

**Caroline Town Board Business Meeting Minutes of December 20, 2023**

The Town Board December 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:** 6 **Zoom:** 3

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

**Privilege-of-the-Floor**

*Katherine Goldberg – Inquired why Laundry Mats have been eliminated from the draft zoning law.*

**Committee Reports**

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

- The Shared Services Committee unanimously approved the 2024 Shared Services Plan for countywide Rapid Emergency Response on December 11, 2023, for recommendation to the county for submission to New York State as a 2024 shared services initiative for Tompkins County.
- The Speedsville Community Center hosted an informational meeting with Egg Geothermal about the Speedsville Thermal Network Feasibility Study on Tuesday, November 28, 2023. The meeting was well attended. Egg Geo is requesting energy use information for as many Speedsville homes as possible to inform their Feasibility Study. That work is in progress.
- Bill Podulka and I met with Roxanne Johnston, Kristen Hychka, and Rebecca Minas of DWSP2 group to discuss stormwater protection considerations for large solar projects.
- The Town Board met with LaBella Engineers on December 14 to review and discuss the highway project draft report. The report is posted on the town website, Document tab, Highway Project folder. The Board will be seeking modifications to project scope and design to control costs.
- Video security system has been installed at the Town Offices and Historic Town Hall. Installation of monitors in the offices of the Town and Court Clerk is pending.
- Compiled submissions for reimbursement for the Ekroos Road Culvert Replacement Project from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s Water Quality Improvement Project grant award. Final Report is attached.
- Final edits of zoning law. The majority of changes are editorial. Policy changes include adhering to NYS law that area of a home or accessory structure allowed for use as a home occupation is no more than 50% and modification of the water overlay district. The Stream Corridor Overlay District is comprised of riparian buffers along streams (100 ft. from top of bank for Six Mile Creek in Ag/Rural and Focused Commercial Districts, 75 ft. in hamlets; 50 ft. from top of bank for all other perennial streams; 25 ft. for

intermittent streams). Wetlands are regulated by the state and federal governments. Floodplains are designated by FEMA and regulated by the Town’s Flood Damage Prevention Local Law of 2021.

**Code Officer, Cliff Babson** – Submitted a monthly Report to the Board for their review, a copy of which has been filed with the Clerk in Town Correspondence.

**Town Clerk, Jessie Townsend** – The 2024 Town & County tax bills will be mailed to residents on December 27<sup>th</sup>. The Clerk’s Office will be closed on New Year’s Day (Monday, January 1, 2024).

Collection will begin January 2<sup>nd</sup> through April 1<sup>st</sup>. Recently received an estimate from our current credit card vendor to expand payment services related to dog renewals and marriage licenses, etc. Disappointed to learn that the surcharge fees are extremely high, more than 3.95% per transaction, as well as an annual cost of \$1,500 for software maintenance and support. Committed to continue seeking alternate vendors to offer card services at a lower cost to residents.

**Clm. Murray** – Met with Mark and CO, Cliff Babson regarding his transition to be the Zoning Officer should the law pass. Cliff has researched software programs that can be used for both zoning as well as building code and has recommended the purchase of cloudpermit. This permit software is currently being used in Groton and is being considered by the County. Will make a motion to approve the purchase this software later in the meeting.

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**Discussion of draft zoning law**

Reviewed and discussed the Schedule of Uses in Article IV of the draft law after receiving advice from the Town Attorney related to Special Use Permits (SUP) vs. Site Plan Review (SPR). The following was discussed and noted:

Commercial Horse Operating Facility – A lot of comments surrounding permitting in Ag/rural and Focused Commercial vs. permitting in all hamlets. Changed to P in Ag/Rural and Focused Comm.

Section 9.1.c & d. – covered in paragraph a (non-conforming lots) reviewed change made to this section by Nan.

Cemetery – Human... add - or animal.

Special Use Permits – Remove paragraph b (redundant).

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**Resolutions**

**Resolution 130 of 2023. Approval of Changes to the Draft Zoning Law by Consent Agenda**

Motion by: Witmer      Second: Brown

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board agrees to a Consent Agenda to approve the changes made to the draft Zoning Law as outlined above.

**Motion carried.**

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

**Nays: None**

**Resolution 131 of 2023. Resolution to set Public Hearing on proposed Zoning Law**

Motion by Witmer      Second: Murray

WHEREAS, by Resolution 64 of 2021, adopted February 10, 2021, the Caroline Town Board formed a Zoning Commission to develop a comprehensive zoning plan for the Town; and

WHEREAS, Caroline’s Zoning Commission approved their Final Report to the Town Board on March 27, 2023 after 51 public meetings and a rigorous process that encouraged and considered public input; and

WHEREAS, the Town Board accepted the Commission’s Report on April 5, 2023 and has now completed its review and amendments as agreed to-date; therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Caroline Town Board hereby sets a Public Hearing to hear comments on the Town’s proposed zoning law for January 31, 2023, at 7 pm at the Caroline Town Hall and by Zoom; and further be it

RESOLVED, the final draft zoning law shall be posted on the Town’s home page and notice shall immediately be published in the Town newspaper and sent to all interested agencies as identified in Resolution 101 of 2023 of August 18, 2023, SEQRA Review of the proposed Caroline Zoning Law; and further be it

RESOLVED, the final draft zoning law shall immediately be submitted to the Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability for review as required by General Municipal Law § 239-m and -n.

**Motion carried.**  
**Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown**  
**Nays: None**

**Resolution 131 of 2023. Establish a History Room Advisory Committee**

Motion by: Brown      Second: Kelley-Mackenzie

WHEREAS, NYS law 57.07 mandates the appointment of a Town Historian in order to “ promote the establishment and improvement of programs for the management and preservation of local government records with enduring value for historical or other research; encourage the coordinated collection and preservation of nongovernmental historical records by libraries, historical societies, and other repositories; and carry out and actively encourage research in such records in order to add to the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the community's history” and

WHEREAS, the Town of Caroline has established the History Room to house collections of local historical importance; and therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Caroline Town Board wishes to a History Room Advisory Committee, being composed of the Town Historian, the Deputy Historian, and up to 2 community members, to better support the activities and collections of the History Room of the Town of Caroline.

*Discussion: some initial questions as to the purpose of this committee. Clm. Brown offered her interest and support as a way to facilitate stronger communications between the Historian and Board and to also help guide the needs of the Room, as the community’s interest in the Town’s history has grown greatly in more recent years. One recommendation made was to have the Committee meet (at least) quarterly but that is yet to be determined. The overall consensus was that Clm. Brown serve as Liaison and that she will work to begin discussions with the Historian and organize further details relating to other members, meeting dates/times, and prioritizing needs.*

**Motion carried.**  
**Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown**  
**Nays: None**

**Resolution 132 of 2023. Set 2024 Town of Caroline employee wage increase.**

Motion by: Witmer      Second: Snow

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby approves a 2024 wage increase for non-union employees of 3.2%.

**Motion carried.**

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

**Nays: None**

**Resolution 133 of 2023. Set 2024 employee health insurance terms.**

Motion by: Witmer      Second: Murray

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby provides that Class A employees or officials qualifying for the Town’s health insurance plan (Gold Plan) shall be responsible for 16% of the premium. Class A employees and officials currently covered by the Town’s health insurance may continue in 2024 with the Gold Plan with an HRA funded at 100% of the Out-of-pocket Maximum (OOPmax); they may also switch to an HSA funded at 100% of the OOPmax for two years, then 50% OOPmax thereafter. This is a one-time irreversible option that must be made at the start of the year. New eligible employees and officials may enroll for the Town’s health insurance (Gold Plan) with an HSA funded at 100% OOPmax in the first 12 months, then 50% of the OOPmax annually thereafter. And further be it

Resolved, Class B employees enrolling in the Town’s health insurance plan shall be responsible for 50% of the premium without a town contribution to an HSA. And further be it

Resolved, Class C employees may enroll in the Town’s health insurance plan at their own expense without a town contribution to an HSA; and further be it

Resolved, the Town’s Employee Handbook shall be updated accordingly.

*Discussion: Clm. Kelley-Mackenzie wants to offer coverage for part-time (20+ hrs/wk) employees. More questions surrounding the current coverage, annual cost, etc. After a lengthy discussion, it was agreed to approve the terms as set forth and revisit the discussion later in the year when further details on cost can be outlined.*

**Motion carried.**

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

**Nays: None**

**Resolution 134 of 2023. Authorize 3-year contract for Cloudpermit for the Code Enforcement Office.**

Motion: Murray      Second: Witmer

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board authorizes approval of the 3-year proposal for Cloudpermit software.

**Motion carried.**

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

**Nays: None**

**Resolution 135 of 2023. Authorizing the Supervisor to sign 2024 Caroline Fire Protection contracts with Speedsville Volunteer Fire Co. and Brooktondale Fire District**

Motion by: Witmer      Second: Murray

RESOLVED, the Caroline Town Board authorizes the Supervisor to sign the 2024 Caroline Fire Protection District contracts with Speedsville Volunteer Fire Co. and Brooktondale Fire District.

**Motion carried.**

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

**Nays: None**

**Resolution 136 of 2023. Authorizing the Supervisor to sign the 2024 Agreements for Cooperative Purchasing of Workers’ Comp Insurance**

Motion by: Witmer      Second: Snow

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board authorizes the Supervisor to sign the 2024 GML 119-o Agreements for Cooperative Purchasing and Reimbursement of Workers’ Compensation Insurance with Brooktondale and Slaterville Fire Districts.

**Motion carried.**  
**Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown**  
**Nays: None**

**Resolution 137 of 2023. Authorizing the Supervisor to sign 2024 agreement for legal services**

Motion by: Witmer      Second: Snow

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board authorizes the Supervisor to sign 2024 Agreement for Legal Representation between the Town of Caroline and Guy K. Krogh, Esq. of Thaler & Thaler

**Motion carried.**  
**Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown**  
**Nays: None**

**Resolution 138 of 2023. 2023 Budget Transfers to Reserve Accounts**

Motion by: Witmer      Second: Kelley-Mackenzie

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board makes the following 2023 transfer to reserves:  
\$30,000      from A1620.43 Town Hall Capital Reserve      to A231 Town Hall Reserve

**Motion carried.**  
**Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown**  
**Nays: None**

**Resolution 139 of 2023. Approval of Vouchers for Payment of Town Bills**

Motion by: Witmer      Second: Kelley-Mackenzie

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board approves payment of audited vouchers for the General (A) Fund, Highway (DA) Fund and Streetlighting (SL) Fund as follows:

- A Fund: \$60,858.80
- DA Fund: \$102,574.75
- SL Fund: \$1,006.74

**Motion carried.**  
**Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown**  
**Nays: None**

**Resolution 140 of 2023. Set Organizational Meeting**

Motion by: Witmer      Second: Kelley-Mackenzie

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby sets the 2024 Organizational Meeting to be held on January 3, 2024, beginning at 7pm.

**Motion carried.**  
**Ayes: Witmer, Snow, Murray, Kelley-Mackenzie, Brown**  
**Nays: None**

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A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Supr. Witmer and seconded by Clm. Murray and carried unanimously at 9:00PM.

----Meeting Adjourned----