

Caroline Town Board Meeting Minutes of September 2, 2014

The Town Board Business meeting held on September 2, 2014 at the Caroline Town Hall was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Supervisor Don Barber.

Attendance:

Don Barber, Supervisor
John Fracchia, Councilmember
Irene Weiser, Councilmember
Mark Witmer, Councilmember
Tim Seely, Councilmember

Recording

Secretary: Marilou Harrington-Lawson, Town Clerk

Also present: 12 members of the public

Mr. Barber started the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Public Hearing: To Override NYS 2% Tax Cap

Public hearing started at 7:03 p.m

Pete Hoyt- Wanted to know whether this law was subject Permissive Referendum. Supervisor Barber answered he believed not but that he would further investigate through the Association of Towns and would email the answer to Pete the following day. Pete after listening to Supervisor Barber about the explanation for possibly have the 2% override in place said the he to shares the opinion that the State is “jamming” it to the municipalities but he would still rather not see the law pass tonight. He would like to see 2 budgets; one when the 2% override and one without it. Then he would like the choice taken to the voters. He said “Let the voters decide if they want less services and lower taxes or more services and higher taxes”. Supervisor Barber responded that based on last years budget, the 2 options would be to reduce the tax levy and offer less services or raise the tax levy and keeping fewer services. The State has been cutting revenue sharing every year while giving local municipalities more work and responsibility like all parts of dog licensing and as well as govern fireworks while they still take their cut of the profit.

Carol Barra- why we might have to go over the cap? Supervisor Barber- For the last decade (with the exception of last year where we went over the tax cap) we have each year cut the budget to keep the property taxes low. We haven’t had to raise taxes because we have been using \$100-\$150, 000 out of our reserve to keep the taxes down. When you no longer have that money to spend you either have to cut \$100-\$150,000 worth of services or raise taxes. Last year we cut \$45,000 from our fund balance. We are not building fund balance, we don’t have savings. Even if we just by the cost of last year we would still need to come up with \$45,000 from the fund balance. Carol asked if employees paid toward their health care. Supervisor Barber said with the Affordable Care Act the most the employer can have an employee pay is 15-20% which is in the contract this year.

Glen Schneider - How big is the problem? What will be cut out? Supervisor Barber said if we take out all discretionary programs like for the seniors, the youth and the food pantry that will help some for one year. But we are required by law to do the up keep of the cemeteries and do maintenance on the road, and we always could cut those services so that the upkeep is more limited or less but that is not an ideal solution. It is possible to cut funding to those place we are required by law to do the upkeep for but by doing that we are not really doing are required duty for the Town.

Mrs. Lychalk- Thought that there was hundreds of thousands dollars spent on the proposed noise ordinance law that was “thrown out the window” to pay for lawyers and such. Supervisor Barber said the Town has never spent that kind of money on any kind of law, that the noise ordinance was no exception. She said she was on a fixed income and couldn’t afford a tax increase. He said this was about balancing the budget with the needs of the Town and when he started on the board 20 years ago that the taxes were \$7.00 per \$1000 and he worked to lower them and keep them lowered to date.

Chris Fillinger- What part of the total budget belongs to the Highway Department? Supervisor Barber answered about 2/3 of the budget is Highway. Chris then asked what percentage is snow removal, sanding de-icing, etc. of the total budget? Supervisor Barber answered 25%-30% with some revenue generated by plowing of County roads when necessary.

Cal Snow- Said when Governor Cuomo presented the 2% tax cap he thought it was a good idea and a way of trying to keep things under control, but he then said “there is no sense being penny wise and pound foolish”. He said he doesn’t envy the board to be faced with this dilemma of deciding whether to cut the budget and ultimately services or go over the tax cap to keep services.

Supervisor Barber- With every year we have had to use the fund balance to cover the cost of the budget increases (due to inflation and rising costs of services) until there is little to nothing left in the fund balance to cover these increases. Unless the tax base is increased to cover services then services will need to be cut which could mean less Highway services; road repair, snow plowing etc, as well as other town services.

With the 2% tax cap override law in 2013 we went \$9,600 over the budget. Supervisor Barber said, we essentially cut \$35,000 out of Highway budget while we had an increase of almost \$45,000 in health care and retirement.

A few more people spoke expressing concern about the increase in the tax levy but understanding the reasoning behind the consideration of the Local Law to override the 2% Tax Cap.

Public hearing has closed at 8:07

Privilege of the Floor

Interview with Lisa Richards for the Joint Youth Commission. The Town Board was able to ask Lisa questions and learn her interest and talents for serving as a member on the Joint Youth Commission. Lisa works in Communications at Cornell Cooperative Extension. She has been a member of the local PTA as a Treasurer and Co- President (Caroline Elementary School). She is interested in rural growth and recreational and educational opportunities offered in the area.

Reports

Cindy Whittaker, Highway Superintendent

Don Barber, Town Supervisor

He will give report at the 9/10 meeting

Tim Seely, Town Board

He will give report at the 9/10 meeting

Mark Witmer, Town Board

14 August, 6:30 - 8:00 pm, The Planning Board met: Chad Novelli, Bruce Murray, Ed Wurtz, Lois Lounsbury, Chris Payne

- **Conservation Advisory Committees** and Easement concept presented to group. Planning Board is very interested. Dan Klein has suggested Oct 9 meeting and PB agreed.
- **Revision of Comprehensive Plan.** Focus on soliciting visions of citizens for Town. PB will discuss Comprehensive Plan at Sept meeting. Provisional plan: Announcement to public to join CP revision process after we have read it carefully. Will develop survey, then solicit input from community. Discussion of placement of World Cafe process in process - early on.

Watershed Committee

19 August, 7-8:30 pm, Becky Dewitt, Chris Payne, Mark Witmer

- **Review of Comprehensive Plan.** Watershed to read current plan and offer input.
- **Buffalo Road Creek** work - survey done this past Monday, 8-18. Town employing *de minimus* Eminent Domain process. D&F at 2 Sep board meeting.
*[update: message when I got home from Mr. Lehman that he would like to sign easement. Thurs, 21 Aug: Mr. Lehman signed 5-yr easements for both 196 Buffalo Road and 300A Buffalo Road. Emailed Guy Krogh that Eminent Domain is now off the table!]

- **Film: Looking for Answers: Developing Partnerships for the Control of Sediment Runoff from Rural Roads.** Boquet River Association, Essex County Government, Box 217, Elizabethtown, NY 12932.

Take home:

Cooperation among private sector and government/gov. agencies

Need for long-term planning

Need for long-term capital plan

- **Wood Thrush Lane.** Meeting with Jon Negley, 10 am, Wed, 27 Aug. Will present information on history of site and past drainage work. Key issue: roles and responsibilities of town and homeowners. [Summary of meeting from Irene Weiser (Jon Negley, Barry Goodrich, Laura Rivet, Dalva Hedlund, Joe?, Jeff Smith of TC Hwy). Jon explained design of ditches and showed that the front ditch can handle a 25-year flood. Irene explained that ditches protect road; homes are homeowner responsibility. Discussion of retention pond on Fire Dept. land.]
- **Update on USGS Stream Gauge Agreement.** Will bring to Board 2015-2017 Agreement for approval at September meeting. Formalizing agreements with joint partners (Dryden, Ithaca, TCS & W). Will solicit presentation by USGS on utility of data.

Energy Independent Caroline

25 August, 7-8:20 pm, Mary Alyce Kobler, Jonathan Comstock, Julie Hansen, Mark Witmer

- **Comprehensive Plan and EIC**

Resolved that we will read and discuss current Comprehensive Plan for next meeting.

What is our vision?

What has current Comprehensive Plan accomplished?

How can it be improved? Deletions? Additions? Alterations?

- **Climate Smart Communities and early assessment**

Climate Smart Communities Webinar: Climate Smart Community Certification

Thursday, September 11, 2014**10:30 a.m. – Noon**

We should move forward in evaluating our progress as a Climate Smart Community, and evaluate each of the 13 priority actions. Mark will attend webinar. Need to move forward on Climate Smart.

John Fracchia, Town Board**Emergency Services**

FD Coverage Map Project:

- Working with Brian Wilbur to update the map based on contract information and information provided by Brooktondale and Speedsville Fire Departments.

Volunteer Shortage Project:

- Received response from John D'Allesandro, Deputy Volunteer Coordinator at the Fire Association of the State of New York about their Tuition Reimbursement Program for 2014. Grant criteria is as follows: 1) Applicant must currently be a member of the squad, 2) They must reapply for the grant each year, 3) The current application deadline is October 3, 2014.

EMS/Code Enforcement - Joint Areas of Concern:

- Discussed current challenges that Code Enforcement is experiencing in budget prep meeting. Based on that recommended to Kevin protocols for addressing 1) Identifying Abandoned/Condemned properties and 2) Communication between EMS and Code when a fire has occurred.

Emergency Preparedness

- No update

Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium

- Attended August meeting of the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium on August 28th. Several resolutions were passed including:
 1. Resolution to Authorize Dental/Vision Plan through CSEA
 2. Resolution that urges municipalities to adopt a Wellness Policy.
 3. Resolution to offer a Platinum level health insurance plan.

All of these resolutions passed. I will be offering suggested wording regarding a Wellness Policy, likely at our October meeting. The consortium is considering adopting additional medal

level plans (Bronze, Silver, Gold), consistent with the Affordable Care Act.

Additional Projects

HOME Rehabilitation Grants

- Christine Carreiro has received additional inquiries, but to date none have gone through with the next steps. She has outreached churches in our community and appreciates our continue efforts to identify individuals who may benefit from this grant.

Budget Conversations With Department Heads

- Met with the following departments to have conversations about the upcoming budget and long term strategic budget planning: Clerk, Code, and Highway.

Irene Weiser, Town Board

AQUIFER PROTECTION COMMITTEE

Work continues with Steve Winkley. Preparing for educational forums in Sept 25 and Oct. 21 1:47
Brooktondale Fire Hall

The Town of Caroline Aquifer Protection Committee presents:

Protecting Caroline's Drinking Water - a 2 part educational forum

by Steven Winkley, New York Rural Water Association

Part 1: Where does our drinking water come from?

Thursday September 25, Brooktondale Fire Hall, Valley Rd, 7- 9pm

This section will discuss basics such as what is an aquifer, what types of aquifers do we have in Caroline, where does the water come from and how does an aquifer get recharged.

Part 2: Protecting our water supply

Tuesday October 21, Brooktondale Fire Hall, Valley Rd, 7- 9pm

This section will discuss various threats to water quality and water quantity, giving examples of problems from other rural regions of NY State, and will identify some methods to protect the water supply from these hazards.

COMMUNICATION INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Will be coordinating with Computing Center for upgrade to Office 365.

Brightworks has sent assessment /estimate of upcoming system needs - new computers, router, wiring improvements. Will discuss with committee and have budget recommendations soon.

Brightworks has sent a set of instructions and a Log form to keep track of system reboots and hopefully track down the problem. Need all to participate in completing log and notifying BW when need for reboot arises. Suggest keeping instructions and log sheet on clipboard in closet.

WATERSHED/HIGHWAY

Met with Woodthrush Lane homeowners, County Hwy, SWCD to discuss property owner concerns about runoff from Bald Hill that is causing basement and yard flooding – a problem that is getting worse with heavier rains we are now experiencing.. Owners say that drainage ditch on Woodthrush not working well – fills almost to top. They also have concerns that culverts from Bald Hill Rd which point toward their side of the hill, add to the flooding problems. Owners have undertaken a variety of measures to try to mitigate problems, including diverting water from their property to the ditch.

Jon Negley (SWCD) described a combination of factors that contribute to the situation - ditch in front of affected homes is level.; soil type on hillside not highly permeable, so runoff to be expected; soil type at base of hill very permeable, so soaks up water like a sponge; high bedrock layer results in high water table.

Property owners say they've not seen significant flooding onto the road, but they have concerns that French drain from Woodthrush down Weber to Whitechurch may not be functioning, because the pipe outlet is always dry. Jeff Smith from County Hwy says that if drain were plugged, there would be signs of it at the inlet or in area before the clog. Jeff suggests that instead French drain may be working appropriately and diffusing water into the ground before it reaches the outfall.

I remarked that while I understood the homeowner's frustration at the flooding they were experiencing, that since Town infrastructure was not being threatened or damaged, that this situation was a private property situation, not public interest.

I proposed exploring the possibility of using the nearby un-used ballfield (owned by the B'dale Fire Company) for a rainwater retention pond. Complicated idea – who will pay for it? Who will be responsible for maintenance, liability, monitoring during heavy rain to ensure it doesn't breach...

Next steps:

- Jon to explore drainage and culverts on Bald Hill
- Explore what's happening with French drain
- Talk to B'dale FD about use of ball field for retention pond.

OTHER HIGHWAY

Residents on Fire Tower Rd have questions/concerns about ditching, plans to top coat road. Will meet w/Cindy to discuss.

Resident on Level Green Rd had questions/concerns about dust oil treatment.

Meet w/Cindy soon to discuss next steps for Chestnut Rd culvert repair.

Resolutions

Resolution 169 of 2014

A motion was made by Tim Seely and Seconded by Mark Witmer

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby appoints Lisa Richards to the Joint Youth Commission for the term ending on December 31, 2015.

Adopted Barber: Aye; Fracchia: Aye; Witmer: Aye; Weiser: Aye Seely: Aye

Town Business

----Adjourn----

Adjourned on a motion by Mr. Witmer and seconded by Mr. Seely the meeting adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marilou Harrington-Lawson, Town Clerk