

Caroline Town Board Meeting Minutes of September 6, 2011

The Town of Caroline Agenda Meeting held on September 6, 2011 at the Speedsville Community Center was called to order at 7:10 PM by Supervisor Donald Barber.

Attendance:

Donald Barber, Supervisor
Dominic Frongillo, Councilmember
Linda Adams, Councilmember
Toby McDonald, Councilmember
Peter Hoyt, Councilmember

Recording

Secretary: Christine Wilbur, Deputy Town Clerk and Marilou Harrington, Town Clerk

Also present: Approximately 85 members of the public

Superintendent Barber addressed members of the public regarding the rules for speaking during the Privilege of the Floor section of the meeting. A sign-up sheet (see attachment 1) was circulated for those people who were interested in speaking. He indicated that people could speak even if they didn't sign the sheet and those who signed the sheet didn't need to speak if they changed their mind, etc.; speakers will be called upon one at a time – please try to keep remarks to 3 minutes to give everyone a chance to speak, and be respectful of the speakers. He also pointed out the fire exits.

Privilege of the Floor

Bill Podulka spoke to the Town Board regarding his disapproval of the resolution clarifying the Town of Caroline's role regarding gas development based on current environmental conservation law.

Mr. Podulka presented a petition to the Town Board, signed by 1,146 Caroline residents who are overwhelmingly in favor of banning high-volume hydraulic fracturing. Approximately 40 people, representative of a cross section of town residents, did the petitioning. All petitioners had an orientation session; all knew it was a controversial subject and petitioners were instructed to be respectful to all opinions and the intent was to start a dialogue within the community. They also provided written materials to leave with residents if they desired or wanted more information

Mr. Podulka provided information, through a Power Point presentation, regarding the petitioning process as well as a synopsis of the results. Some of the information is as follows:

- Petitioners contacted over half the households and people in the Town of Caroline;
- A map was provided that showed where the residents reside throughout the Town of Caroline;
- Residents contacted are representative of the political party affiliations in Caroline;
- Residents contacted are representative of the ages of Caroline residents;
- Petition signers come from all over Caroline (he provided a map);
- 71% of residents approached are in favor of banning high-volume hydraulic fracturing.

Board members will get copies of his presentation and Bill said the information will be available on line at the ROUSE website; www.rouse-tc.org. The power point presentation is also an attachment to the minutes and can be viewed at the Town Clerk's office. (see attachment 2)

Mr. Podulka concluded his presentation by asking the Town Board to be responsive to a majority of their constituents who want the Board to act on this issue. He provided a proposed resolution for the Board to consider banning hydraulic fracturing in the Town of Caroline. He also asked the Town Board to approach a lawyer who would (free) assist in developing the appropriate language.

A summary of questions, comments and statements from the public are as follows:

Tony Tavelli – asked what information was given to petitioners – was it biased in favor of the ban?

Harry Dilles asked how many signers are property tax payers?

Earl Collin – fair and balanced view? Are there information sessions for pro-gas presentations?

Elizabeth Smith felt petitioners were offensive. She asked to explain the difference between unsafe drilling and a total ban.

Bill Podulka (personally) has not seen a safe gas drilling operation – cannot speak for everyone in the group. Position of the group is on the brochure.

John Confer (a petitioner) reported that every house he approached already knew about hydrofracking and had already made their minds up – he does not feel he tried to persuade people one way or another – nobody changed their mind because of his visit.

Kevin Jordan reported that two ladies came to his house to present petition – he knew what it was about – he listened; he went to work at the gas company and was amazed to see the quality of environmental and safety procedures and urged people to visit job site .

Bill Podulka has visited a job site but does not feel is representative of all worksites; and he feels the ROUSE committee has done the best they can to provide factual information.

Becky DeWitt (a petitioner) did not have to persuade anybody.

Michele Brown asked how many (what percentage) of registered voters were approached. About 2,100 were approached – 1,146 signed.

David Foster reported that 55 percent of land is leased to a gas company and some leases are expiring.

Milt Taam believes the information being provided is misleading that gas is not a clean fuel. Bill Podulka and Mr. Taam disagreed with each other on the subject.

Cal Snow asked what “active” voters means. Board of Elections lists 2,300 voters, 2100 are active – not sure what “active” means.

Bruce Murray asked if the information being provided is based on published papers and documented? Mr. Podulka referred to the literature that was being provided which includes the sources of the information.

Jerry Jordan (?) asked if there are any safer or different methods to extract gas other than hydrofracking. Mr. Podulka was not aware of any other method. Don thanked Bill for putting himself on the line for this issue.

Elizabeth Smith thanked the Board for having the meeting in Speedsville. She spoke about possible legal endangerment to the Town if a ban was enacted. She does not want the Town to bear the cost of a lawsuit. She feels that since we all use and need energy, this ban represents a double standard. We should find ways to work together.

Robert Anderson read a prepared statement (see attachment 3) regarding the power of public opinion which he feels is not always with fairness or respectful of rights of all. He concluded by asking the Board to make an informed decision, not a political one.

Mary Alyse Kobler spoke about local farmers who produce all they need and want their grandkids to follow. She feels she is informed and educated on the topic of gas drilling and is confident that people are providing factual information. She is encouraging everyone to wait and see – a safer method to drill for gas may be developed in the future, but not yet.

Frank Yapple, from the oldest family in Caroline, thanked the Board for coming to Speedsville - the “Lost Corner” of town. He spoke about large landowners in this end of town who feel a ban on gas drilling would take away a source of income for farmers who are barely scraping by.

Pat Brehl spoke in favor of a ban on gas extraction using high-volume, hydraulic fracturing, she also spoke about the Exxon Valdez oil spill and that it could happen here.

Aaron Snow – thanked Bob Anderson for his remarks. He urged the Board to continue to work toward the ban.

Becky DeWitt is opposed to hydraulic fracturing in Town of Caroline. She spoke of a need to form a coalition to help farmers in NYS so they do not have to resort to risky ventures with the gas companies for income.

Bruce Murray, who has lived here for 60 years, believes that some statistics show that we are close to being able to access the gas in a safe manner. We do not have to be in a big hurry and should slow down, step back and wait for safe procedures.

Ann Boehm has lived here for 30 yrs. and was a petitioner. She spoke of deep-rooted families to happy hermits who all have a fundamental regard for stewardship. She read remarks of statistics negative to gas drilling.

At this time (8:40 PM) Supervisor Barber announced he would like to have the Privilege of the Floor comments end at 9:00 PM. and that there will be other opportunities for residents to speak to this issue at future meetings.

John Comstock, a petitioner, agrees with others and urges Board members to listen to the majority of residents who want a ban on drilling. He feels once drilling starts, there will be no stopping it.

Louis Freedman, a resident for over 25 years, urges the Board to respect the views of the majority of the residents.

Bill Crispell, a resident over 71 years, respects everyone's opinion, loves the community, but reminded the Board that a ban on drilling is not under the Board's jurisdiction.

Jim Houghton had many questions about the quality of the information – feels people on both sides of the issue are providing misleading information and urges everyone to question the legitimacy of what is being provided.

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Evett, a resident for 36 years, was very involved in petition drive and obtained over 100 signatures. She feels the methods of the petition drive were commendable and feels insulted by those who believe mis-information was distributed. Lots of time and energy has been invested – we cannot stand by and allow a practice (hydraulic fracturing) that has been shown to be destructive throughout the country.

Linc Adams said we all use energy – we are hydrocarbon users. We are using energy at others' expense – hypocrisy by not allowing gas drilling here. NYS is the most regulated State regarding gas drilling. This is a natural resource.

Milt Taam read a statement regarding the impact of gas drilling in PA. He spoke to residents - 1 to 2 % of wells in PA are contaminated. We can do better in NYS – take time to spend time to figure it out – we can do better than PA. Life goes along in Bradford CO., PA – not a huge impact – not what ROUSE is claiming. Many roads in PA are better than here. ROUSE is exaggerating impact. Natural gas is best fuel available – should be allowed to be developed here in Town of Caroline – identify risk and find solutions.

Irene Weiser, resident for 19 years, thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak and for holding this meeting in Speedsville. She is grateful for those residents who are stewards of the beautiful woods and farmlands in the Town of Caroline. She spoke about negative impacts on town. She is running for Town Board and is meeting people and listening to their concerns; some need money to pay taxes – not an active choice, but out of desperation (that they are in favor of gas drilling). What is the cost to the rural way of life? We are all connected to the water we drink and the air we breathe. We should use creative solutions to bring all of us together.

At 9:00 PM Supervisor Barber closed the Privilege of the Floor portion of the meeting and reminded attendees that there will be more opportunities for people to speak.

The majority of the audience left the building at 9:10 PM prior to the regular board business.

The regular meeting continued at 9:15 PM

OTHER PUBLIC COMMENT

Molly Adams reported she will be involved in the budget process for the Senior Citizens and would like information on when the meetings will be held. Supervisor Barber said a good time for budget input would be at the business meeting to be held on September 15. Budget work sessions will be set up at that meeting

Reports

Linda Adams, Councilmember – introduced herself - She is a Councilmember and Chair of the Watershed Committee and leader of the Tompkins County Landowner's Association. Due to technical problems, she will make her presentation (regarding gas drilling) at a future meeting.

She also reported that the Six Mile Creek Gauge Station funding plan will be discussed at next week's Business Meeting.

Dominic Frangillo, Councilmember – reminded the audience to subscribe to the list serve for official Town announcements, notices of meetings, etc. If you would like to subscribe, just let him know. He reported that there will be a meeting on September 27 (ROUSE sponsored) regarding home energy efficiency.

Peter Hoyt, Councilmember –briefly discussed the Burns Road Speed Limit Resolution that will be presented at next week's Business Meeting.

Toby McDonald, Councilmember – no report.

Approval of Minutes

Resolution 112 of 2011

Minutes of the Agenda Meeting August 2, 2011.

A motion was made by Supervisor Barber and seconded by Councilmember Adams to accept the minutes of the August 2, 2011 as submitted by the Deputy Town Clerk.

Adopted Barber: Aye; Frongillo: Aye; Adams: Aye; McDonald: Aye; Hoyt: Abstain

Minutes of Business Meeting August 9, 2011

A motion was made by Supervisor Barber and seconded by Councilmember Hoyt to accept the minutes of August 9, 2011 as submitted by the Town Clerk.

Adopted Barber: Aye; Frongillo: Aye Adams: Aye; McDonald: Aye; Hoyt: Aye

Town Business:

The Town Code Officer reported that a violation has been issued to a resident who continues to have personal items in Town right of way. If the resident does not comply, the Town will remove the items and the cost will be charged to resident.

Supervisor Barber reported that the State Hydrofracking panel will now have a local official and hopes that the local letter-writing campaign influenced that decision.

There will be a meeting next Monday –Town of Danby – review of comprehensive plan.

Supervisor Barber would like budget requests as soon as possible.

Local Law re: flood plain – will schedule public hearing.

Look for budget workshop dates for budget – bring calendars. Need to do two meetings in addition to Town Board meetings.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding future meetings to continue with the gas drilling debate and when a resolution would be presented. It was decided to schedule the October 4th meeting at a venue large enough to allow for more public comment on gas drilling and set an agenda item to include a resolution regarding gas drilling. This meeting will be announced in newsletters and list serves and be highly publicized. The location of the meeting may be held at the Brooktondale Fire Hall.

Due to possible primary elections, the September Business meeting will be held on **Thursday, September 15, 2011** (not the regular Tuesday meeting date) at the Historic Town Hall.

Agenda Items for the September 15, 2011 Business Meeting:

- Transfers
- Approve Abstracts: Highway, General, Lighting
- Six Mile Creek Gauge Station Funding Plan
- Burns Road Speed Limit Resolution

- Discuss Flood Plain Local Law text and set public hearing date
- Set dates for Budget Workshops
- Set date for Budget Public Hearing
- Note: October 4th Town Board meeting will include a discussion of the Hydrofracking Ban resolution.

Adjourn

On a motion by Supervisor Barber and seconded by Councilmember McDonald, the meeting adjourned at 10:05 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine M. Wilbur, Deputy Town Clerk

Marilou Harrington, Town Clerk