

Caroline Town Board Business Meeting Minutes of April 14, 2021

The Town Board Special Meeting was held electronically via Zoom teleconference on April 14, 2021 beginning at 7:03 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: 3 members of the public attended the teleconference.

Privilege-of-the-Floor

Wil Lawrence – Reported that on Tuesday, April 20th there will be an Age-Friendly Workshop beginning at 9:00a.m. TCCOG will also be meeting next week to discuss broadband.

Colin Hamilton – Spoke in support of the Food Sovereignty Ordinance and urged the town board to move forward with the ordinance.

Andrew Dygert – Also supports the Food Sovereignty Ordinance and feels it fits with the Town’s Comprehensive Plan.

Additions or Deletions to Agenda

Supervisor Witmer added an Executive Session at the end of the meeting to discuss a personnel matter. Councilmember Snow added discussion on ATV’s.

Proposal for a Caroline Clean Heating & Cooling Campaign by Lisa Marshall

Lisa Marshall gave a presentation about the Campaign including the benefits of converting all forms of fossil fuel heating to air-and ground-source heat pumps. New York State is conducting a Pilot Study and there are grant opportunities available residents in an effort by the State to reach its climate goals, which include the achievement of 70% renewable energy use by 2030 and carbon-free electricity generation by 2040. A Resolution to participate in this campaign will be considered later in tonight’s meeting.

Reports

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

Correspondence of Note

Received NYSDOT notices of 2021 culvert project and detour plans:

- CR115 (Valley Road) over Six Mile Creek tributary east of west terminus of Burns Rd. Detour: Lounsbery to NYS Rt. 79 to Boiceville Rd (2.4 mi/4 min)
- CR119 (Coddington Road) over Six Mile Creek tributary east of Caroline Depot Rd. Detour to NYS 96B (21.4 mi/25 min).

Submitted letter of support to Liz Cameron at T.C. Health Department for CDBG proposal for funding to support septic system replacement for LMI households.

Supervisor's Notes

Ms. Lyke composed the first quarterly edition of a town newsletter that was mailed to all Caroline residences with a team effort at the Town Hall. We will be posting newsletters to the town website and sending via Town Announcements.

Clean Energy Communities Brighten Up Caroline Grant: Working with Guth DeConzo (NYPA engineering contractors) on final streetlight design. Have agreed to their recommendation of cellular communication devices from each streetlight, recognizing incomplete coverage at this time. LED bulb distribution underway. Postcards sent to all town residents.

Watershed Committee: 2021 Clean Up Day scheduled for April 17 to clean up roadsides and ditches. The Highway Department's 2021 Clean Up Week will be April 26 through May 1.

Collected and submitted documentation for unrecovered grant funds from NYS Empire State Development for 2014 stream stabilization work on Six Mile Creek at Old 600.

Working with René Carver on Historic Town Hall AV system installation. René will begin mounting and measuring for cable runs on Thursday, April 15.

Finance documents received from Key Bank for 5-year installment purchase of snow plow truck with interest rate of 2.2%.

TCAT Transit Services meeting: The Caroline TCAT bus stop was dedicated to Don's brother David Barber on April 13th. There is now a plaque honor "TCAT Dave" in the shelter. TCAT will have an Proterra Electric Bus Launch on Thursday, April 22nd at 10:30 am at Bernie Milton Pavilion at The Commons. There will be an opportunity to ride on of the new electric buses. TCAT ridership is gradually increasing, but still down more than 30% from pre-COVID times.

Jessie Townsend, Town Clerk – Tax Collection was turned over to Tompkins County earlier this week. Reports on licenses issued in March are as follows: 1 Misc (book); 41 Dog Licenses; 1 Fishing License; and 9 Building Permit fees. Total collected \$3,875.00 less \$79.62 in non-local revenues. Check 236 to Supervisor on April 1st in the amount of \$3,795.38.

Bob Spencer, Highway Supt. – Clean Up Week will be held April 26 through May 1 for town residents. Spring projects are currently underway. Town Board and Staff discussed a memorial bench and tree planting to honor Dallas Micha. Also discussed a gift for recognition of highway employee, Les Dean, for his 51 years of service for the Town.

Dan Klein, County Rep. Report – Tompkins County has the 2nd highest vaccination rate in New York State. County has also administered more than 1,000,000 COVID tests. Several County Highway projects (tentatively) scheduled for this year include continuing paving on Coddington Rd, Caroline Depot Rd, and Lounsbery Rd; and the Central Chapel Rd Bridge Project.

John Fracchia, Councilmember – Highway Barns Project – Next Week the Hwy Group will be interviewing 3 of 6 firms that submitted RFP's. Firm will be looking at suitability with the current site, Perkins Rd site or possible other location for new highway barn. Brief discussion regarding process.

Tim Murray, Councilmember – Zoning Commission met on Tuesday. Board is working to get a Planner to join and assist the Commission. Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 27th.

Resolutions

Resolution 90 of 2021. Authorizing Town participation in HeatSmart Tompkins Clean Heating & Cooling Campaign

A motion made by Supervisor Witmer and seconded by Councilmember Goldberg as follows:

Whereas, NYSERDA is currently offering generous incentives for low-to-moderate income households for insulation and air sealing, energy efficient heat pumps, and heat pump water heaters; and

Whereas, some incentives are time limited; and

Whereas, HeatSmart Tompkins is offering municipalities the opportunity to participate in a Campaign for Clean Heating and Cooling to provide information and coordinate resident sign-ups for these services; and

Whereas, the campaign offers residents free assessments for home energy improvements; and

Whereas, successful participation in this campaign will result in greater comfort and energy savings for participating households and potential grant funding for the Town; and

Whereas, the Town of Caroline wishes to partner with HeatSmart Tompkins on this campaign; and

Whereas, the Campaign will include a Clean Heating and Cooling Webinar in early May that will be open to all residents; and

Whereas, the Town of Caroline wishes to help residents lower their energy costs and obtain clean, comfortable year-round heating and cooling; therefore be it

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board hereby approves Town participation in the HeatSmart Tompkins Campaign for Clean Heating and Cooling from April 15th through July 31, 2021.

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

Resolution 91 of 2021. Support of the *New York Health Act*

A motion made by Supervisor Witmer and seconded by Councilmember Fracchia as follows:

Whereas, after more than one year of the current global pandemic, it is clear that universal, guaranteed healthcare is not only sound public health policy, but a necessity for a just economic recovery that centers racial and economic justice; and

Whereas, the pandemic has revealed a healthcare system that is structurally flawed, leaving millions of people uninsured when they lost their jobs, with the impact especially severe for lower-income essential workers at higher risk, while private health insurance companies made record profits; and

Whereas, the current private health insurance system leaves many people uninsured; and

Whereas, the New York Health Act will guarantee coverage to every resident, providing the healthcare New Yorkers need, including vision, dental, hearing, reproductive health, substance use treatment, mental health and long-term care and support services, removing means-testing and financial barriers to healthcare; and

Whereas, according to a study by the RAND Corporation, the plan eliminates the wasteful spending and business practices of private health insurance companies, so that 90% of New Yorkers will pay less than they do now for healthcare, while the wealthiest New Yorkers will pay a little more; and

Whereas, the New York Health Act will guarantee that every resident and full-time worker is covered, regardless of immigration status; and

Whereas, the New York Health Act will benefit women by guaranteeing access to the comprehensive coverage, including maternity care and family planning services, while eliminating the financial burden associated with care; and

Whereas, those who are currently on Medicare will see increased benefits with the NY Health plan because it will cover benefits that Medicare currently does not (vision, dental, hearing, long-term care and support services), while lowering costs for seniors because of the progressive financing structure and the elimination of out-of-pocket costs; and

Whereas, the New York Health Act will eliminate the burdensome paperwork and complexity associated with billing, allowing doctors and nurses to focus on health care, not administration of insurance; and

Whereas, New York can guarantee healthcare to all residents through a state-funded program like the NY Health Act, regardless of the status of the Affordable Care Act or federal waivers; therefore be it

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board enthusiastically supports the passage of the New York Health Act; and

Further Resolved, certified copies of this resolution shall be sent to New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins (scousins@nysenate.org), New York State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie (speaker@nyassembly.gov), Assemblymember Anna Kelles for the 125th District (kellesa@nyassembly.gov), and the Campaign for New York Health (info@nyhcampaign.org).

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

Resolution 92 of 2021. Approval of Vouchers for Payment of Town Bills

A motion made by Supervisor Witmer and seconded by Councilmember Murray as follows:

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board approves payment of vouchers for March bills in the amounts of \$22,104.62 for the General Fund, \$50,547.46 for the Highway Fund, and \$246.86 for the Streetlight Fund.

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

Discussion of Local Food and Self-governance Ordinance – Town of Brownfield, Maine

Clm. Fracchia thanked Andrew and Colin for bringing this topic to the Board. He also shared concerns about food safety and how involved the Town should get. Clm. Murray recommended that the Town form an Ag Committee as recommended in the Comprehensive Plan. He appreciated the attention this brought forward but feels they need more information and clarity about how to support an initiative like this. Councilmember Snow recognizes that there are issues with the rules and regulations that farmers are faced with. Feels most regulations are made for big corporations and do not necessarily apply to small farmers. Clm. Goldberg agrees with the philosophical aspect of this Ordinance but does not know how this document from Maine recognizes the issues and concerns within Caroline. Supr. Witmer agreed with Clm. Murray's suggestion of the formation of an Ag Committee in order to address current issues within the Town and board members unanimously agreed. The Town will send out an announcement seeking applicants to serve on the Ag. Committee. Supr. Witmer encouraged both Andrew and Colin to apply.

Review of draft Town of Caroline Solar Energy Siting Law

(Local Law #___ of 2021 A Local Law of the Town of Caroline relating to Solar Energy Systems Proposed to be Sited in the Town of Caroline, NY can be found on our website under Current Topics)

Supervisor Witmer found the Law very clear and easy to navigate. Thanked the Planning Board for putting this together. Clm. Murray agreed and asked Planning Board member, Bill Podulka to clarify a couple of questions he had. Bill then went through different sections of the Law and gave an overview of how the Planning Board arrived at some of their decisions. The Board will be sending the Law to Town Attorney, Guy Krogh for modifications and review.

Approval of Minutes

A motion made by Supervisor Witmer and seconded by Councilmember Goldberg to approve the Agenda Minutes of April 6, 2021 as submitted by Town Clerk, Jessica Townsend and was carried unanimously.

ATV's

Clm. Snow would like to see something move forward with the ATV Club's proposal. Supr. Witmer stated that the last proposal they received appeared to show a large number of roads being opened for ATV's. He would like to see specific trails where road use is required as the only method to access such trail. The proposal also had several County Roads that they wanted considered and the Town cannot open any County Roads. Bob Spencer will talk to the ATV Club and see what they can come up with and will bring it back to the Board for their consideration and vote.

A motion to enter Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter by Supervisor Witmer and seconded by Councilmember Snow and carried unanimously at 10:02 p.m. and ended at 10:10 p.m.

Resolution 93 of 2021. Grant of one week of bereavement leave to the highway employees.

A motion made by Supervisor Witmer and seconded by Councilmember Snow as follows:

Whereas, the Town of Caroline Highway Department suffered a tragic loss of one of their members on April 3rd, 2021; and

Whereas, the Highway Superintendent recommended a week paid bereavement leave for the welfare and safety of the crew; therefore be it

Resolved, the Caroline Town Board authorizes a week's (40 hours) paid bereavement leave for the highway employees; and further be it

Resolved, this action was taken recognizing the exceptionally tragic circumstances and is outside of the highway workers' union contract and does not constitute a precedent.

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

----Adjourn----

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica L. Townsend, Town Clerk