

State of New York
County of Fulton
Town of Caroga

Minutes of a Caroga Town Board meeting held Wednesday November 8, 2023 at the municipal building located at 1840 State Highway #10 at 6:00 pm with the following persons in attendance by roll call. The flag salute followed.

Supervisor Scott Horton - Here
Council Member John Glenn – Here
Council Member Barbara Deluca – Here
Council Member Richard Sturgess – Here
Council Member Donald Travis – Here

Tor Shekerjian – Confidential Secretary to the Supervisor facilitated the hybrid meeting using Zoom. Also in attendance were Ralph Palcovic - Caroga Tourism Commission (CTC) member, Leigh Anne Loucks – Assessor, Larry Voght – Highway Superintendent, Mike Kunath – BTI Director, Matthew Cooper and Lynn Delesky – Planning Board Members, John Livingston and Paul Dunlevy – Board of Assessment Review members, and Walter Hogan Weed Harvesting Coordinator. There were seven members of the public in attendance and an additional fourteen people were on using Zoom.

Council Member Glenn made a motion to waive the reading of the minutes. Council Member Sturgess seconded the motion. All board members were in favor of the motion. Horton, Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Travis.

Department Reports:

Wheelerville Bike Trail – Supervisor Horton had a conversation with Mr. Manning earlier today he was applying for more grants. The trails are closed at this time. The supervisor noted that the state just announced the Smart Growth Grant applications for funding are available. The application deadline is January 1st. That is the grant that originally started this whole program for the bike trail system. The town board has to approve applying for the grant but this won't be done this evening.

BTI – Mike Kunath reported that not much is going on. He applied to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to hold BTI classes for new employees in the pesticide program. He was approved to do so. The 30 hour class is set for December 8, 9, 10, & 17 at the fire house. He has hired two people, Jason Young from Bleecker and Austin Hinderliter from Ephratah. After they take the course they will be sent for an exam in Utica in January. He has books on the way for the class.

Sole Assessor – Supervisor Horton stated the Assessor stated she did not have a report for this evening.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector/Registrar/RMO – Linda Gilbert submitted the monthly report to the board.

Code Enforcement & Sanitation – Mr. Fancher submitted a written report. 27 permits were issued for a total of \$4,075.00 in fees being collected with a valuation of \$1,774,536.00 in new construction. The code officer had appearance tickets printed. He has met with the ZBA in regards to a zoning interpretation. He is working on closing out permits before year end.

Dog Control – No report.

Golf Course – Councilman Sturgess has a report from Steve Stedman on his phone. He read that the golf course is officially closed. Members can play on nice days if they wish. All greens and tees are fully aerified. Fairways #15 – 18 are still left to do. All golf course accessories are put away for the winter. Flags and Tees left out for the time being. Projects: #4 complete awaiting spring sodding, #10 is 70% complete awaiting spring sodding. Winter preparations: Greens were sprayed against snow mold. Two applications were made this past week. The irrigation system will be blown out on Tuesday November 14th. He will be flagging irrigation lines for the Nick Stoner Trailers. A cross country ski trail will also be marked out as in previous years. Council Member Sturgess thought the trees will be coming down within the next 30 days.

Supervisor Horton stated he thought the golf course did very well this year. Council Member Sturgess wanted to thank the people that worked at the golf course this season. They had record breaking numbers. When the fire happened four years ago there were not a lot of people who knew a lot about what was going on. Over the course of four years revenue has more than doubled. Council Member Sturgess stated he thought it was amazing.

Highway – Mr. Voght said he is waiting for an inspection on the Cape Horn Road over Caroga Creek. He won't know anything until they get back to him. With the outlook on tomorrow's weather they will be out sanding and salting at 4 am. Mr. Voght thanked everyone who voted for him and for believing in him. Supervisor Horton stated the bridge has scouring/erosion around the footers. It can cause instability. The highway superintendent has been asked to look at it and come up with an action plan. An engineering firm has been called to look at the bridge. A remediation plan will be put together.

Lakes Management Program – Council Member Glenn stated the programs are closed for the season. Final reports from the stewards, and boat wash will be put on the website. Going forward if there are any grants available the reports will be on the website to get the information.

Marcus Harazin will get the final report in. For the year there were 2866 boats inspected, and 255 were decontaminated. He stated Caroga was the third busiest program in the upstate area. This area continues to be heavily utilized. Mr. Harazin spent about 40 hours of volunteer work hours on the DEC grant. It is for a three year program. Mr. Hogan put an application in for weed removal and Mr. Harazin put one in for inspections and decontamination stations in the amount of \$100,000.00. Letters of support were obtained from. Fulton County Soil & Water, Adirondack Watershed Institute, Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program, the Adirondack Park Lakes Alliance, East & West Caroga Lakes Association, Canada Lake Conservation Association (CLCA), Peck Lake Association, Stoner Lakes Association, Pleasant Lakes Association, and the

Canada Lake and Caroga Lake Marinas. He thanked all of them for their support. It shows the importance of maintaining invasive free waterways in the area. It is not just for the town but for all the visitors who use it from the surrounding areas. He hopes we get funding, there are no guarantees. Mr. Harazin noted Supervisor Horton helped with the submittal and data for the grant. The station was open Memorial Day through Columbus Day. He thanked all of the volunteers who worked at the inspection station from the CLCA, - Lori Mott and her volunteers. He thanked the staff at the decontamination (decon) station and inspections stations at West Lake and the campsite on East Caroga. All parties will get together to discuss how to improve and expand the program.

Mr. Harazin stated the lake associations are interested in trying to get the state to do more to enforce the law that is in place and provide more resources for enforcement. That is a problem.

Mr. Hogan reported that the harvester/invasive species program finished up uneventfully. His data was in his October report. The harvester was gone over by Beech Ridge Garage. It is in pretty good shape. Half of the hose that goes into the water will be replaced. He is working on the grant application and permits for APA and DEC for ProcellaCOR with Mr. Sullivan. We should be all set to do our first ProcellaCOR application in May. This will be monitored through 2025. He is trying to get better equipment through the grant - sonar equipment to do a better job identifying the milfoil. It has a GPS locator system. Mr. Hogan stated the grant has two clauses: if you have an existing DEC Grant or similar activity you are disqualified, but he doesn't consider putting in for equipment the same as applying ProcellaCOR. He is considering them as two separate activities. The other part is if you already have active milfoil. This grant is to help people that have new milfoil. So there is a potential we will be disqualified because we already have active milfoil. Mr. Hogan has been in contact with the person who oversees the grant applications and she assured him that they would be willing to talk to him if we get disqualified to see if there is something they can do about that. Supervisor Horton thanked him for his service. He has done above any expectations he had. Mr. Hogan stated it has been a learning experience and he always loves learning.

Town Hall Building – Council Member Travis reported that the maintenance person has health issues and will be leaving. Council Member Travis want to advertise on the website and newspaper for a new part time maintenance person. There is one application in. Council Member Sturgess thought we already made a motion to hire a new person. Supervisor Horton just asked him to bring the name to the board. He suggested a couple of council members conduct an interview.

CTC – Council Member DeLuca reported there will be a Tree Lighting on Saturday November 25th in conjunction with the Caroga Arts Collective. The time is from 1 – 5 pm. She reported a very successful Trunk or Treat event despite the cold weather. There were about 500 people there.

Council Member DeLuca just received an email from the Fire Chief and noted that the CLVFC does give money to all four lakes from the fishing derby event.

Supervisor Horton asked if the merry-go-round got fixed. Council Member DeLuca stated they were getting the metal piece fabricated yesterday or today.

Short Term Rental Committee – Council Member DeLuca had nothing to report, but noted it is almost ready to go.

Supervisor Horton noted in ten minutes they would go into an executive session for a personnel matter at 6:30 pm.

Supervisor's Report: Supervisor Horton thanked the board for their hard work this budget season. It is a process and over the past four years taxes have been kept low. He is very proud of that. We have been able to get a lot of things done. One person doesn't do it all.

He recently discussed the town's financial status with Council Member Travis. Looking back to 2019 the town had a little over a million dollars in our bank account. We are now well over three million dollars in our bank account. A million of that came from the insurance proceeds. Being able to build up the fund balance and fund new programs, putting in reserve funds to reduce surprise tax increases have been a hallmark and he hopes we continue to do that. At the next meeting or the last meeting of the month of December there will be decisions to fund these reserve accounts. He hopes the board will support that. We are building up funds to replace highway equipment without having to borrow money. That is more important now than it was 8 or 10 years ago when interest rates were extremely low. Supervisor Horton stated he has invested money and received about \$3,000.00 - \$3,500.00 in interest for this year. He stated the reserve fund for the harvester is up to around \$59,000.00. The reserve fund for highway equipment is funded at \$150,000.00 right now. A couple of reserve funds have been set up for the golf course one for equipment. Right now we have new equipment but eventually it will have to be replaced. Every year money will be put into those reserve funds when it comes time to buy a new mower or other large piece of equipment for the golf course the money will be there and there won't be any increase in taxes because we planned ahead.

He has invested money in the street lighting program. We have cut expenses. The Supervisor noted that health insurance costs have gone up 20 some percent over the past few years. Liability insurance has gone up similarly. Fuel and electricity costs have gone up. With the help of his board we have been able to keep expenses where they should be.

Supervisor Horton suggested a five minute recess before the executive session. Council Member Glenn suggested having the public comments and questions now before the executive session. The Supervisor agreed.

****Public Comments and Questions**

Mr. Brown stated at the last meeting he made some comments about the beach on East Shore Road. He received and read an email from Mr. Jim Hale. Mr. Brown has a copy of the (October town meeting) minutes and Mr. Hale has taken away, twisted, and added to what he said at the October meeting in his email. The email went out to Mr. Brown's neighbors. He reiterated his statements made at last month's meeting tonight. His issues are an enlarged area for the parking of golf carts, the building of kayak racks that block the view of the lake, if permits were obtained for a sign, and the dumping of 28 tons of sand on the beach area. Mr. Brown had also commented on the use and liability of golf carts on town and state roads. He may go to DEC

about these issues. Mr. Brown stated there isn't an association. There are no board members. Supervisor Horton thought this was a civil matter.

At 6:35 pm Council Member Glenn made a motion to enter into an executive session for a personnel matter. Council Member Travis seconded the motion. All board members were in favor of the motion. Horton, Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Travis.

At 7:39 pm Council Member Glenn made a motion to exit from the executive session. Council Member Travis seconded the motion. All board members were in favor of the motion. Horton, Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Travis

The Assessor and 2 other persons were in attendance and 10 were online using zoom at this time.

Supervisor Horton stated there was an executive session and testimony was heard from everybody. It is the board's opinion that we had a meeting of the Board of Assessment Review (BAR) that did not go as smoothly as it should have. We believe that what happened is that there were errors due primarily to lack of knowledge. We think that it is unfortunate, and we are advising that at the first of the year that both the Assessor and the chairman of the BAR (John Livingston) take additional training in their respective jobs that is offered through the Association of Towns.

The assessor asked if there was public comment on this and "what was the training you would like me to take to make the Board of Assessment ___? ___." Council Member Sturgess thought they had continuing education for the assessor. The Assessor replied yes but it is not for the Board of Assessment Review. She stated she knows how the Board of Assessment Review is supposed to run. Council Member Sturgess noted she had to go back and search if she was allowed to talk. The Assessor responded that she didn't have to search. She stated she was asked a question by Burt Wilson and started to answer, Supervisor Horton interjected, "are we going into executive session?" The assessor stated we were not because.... Council Member Glenn stated she is the assessor... She was Ok with discussing this. The Assessor stated you can listen to the recording and know how it.... The Supervisor again stated we are getting into executive.

Council Member Sturgess thought if both people took a refresher, and John, (Gavel used) Supervisor Horton stated we are discussing matters that are supposed to be discussed in executive session. There was an executive session we made a determination of what the board felt was the best way (to move) forward. Supervisor Horton stated the board wants the Assessor and Mr. Livingston to continue in their positions. "We think there was culpability on both sides." (Assessor laughed) Supervisor Horton stated she was disrespecting the board, who she works for he reminded. Her response was for a very limited time yes. The assessor continue saying the point of the matter was the supervisor was disrespectful to her when she was not in attendance at the last meeting. Supervisor Horton stated she "could leave right now, you are dismissed from this meeting."

The Supervisor moved on to other business and opened the meeting to privilege of the floor. Council Member Glenn thought we already did this. The Supervisor noted only one person spoke. No one else addressed the board this evening.

New Business:

Supervisor Horton noted the term of Cathy Ann Wallace on BAR expired on 9/30/2023. He asked if anybody had a name to put forward to fill this position at this time. Supervisor Horton stated he had not received a resignation letter. The clerk stated the term is up and noted she said last year she did not want to continue to serve. She did not show up for this year's hearings.

Supervisor Horton reviewed the correspondence.

NOTICE: No BLACK Bags Curbside or @ Transfer Station (must be opened/emptied)

No changes to transfer hours for Thanksgiving weekend.

Letter supporting line items in 2024 Budget for not-for-profits from Doug Purcell

Letter of support for museum funding in 2024 budget line-item Dale Statson

Letter from John Peck to include funds for museum in the budget.

Letter from Allen Farber supporting contribution to museum

RESOLUTIONS:

RESOLUTION to fund a new motor for the monitoring boat was tabled per Council Member Glenn.

RESOLUTION to purchase of a new sonar system for the lake management boat was tabled per Council Member Glenn.

Supervisor Horton explained the reason for tabling these two resolution is because there is a possibility of having funding for these items through a grant. If we purchased them at this time we could not use the grant funds for that equipment.

RESOLUTION Retirement Reporting for Golf Course Personnel Steve Stedman, the clerk stated this should also be pulled. She spoke to the bookkeeper earlier and she wants the calendar he submits to also include his off months' work because it is a seasonal kind of job. The bookkeeper thought the months of January, February, and March should be included in the retirement reporting report. Council Member Sturgess stated this is a salaried position. The clerk explained that this is just for New York State Retirement to credit him with the hours he works. Council Member Sturgess noted he works 60 -70 hours a week in the summer. He disagreed with this. The clerk noted the state actually prefers yearly calendars be kept for seasonal employees. Council Member Sturgess again noted he is a salaried employee. Supervisor Horton noted they want to annualize his work schedule. In the summer he works many more hours than the standard work week, and in the winter time he is not working as many. They want to see a record of his entire year usually it is three months but because it is seasonal they want to see more information to make sure he is getting the proper credit for the hours worked. This makes sense now to Council Member Sturgess but he feels like he is more than 40 hours a week. The Supervisor and clerk agreed. Council Member Sturgess stated probably if you balance the other nine months he works..... The clerk stated that is what the state wants to see in black & white.

Supervisor Horton noted the transfer to A8090.41 weed C/E was no longer necessary as the resolution was tabled.

RESOLUTION #2023-116 to make the following transfers as necessary to maintain a balanced budget was offered by Supervisor Horton at the regular monthly meeting of the Caroga Town Board held on November 8, 2023.

WHEREAS, the bookkeeper has determined that the transfers below are necessary to maintain a balanced budget, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the following transfers be made to maintain a balance budget.

From: A7145.1 Trails P/S	\$ 700.00	
To: A7145.41 Trails Merch		\$ 700.00
From DA5110.1 Gen Rep P/S	\$ 2,000.00	
To DA5110.4 Gen Rep C/E		\$ 2,000.00

Seconded by Council Member Sturgess

Adopted by a vote of five Ayes: Horton, Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Travis

Supervisor Horton explained that sales were better than projected.

RESOLUTION #2023-117 to make the following budget adjustments to maintain a balanced budget (sale of Golf Course Merchandise) was offered by Supervisor Horton at the regular monthly meeting of the Caroga Town Board held on November 8, 2023.

WHEREAS, the bookkeeper has determined that the transfer below is necessary to maintain a balanced budget, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the following transfers be made to maintain a balance budget.

TO: A7180.42 Golf Course Merch	\$ 2000.00	
FROM: Revenue received from sale of Merchandise A2025.20		\$ 2,000.00

Seconded by Council Member Sturgess

Adopted by a vote of five Ayes: Horton, Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Travis

Council Member Sturgess made a motion to approve the minutes of the Oct. 11 budget meeting, October 11th Town Board meeting and special meeting held October 19th. Council Member Glenn seconded the motion. All board members were in favor of the motion. Horton, Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Travis.

RESOLUTION #2023-118 to send of letter of interest on a Department of Transportation Grant was offered by Council Member Sturgess at the regular monthly meeting of the Caroga Town Board held on November 8, 2023.

WHEREAS, Council Member DeLuca notified the board this afternoon via email on the availability of a FY 2023 Thriving Communities Program/ through the US Department of Transportation, and

WHEREAS, a letter of interest is needed to be completed by November 15, 2023, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Council Member DeLuca is hereby authorized to submit a letter of interest to the New York State Department of Transportation on behalf of the town for this grant opportunity for tourism, community infrastructure.

Seconded by Council Member Travis

Discussion: Supervisor Horton asked if the program requires, if successful, that there is a contribution by the town. Council Member DeLuca stated she did not think so, but she could not be sure. The email on this came in at 3:10 pm today it was noted. Supervisor Horton stated he had not had a chance to review it.

Adopted by a vote of four Ayes: Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Travis
Opposed: Horton

Council Member Sturgess made a motion to pay the bills as presented for audit. Council Member Glenn seconded the motion. All board members were in favor of the motion. Horton, Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Travis.

The clerk asked if town hall was closed on Friday in observance of Veteran's Day. Supervisor Horton stated the day of observance is Friday. It is a county holiday. Council Member Travis noted the highway department is closed anyway.

At 7:54 pm Council Member Glenn made a motion to adjourn, the motion was seconded by Council Member Travis. All board members were in favor of the motion. Horton, Glenn, DeLuca, Sturgess, Travis.

Submitted by,

Linda Gilbert, RMC, CMC
Caroga Town Clerk

Prepaid #'s 303 – 332 \$23,521.57

General #'s 341 – 369 \$11,991.17

General Park #'s 114 - 120 \$1,969.79

Highway #'s 128 to 146 - \$34,112.41