

Caroline Town Board Agenda Meeting Minutes of August 4, 2020

The Town Board Agenda Meeting was held electronically via Zoom teleconference on August 4, 2020 beginning at 7:06 p.m. hosted by Supervisor Mark Witmer co-hosted by Councilmember John Fracchia

Attendance:

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

Recording Secretary:

Jessica L. Townsend, Town Clerk

Also Present: 6 members of the public

Supervisor Witmer opened by stating that the meeting will be recorded and posted on the town website.

Privilege-of-the-Floor

Mary Alyce Kobler – Is in favor of the town entering into the Conservation Easement with the Finger Lakes Land Trust to protect the wetlands on Thomas Road.

Elisa Evett – Asked for an update on what the board done, if anything, since the enactment of the Moratorium. Hopes to hear a report at next week's business meeting. Requested that the board to pursue a plan for future citing's of cell phone towers.

Doug Keefe – Fire Chief in Speedsville – Inquired about the renaming of Speed Hill Rd and Speedsville hamlet. Supervisor Witmer said that during discussion of inclusivity and diversity at last month's business meeting, the subject was brought up but that there has been no action taken by the town board. Councilmember Weiser said that she had been approached by members of the community who raised this issue, and it has been on their radar. It was agreed unanimously that if anything were to be done, the public would be engaged in discussion and process.

Katherine Goldberg – *See Attachment #1*

Jonathan – Supports the partnership with the Finger Lakes Land Trust to protect the wetlands on Thomas Road.

Additions or Deletions to Agenda

None

Committee Reports

John Fracchia, Councilmember – The highway barn taskforce is close to issuing an RFQ to get evaluations done on some prospective properties for the new highway barns.

Irene Weiser, Councilmember – Continues to hear from people regarding truck traffic and speed on Coddington Road. Would like to recommend that there is another traffic study done by Tompkins County in order to get an idea of traffic flow, weight of vehicles, speed, etc. The other main issue is broadband. Is continuing to work with Haefele and is continuing to explore options for the area. Further discussion regarding a county-wide initiative on broadband.

Cal Snow, Councilmember – Would like to see continuous progress being made on the highway taskforce so they can receive the guidance they need on how to proceed.

Tim Murray, Councilmember – The Planning Board is meeting on Thursday at 6:00pm. As a result of that meeting, there may be a draft of the revised Comprehensive Plan ready for review. The Planning Board will schedule a Public Hearing in late August.

Dan Klein, County Representative – A lot of conversations happening within the County/regionally about broadband issues. Expects conversations to continue and within the next month or so, they should have a plan on how to proceed. They will be voting on whether to exceed the tax-cap or not and there will be a Public Hearing set as required by law. The County had furloughed about 80 employees in late May, all but 17 employees have returned. The fund balance at this time is approximately \$45 million dollars. Projecting a \$5-\$10 million revenue shortfall for 2020. Two weeks ago, the Department of Health released that Caroline had 6 positive cases for COVID.

Discussion of Town Hall Grounds Project

Supervisor Witmer presented the bid tabulation at the July business meeting. The winning bid was Edger Enterprise for \$97,000. After reviewing and discussing the proposal, and the total cost of this project, everyone felt that they should look at other alternatives to keep cost down. One way to do this would be to have the highway department do the prep work to the base of the parking lot before paving. Superintendent Spencer has received a quote from Suit-Kote for paving the parking lot and it is approximately ¼ of the cost of the bid from Edger. They need to decide whether to keep the bioretention feature as planned or remove that item and just put a new lawn in and apply for a beatification grant through the County with the possibility of new plantings. The sidewalk would need to be bid out separately. Supervisor Witmer is advocating to keep the bioretention feature. Barry Goodrich offered his opinion that the bioretention area is costly and does not offer anything more than what the ground does now. Supervisor Witmer stated that the engineer has made changes to the plans and the bio-feature would be smaller and significantly lower in price which he believes would be covered by the grant monies already received from Soil & Water. Councilmember Snow recommended a good sod be installed and planting some more Sugar Maple trees. Shared some concern about future management and maintenance to the feature. Councilmember Weiser recommends giving the grant money back and taking out the retention pond. Reconfiguring the plans is going to cause additional delays. Wants the grounds back in order and have a new sidewalk installed for the additional parking along Midline Road. Councilmember Murray added that if we could scale back the bioretention feature and have it done quickly with the money we have received then he is for it but doesn't have a personal preference either way, In closing, it was agreed to decline the current proposal. Based on conversation with the highway supt., we will have

the highway crew assist in whatever way possible. They will use the existing sections of the RFP for the lawn restoration (w/additional plantings) and the sidewalk/Midline parking spaces. Supervisor Witmer will meet with Hwy Supt. Spencer to sharpen those plans.

Discussion of Finger Lakes Land Trust Proposal for Thomas Road Wetlands Conservation Easement

The proposal and presentation are posted on the town website. Supervisor Witmer had voiced concern about a compelling purpose for the town in addition to what's already there. The wetlands are already protected. Kris West agreed that they are already protected but the surrounding area is not and as long as it stays in private ownership, that could change. Supervisor Witmer asked if she would explain the tax benefits for the private individual. Kris explained that when a land is donated as a gift, NYS gives them an annual 25% tax credit as the landowner. The FLLT would use grant funds to buy the wetlands from the landowners (up to 75% of the appraised value of the property), the FLLT would acquire that property and then transfer ownership to the town, subject to the conservation easement. She further stated that the project is in line with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Supervisor Witmer and Councilmember Snow agree that in doing this could potentially lead to other property owners wanting/having similar expectations. Councilmember Murray, Councilmember Fracchia and Councilmember Weiser remain interested in this partnership. The town board would like to discuss this further with town attorney and also the insurance company for further advice and guidance.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mark Witmer and seconded by John Fracchia to approve the Business Minutes of July 15, 2020 as submitted by Town Clerk, Jessica Townsend

Discussion: (Res. No. 103)

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

Agenda items for August 12 Business Meeting

Consideration on Thomas Rd

Broadband Committee

Town Hall Project

Budget Discussion

---Adjourn the meeting ---

The meeting adjourned on a motion by Mark Witmer and seconded by Councilmember Murray at 9:02p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica L. Townsend, Town Clerk

(ATTACHMENT #1)

I wanted to see what the start date of the moratorium was and I had a bit of trouble finding it. There is a "Revised moratorium" draft posted on the website, dated 6/2, with start date noted as "immediately". There is also a letter dated 6/8 from Department of Planning and Sustainability regarding the moratorium's approval. I do not personally know what the official start date is, but assuming it was within the week of that letter, we are now 2 months out. Let's then consider that we now have a 120 day moratorium. I'm speaking tonight to ask what steps the Town Board will be taking in the next 120 days, and put this very simple question on record. The moratorium law has been enacted for the purpose of considering how best to address development in the town. There is absolutely nothing to state that this consideration must not begin until the Comprehensive Plan is adopted, given that this is an ongoing responsibility and role of Town leadership; in fact, waiting would compromise the very intent of the 180, now 120 days that are before us. By the time the Comprehensive Plan is adopted, we will likely be at 100 days or less. To put this in Town Board time, that's approximately 3 meetings. Not very much time to consider, develop and enact policy to protect our town.

We already know that there is overwhelming community support for additional consideration and action related to preservation of our town's values and vision related to development. The existing Comprehensive Plan is abundantly clear in articulating these values and it is unquestionable that existing local law is insufficient in addressing concerns related to development in our Town. Furthermore, one single action - whether zoning, Formula Business Restrictions or other strategies, will not be sufficient to address the concerns of all Caroline residents. I agree with the petitioners *against* the moratorium who state that it's not the Town Board's job to decide what businesses can be here. That's true. It's their job to defend the Comprehensive Plan (old, new, all versions of it), and uphold town values, vision and goals. Where development is concerned, this means assessing whether a business' behavior, appearance and impact is consistent with the character of the town. Therefore, a thoughtful combination of initiatives will be required. This takes time. Time that was provided by the moratorium but is slipping away more quickly than some may realize.

The "Actions" that are prohibited prior to adoption of the Comprehensive Plan relate to permits and approval of new projects - what is *not* prohibited is engagement by elected town leaders in proactive steps to protect, preserve and promote our town related to development interests. To reiterate the question I raised initially tonight - what is the Town Board going to be doing in the remaining 120 days to fight for our town's values related to development? A new Comprehensive Plan will not be some magic bullet towards identifying and implementing such action. Residents have said loudly & clearly, they are with you, they support you, and they are not willing to back down out of fear. I personally hope that you feel the same way and I urge you to take action.