

Caroline Town Board Agenda Meeting Minutes of October 6, 2020

The Town Board Agenda Meeting was held electronically via Zoom teleconference on October 6, 2020 beginning at 7:02 p.m. hosted by Supervisor Mark Witmer co-hosted by Councilmember Irene Weiser

Attendance:

Supervisor Mark Witmer
Councilmember John Fracchia - Absent
Councilmember Irene Weiser
Councilmember Tim Murray
Councilmember Cal Snow

Recording Secretary:

Jessica L. Townsend, Town Clerk

Also Present: 3 members of the public

Privilege-of-the-Floor

None

Additions or Deletions to Agenda

Councilmember Weiser would like to add an agenda item to discuss a broadband resolution for consideration. (ATTACHMENT #1)

Committee Reports

John Fracchia, Councilmember – Absent

Irene Weiser, Councilmember – Gave an overview of a meeting she attended that was coordinated through TCCOG regarding issues related to broadband services throughout the Southern Tier. She is bringing forward a Resolution (ATTACHMENT #1) for consideration and voting at next week's Business Meeting. She read through the proposed Resolution and highlighted the public's need for said request. After some discussion on process, Town Board members were unanimous in voting to support this.

Cal Snow, Councilmember – Highway - Crew did a great job with the Town Hall grounds project. Brooktondale Cemetery has a new Board of Directors – Bill Besemer, Greg Harrington, Emily Adams, John Carson, and Cal Snow.

Tim Murray, Councilmember – Planning Board has met and are currently going over public comments and will work to integrate them into the Comprehensive Plan, as and where appropriate. The next meeting is Thursday at 5pm. Expects that they will have it ready for the Town Board's review by the Agenda Meeting in November. Land Use Task Force has met 4 times already and will continue to meet weekly. Minutes to those meetings can be found on the town website.

Introduction of 2021 Tentative Budget

Supervisor Witmer introduced the 2021 Tentative Budget. Non-Union Employees rates to stay flat this year as a gesture of goodwill. Mark explained that budget lines were based conservatively and briefly

described the proposals of many of the line items. Councilmember Weiser thanked him for putting together the graphs to better understand expenditures and reserve funds over the past 10 years. Further discussions on prioritizing legal services, local first responder services and family paid leave and to evaluate the reserve funds. These items will be discussed more extensively during the budget workshops.

Review of draft Fund Balance Policy

Supervisor Witmer introduced the Fund Balance Policy (ATTACHMENT #2). The Board will discuss this at next week's Business Meeting.

Schedule of Budget Workshops

The first budget workshop will be held at the beginning of next week's Business Meeting to discuss the highway budget. The second budget workshop is scheduled for Thursday, October 15th at 7:00 p.m.

Resolution 121 of 2020**Approval of Minutes of September 9, 2020**

A motion was made by Mark Witmer and seconded by Councilmember Murray to approve the Business Minutes of September 9, 2020 as submitted by Velvet Lyke

Adopted: Witmer: Aye; Fracchia: Absent; Weiser: Aye; Snow: Aye; Murray: Aye

Agenda items for October 14 Business Meeting

Vote on Resolution for Broadband
Discussion on Highway Planning
Approval of 2020-2021 Health Care Consortium Municipal Cooperative Agreements
Introduce Local Law to Override Tax Cap
Discussion on County Planning Support
Casey Mastro and Steve Nicholson to discuss Streetlights
Discuss Fund Balance Policy
2021 Budget discussions

----Adjourn the meeting ----

The meeting adjourned on a motion by Mark Witmer and seconded by Councilmember Tim Murray at 9:38p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica L. Townsend, Town Clerk

(ATTACHMENT #1)

TOWN OF CAROLINE RESOLUTION SUPPORTING AN OVER TARGET REQUEST FOR TOMPKINS COUNTY TO UNDERTAKE A BROADBAND PLANNING STUDY AND PLEDGING FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS IN SUPPORT.

WHEREAS COVID-19 has highlighted key inequities in our infrastructure and communities, including a lack of adequate broadband access to residents and businesses in our rural communities; and

WHEREAS lack of broadband access impedes the ability of our residents to do work, attend school, have medical appointments, run their businesses, and even to have virtual face-to-face conversations with loved ones; and

WHEREAS access to broadband services is not a luxury but a necessary public need that must be addressed; and

WHEREAS at least 300 households (25%) in the Town of Caroline lack access to broadband service and others experience barriers to access based on affordability and physical distance from the road; and

WHEREAS the model for broadband buildout up until now has been that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) get grant funding from the state or federal governments to build a system that the ISP owns and controls; and

WHEREAS these ISPs are driven by profit motives rather than public interests, resulting in inadequate speeds and lack of access and competition in the most rural areas in the county; and

WHEREAS municipally owned internet services can better serve the public interest; and

WHEREAS it is not economically feasible for each municipality to fight each other for state and federal funding to build their own fiber network; and

WHEREAS a collective, regional approach is not only possible and logical, it is already happening in many counties around us through a regional partnership with the Southern Tier Network, and

WHEREAS the Southern Tier Network (STN) is a municipally-owned non-profit open access fiber network created in January 2011 through a partnership between the Southern Tier Central, Corning Incorporated, and Chemung, Schuyler, and Steuben Counties; and

WHEREAS STN was built to support the needs of public safety, improve broadband access in rural areas, increase competition and the level of telecommunications services across the region, and create a globally competitive advantage for job creation; and

WHEREAS STN has developed and successfully maintained over 500 miles of fiber across the Southern Tier of New York, with lines extending through Schuyler, Chemung, Steuben, Yates, Tioga, Broome, and even into Tompkins County; and

WHEREAS since 2011, STN has been building out middle mile fiberoptic cable that has successfully increased the competition of ISPs to provide service to both residential and commercial properties; and

WHEREAS STN is now working with member counties to explore solutions to reach into the most rural areas in the Southern Tier; and

WHEREAS earlier this year Schuyler, Chemung, Steuben, Yates, and Tioga (the current members of STN) collectively hired Fujitsu to do a study with 5 deliverables to explore a plan for STN to build, own and operate a network of both middle and final mile fiber in their communities; and

WHEREAS the Executive Director of STN, Steve Manning, indicated that Tompkins may be able to create an add-on contract with Fujitsu for the same deliverables, taking advantage of the work that has already been done (e.g. business and operations models, financial models etc.) to realize costs savings; and

WHEREAS the Town of Caroline recently participated in a webinar with Steve Manning to learn more about the potential of municipally owned broadband, and we are interested in exploring the possibility and believe economies of scale will be realized that will make the project more feasible by working with other Counties;

Now, therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Town of Caroline Town Board asks the County to support a one-time Over Target Request of not more than \$80,000 for a study that will provide the following deliverables to help us identify a possible path forward for a county-wide buildout of both middle and last mile fiber optic cable in Tompkins County.

1. Market assessment - identifying the unserved and underserved areas, what the competition is in the county, where do the current providers provide service, what the terms are and what they are charging, and will outline demographics.
2. Design - outside (geographic layout and design, redundancy and diversity, how to reach each address point, comparison of a distributed or central architecture) and inside plan design (where should colocation centers be placed, convergence points, OLTs, etc...).
3. Business and operations model - what are the different models out there for municipal based fiber to the home. What does it look like and what are the different models of operation?
4. Operations and maintenance - a complete look at what would it take to operate the infrastructure, what type of service, what are the staffing needs, what is a recommended maintenance schedule? How often do you need to replace a core router etc...?

5. Financials - for both capital and operations (including take rate opportunities) - what kind of revenue can you expect since it needs to cover costs for many decades?

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Caroline pledges \$5000 to be paid to Tompkins County in 2021 when the contract for the above deliverables is executed.

Town of Caroline Fund Balance Policy

Purpose: The Office of the New York State Comptroller recommends that local governments establish a policy to maintain reasonable levels of Unexpended Surplus Funds to buffer the Town from unanticipated expenditures or revenue shortfalls. The Caroline Town Board hereby establishes this Fund Balance Policy in order to provide a clear understanding of the purposes of the various Town funds and guidance for Town Officers to promote a rational strategy for the budgeting and capital planning needs of the Town. This policy will enhance fiscal stability and predictability for the Town and its residents.

Fund Balance Classifications: In 2009 the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) revised the classification of Fund Balance in Statement 54 from reserved and unreserved fund balance to five fund balance classifications:

1. **Non-spendable Fund Balance:** assets that are inherently nonspendable because of their form or because they must be maintained intact, including prepaid items, inventories, long-term portions of loans receivable, financial assets held for resale, and the principal of endowments (examples include materials and fuel for maintenance of highways and Town capital assets).
2. **Restricted Fund Balance:** funds that are subject to externally enforceable legal purpose restrictions imposed by creditors, grantors, contributors, or laws and regulations of other governments, or through constitutional provisions or enabling legislation (examples include Town Hall, Highway Barn, and Highway Equipment Reserve Funds, as well as grant awards from FEMA or the NYS Dept. Environmental Conservation, such as WQIP and Clean Energy Communities).
3. **Committed Fund Balance:** amounts that are subject to a purpose constraint imposed by a formal action of the government's highest level of decision-making authority before the end of the fiscal year, and that require the same level of formal action to remove the constraint. The New York State Office of the State Comptroller believes that most local governments in New York will not have committed fund balance to report.
4. **Assigned Fund Balance:** amounts subject to a purpose constraint that represents an intended use established by the government's highest level of decision-making authority, or by their designated body or official. The purpose of the assignment must be narrower than the purpose of the General Fund, and in funds other than the General Fund, assigned fund balance represents the unexpended moneys in those funds (i.e., Highway Fund, Fire Protection Fund, and Streetlight Fund).
5. **Unassigned Fund Balance:** the residual classification for the government's General Fund, and could be a surplus or a deficit. In funds other than the General Fund, the unassigned classification should be used only to report a deficit balance resulting from overspending for specific purposes for which amounts had been restricted, committed, or unassigned.

Policy:

1. This policy shall apply to the Town's General Town-wide (A) Fund and the Highway (DA) Fund.
2. When resources are available from multiple fund balance classifications, the Town shall spend funds in the following order: restricted, committed, assigned, unassigned.
3. The Caroline Town Board is the decision-making authority authorized to commit fund balance. The action to commit fund balance must occur prior to the end of the fiscal year in order to report such commitments in the annual financial report. The commitment may only be modified by a resolution of the Town Board.
4. The Town Supervisor has authority to assign Unassigned Fund Balance amounts where the Town's intent is for those amounts to be used for specific purposes. This delegation of authority is for the sole purpose of reporting these amounts in the annual financial statements.
5. *Unexpended Surplus Funds*: For the purpose of this policy, *unexpended surplus funds* shall consist of Unassigned Fund Balance for the General Fund (A917 in the Annual Update Document) and Assigned Fund Balance for the Highway Fund (DA915 in the Annual Update Document).
6. The Town shall strive to maintain Unexpended Surplus Funds in the General and Highway Funds between 15% and 20% of budgeted expenditures:
 - A. General Fund Unexpended Surplus Funds above 20% shall be reserved for specific capital needs or to support Highway Fund policy goals.
 - B. Highway Fund Unexpended Surplus Funds above 20% shall be reserved for equipment needs (Reserve Fund DA 233).
7. The Town Supervisor shall report the amount and percentage of unexpended surplus funds to the Town Board upon completion of the Annual Update Document each year.
8. If unexpended surplus funds exceed the maximum amount recommended by this policy, the excess may be used for any lawful purpose approved by the Town Board. In order to minimize the long-term impact of such use, the excess should be appropriated to one-time expenditures which do not result in recurring operating costs, and/or be used to establish or increase reserves, and/or be used to offset the succeeding year's tax levy.
9. All unexpended funds in DA5130.2 Machinery - Equipment shall be transferred to its own reserve fund (DA233).
10. All other Unexpended Surplus Funds may not be transferred to reserves or used for other purposes unless fund balance minimums have been met.
11. In the event that Unexpended Surplus Funds fall below the minimum amount set forth herein, the Supervisor shall make a recommendation to the Town Board to restore the balance to the minimum level in the next budget year or other appropriate period of time.

Review: This policy shall be reviewed by the Town Board on an annual basis.