

Caroga News Flash

Town Board Meeting Highlights

December 11, 2024 Monthly Meeting

For all issues of the *Caroga News Flash*, see https://townofcaroga.com/news_flashes/.

This meeting began at 6:30 PM and lasted 65 minutes, including 16 minutes in executive session. In addition to the Town Board and Clerk, 12 people attended at Town Hall and 14 via zoom. Council Member Glenn was not present for this meeting.

Supervisor Palcovic gave updates about Golf Clubhouse and Highway Garage projects, since he assumed office in January 2024. He aimed to remedy misinformation with facts from recent engineering reports before beginning anew in 2025 (see pages 2-4).

Resolutions:

1. Year-End Business —

- Set date of December 27, 2024 at 4:00 PM for the year-end meeting (4-0 vote)
- Set date of December 20, 2024 for when all 2024 bills must be submitted (4-0 vote)

2. Budget —

- **Budget Transfers — (4-0 vote)**

From: A1990.4 Contingency	\$ 5,000.00	To: A1620.4 Building C/E	\$ 5,000.00
From: A1990.4. Contingency	\$ 350.00	To: A71845.4 Recreational Trails C/E	\$ 350.00
From: A7180.13 Clubhouse P/S	\$ 700.00	To: A7180.12 Golf Course P/S	\$ 700.00
From: A1990.4 Contingency	\$ 5,000.00	To: A7145.1 Recreational Trails P/S	\$ 5,000.00
From: A1670.41 Golf Merch Mail	\$ 250.00	To: A1670.4 Print & Mail C/E	\$ 250.00
From: DA5142.1 Snow P/S	\$ 3,000.00	To: DA5130.4 Machinery C/E	\$ 3,000.00

- **Budget Reserves — (4-0 vote)**

Capital Reserve	\$ 20,000.00
Garbage Truck Reserve	\$ 20,000.00
Golf Course Equipment Reserve	\$ 35,000.00
Golf Course Improvements Reserve	\$ 10,000.00

3. Other Business —

- Deferred interim Highway Superintendent appointment until 2025 organizational meeting
- Approved advertising the open position for Caroga Planning Board Clerk and ZBA Clerk
- Set the Janitorial/Maintenance rate as \$18.00/hour and hired Mike Harrington (4-0 votes)
- Rescinded Resolution 2024-106 listing East Shore Road for no through trucks (4-0 vote)
- Approved the November minutes and approved bills as presented for audit (4-0 votes)

Announcements:

- ❖ Fulton County's adopted 2025 Budget results in a Caroga property tax increase of 15.48%.
- ❖ Transfer Station will be closed 12/25/2024 and open Thursday 12/26/2024 Noon-4:00PM.
- ❖ Thank you to all involved with restoring the street light at the end of West Lake Road.
- ❖ Thank you to Caroga Museum for Kane Mountain Fire Tower 2025 Centennial brochures.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

<https://TownOfCaroga.com/calendar>

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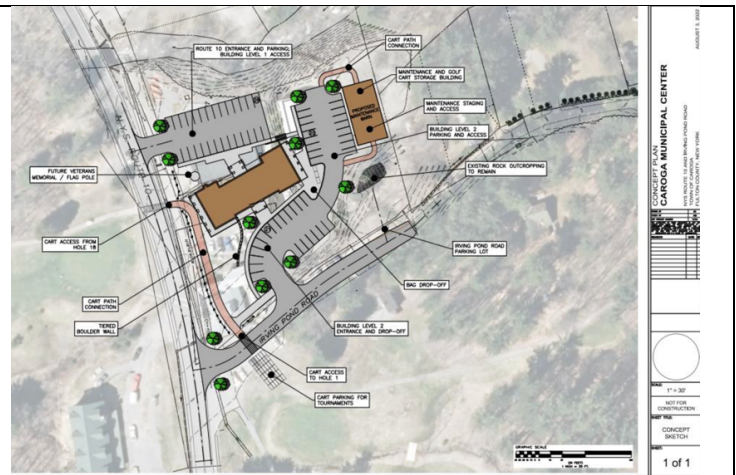
December 2024 Golf Clubhouse & Highway Garage Building Project Updates

To remedy recent misinformation with current facts, Supervisor Ralph Palcovic summarized municipal building project updates since he assumed office in January 2024.

What were the 2022 municipal building design concepts?

- Four years ago — in November 2020 — a tragic fire destroyed Caroga’s municipal golf clubhouse.
 - Modular sheds showed a fast minimal viable plan to keep the Nick Stoner Golf Course open.
 - **Prior officials also sunk more than \$100,000.00 with Phinney Design to develop concepts for:**
 - a new **12,850-SF Multi-Purpose Municipal Center Clubhouse at 1801 State Highway 10** and
 - a new **3,360-SF Highway Garage at 1913 State Highway 10**.
- Despite public calls for revision, prior officials advanced 2022 design concepts with no change.

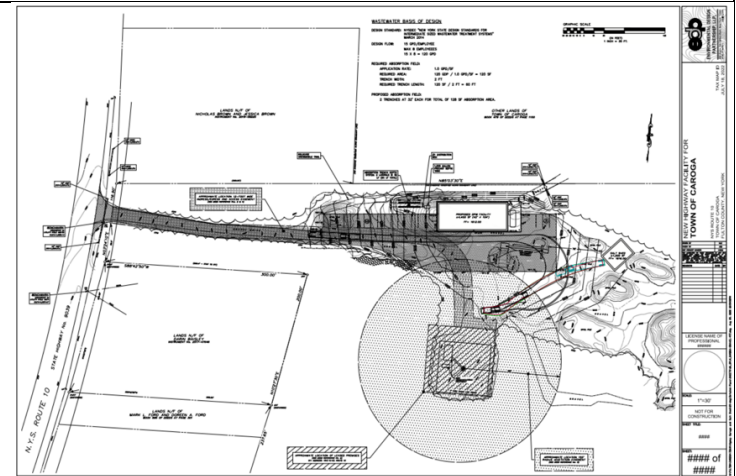
Prior 2022 Municipal Center Design Concept at 1801 State Highway 10



Prior 2022 Highway Garage Design Concept at 1913 State Highway 10



PHINNEY DESIGN GROUP TOWN OF CAROGA DPW GARAGE PERSPECTIVES A2-5



- **Current 2024 engineering reports show needs to discontinue 2022 plans and begin anew.**
 - In 2024, current officials hired C.T. Male Associates Engineering, Surveying, Architecture, Landscape Architecture & Geology, D.P.C (“CT Male”) to clarify prior environmental impacts from petroleum/MTBE spills and current subsurface impacts on site development at 1801 Hwy 10.
 - In 2024, current officials also worked with Environmental Design Partnership, LLP (EDP) on site and building planning at 1913 State Highway 10 (near the Cell Tower and Salt Shed).

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2022 Municipal Center Conceptual Designs Overlap with a Legacy Fuel Spill.

Until Supervisor Palcovic took office, no impact assessments addressed site development risks.

What legacy hazards exist at 1801 State Highway 10?

- Supervisor Palcovic reported, **“Preliminary plans put the new clubhouse in a legacy spill area...** No environmental considerations were given with the process of putting a new clubhouse where it was going to go. Because of the environmental implications, this Board brought on CT Male to review all records, do an onsite inspection, and give a professional opinion.”
- As a prior Town Board Member, Supervisor Palcovic knows first-hand the site contamination history. In 1999, underground fuel-tanks leaked extensively into parking areas next to the Highway Garage. This petroleum hydrocarbon and MTBE spill resulted in significant ground contamination. (This was before New York State’s 2004 ban of toxic MTBE as a hazardous fuel additive.) At that time, Town officials took immediate action and hired a management contractor to work with NYS DEC. Officials “followed all New York State guidance” and met cleanup stabilization thresholds, but it was “never 100% remediated.” They purchased a residential property with a contaminated well across the street and settled a multi-million-dollar civil lawsuit. Twenty-five years ago, this impacted budget finances, because insurance does not pay for such contamination. Contamination hazards cannot be ignored.
- Prevention is key. “Working in the world of emergency management, we know that if we dig a hole and gasoline comes out, you have a 2-hour window to notify the State and take immediate actions to stop the event...The implications of soil disturbance in the legacy area mean that you immediately have to stop work, notify DEC, and then you have potential for environmental release with Irving Pond Creek coming down the hill. Now you dig a hole and have gasoline-saturated sand, dirt, and fill that has to be managed. Hopefully, it doesn’t rain and run into the creek. If you dig a hole for a foundation for a building...and this happened, you would be required to do a full remediation at an unpredictable cost.”
- CT Male’s team led by Jeff Marx, P.E. aimed to assess the nature and extent of contaminant impacts, correlate effects with possible future site disturbance, evaluate potential strategies, and work with NYS DEC. Based on noninvasive risk assessments and detailed spill response record reviews, they assessed the entire legacy spill area. Supervisor Palcovic reported, **“Their recommendation is, ‘Do not dig. Leave it undisturbed.’ We have that in writing. Paying for that CT Male report is a whole lot cheaper than digging a hole and removing thousands of yards of dirt.”**

What are the New York State permit violations?

- According to Supervisor Palcovic, “CT Male also looked at the larger picture...There was a discovery, besides the spill. The tanks require permits and inspection by New York State. Those permits expired two years ago. The Town of Caroga is in violation of putting fuel in an unregistered tank, per NYS standards. As we are coming through that process, CT Male has been engaged to bring permits up to speed and do a little more homework for us. They found a notice of violation issued to the Town Highway Department a year ago. This is late-breaking two days ago. It’s got to do with petroleum bulk storage, not just the fuel tanks. We’re not out of business, and they are not shutting us down. New York State is working with CT Male to update permits and correct the two-year-old deficiency. So, let’s move forward and work on corrective action. Hopefully, we do not get any fines.”

What are the current Golf Clubhouse plans?

- The Supervisor continued, “Back to the Clubhouse. CT Male has been engaged by this Town Board to come up with preliminary siting of a new clubhouse. It will not be in a disturbed environmental area...We have walked and talked with numerous engineers. [1] We are now coming up with a new conceptual design and location [at 1801 Highway 10], which will not disturb the legacy spill area. These are the facts. [2] Within that building — in the future after we get the Clubhouse up — this Board’s intent is to put municipal offices in the lower level of that building.”

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2022 Highway Garage Conceptual Designs Are Unworkable.

Prior officials' undersized and underfunded highway garage conceptual designs were sited in wetlands.

What are the plans for a Highway Garage at 1913 Highway 10?

- The Supervisor stated, "Now we are going to move down the road to plans to build a new Highway Garage. The 2022 preliminary design plans and building siting that prior officials spent a lot of money on were found to be inadequate." Three major issues by prior officials must be resolved now.
 - **UNDERSIZED**: "That building plan will not properly house Town equipment. We could not back in equipment and have room to walk around it. It did not make sense for current needs."
 - **UNDERFUNDED**: "Every step costs more money. We are not going to build that building for the one-million-dollar bond issue. Eventually, the Town of Caroga went to the voters and approved that, but that is not enough money. No. It is going to be another million plus. That's preliminary costs. Anybody that knows buildings, knows its costs based on size. Going bigger to meet needs will cost more."
 - **SITED IN WETLANDS**: "I asked the prior Supervisor, 'Did you look at wetlands assessment?' No. So, we asked the architect, 'What about the wetland assessment?' We know that environmental compliance is rule #1. So, the architect pulled up the NYS wetlands map. Guess where the new Highway Garage was going? In the wetlands. So, EDP is coming up with another design for the building, and they do not know where to put it. So, we engaged EDP to do a wetlands assessment. They sent an environment engineer, and flagged the area. The EDP lead engineer still was not comfortable, and so we are calling in the NYS APA and Army Corps of Engineers to define where that Highway Garage might go on that property. We are not going to fill in wetlands. That's where we are with that. We have not had APA or Army Corp of Engineers there yet. The preliminary building and site plan will all have to be reconsidered based on these findings."
 - Supervisor Palcovic thanked everyone for listening. Public comments are welcome.

Supervisor Palcovic reported on municipal building projects.

He summarized 2022 conceptual designs and 2024 engineering reports.

Critical environmental, health, and financial findings underscore needs:

(1) to discontinue risky and costly 2022 conceptual design plans and

(2) to begin anew in 2025 with safer and cost-effective ways.