

Caroga News Flash

Town Board Meeting Highlights

April 3, 2024 Building Project Work Session

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This Town Board work session began at 6:30 PM and lasted 90 minutes at Town Hall.

Supervisor Ralph Palcovic called the meeting “to put information on the table, so we’re all in the same room and trying to be on the same page.” The Town Board exchanged information and thoughts about the new highway garage project, a golf clubhouse stand-alone structure concept, the current highway garage future considerations, and town drug testing program expansion.

Supervisor Palcovic facilitated discussion and debate about Caroga’s capital building projects while calling for a process with phased priorities and specified steps. He emphasized,

“There’s a lot on the table. You cannot do it all. You’ve got to make that top 10 list, pick 5, and work on 2 or 3 step by step, and attach a time line that’s reasonable and effective... Project 1 would be the Highway Garage, and in parallel, possibly we could get a golf clubhouse up that we can be proud of.”

PHASE I: HIGHWAY GARAGE

Barriers with design inadequacy and unknown costs must be resolved to move forward.

DESIGN

- Resolution #2022-049 approved a \$175,000.00 professional architectural design services contract with Phinney Design Group, and Resolution #2022-170 authorized up to \$4,000.00 more to design electrical services. From November 2020 to December 2023, the Town of Caroga paid Phinney \$115,907.00 for conceptual design and site plan work of both the golf clubhouse and highway garage, and conceptual designs have been delivered to the Town. Electrical design, wetland delineation, and site plans are pending from EDP subcontract after snow season. Site and design work does not include water-septic plans nor bid documents.
- Highway Superintendent Voght determined that the prior Town Board’s initial 140’ x 40’ building design, as drawn, is inadequate. That initial 140’ x 40’ proposed garage design at 1913 State Highway 10 is too small to meet needs for basic equipment and repair work.
- Superintendent Voght, Supervisor Palcovic, and Council Member Cooper recently met with Phinney’s architect about a 150’ x 60’ building with deeper work space and an added bay.

FINANCES

- The 2022 design for a 5,600-square-foot highway garage came with a cost estimate of about \$800,000.00 plus 20% contingency. In 2023, voters approved \$1,000,000.00 bond funding.
- Council Member Cooper noted, *“The bottom line is this went out with a \$1,000,000.00 figure, but to put a shovel in the ground that meets the need, we need an accurate cost estimate.”*
- Questions remain about financing additional costs beyond bonds with town funds, grants, etc.

NEXT STEP

- Supervisor Palcovic specified the next step of the process:
“Next we need to get a Town Board resolution to authorize redesign of the highway garage and continue down that path or come up with an alternative plan.”

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PHASE II: GOLF CLUBHOUSE

Questions about design factors and available funds must be addressed to move forward.

DESIGN

- Golf Superintendent Steve Stedman introduced a design for stand-alone modular structures. This includes a modular golf clubhouse up to 48' x 60' (2,880 square feet) plus a 40' x 35' golf cart shed (1,400 square feet) for a total of 4,280 square feet. This new design option would not dig up contaminated subsoil at the site. It also would clean up and repurpose the existing highway garage and pole barn at 1801 State Highway 10 for golf course equipment use.
- Council Member Sturgess called the new building proposal “irrelevant” and “short-sighted”. He focused on his time spent and the future value of Phinney’s design for a 17,000-square-foot combined golf clubhouse and town hall proposed by the prior Town Board. He insisted, *“We didn’t settle it...We didn’t ask the public...I’m not gonna get off my chest having them projects combined until there’s a vote. It’s worth going down that road. If this Board votes to scratch that project and I get voted out, then I’ll never talk about it again, but right now that hasn’t happened.”*

FINANCES

- Supervisor Palcovic noted, *“The bottom line is that the money’s not there. We don’t have a bond issue to build Town Hall. We have bonding to build a highway garage, and we have about \$1,000,000.00 residual insurance assets in the bank for a golf course building. That’s the bottom line...Let’s get something done.”*

NEXT STEPS

- Next steps involve specifying available funds, design plans, and cost estimates.

PHASE III: TOWN HALL

Questions exist about future phased plans to address challenges at Town Hall.

As a former Council Member and current Supervisor, Mr. Palcovic bridged past and future plans:

“I have all the engineering studies from 14 years ago [when Caroga voters did not approve a 2010 \$999,000.00 bond referendum to build a new Town Hall and resolve structural, mold, and air quality deficiencies with the existing building]. We spent tens of thousands of dollars then with CT Male.

We also have a design of a new Town Hall. The question now is where to put it. We have to be able to live in a structure and build a new structure. The controlling path back then was that we had to do remediation and stabilization on the old school building and deal with utilities. That all got done.

But that site plan would now be encroaching on the clinic. So, there are site layout questions, but the engineering for Town Hall is done. It’s an Adirondack-style, functional, energy-efficient building. And we have all the engineering and planning studies about the Town Hall building.

If we can get somebody, we can take that information and apply for state and federal grants. When money appears, then a Town Hall project can go forward.”

ANNOUNCEMENT

- ❖ “The Town of Caroga is in need of a Grant Writer. If you are a successful grant writer, please contact Supervisor Palcovic at his office: 581-835-4211 Ext.110.”

Upcoming Meetings and Events: <https://TownOfCaroga.com/calendar>