**Caroline Town Board Meeting Minutes of February 15, 2023**

A Public Hearing on a Town of Caroline Property Tax Exemptions Local Law and the Town Board Business Meeting were held hybrid at the Caroline Town Hall on February 15, 2023, and was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Supr. Witmer

**Attendance**:  **Also Present:**

Supervisor Mark Witmer Jay Franklin

Councilmember Cal Snow

Councilmember Tim Murray

Councilmember Katherine Goldberg

Councilmember Kate Kelley-Mackenzie

**Recording Secretary**:

Jessica L. Townsend, Town Clerk

**Public Present:** 3 **Zoom**: 4

Supr. Witmer opened the meeting with Pledge to the Flag.

## Public Hearing

Supr. Witmer provided a brief background on each proposed exemption and then opened the Public Hearing at 7:03 p.m.

Pete Hoyt – Does not find any that are objectionable.

Kathy Mix – Thanked the Board for putting these additional exemptions forward.

After receiving no further comments, Supr. Witmer closed the Hearing at 7:06 p.m.

**Resolution 61 of 2023. Adopting the Town of Caroline Property Tax Exemptions Local Law**

Motion by: Witmer Seconded: Goldberg

Whereas, on December 9, 2022, New York State adopted legislation allowing a property tax exemption for Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Workers; and

Whereas, the Caroline Town Board wishes to update the limit on the Low-income Senior & Disability Property Tax Exemption; and

Whereas, the Caroline Town Board wishes to provide additional property tax exemptions to support the town’s goals; therefore be it

Resolved, having held a Public Hearing on the Town of Caroline Property Tax Exemption Local Law on February 15, 2023, the Caroline Town Board hereby adopts this local law.

*Discussion: Tim and Mark offered support for these exemptions. County Assessment Director, Jay Franklin, briefly outlined process questions, advising that all applications are submitted through the County Assessment Office and that the parent/grandparent, senior disabled, and the income-based exemptions are done annually. The deadline to apply is March 1st and further questions or clarifications should be directed to his department.*

**Motion carried.**

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

**Nays: None**

**Resolution 62 of 2023. Contract for LED Light Conversion at Caroline Fire Stations**

Motion by: Witmer Second: Murray

Whereas, the Town received a NYSERDA grant for town-wide LED conversion (Brighten Up Caroline) that includes fire stations; and

Whereas, the Town has obtained two proposals for LED lighting conversion at the Slaterville and Brooktondale Fire Stations; and

Whereas, Global LED Solutions has provided the Town the lowest cost proposal of $13,827.65; therefore be it

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby authorizes the Supervisor to sign a contract with Global LED Solutions for LED lighting conversion at Slaterville and Brooktondale Fire Stations.

*Discussion: Representative from Global LED Solutions gave an energy analysis and answered questions from the Board. Once Agreement is signed, installation will be scheduled, typically within 4-6 weeks and should take no more than 3 days to complete.*

**Motion carried.**

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

**Nays: None**

## Committee Reports

**Supr. Witmer** – Supervisor Notes:

* Tompkins County Planning & Sustainability invitation for grants workshops on 13 and 16 Feb.
* Two Public Hearings on the Zoning Commission’s Preliminary Report have been scheduled, one on February 22 and one on February 28. Both start at 6 pm. Written comments are encouraged. Notices have been sent to neighboring municipalities.
* Interviews scheduled for Highway Project.
* TCCOG Emergency Services Planning: Interviews by T.C. Department of Emergency Response for EMS Program Manager are in progress.
* Steering committee for Tompkins County’s Code Enforcement shared services study met on February 7 and reviewed survey responses from Chief Elected Officials, Code Officers, and Planners. Round table discussions are planned for early March.
* Energy Independent Caroline Committee: working on draft CCA (Community Choice Aggregation) Local Law for consideration by the Town Board. A CCA Local Law is a necessary step that allows a municipality to establish a CCA program, but does not require that a municipality do so. Community Choice Aggregation is a community energy bulk-purchasing program that empowers a municipality to leverage marketplace competition. Residents can opt-out at any time.
* Watershed Committee: After reading the Carey Institute’s white paper on salt use by homeowners and municipalities, the committee suggested connecting with Superintendent Spencer to find out about the highway departments protocols. Will be coordinating with Superintendent Spencer on Spring Road and Ditch Clean Up.
* DEC has issued a permit for the Ekroos Culvert and Stream Stabilization Project. Working with Superintendent Spencer to provide any feedback to the town engineer for final project plans so that the project can be bid and planned for early 2023 completion.

**Town Clerk** – *Tax Collection -*Collection will continue through March. I did receive some feedback from residents concerning the “encouragement to pay on-line or by mail” that was notated on the tax bills. This was done to deter 2000+ people from coming through the Town Hall in a very short period in an effort to protect staff and residents that are health-compromised or are coming to pay with cash. Again, it is only encouraged, not required. During January, my office collected just under $2.5M. 101 bills were paid on-line, 203 paid in-person and the rest were paid by mail.

**Clm. Murray –** *ZC* **–** Earliest the Board could receive draft law is at the March Business Meeting. Although not required, but after discussions with the Ag Committee, the draft will be sent to NYS Ag & Markets for their review. It was emphasized that this does not push the law forward, this is being done at this time because of the significant delay within the State Ag Department.

**Clm. Goldberg** – George (Ag Planner) came to the meeting on February 7th and introduced himself and his involvement on the Committee. The first outreach event is scheduled for April 6, 2023. A survey will be sent out for input. Look for more information in the Town Newsletter.

**Clm. Kelley-Mackenzie –** Will be meeting to discuss the Safe Streets for All grant.

## Discussion with Susan Holland on the Historic Town Hall Project

Susan Holland from Historic Ithaca came to discuss the Historic Town Hall project. She has been working with Mark, Cal and Steve Gibian to discuss preservation of the building and to collect information on grant funding for same.

**Resolution 63 of 2023. Appreciation to Karyn Scott for Service on Town Youth Commissions**

Motion by: Witmer Second: Murray

Whereas, Karyn Scott has ably served as the Town’s representative to the Tompkins County Recreational Partnership and Joint Youth Commission for the past 6 years with commitment to youth programs; and

Whereas, Karyn is stepping down because of other commitments; therefore be it

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board extends its sincere appreciation to Karyn for her superb service to the youth of Caroline.

**Motion carried.**

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

**Nays: None**

**Resolution 64 of 2023. Committing TOC ARPA funds to support municipal broadband buildout.**

Motion by: Witmer Second: Kelley-Mackenzie

Whereas, the Town of Caroline was awarded a grant of $132,333 for the Tompkins County Community Recovery Fund (Tompkins County ARPA funds) for development of a feasibility study and partial buildout of Dryden’s municipal broadband project into Caroline; and

Whereas, provision of reliable internet access in all areas of Caroline is a well recognized need and identified as a priority in the American Rescue Plan; and

Whereas, the grant proposal for the feasibility study and partial buildout from Yellow Barn Road to Slaterville Springs is $583,050; and

Whereas, this project will prepare the Town to apply for additional funding to complete a town-wide municipal broadband project; therefore be it

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board commits its ARPA funds totaling $338,050 towards the municipal broadband feasibility study and partial buildout; and further be it

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board authorizes the Supervisor to sign the Agreement with Tompkins County for the Tompkins County Community Recovery Funds Award for this project.

**Motion carried.**

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

**Nays: None**

**Resolution 65 of 2023. Approval of Vouchers for Payment of Town Bills**

Motion by: Witmer Second: Goldberg

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board approves payment of vouchers for bills in the amounts of $40,652.46 for the General Fund, $83,129.15 for the Highway Fund, $1,494.28 for the Streetlight Fund, and $78,090.00 for the Fire District Fund.

**Motion carried.**

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

**Nays: None**

**Resolution 66 of 2023 Budget Transfer**

Motion by: Witmer Second: Murray

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby authorizes the following budget transfer:

$2,820 from A1990.4 Contingency to A1910.4 Insurance

**Motion carried.**

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

**Nays: None**

## Approval of Minutes

The Caroline Town Board approved the Minutes of January 18th and Feb 1st, 2023 as submitted by Town Clerk, Jessie Townsend.

## Discussion of Town COVID policy

As President Biden announced ending the national pandemic on May 11th, 2023, Supr. Witmer proposed ending the Town’s policy at such time. The Board agreed and such action will be offered in May.

## Items for March Agenda Meeting

Possible introduction to the Battery Storage Local Law

Discussion with GreenSpot regarding EV Charging Station change out.

A Motion to enter Executive Session was made by Supr. Witmer to discuss a personnel matter and was seconded by Clm. Murray and carried unanimously at 8:48 p.m.

A Motion to exit Executive Session and adjourn the meeting was made by Supr. Witmer and seconded by Clm. Kelley-Mackenzie and carried unanimously at 9:33 p.m.

----**Meeting Adjourned----**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessie Townsend, Town Clerk