

Caroline Town Board Business Meeting Minutes of October 13 2021

The Town Board Business Meeting and Budget Workshop #2 was held in-person at the Caroline Town Hall and electronically via zoom teleconference on October 13, 2021, beginning at 7:00 p.m. hosted by Supervisor Witmer.

Attendance: Mark Witmer, Supervisor
John Fracchia, Councilmember
Cal Snow, Councilmember
Tim Murray, Councilmember
Katherine Goldberg, Councilmember

Recording Secretary: Jessie Townsend, Town Clerk

Also Present: Highway Superintendent, Bob Spencer and 1 member of the public attended the teleconference.

Privilege-of-the-Floor

Mary Beth O'Connor –Thanked the Supr., Town Board and Code Enforcer for their attention to property located on Middaugh Rd. She asked for information pertaining to the future plan at the site. She asked how the business at the bottom of Middaugh Rd. has been allowed to continue renovating and unload building materials at the site while the town has a Moratorium is in place and what the ramifications are if they are violating. After board discussion, Supr. Witmer responded that they need more information regarding prior work that's been done to the property and if there were violations then or if there are any currently. The board, with the Code Officer, will continue to work to resolve this.

Discussion with Joe Hoffer and Jim Boudreau (SPCA)

Members of the Animal Control Office, Joe, and Jim came to give information regarding the services that they have continued to provide the town since 2009. Clm. Goldberg was interested in hearing what the benefits are with contracting with them vs. an independent Officer. Joe responded that although there are good independent animal service officers, the SPCA provides a 24/7 service that focuses mainly on humane investigations, collecting stray dogs and provide housing while finding the owner, issue tickets for failure to license, help neighbors resolve disturbance/safety issues concerning a dog. The annual cost is based on a 2009 calculation based on dog enumeration, people population of each municipality and units of service. All towns in Tompkins County, excluding Dryden and Lansing are contracted with them.

Resolution 132 of 2021. Authorization of Animal Control Services Agreement with Tompkins County Animal Control for 2022-2024.

A motion made by Supr. Wimer and seconded by Clm. Goldberg

The Caroline Town Board hereby authorizes the Supervisor to sign a three-year agreement with Tompkins County Animal Control (TCAC) to continue animal control services for the Town.

Passed: Witmer: Aye; Fracchia: Aye; Snow: Aye; Murray: Aye; Goldberg: Aye

Reports

Supervisor Mark Witmer – The Town Supervisor's Report is as follows:

Correspondence of Note

- Received notice from Union Volunteer Emergency Squad, Inc. of intention to apply for expansion of their operating certificate (Certificate of Need) to encompass the entirety of Broome County and the Towns of Richford, Berkshire, Newark Valley and Owego. They are seeking letter of support from Caroline.
- Posting of Foreclosure Filings from Lisa Schott, Tompkins County Treasury Manager
- Received letter from NYS Department of Public Service of the Comprehensive Broadband Connectivity Act, requiring the PSC to study the availability, reliability, and cost of high-speed internet services in NYS and to publish on its website a detailed internet access map of the state. The PSC has hired ECC Technologies to conduct to gather the detailed field information. There is also an optional online broadband service survey that consumers can complete: www.empirestatebroadband.com.
- Received \$5,000 reimbursement from the NYS Workers Comp Alliance for good performance.

Supervisor's Notes

- Spoke at the Tompkins County Health and Economic Development Committee Meeting and the Legislature Meeting in favor of continuing the Fujitsu Middle-mile study and gathering better information to inform our broadband planning. The Fujitsu study may have been flawed by being tied to Federal census block method. The Legislature voted to discontinue the Fujitsu study and proceed with gathering more detailed information on broadband access in Tompkins County. My question was whether the new PSC initiative will accomplish this goal. The County is proceeding to look for ways to support build out of broadband services to underserved areas by individual Internet Service Providers. I will be following developments and exploring options for Caroline going forward. The Dryden broadband project and STN trunk line on White Church Rd. may provide opportunities.
- LED streetlights: NYPA has identified another parts supplier for the NBIOT cellular nodes. Project completion is now being scheduled.
- Working with Brighten Up Program Director Emily Adams to close out Brighten Up Campaign.
- Stair Glide has been successfully installed in the Historic Town Hall.
- Notified Rick Morgan of Town's commitment for dry hydrant on McGrath Road
- 144 Middaugh Road. Code Officer Williams has issued a Notice of Violation. Construction activity is halted and no further work will occur until we've received, reviewed, and approved a building permit application.
- Decks and railings to main entrance and west side door entrance of Historic Town Hall have been re-stained by Tyler Mix and crew. The east front and east side door decks and rails will be stained next summer.

Town Clerk, Jessie Townsend – Report on license fees collected in August are as follows: 37 Dog Licenses; 1 Marriage License; 9 Hunting and Fishing Licenses; and collected 7 Building Permit fees. Total fees collected were \$2,219.00 less \$548.00 in non-local revenues. Check 256 to Supervisor on October 5th in the amount of \$1,670.75. (sold \$490 in HL – town keeps \$27.75 – rest to DEC)

Hwy Supt., Bob Spencer – A new Loader has been purchased and delivered. Middaugh Rd and Chesnut Rd were paved this week. Shoulders will be added for those roads in upcoming weeks. When the paving of Middaugh Rd was being done, highway crew members encountered a near-fatal experience when a car drove through the road closed sign, past the flagger, and proceeded to yell at the paving crew because she “had things to do”. Bob would like to approach the Sherriff's Office and ask for enforcement in work zones. He is looking into purchasing another “Your Speed Is” sign, one that is portable, to allow him to transport it to different jobsites.

Central Chapel Bridge update – The precast is scheduled for October 25th. It will take approximately a week or two to cover. That will stretch into November but they are hoping to have the bridge project completed in mid-November.

Dan Klein, County Rep. Report – Dan was unable to make the meeting tonight. He offered the following information via email:

The County has stopped the original broadband study. This is the one that was mapping out how we might build fiber to the unserved parts of the County, much of which is in Caroline. Instead, we will be doing a physical survey to more definitively find out where those unserved areas are, and to see if existing internet service providers might want to extend service to these areas. In my opinion, we should be doing both the study and the survey at the same time, but I lost that vote 5 to 9. Hopefully the new strategy will work out.

Thank you again to each one of you for writing in to the legislature supporting the idea of doing both studies.

At our county budget meeting last night, I proposed drawing \$1.6 million from the fund balance to bring the tax levy increase to zero. My proposal was pared down to \$1 million, and that passed. So as of right now, the proposed increase in the tax levy is about .8%, which would result in a \$18 increase on the tax bill of a median-priced home in the county. At tonight's budget meeting, where I will be instead of your meeting, I hope to again try to bring down the tax levy increase to zero. We'll see how it goes...

Clm. Murray – Zoning Commission met last night and were discussing the preparation of a public information session, to be held sometime in December. There are various concerns regarding the public session in-person, such as where it will be held and how to all meet safely. They will continue to follow covid positive statistics in the County and noted that the Brooktondale Fire Hall may be a possibility for a meeting space. The group is discussing this in depth and will announce the plan at a future date. The Commission will meet again on October 26th.

Discussion of Highway Barn Planning site considerations

Clm. Fracchia announced that Laberge group is preparing a report that will illustrate the pros and cons of the three different property options, the needs of a highway building 30 years from now, and what property accommodations are necessary to operate.

Clm. Murray would like verification that they are looking at the town's Comprehensive Plan and taking those measures into planning considerations.

Supr. Witmer also asked for specific focus on greenhouse gas emissions and geothermal heating and cooling options and if those options are available for all sites.

More information will be provided upon the completion of the report.

Resolutions

Resolution 133 of 2021. Town of Caroline COVID-19 Vaccination/Testing Policy

A motion made by Supt. Witmer and seconded by Clm. Clm. Fracchia

The Caroline Town Board adopted a resolution at the September 15, 2021 town board business meeting requiring that all Town of Caroline employees either provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19 or complete biweekly testing through Tompkins County's safety testing policy.

Attestation of Vaccination: Fully vaccinated individuals (two weeks post final dose of vaccine) should submit a photocopy of their vaccination card to Velvet Lyke (bookkeeper@townofcaroline.org) to verify their vaccination. This information will be kept confidential.

Required Testing: Unvaccinated individuals and anyone not choosing to report their vaccination status will be required to participate in Tompkins County's twice-weekly testing program. Employees who are fully vaccinated and have provided proof of vaccination are NOT required to complete surveillance COVID-19 testing. However, individuals may participate in the surveillance testing program regardless of vaccination status if they wish, free of charge.

Testing Protocol: Saliva samples for testing will be collected as per the Tompkins County Health Department's protocol. Samples will be submitted on designated days by 10 am and placed in the designated transport container at the town hall offices or highway facility for pick up and transport to the drop-off location by the Supervisor's Assistant.

Testing if You Have Symptoms: Anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, regardless of vaccination status, should NOT use the Tompkins County Employee COVID-19 Surveillance Testing Program or access County property. Such individuals should register for an appointment to access one of the Cayuga Health sampling centers and/or contact their primary care provider.

Positive COVID-19 Test: Any employee testing positive for COVID-19 must notify his/her supervisor and follow public health guidance on isolating.

Compliance: If an employee does not comply with the requirements of this policy, the Town will follow a progressive discipline process.

Effective Date: This policy shall become effective the week of October 18, 2021 and shall be reviewed in December 2021 and periodically thereafter.

Discussion: Bob proposed that ALL town employees, regardless of vaccination status, be tested. He would like to go the extra mile and not outcast those that are not vaccinated. Jessie also commented that this particular Resolution was put in place to encourage town employees that are not vaccinated, to get vaccinated and that there is language included in the Resolution saying that anyone who wishes to be tested can be.

Passed: Witmer: Aye; Fracchia: Aye; Snow: Aye; Murray: Aye; Goldberg: Aye

Resolution 134 of 2021. Amendment to the Town's Health Reimbursement Account

A motion made by Supr. Wimer and seconded by Clm. Fracchia

Whereas, recent changes in the law allow for eliminating the COVID-19 Outbreak Period (March 1, 2020 through February 28, 2021) from time-sensitive periods for plan events; therefore be it

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby authorizes the Supervisor to sign the amendment to the Town's Health Reimbursement Account with Lifetime Benefits Solutions.

Passed: Witmer: Aye; Fracchia: Aye; Snow: Aye; Murray: Aye; Goldberg: Aye

Resolution 135 of 2021. Recommendation of Steve Nicholson as the Town's representative to the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council.

A motion made by Supr. Wimer and seconded by Clm. Snow

The Caroline Town Board hereby recommends to the Tompkins County Legislature Steve Nicholson as the Town's representative on the Environmental Management Council for the 2022-2023 term.

The Town Board wishes to express its gratitude for his continued excellent service as CMC Representative.

Passed: Witmer: Aye; Fracchia: Aye; Snow: Aye; Murray: Aye; Goldberg: Aye

Resolution 136 of 2021. Approval of the 2022 Amendment to the Municipal Cooperative Agreement for the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium

A motion made by Supr. Wimer and seconded by Clm. Fracchia

WHEREAS, the Town of Caroline is a Participant in the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium (the "Consortium"), a municipal cooperative organized under Article 47 of the New York Insurance Law, and

WHEREAS, the municipal participants in the Consortium, including this body, have approved and executed a certain Municipal Cooperation Agreement (the "Agreement"; effective date of October 1, 2010),

WHEREAS, Article 47 of the New York Insurance Law (the "Insurance Law") and the rules and regulations of the New York State Department of Financial Services set forth certain requirements for governance of municipal cooperatives that offer self-insured municipal cooperative health insurance plans, and

WHEREAS, the Agreement sets forth in Section Q2 that continuation of the Consortium under the terms and conditions of the Agreement, or any amendments or restatements thereto, shall be subject to Board review and upon acceptance of any new Participant hereafter, and

WHEREAS, by motion 001-2021 the Consortium's Board of Directors recommends approval of the 2022 Amended Agreement, and

WHEREAS, the Municipal Cooperative Agreement requires that amendments to the agreement be presented to each participant for review and adopted by its municipal board,

WHEREAS, the Town of Caroline is in receipt of the proposed amended Agreement and has determined that it is in the best interest of its constituents who are served by the Consortium to amend the Agreement as set forth in the attached 2022 Amended Municipal Cooperative Agreements, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town of Caroline approves and authorizes the Chief Executive Officer to sign the 2022 Amendment to the Municipal Cooperative Agreement of the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium, and

RESOLVED, further, that the Clerk of the Town of Caroline is hereby authorized to execute this Resolution to indicate its approval, transmit a copy thereof to the Board of Directors of the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium, and take any other such actions as may be required by law.

Passed: Witmer: Aye; Fracchia: Aye; Snow: Aye; Murray: Aye; Goldberg: Aye

**Resolution 137 of 2021. Budget Transfer
(PS = personnel services, CE = contractual, EQ = equipment)**

A motion by Supr. Witmer and seconded by Clm. Fracchia

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board makes the following 2021 budget transfers:

\$6,100	from A1990.4 Contingency	to A1620.2 Town Hall EQ
\$200	from A1010.4 Town Board CE	to A3620.4 Safety Inspection CE
\$500	from A1990.4 Contingency	to A1620.1 Cleaning PS
\$3,000	from A1990.4 Contingency	to A1620.12 Maintenance PS

Passed: Witmer: Aye; Fracchia: Aye; Snow: Aye; Murray: Aye; Goldberg: Aye

Resolution 138 of 2021. Approval of Vouchers for Payment of Town Bills

A motion made by Supv. Witmer and seconded by Clm.

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board approves payment of vouchers for bills in the amounts of \$32,274.11 for the General Fund, \$229,581.75 for the Highway Fund, and \$238.80 for the Streetlight Fund. (awaiting Constellation bill)

Passed: Witmer: Aye; Fracchia: Aye; Snow: Aye; Murray: Aye; Goldberg: Aye

Resolution 139 of 2021. Letter of Support to Extend Operating Services

A motion made by Supr. Witmer and seconded by Cal

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby agrees to the support of Union Volunteer Ambulance for their expansion of operating services within Broome and Tioga County.

Passed: Witmer: Aye; Fracchia: Aye; Snow: Aye; Murray: Aye; Goldberg: Aye

Discussion on Water Testing

Cm. Snow proposed \$540 be added to the budget for water sampling at the Town Hall and Highway Department. The testing will be for 2 consecutive years, beginning in January 2022, and will be tested bi-monthly. After getting a baseline, testing would be reduced to twice a year, once in the spring, once in the fall. He also volunteered to collect the water samples and transport them to the County Health Dept. The town board unanimously agreed.

Budget Workshop #2

Supr. Witmer presented the [tentative budget](#) proposal, specifically the salary lines, and that the increases/changes that there are for elected officials, were based on a salary vs. population assessment that he believes to be in line with other towns similar to ours. The Supervisor and Highway Superintendent projected no change in salary so those were given a 4% increase. All non-elected employees are set at a 4% increase as well.

Cm. Snow added that some highway items, such as fuel, may be significantly higher next year and need to be budgeted as such. Board discussed and agreed that the highway reserve is up considerably this year than last.

Next Budget Workshop is set for October 19th at 7:00p.m.

A Public Hearing is set for the Wednesday, Nov. 3rd after the Agenda Meeting, with a 4th Budget Workshop to follow.

Approval of Minutes

The Town Board reviewed and approved the Minutes of October 5, 2021, Agenda Meeting as submitted by Town Clerk, Jessica Townsend and was carried unanimously.

A motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss Union Contract negotiations by Supervisor Witmer and seconded by Councilmember Murray was carried unanimously at 9:28p.m. and ended at 10:54p.m.

---Adjourn---

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica L. Townsend, Town Clerk