

State of New York
County of Fulton
Town of Caroga

Minutes of a Caroga Town Board meeting held Thursday November 4, 2021 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 James Long – Here via Zoom
Council Member Richard Sturgess - Here
Council Member Donald Travis – Here

Tor Shekerjian Secretary to the Supervisor facilitated the zoom meeting. There were eight people using zoom and four members of the public in attendance. The Budget Officer Joanne Young was also in attendance.

Supervisor Horton called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm. He stated tonight’s meeting we are going to have the public hearing on the preliminary budget. “We will leave that open throughout the evening.” Supervisor Horton stated there were four other items of business. That being said the Supervisor opened up the floor open up the public hearing. Attendees were reminded by Mr. Shekerjian on how to raise their hand to be recognized to participate in the meeting. No one remote or in person commented on the budget at this time. The hearing remained open.

Supervisor Horton stated as a summary the preliminary budget has a zero-tax increase for 2022. There was a minor one cent per thousand increase in the Fire Company contract. The contract runs for two more years. The terms were agreed to previously.

The Supervisor opened up the comments from the board members.

Council Member Glenn wanted to increase the line item for the Senior citizens Club up to \$3,500 A6772.4. Council Member Long agreed. Council Member Glenn also wanted the line item A7450.4 Museum restored to \$3,500.00. Council Member Long stated the previous amount for the museum was \$4,000.

Council Member Glenn wanted accountability. Council Member Long noted that the board members received a letter from the president of the Caroga Historical Museum with a financial report. Supervisor Horton noted the senior’s also submitted information on their financials. He noted expenses are going up. He noted the museum needed a new roof. The board discussed giving the museum an additional \$1,000.00 for the roof project. It was noted that this organization brings tourists to our community. The Supervisor thought the museum may want to acquire more pieces for the museum as part of their business plan. They do a great public service. The reason the board asked for financials was to make sure they didn’t have a huge bank account and were asking the town for money.

Council Member Travis wanted the line A1620.1 to increase by \$5,000.00. The current rate of pay is \$14.05 per hour. He would like to see an increase to \$15.00 per hour. Council Member Sturgess agreed. The janitor works 40 hours every two weeks. The line was put at \$16,500.00.

The board received a letter from the Caroga Fish and Game Club. They requested funds through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in the amount of \$15,000.00. The club just built a new range and have been saving to do repairs inside and out. Council Member Sturgess suggested putting \$5,000.00 on the line item in 2022 and \$5,000.00 in 2023. Then the line A8720.4 would go back to \$1,500.00. The \$1,500.00 is used for lake stocking. Supervisor Horton stated the club is open to anyone and that they have over 600 members. This organization brings people to Caroga Lake. They do things for the community and bring in tourism stated Council Member Sturgess. They are a non for profit.

Council Member Long noted the senior's and museum were asked to open their books to the town. He was not comfortable putting money on the line item until he has seen their books. He stated a budget amendment could be made. Council Member Sturgess stated this would not be a yearly contribution. It would be a boost to get projects done that they have been trying to do. Council Member Travis is an officer (Secretary) of the Fish and Game Club. He has the books at home. Council Member Long stated he has not seen the books and it is too late for this fiscal year. At their meeting on Tuesday, it was reported that they had \$7,600.00 in their checking account. Council Member Travis noted on September 25 the club put in 760 Browns and Rainbow breeders in East and West Caroga. Council Member Long wondered why Green, West Canada, Lilly or Stoner Lakes did not get any fish. Council Member Sturgess wondered why this question was not asked last year when money was given to them. Council Member Long noted the traffic on the West Lake fishing access exceeds East & West Caroga and the Campsite. Supervisor Horton responded that no one requested fish be stocked there. It was stated that each loon consumes over 2000 lbs. of fish per year. Stocking needs are different on each lake. The comment was made that if the fishing wasn't good on Canada Lake the anglers would not be there. The points were well taken.

Council Member Long made a motion to table this issue until the next fiscal year.

Supervisor Horton thought for next year that anyone asking for funds must provide financial statements to show there is a need for the town to support them. The budget officer suggested creating a new line item A8720.41 - \$5,000.00 operating expense for the ARPA money.

Council Member Travis mentioned longevity for the Town Clerk. The clerk said it could not be done at this time it has to be included in the advertised salary.

Council Member Long noted spending has been increased in a couple of line items without reducing spending. In order to maintain some semblance of balance on this budget he recommended zeroing out line items A8010.1 Planning Clerk \$2,000.00 and A8020.1 \$3,000.00 for the ZBA Clerk.

Supervisor Horton was keeping a tally. He concurred with the Budget Officer that there is a \$10,000.00 change at this point. She noted that \$5,000.00 was coming out of the ARPA funds. Supervisor Horton noted the sales tax revenue is up \$130,000 more than budgeted. The Supervisor wanted to see the money (\$10,000.00) Supervisor Horton suggested increasing the fund balance on the A line to \$277,977.00 so there is no increase to the town taxpayer. He noted golf course expenses would come out of the ARPA funds too. The Supervisor asked if the board wanted to reduce the increase of the Fire tax one cent increase by moving money around on the front page of the budget.

Supervisor Horton asked if anyone wanted to speak on the public hearing either in person or via Zoom. At 6:37 Supervisor Horton used the gavel to close the public hearing.

Council Member Glenn asked if all of the ARPA funds had been allocated ½ this year ½ next year. Supervisor Horton stated it is not spent, it has been allocated. This does not cost the taxpayers anything and the town does have to spend it.

Council Member Sturgess reminded the Supervisor that the public hearing has to be open for an hour. The Supervisor looked to the budget officer on this. Mrs. Young agreed. Supervisor Horton state the public hearing will be open until 7 pm. If people raise their hand Mr. Shekerjian will let the board know.

The board discussed page 17 - the highway fund DA5110.1 Personnel maintenance and DA5142.1 Personnel Snow removal line items. The state designates there be two separate lines. The budget officer noted it is easier to see the overtime expense. The Supervisor thought the winter hours would start next week. Supervisor Horton noted the TAFT Act and stated the board can't go into this. It was noted the Council Members Sturgess and Travis along with the Supervisor have worked on the highway budget before the highway employees voted to unionize. They found out things were not as competitive as they should be. The Supervisor stated that money will need to be added to the budget. Council Member Sturgess stated the highway department was grossly underpaid compared to others. Supervisor Horton thought another \$14,000.00 should be put in the line items bringing the total up to \$172,684.00. Council Member Glenn agreed. Council Member Long asked if the money was coming from the fund balance. The Supervisor noted at the beginning of the year money was transferred to the highway account so it was solvent. Supervisor Horton stated there will be a fund balance in the highway account of close to \$300,000.00 at the end of the year. The bookkeeper noted she is waiting for CHIPS money to come in. Council Member Long trusts the board to seek council on this TAFT Act. Supervisor Horton replied "the answer is yes."

Supervisor Horton asked for any more comments on the budget. He stated there were still about thirteen minutes before the hearing would be closed and then there would be a vote on the budget.

Claudia Insogna had a question on the term the new Caroga Lake. She is a longtime resident and likes the old Caroga and did not want it to change too much. Council Member Sturgess stated it was a campaign slogan used by Barb Deluca. Supervisor Horton explained that was his

independent line name. The adjective new was to designate a reinvigoration of the town. Reinvigorate had too many letters.

Supervisor Horton reviewed the dollar value of permits issued in the code office for the past five years.

2017 Value of Building permits issued \$1,787,000.00

2018 Value of Building permits issued \$3,871,000.00

2019 Value of Building permits issued \$4,380,000.00 pre-COVID

2020 Value of Building permits issued \$6,301,000.00 includes fire house & Dollar General

2021 Value of Building permits issued \$6,774,000.00 year to date

Supervisor Horton stated this was eye opening and noted many times people under estimate the value of their project. He stated for the first time in a long time the assessed value went up one million dollars. The old Caroga is getting a face lift. These numbers show an interested and faith in the town. The Supervisor stated the town can only tax for the money that they spend. The fair share will be less because others have invested in the properties and are required to pay their fair share. These numbers will stabilize taxes. The Supervisor also noted the lobbyists are doing a good job in reducing franchise payment amounts. Caroga also has state lands. He noted Hamilton County has the largest majority of state lands. Council Member Long noted there is a negotiation process. The Supervisor noted the town's share of the sales tax revenue is based on the assessed value of the town.

In other business Supervisor Horton stated that Fred Franko – Planning Board member would like to attend a training sponsored by the Association of Towns on Saturday November 13th online. The cost of the training is \$35.00.

RESOLUTION #2021-113 to authorize an expenditure for training was offered by Council Member Long at the November 4th 2021 meeting to hold a public hearing on the 2022 budget.

WHEREAS, Planning Board Member Fred Franko contacted the town clerk about an upcoming training session he wanted to attend, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Caroga town Board does hereby move to authorize an expenditure of \$35.00 for a virtual training session on November 13th sponsored by the Association of Towns.

Seconded by Council Member Sturgess

Adopted by a vote of five yeses:

Supervisor Scott Horton - Yes

Council Member John Glenn - Yes

Council Member James Long - Yes

Council Member Richard Sturgess - Yes

Council Member Donald Travis – Yes

Supervisor Horton discussed an email from Stephen Kay a golf course architect out of Rutgers University did some design work on the golf course. We were thinking of putting the golf course

building in a different location. The insurance company did reimburse us for some of those funds. The design we have in the clubhouse now shows the back nine is the front nine and the front nine is the back nine. There were some good ideas that came out of this on how we can improve the course down the road. Supervisor Horton spoke with Steve Stedman today and he will be involved with this new design which is rather minor. He has no intentions of going down that road in the near future. But if you don't have a plan then you plan to fail. Mr. Kay for some reason thinks very highly of our Golf Course and came up with a cost of \$3,000.00 to change this around. Mr. Kay will need to talk to Mr. Stedman. His priority now is irrigation and drainage. Supervisor Horton stated some ponds may be added to the course on the back nine. There is a program through the County Soil & Waters and the cost would be little or nothing. The ponds would be for irrigation use. The town has a manual system to water the course. If the system were automated the watering could be done at night. Supervisor Horton asked the board to approve paying Steven Kay \$3000.00 to number the holes correctly as originally were. Hole #9 would turn into a par 5 by having hole #'s 8 & 9 would be combined, hole #7 would be a par 3, Hole #14 would be longer – the Tee would move. A pond would be designed in the fairways of 10 & 15 the primary function would be for irrigation but it would add a design element to the course. Hole #17 would be a par 3, and then the 18th hole would be a par 5. There would be a pond where the stream is in front of the 18 green.

Council Member Long thought this was a significant capital expenditure. He asked what the capital cost would be for the town. Supervisor Horton stated that Number seven on Mr. Kay's list is coming up with a cost estimate and to prioritize a schedule for these changes. After he does his work, we will know.

Council Member Sturgess understood the question posed by Council Member Long. Why spend the money if we don't know if we can afford the cost to make the improvements? The reason Council Member Sturgess is for this is the improvements Mr. Stedman makes on the course now could have to be done twice due to future redevelopment. We have funds with ARPA now. We have to spend these funds and this qualifies. Tree maintenance is being done now on the course; we have to have a plan. If we don't have a plan, improvements being made on the course now may not fit in. This helps the golf course superintendent know where he's going.

Mrs. Holliday asked what could be done with the pond on #7. Nothing has ever changed. It was noted the water is needed on the back nine. Supervisor Horton will have them look at the pond.

Council Member Long remembered there was some give and take on spending money on the bike trail and he thought Mr. Manning walked away with less money than he wanted. If the ARPA money has to be spent it should go to the bike trail.

7:15 Supervisor Horton asked if anyone wanted to speak on the budget.

In talking to Mr. Stedman today he said the professionals get paid to do this and they do a good job.

RESOLUTION # 2021-114 to spend \$3,000.00 on an updating plan D for the Nick Stoner Golf Course using ARPA Funds was offered by Supervisor Horton at a special meeting on November 4, 2021.

WHEREAS, Supervisor Horton and Council Member Sturgess have been in contact with Steven Kay of Rutgers University, and

WHEREAS, the current map of proposed changes to the course at the golf shop has the front and back nines flipped, and

WHEREAS, the proposed Plan D outlined some future updates to the Nick Stoner Municipal Golf Course, for a cost of \$3,000.00, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Caroga Town Board does hereby move to spend American Rescue Plan Act funds

In the amount of \$3,000.00 to pay Mr. Kay for an updated plan for the Nick Stoner Golf Course.

Seconded by Council Member Sturgess

Adopted by the following roll call vote:

Supervisor Scott Horton - Aye

Council Member John Glenn - Aye

Council Member James Long - Aye

Council Member Richard Sturgess - Yes

Council Member Donald Travis – Aye

At 7:17 Supervisor Horton closed the public hearing on the budget.

Supervisor Horton stated he has been working on the insurance claim and we are almost there as far as the loss of equipment. The town got paid for all of the tools, cups, flags, benches, ball washers, for filling in the foundation, and for the Clean Harbor cleaning up the new clubhouse and the bathrooms – hook up etc. The town had partial books on what was lost as far as equipment. The Insurance policy has a schedule of equipment. Some of the items were lost or damaged in the fire. The town had to research the value of the equipment. In some cases, the year of the equipment was not correctly documented. The insurance company sent over their worksheet and only one item is outstanding. The total of the thirteen items not reimburse is \$107,930.93. The town was paid \$130,000.00 for loss of equipment. Supervisor Horton asked the board to approve the loss statement submitted by the insurance company.

RESOLUTION #2021-115 to accept the settlement amount of \$107,930.93 for thirteen pieces of equipment as submitted by the insurance company for the loss of golf equipment was offered by Supervisor Horton at the November 4th 2021 town board meeting.

WHEREAS, Supervisor Horton, Council Member Sturgess, and Council Member Travis have worked countless hours due to the fire at the Nick Stoner Municipal Golf Course, and

WHEREAS, most recently they have been working with the insurance company on the value of the golf equipment lost in the fire, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Caroga Town Board does hereby move to accept the settlement agreement submitted by the insurance company for the loss of golf equipment in the amount of \$107,930.93 for thirteen items.

Seconded by Council Member Long

Adopted by the following roll call vote:

Council Member John Glenn - Yes
Council Member James Long - Aye
Council Member Richard Sturgess - Yes
Council Member Donald Travis – Yes
Supervisor Scott Horton – Aye

Supervisor Horton stated the town had a \$70,000.00 Foley Wheel grinder. To contract the work out each year it is \$2,000 to \$2,500.00. The insurance company will pay the town \$34,747.50. We use this equipment once a year. We would be better off taking the money.

RESOLUTION #2021-116 to accept the settlement amount of \$34,747.50 for the Foley Wheel Grinder was offered by Supervisor Horton at the November 4th 2021 town board meeting.

WHEREAS, Supervisor Horton, Council Member Sturgess, and Council Member Travis have worked countless hours due to the fire at the Nick Stoner Municipal Golf Course, and

WHEREAS, most recently they have been working with the insurance company on the value of the Foley Wheel Grinder lost in the fire, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Caroga Town Board does hereby move to accept the settlement agreement submitted by the insurance company for the loss of the Foley Wheel Grinder in the amount of \$34,747.50

Seconded by Council Member Sturgess

Adopted by the following roll call vote:

Council Member James Long - Aye
Council Member Richard Sturgess - Yes
Council Member Donald Travis – Yes
Supervisor Scott Horton – Aye
Council Member John Glenn - Yes

Supervisor Horton stated the insurance claim to date is \$1,423,089.86. Supervisor Horton stated there will be some sort of bonding on a new combined town hall and golf shop. The architect stated doing a combined structure will save about 2 million dollars. The Supervisor noted we need to know the financing cost on this. It will be several months. But he hoped there could be a presentation next month on the 9-million-dollar combined structure. The insurance was on board with this project. The insurance company appears to be on board that they owe the town the foundation and the roof. The design is a two-story building on a slab – to keep the cost down. It will be across from the 18th hole. Town hall will be at grade level with an entrance to the north. It will be smaller than the space used now. The blue print of the same floor plan would be the clubhouse on top. The entrance would face toward the south. Since the lot is sloped, they will also be at grade level. Supervisor Horton stated the town is limited to 4 million from insurance for the golf course building.

Council Member Long asked if the total claim is 4 million and they have already paid the town 1.4 million then is the remaining amount only 2.6 million for the building? Supervisor Horton did not know the answer to the question. The policy covers a million dollars in codes. \$500,000.00 for each building. The insurance company agrees there were two golf course buildings. The Supervisor was not sure of the second ½ million as that was for the maintenance shop and storage of the carts. Insurance has to pay us because we could not be on the same site and we have to be Americans with Disabilities compliant. They don't care what we build; they only pay us for what was there - code compliant and that is their obligation to the town.

Council Member Long noted the need for parking to meet code. This would necessitate dismantling the present highway barn and relocating that. The taxpayers would be on the hook for all of that cost as well to implement this plan. Supervisor Horton responded only partially. We have not definitively defined the space. No civil work has been done on this so we don't know. Supervisor Horton stated there will be an offset in use when town hall is busy the golf course will more than likely be closed and vice versa.

Council Member Long noted there was a discussion of shared services with the town justice. Can we piggy back on with another town or do we have to rebuild our own facility. Supervisor Horton stated he contacted three adjacent municipalities and right now it is not looking too promising. Council Member Long did not think it would be hardship if Caroga went to them. Supervisor Horton stated the other courts are not interested in coming to Caroga. He has checked with Stratford, Ephratah, and Bleecker. Council Member Long asked about the cities of Gloversville or Johnstown, were they ruled out. Supervisor Horton did not know if that was viable yet. Supervisor Horton has to still talk to the Town's Court Justice and the unified court on this. Council Member Sturgess asked Council Member Long if he's put in any time on this. Council Member Long stated he did. He noted there is a profound impact on the building if the size could be reduced and thus, we may not have to dismantle the barn for parking. It is all interlinked.

Council Member Sturgess stated with all due respect James you have not put an hour into this fire claim. Council Member Long stated that was totally baseless and false.

Supervisor Horton stated the size of the building was probably as small as it could be without losing functionality. The Supervisor stated the combined meeting space and court space is smaller than the existing meeting room. It was unsure if the judge would still have space for records at a new town hall. We would not need the judge's chambers, attorney room and a holding room if space was shared in another town.

Supervisor Horton stated we need to have a fiscal advisor – Fiscal Advisor and Marketing Inc. is a company out of Syracuse NY. He has a contract that was sent to the town attorney. The supervisor also reached out to two municipal leasing companies. Nothing can be done until there is a signed contract. The town has to be rated to get bonds. The public has to be notified of the terms, and the board has to get taxpayer approval. Until there are real numbers it's just a guess. Council Member Sturgess noted the insurance company is figuring up the numbers and the architect is fighting for the town. Supervisor Horton stated they are only going to pay the town for what was there. The golf building was post and beam construction.

Supervisor Horton wants to contract with these people for long term financing. The cost is \$14,500.00 for 1 – 5 million if over 5 million the bond fee is \$250 for every million over that. The company has to look at our credit rating. The Supervisor said the town has the best you can have zero. We have a healthy fund balance. We should be getting the best rates out there. The interest rates depend on the people bidding on the bonds. We won't know. Additional work will be billed at \$195.00 per hour. Council Member Long asked what the time limit was now if we contract with them now how long do we have before we issue a bond, or they walk away. Council Member Sturgess read July 1st 2022. Council Member Long asked if the voter do not approve issuing debt by July 1st the company can walk away and demand a new fee. Supervisor Horton stated the answer is yes in all practicality. The supervisor did not know if the terms were statute or contractual.

The clerk asked when this would be presented to the voters – in June during the next election or was there going to be a special election?

Supervisor Horton stated one we have all of the information, and have a special election, but where we are in the design phase, he wanted to have this go to the public in February but he did not see it. He thought going to the public in February was a good time because if the voters approved it then we could do the detail. We are not going to spend money on detail design on something we are not going to build. We have to get better numbers than what we have. We have to get projected financing advice so we can go to the voters with 100% certainty of what it is going to cost or less. The Phinney group has been good in being overly cautious and overly conservative.

The clerk noted she is collecting taxes in February and won't have time to put together a special election. It is a lot of work. Supervisor Horton stated it would be nice to have it during the regular election cycle. Council Member Sturgess wanted to have this election before June. Council Member Glenn was in favor of a June vote. The Supervisor noted it takes six months to get contract bids out, and then two months to get them back. He had hoped to start building by the end of the year. Council Member Sturgess wondered if the foundation/slab could be done

prior to the vote. He wanted to fast track the construction. If the vote did not pass then the building would be one story instead of two. The Supervisor stated this could save money. He noted as Council Member Long stated we want to explore all opportunities. The supervisor was happy where we were almost one year after the fire. We are open and there are preliminary plans.

Supervisor Horton stated he would not sign the contract until we have some of these answers.

Council Member Long asked if this company would take some basis points on debt issued. Supervisor Horton replied no, it is a straight fee.

RESOLUTION #2021 -117 to hire these people as fiscal advisors to assist with financing of the project was offered by Supervisor Horton at the November 4th 2021 town board meeting.

WHEREAS, the board discussed hiring fiscal advisors for the financing of the rebuilding of the Nick Stoner Golf Course Building, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Caroga Town Board does hereby move to hire fiscal advisors Syracuse NY to assist with financing of the project. The cost is variable per their fee schedule. The number was \$14,500.00 we will be under \$16,000.00

Seconded by Council Member Long

Adopted by the following roll call vote:

Council Member Richard Sturgess - Yes
Council Member Donald Travis – Yes
Supervisor Scott Horton – Aye
Council Member John Glenn - Yes
Council Member James Long – Aye

Council Member Long stated for the record we have voted for a firm called Fiscal Advisors and Marketing Inc. out of Syracuse.

Supervisor Horton state we have to turn the preliminary budget to the adopted budget.

RESOLUTION #2021-118 a motion as amended taking the primary budget as amended [to adopted] was offered by Supervisor Horton at a town board meeting held on Thursday November 4, 2021.

WHEREAS, the Supervisor asked if the board wanted to go over the amendments again. And

WHEREAS, Supervisor Horton stated the following: Just To be clear we are going to is keep the tax rate the same the general town wide appropriations are going up \$10,000.00 and we are going to use the fund balance reserves of \$10,000.00 General fund balance will be \$277,977.00. The tax rate will stay the same as 2021 at \$1.04 for 2022. The Town highway line appropriations are going to increase by \$14,000.00. We will be increasing the fund balance from \$42,398.00 to \$56,398.00 to offset that. The tax rate per thousand will be \$5.08 the same as

2021. The Fire contract will be \$145,138.00 that stays the same. The tax rate per thousand was \$0.90 that goes to \$0.91 per thousand for a total tax of \$7.03 per thousand, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the amended budget is hereby moved to the final budget.

Council Member Long seconded the motion.

Discussion: Council Member Sturgess stated this was a motion to adopt this primary budget to a final budget. Yes, was the Supervisor responded the actual budget, the adopted budget?

The budget director was asked what the correct terminology was preliminary to final, so we didn't have to do this again. Council Member Sturgess couldn't believe we had to ask this.

The Town Clerk reads from the town clerk manual "The preliminary budget shall be adopted as the final budget by town board resolution." The supervisor stated the resolution is to make this the final budget as amended and seconded by Council Member Long.

The clerk stated she was going to stay in her lane.

Adopted by the following roll call vote:

Council Member Donald Travis – Yes
Supervisor Scott Horton – Aye
Council Member John Glenn - Yes
Council Member James Long – Aye
Council Member Richard Sturgess - Yes

At 8:08 pm Council Member Glenn made a motion to adjourn the motion was seconded by Council Member Long. All board members were in favor of the motion.

Submitted by Caroga Town Clerk

Linda M. Gilbert, RMC, CMC