

State of New York
County of Fulton
Town of Caroga

Minutes of a Caroga Town Board work session held May 21, 2008 at the municipal building located at 1840 State Highway #10. There was a quorum of the board behind closed doors in the Supervisor's office until 6:50 pm. At 7:00 pm the following persons were in attendance - Supervisor Robert Kane, Councilman Ralph Palcovic, Robert Sprung, Robert Sullivan and Council Member Valerie Scribner.

There were 16 members of the public in attendance for a presentation from Brad Dake about the Adirondack Park Regional Assessment Project. Mr. Dake stated that one of the more popular questions he fields is about Stewart's shops in the Adirondack Park. He noted that there were 18 stores within the blue line and 1/3 of 330 stores are located within ten miles of the blue line in gateway communities. (This project is not about those stores)

In the Town of Caroga there are 20,940 acres of wild forest out of about 34,000. This means that about 60% of the town is state lands. "The Adirondack Park Regional Assessment Project is a project sponsored by the Adirondack North Country Association, the Association of Towns and Villages, and the Town of Arietta Planning Board. We came together as an alliance to interview all of the communities of the park by way of a survey which is 50 pages long." There are 13 modules, with three additional modules for fire protection, emergency medical services, and public schools. The project will do a first of its kind inventory of the entire park, students, fire trucks, snowplows, and attitudes that people have. They hope that this will provide a factual basis for any discussion for what is or isn't happening in the park. The LA Group is in charge of the survey; the quality of the survey is dependent of the quality of the response. They hope to have a 90% rate back of the responses.

Mr. Dake noted that like over 1/3 of the communities in the park the town is well over 50% state owned. Mr. Dake passed out a sheet showing the growth of state lands relative to the entire park for the past 130 years. He noted the only way to take state land declared part of the wild forest and turn it back to private or community hands is to have a constitutional amendment. This has only happened 17 times, twice in the Town of Arietta to expand the Piseco airport, twice on Whiteface Mountain, for the Northway and for a landfill site before regulations, just to name a few. He recounted the amendment last year for the Racquet Lake well/water system, which was under an acre. He noted that a project has commenced for a Rt 56 corridor power supply in Tupper Lake, which was not voted on.

Mr. Dake is seeking an Arietta Amendment, which would make it possible for the towns, villages, and counties of the park to buy a total of 500 acres a year. (all combined) If DEC is a willing seller, and the APA could rezone the land, that would be the level of scrutiny rather than having the legislature and the people of NYAC determine the future.

Mr. Dake has made this presentation to 70 towns and has 33 more to go. He is interviewing people to see how state lands are interfering with a community's growth.

He asked the board to exam where in Caroga Lake would they might be interested in purchasing state land. The golf course was discussed, or perhaps an area for a gravel bank. There are some towns, which only have a few acres in the park. There are 35 towns that don't have any conflicts with state lands. He noted that state owned land in the Town of Arietta is 96%. This is in a town with less than one person per sq mile. Yet there is no space in the community to put homes or an industrial park. They cannot create a trail around the lake because they can't cross state land in four locations. They would like to improve the airport again, and perhaps look at sewer and water districts.

Mr. Dake is going to try to change the law with an amendment, an amendment which would allow them to transfer 500 acres of land to the private or public sector and then replace that land with the money generated - roughly an equal amount. "We are going to engage in clustering." You put the people where the people are and the wilderness where the wilderness is. The Adirondack Park Land use map was shown to those present.

Mr. Fenzl was in favor of the amendment but wanted to make sure there is control over growth.

Mr. Dake noted that the APA would be involved in reclassifying any land intensity uses. Decisions would be based on the "collective judgment of the people of the park, not of the state." He thinks there will be enough checks and balances. "The way you look at the present is to go into the future and come back." His father helped create Saratoga Performing Arts Center, which helped build the city to what it is now.

Doug Smith noted that it depends what the town wants. It is not just going to happen. There will be a lot of checks and balances. We may not have the same needs as a town landlocked in the park.

Councilman Sullivan noted that Caroga is fortunate in that we are located at the edge of the park. Our residents can travel to make a good living outside the park.

Council Member Scribner stated that we have not been looking for state land. We are searching for reasons to acquire state land.

Councilman Palcovic stated we are struggling to find a place for a gravel bank, salt pile placement, and a new barn.

Mr. Dake stated that the town has never taken the time to look at what the town could do with ½ an acre of land. If this amendment fails, it will be another generation from now before this is looked at again. Jim Connelly of the APA suggested having a sunset on the project. The legislature could vote on it after a number of years, 10, 5, or 3.

Hydropower could work in the park, Mr. Dake noted. In Indian Lake if they could buy the land from the state on the other side of the dam this could happen. It would power all of Hamilton County. He also discussed the benefits of wind power. Mr. Dake has solar power instead of depending on his generator.

Jamie Long was not sure he agreed with all the points Mr. Dake make. Once land is developed it is never going to go into state lands. It is not the one-way direction Mr. Dake describes it. The state is not going around acquiring lands. Most acquisitions occur via non-profits to acquire lands or easements. He believes people throughout the state should be able to vote on issues, as per the amendment to the constitution in 1894, which was to give the people of New York land that was forever wild. “Yes there is a clumsy arduous process to reverse this. The legislature has an appropriate role here. Mr. Dake is proposing to undue this very carefully thought out process. We have a cumbersome process to elect a president, and a cumbersome federal government, but it works. These processes are our checks and balances.” He thinks things are working quite well right now. “We have a system that works just fine.” He stated that Mr. Dakes' goals are admirable. He is not disputing them but the mechanism he is proposing to remedy it.

The Board thanked Mr. Dake and everyone for their time. At 8:40 pm the meeting was adjourned. The town board met in the supervisor’s chamber to review a questionnaire from CT Male. The planning board also met in the meeting room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Gilbert – RMC
Town Clerk