

**TOWN OF CAROLINE
BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Date & Time meeting called to order: 9/11/19, call to order 7:02pm

Salute to flag

Present: Mark Witmer, Irene Weiser, John Fracchia, Cal Snow, Tim Murray

Due to illness, the Deputy Clerk asked Town CEO Brooke Greenhouse to take the minutes.

Absent: Deputy Clerk Becky Jordan

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

None

REPORTS:

HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Bald Hill RD is on the list of minimum maintenance roads from approx. 3,900 feet from White Church RD to the dead end per Town Minimum Maintenance Road List / Local law 2 of 1996.

Highway Supervisor Whittaker advised can leave as min. maintenance and it can be plowed at the discretion of the highway dept. OR can make a resolution to remove from the minimum maintenance list and make a full-fledged road. Currently the portion the Liddington property buyers are requesting maintenance for is a "seasonal" road and not necessarily plowed. Discussion was that the request for a change should come from the actual property owner, not any other interested party.

Minimum maintenance and seasonal road designations are a mechanism to prevent excessive costs for maintenance, plowing, etc. to the Town. General conclusion was that if this is not needed for 5 years from now, the request should be made for the change closer to that time

The cost to improve was asked and Cindy said this is not an easy question to answer and has no idea of the cost for this work in 5 years. Gravel costs have tripled in recent history and she said she can not guarantee any costs or estimates.

Discussion was that the prospective buyer wants assurance the road will be maintained in 5 years, when they anticipate moving here. Cindy stated that it can be plowed as-is with the 1-ton truck, but she has had experience that this will lead to complaints and will need to be brought up to better standards if someone intends it to be a regularly used road.

The existing snow plow turnaround, etc. likely could NOT be abandoned based on regulations.

General conclusion was a promise for something 5 years from now cannot be made; the road currently is plowable at the discretion of the Highway Supervisor and the Town would seek to have the landowner pay the cost of necessary road improvements.

Superintendent Whittaker shared Candor's ATV law for consideration and suggested we start with a few roads. She presented a map showing some roads in particular she would suggest be opened to ATVs.

Discussion about the new Highway Superintendent needing an assistant and to consider bringing in someone to start this year to get a head-start on 2020.

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

Written report comments:

In October an electrician is scheduled to connect the Town Hall geothermal. The wiring will allow for future changes to provide a separate electrical service to the Town Hall if desired.

The Town Hall is long overdue for repairs/improvements – would like to work toward RFPs for needed work.

Bio-retention feature next step is an RFP and contractor selection. Questions were raised about the bid process, the specifications are clear so it is expected this project allow a quick RFP.

Concerns about the parking lot and sidewalk plan were raised for possible future discussion.

Mark received an email from the County regarding emergency management planning and Mark provided the Town emergency plan for their review.

Discussion about promoting the soon-to-be available internet connections from Hafele since this was a public-private partnership project and will serve citizens.

COUNTY REP REPORT BY DAN KLEIN:

Dan wanted to make sure Board is aware that the Ag District is currently under review. This happens every 8 years. This is a time for properties to be REMOVED from the district. They can be added at any time. Approximately ½ of the Town of Caroline is in an Ag District.

County Snowmobile Trail re-routing. Dan wanted to make sure Town Board is aware of this and expressed a concern that property owners affected by it are notified. Cindy Whittaker and Don Mix stated that the majority of the trail is along the road right of way and owners are otherwise aware. Mark reported that Scott Doyle said that the land owners were aware of this change.

Budget update – the process began for the new County Budget. 2.76% increase proposed in tax levy with a resulting decrease in the tax rate. \$2.00 per household increase in solid waste fee – this supports the recycling program, where revenues have declined very significantly. This is expected to be the beginning of annual increases.

A variety of capital improvements are expected in the next few years including downtown office consolidation, potentially closing and selling the assessment offices building, public safety building/jail needs to be replaced. The current jail model is an outdated design. New-

er designs reduce the need for staffing. Dept. emergency response has decades old technology. Generally expected to invest about \$6 million. The County goal of net zero energy operations by 2035 will require significant capital investment.

Oct 2 public forum on budget. Ten more meetings on budget, next month Dan will be unable to attend the Town Board meeting for this reason.

Question from Board about expected growth. Prior study concluded in the past the population will decrease. Per Wil Lawrence, census estimates show population has not grown as predicted. Cornell projects 250 annual growth in students over next number of years.

Question from Board about Emergency Services at Office of Emergency Response. Is there a budget piece to support a campaign to recruit and promote emergency responders? Dan asked about this recently and the dept. is expecting to fill a position to recruit, support and train EMS personnel.

Cindy reported that in Candor they have a program to help certifications be easier to obtain and retain. Tioga County has supported this effort in coordination with changes from NYS that make this possible to be easier.

AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES – WILMA LAWRENCE:

Wil presented a written request from the Caroline Seniors addressed to Mark Witmer, Town Supervisor asking the Town for a \$150 increase in the upcoming budget.

The age-friendly project for Caroline will likely emphasize emergency-preparedness.

TOWN CLERK:

No report

BUILDING DEPT:

Written report submitted

CEMETERY:

Cal requested \$300 for work needed at the Veterans Memorial and goal to do before Veterans Day. Needs some supplies, work can be done by volunteers.

An idea was discussed to light the memorial and could be solar or part of the new lighting changes, for consideration now or next year.

HIGHWAY – CAL SNOW:

All data was lost recently during a computer upgrade by the Computing Center. Questions were raised about liability for this. The computer was not backed-up before the change and will require re-entry information of a significant amount of data.

It is unclear if the highway computers are currently being backed-up. Documents in “one-drive” may be stored in the cloud, but other software and data is not backed-up to “one-drive.”

Mark reported that Gary from computer center recommended installing a 4TB drive for backup at the Highway Dept.

There are two interested members in the Highway facilities task force.

Payroll question from Cal, check information has changed. Mark said this is due to a change made by the bookkeeper.

Cindy reported local banks told two of her staff that payroll checks should be written from a different fund and this resulted in an extra hold on releasing funds. Mark reported this process was used to try to keep the payroll separate from other accounts based on a suggestion from the software provider. This was done over one year ago. Historically checks said “supervisor’s fund.” Mark will look into this concern.

The budget should include consideration of two new trucks. Current budget includes one truck. Two trucks will be over 20 years old and have been out of service significantly this year. This year over \$30k in repairs. The plan is to try to order one truck this year and encumber funds that will be released in 2020.

Cal reported the recent passing of former Highway Department employee Rodney Russell.

Cal recognized today as the anniversary of the Sept. 11th attacks. Cindy reported that as an EMT she spent days in NYC after the attacks and was appreciated for her service.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (NOTE ANY CORRECTIONS OR AMENDMENTS):

None

BILLS:

Irene and John noticed what appears to be a duplicate receipt for books purchased for the Library. Payment was pulled from approval pending further review.

Computing Center bill was considered to be high due to additional work caused by the failure of the Highway Dept. computer hard drive during commissioning of a new computer by the Computing Center. It was reported that the original disk was not backed-up prior to the effort to remove malware before transfer of data. The Computing Center invoice was pulled from approval pending further review.

RESOLUTIONS:

To contribute \$50 to the Berkshire Fire Dept. in honor of Rodney Russell and his contributions to our community.

By Cal Snow, 2nd by John.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Approval of Abstracts, except for Library receipt and Computing Center invoices in the amount of \$23,951.37

By Mark, 2nd by John.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Pay highway bills in the amount of \$167,338.18

By Mark, 2nd by Tim.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Pay streetlight bills of \$492.76

By Mark, 2nd by Irene.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Approve revised Town Bookkeeper position with new title “Bookkeeper and Assistant to the Supervisor”

By Mark, 2nd by John.

By Irene to change title to “bookkeeper and assistant to the supervisor” accepted by mover and 2nd.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Approve updated Employee Handbook.

By Mark, 2nd by Tim.

Discussion: added sick-day provision, removed short term disability references, also added vacation benefits for full time employees – a new benefit, benefits begin 1/1/2020, Stephanie reviewed and provided much helpful feedback. Board complimented this accomplishment as thoughtful and important.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Approve supervisor signing NYSEG agreement for street lighting facilities and street lighting pole attachment agreement.

By Mark, 2nd by Tim.

Discussion: The contract was reviewed with NYPA and a desire to have Town Attorney comment on ability to share the agreement with the public was discussed.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Authorize Town Supervisor to sign an agreement for the bioretention project.

By Mark, 2nd by Irene.

Discussion: goal is to also do rock-hounding, seeding of area disturbed by the geothermal work. Likely in two contracts.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Caroline to authorize CCE to begin a climate vulnerability assessment.

By Mark, 2nd by Irene.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Move the Nov agenda meeting to Weds, Nov 6th due to the 5th being election day.

By Mark, 2nd by John.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

ITEMS TO BE HELD OVER:

Action on minimum maintenance road. Need to discuss more with Town Attorney. Likely need for a new petition. Mark will let the Liddingtons / petitioner know this.

DISCUSSION / NEW BUSINESS:

Town Hall improvements:

Crawlspace sealing is a priority. Discussion of the building needing other significant improvements continued.

Trail discussion:

Irene suggested a public meeting separate from Town Board meeting in a larger space. Focus would be an information and question session, not an opinion meeting which would be appropriate for a future public hearing. Tim suggested more discussion among board prior to such a meeting. John pointed out that the budget process will consume much time in the coming months, so there is consideration to have these discussions in early 2020 to afford

them full attention. Sharing the agreement with the public now for public consideration prior to any meetings or actions was discussed. The board decided to share the document in the near future and hold discussions and hearings in the future after the budget is completed.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

By Mark Witmer, 2nd by Cal Snow.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Time of adjournment: 10:07 PM

Minutes prepared by Brooke Greenhouse, Code Enforcement Officer and presented to Becky Jordan, Deputy Clerk.

DRAFT