit performed by Supervisor Witmer, and Councilpersons Snow, Goldberg, and Murray. The accounts and recording-keeping of the Caroline Town Court were found to be in good order.

Motion carried.

Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Goldberg, Kelley-Mackenzie
Nays: None

Resolution 56 of 2022. Completion of Annual Accounting Audit of the Offices of Supervisor and Town Clerk

Motion by: Supr. Witmer Seconded by: Clm. Goldberg

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby affirms completion of the 2022 audit of the Caroline Town Supervisor and Town Clerk on 25 January 2022. Present were Supervisor Witmer and Bookkeeper Velvet Lyke for the Supervisor's Office and Town Clerk Jessica Townsend for the Town Clerk's Office. Councilmembers Snow, Goldberg, and Murray performed the audit. The accounts and recording-keeping of the Offices of the Supervisor and Town Clerk were found to be in good order.

Motion carried.

Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Goldberg, Kelley-Mackenzie
Nays: None

Resolution 57 of 2022. Appointment of Mike Ludgate as Webmaster

Motion by: Supr. Witmer Seconded by: Clm. Murray

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby agrees to appoint Michael Ludgate as the town's webmaster at a rate of \$40.00/ hr not to exceed __ hours/yr.

Motion carried.

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

Nays: None

Discussion

Brief discussion regarding the new town barns. Clm. Snow is currently working with the DEC to locate the mining permit and Reclamation Plan for Site 2. More information to follow.

Old Town Hall project – would like to get plans together for the work needed on the exterior of the building. Discussion regarding painting vs. siding and the prep work involved in removing lead paint as well as keeping the historical building intact. Clm. Kelley-Mackenzie will research grant funding opportunities for the insulation and noted that State funds are available in April. Supr. Witmer and Clm. Snow agreed to meet with town maintenance manager, Richard Brooks to go over first steps in kicking off the project.

Highway Barn – Clm. Snow reports that the current building is in bad shape. Roof is leaking, the electrical circuiting is not up to code and the insulation needs replacing. These issues will need to be remedied. Clm. Snow and Hwy. Supt. Spencer will work on getting estimates to the Board when they receive them

Approval of Minutes

The Town Board reviewed and approved the Minutes of January 19, 2022, as submitted by Town Clerk, Jessica Townsend.

Open Meetings discussion

Supr. Witmer opened discussion and asked for policy opinions for resuming hybrid meetings. Clm. Murray recommends staying consistent with past practice in that as numbers rise in the County, they will monitor and assess as time goes. To participate in-person, it was unanimously agreed that they will require masking, vaccination, and 6-foot distancing.

Committees' discussion

Court Liaison – Supr. Witmer recommended retiring a liaison to the Court. Brief discussion regarding the withdrawal and agreed that direct conversations with the Board would be more appropriate than one individual member.

Planning Board vacancies – Discussion regarding several open seats on the Planning Board. The current members are working with the Zoning Commission, so the appointment of two new members isn't suitable at this time. Once the Commission has completed their work, the Planning Board can resume and seek new members.

Agenda items for February Business Meeting

Read and Vote on Annual Association of Towns Resolutions

Discussion on the Historic Town Hall project

Discussion and review of Town Barns repair estimates

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Code update

Hwy. Supt. invited Board members to join in a ride along with a crew member. This weekend they are preparing for a snowstorm.

---Adjourn the meeting ---

The meeting adjourned on a motion by Supervisor Witmer and seconded by Clm. Murray at 9:27 p.m. and was carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica L. Townsend, Town Clerk