

**MINUTES BOOK\*\*TOWN OF COEYMANS**  
**February 20, 2019 – Town Board Meeting – 7:00pm**

**A Town Board Workshop was held Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 7:00pm at Town Hall, 18 Russell Avenue, Ravena, New York**

**PRESENT:** George D. McHugh, Supervisor  
Daniel D. Baker, Councilman  
Kenneth C. Burns, Councilman  
Zachary S. Collins, Councilman  
Brandon L. LeFevre, Councilman

**ALSO PRESENT:** Cindy L. Rowzee, Town Clerk  
Dawn DeRose, Assessor

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Supervisor McHugh continued the workshop from the Special Audit meeting that ended at 7:28pm.

**Assessor’s Presentation on Impact Numbers**

Andrew and Larry Farbstein gave a presentation on the preliminary numbers from the reassessment. The following items were discussed during the meeting:

- Andrew Farbstein stated that this coming Tuesday at 7pm there would be another meeting for homeowners. This presentation will be placed on the Town website. He then recapped the importance of doing a reassessment.
- He stated that taxing jurisdictions cannot use the reassessment as a reason to raise budgets and that School districts have a 2% cap. He stated that some people will see tax increases, some decreases and some will stay the same. He stated that these assessments will reflect in this year’s School tax bill at the end of August or early September.
- He also stated that the letters with the new assessments would be going out by March 1<sup>st</sup>. there would be an informal period during March to challenge the assessment. Those whose assessments are changed will receive a letter with the new assessment. The Tentative roll will be published on May 1<sup>st</sup> and then Grievance Day is on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday in May for those who want to grieve their assessment.
- Residential assessments were obtained by looking at sales of similar properties.
- Commercial properties were assessed based on the income approach which is the most accepted approach for valuing commercial property.
- The following numbers are preliminary and as informal hearings are held over the next month the numbers can change:
  - The average change in residential was 13%.
  - The average change in commercial was 25-28%.
  - The average change in vacant land was 38%. This was due to a few large tracts of land that were assessed very low.
  - The average for the whole town was 16% but will likely fall to 15% after the changes.
- The assessment changes are from 2007. That is the last time a revaluation was done.

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- Based on the new assessments the Town has already received a 100% equalization rate on the residential properties from the State.
- The difference in the average change is that some properties increase at different rates than others. There are different levels of appreciation and some properties will go up more than others.
- Andrew Farbstein asked residents to get in touch with the Assessor's Office if they have not received their new assessment letter by March 6<sup>th</sup>.
- The Farbstains will come to one more meeting in April to give the numbers following the informal meetings with residents and business owners that will be held in March (up to March 20<sup>th</sup>).
- It was recommended that if you wanted to come to one of the informal meetings to look at comparable sales or an appraisal. First look at the building style, square feet, number of bathrooms then number of bedrooms. The condition can only be taken into account if it is something that is wrong with the house or an obsolete aspect that cannot be fixed, such as a basement wall falling in. They cannot take into account an outdated kitchen or bathroom. It is up to the homeowner to provide the valuation company with reasons to drop the assessment.
- Outlying sales, highest and lowest, are not taken into account as there can be unknown reasons for those high and low prices.
- The Tentative Roll will go on the Town website and SDG Image mate on May 1<sup>st</sup>. At that point people can send in written submissions to the Board of Assessment Review (BAR), they do not have to actually appear in front of the BAR on Grievance Day.

**MJ Designs**

Supervisor McHugh introduced some representatives from MJ Designs, a local engineering firm that has considerable experience with Comprehensive Plan updates and engineering consulting work. He stated that he is considering them if Local Law 2 is passed to retain as an engineer consultant.

Supervisor McHugh stated that he had met with Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) and provided them with our Comprehensive Plan, the Villages Comprehensive Plan and any major changes in Town since 2006 (the Port of Coeymans and Coeymans Industrial Park). This will get the Town to "Step 1" and then a firm like MJ Designs would come in. The following points were discussed regarding the Comprehensive Plan:

- The Town will get the Comprehensive plan from the CDRPC in the spring and then MJ Designs would walk us through what they could do to help update the new plan.
- MJ Designs currently works with the Towns of Rotterdam, East Greenbush and Ballston on their plans.
- It takes about 6 months to possibly years for an update depending on what is needed. A year is very reasonable.
- There will be public engagement meetings.
- There are grants to cover this, usually a 50/50 split, it can be 75/25. Since we should get the information from the CDRPC in April we will hopefully be able to apply in the May-July round of grants.

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- An update usually costs \$70,000-\$80,000. If it is a new comprehensive plan or a complex update it will take longer and could exceed \$100,000.
- Our current Comprehensive Plan does not take into account the Village, although they are a small percentage of the property they are about 50% of the population. We want to make sure the Village and Town Comprehensive Plans work together.

In regards to TDE work the following was discussed:

- MJ Designs reviews engineering work. They currently are the sole town designated engineer for 6 municipalities and they split the work with other engineering firms for 5 or 6 others.
- There was discussion about the Planning and Zoning review process and how their services would be utilized.
- They would do a full review of the SEQR form and look to make sure the technical elements are in compliance. They check to make sure that it meets Zoning and setback requirements. They also would look at things like storm water systems and traffic studies and request traffic reports. They would look through all of this information and then write a detailed letter to the Planning Board to help guide them in making their decision.
- Their fees are based on the actual hours that they work. They would also come to the Planning Board meetings.
- MJ Designs mentioned that they have a whole group that focuses on waste water.
- There was some discussion about past projects in the Town.

Supervisor McHugh asked for a sample engagement letter for calling on a reviewing engineer. Councilman Baker asked that we prepare a resolution to get them going.

**Hecate Energy, Gabe Wapner**

Mr. Gabe Wapner of Hecate Energy gave an overview of the proposed solar farm. The following items were discussed:

- The project will cover 428 acres. It is a 40 MW project with 2 contracts. 20 MW will be a Renewable Energy Project (REP) through NYSERDA where for every MWh of electricity that is created a credit (or certificate) will be created and NYSERDA will buy those credits and retire them. The electricity will go into the New York State electric grid and be sold through the grid. The other 20 MW will go to two companies in Connecticut. Although the companies are outside of this area the physical energy will be consumed in NYS and the revenue benefits will be coming to this community.
- It was stated that they were in the Article 10 permitting process and a 12 month clock started on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. They are hoping to accelerate it and hopefully start construction by the end of the year. Construction will take 9-12 months.
- Mr. Wapner mentioned that there was an investment tax credit that stepped down at the end of 2019 so they purchased some equipment and are leasing space to store it at the Coeymans Industrial Park. Capital equipment will be about \$40 million.
- They have set up safety training for the local fire departments to ensure that they are comfortable with the project.

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- There will be 2-3 full time jobs created by the project.
- The project is the employer and is owned by an investment company called Greenbacker. Once this is up and operating there is very little risk.
- There will be a vegetation management contract and an operations and maintenance contract put out to bid.
- There was discussion about a decommissioning plan. Mr. Wapner stated that there was \$54,000 in intervenor funding that can be applied for to hire council to go through the application and make sure we are comfortable with the plan. There was discussion about bonding the decommissioning. The Town would prefer that it is. Hecate Energy would prefer that it is not bonded. It was stated that there are 3 types of decommissioning plans throughout the country. Requiring a decommissioning bond later on is a possibility, some are required when construction begins. There was discussion about leveraging the decommissioning with the PILOT agreement.
- The revenues from this project will go to the community. The cost of the project is known and the income fee is known. It is a solid project.
- Hecate feels that solar farms do not reduce neighborhood property values but have not done a study on it. He suggested googling “CohnReznick solar property value assessments” for more information on this.
- There would be no hazardous materials involved. It will be silicone (sand), aluminum, steel and glass. The panels will absorb light, glare should be minimal. Any lighting involved would be automated by movement and so should not be an issue. Any runoff from the solar arrays will sheet off the panels and be held in place by native species of grass and vegetation that will be planted.
- There was discussion about the maintenance and upkeep of the area stating that everything would be taken care of if it breaks during its operational life under the maintenance agreement.

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**Motion to Adjourn to Executive Session for Personnel and Employment Matters**

On motion of Councilman Baker, seconded by Councilman Burns, the Town Board Meeting was adjourned to Executive Session to discuss personnel and employment matters.

APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT – SO MOVED

Time – 8:52pm

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**Motion to Adjourn**

On motion of Councilman Collins, seconded by Councilman LeFevre, the Town Board Meeting was adjourned from Executive Session.

APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT – SO MOVED

Time – 9:55pm

*Respectfully Submitted,*



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*Cindy L. Rowzee, Town Clerk*