**A Town Board Meeting was held Thursday, March 13, 2025 at 6:00pm at Town Hall, 18 Russell Avenue, Ravena, New York**

**PRESENT:** Stephen Donnelly, Supervisor

 Michael J. Stott, Deputy Supervisor

 Stephen J. Schmitt, Council Member

 Linda S. Bruno, Council Member
 Ronald Hotaling, Council Member

**Absent:**

**ALSO PRESENT:** Candace McHugh, Town Clerk

 Richard C. Reilly, Town Attorney

David Whipple, NYS ESD

Kevin O’Connor, Advance Albany County Alliance

Katie Newcombe, Chief Economic Development Officer, CEG

Supervisor Donnelly called the meeting to order and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. Supervisor Donnelly asked that the record reflect that all members were present.

**Presentation by: Empire State Development – NY FAST Grant**

Ms. Newcombe stated the goal of this presentation is to review the administrative aspects of this grant and introduced who was in attendance.

Dave Whipple gave a presentation to lend a better understanding of the NY FAST Grant which was awarded to the town. He explained what FAST NY is designed to improve New York’s competitiveness to bring in manufacturing specifically by supporting infrastructure in the state. High tech manufacturing is their main business focus. Track C Grants are sought after to improve infrastructure such as utilities to these areas. “Shovel ready” sites are the biggest draw to these types of companies. The program has awarded $232 million dollars so far to improve 4,000 acres of industrial property across New York. Mike Yevoli the regional director of ESD was also in attendance.

Council member Schmitt asked if the Town is responsible for any funds above and beyond the initial grant. Mr. Yevoli explained there shouldn’t be any cost to the town or taxpayers. Typically, there is a third party involved that offsets the cost.

 Supervisor Donnelly asked if ESD was worried about potential tariffs increasing the cost and effecting the shipping of building materials. They expressed that time is of the essence to avoid potential increases. He also asked about the route of the cables as they came north. Ms. Newcombe explained the exact route of the cables as they come up from the south won’t be determined until the final engineering is done. The Supervisor asked if there was going to be future generating plants, in which Ms. Newcombe replied that generating plants have nothing to do with this. He also asked what type of businesses could potentially be looking at this site. Mr. Whipple stated something larger like wind projects or marine that would need access to a waterway are ideal. Ms. Newcombe explained the power would only be used to services potential projects on the existing footprint of the Coeymans Port. Mr. Whipple described it as proactive investing in infrastructure. Council member Stott asked what 50 megawatts could power. Mr. Whipple gave examples of recent projects such as Fairlife, and Luther Forest. Ms. Newcombe said this amount may not be used by one company but it is considered an asset to the property.

 Supervisor Donnelly asked if other sites inland of the Hudson River have been considered. Ms. Newcombe explained the state tends to look for property that has already had progress in industrial development and is zoned properly. Council member Stott read from the original grant application which stated it was geared towards off shore wind. Mr. Whipple explained at the time the application was submitted off shore wind was a possibility and the application process requires specifics on what the project would serve. Ms. Newcombe stated the previous project this grant was tied to is not active.

Council member Schmitt stated the date of the expiration of this grant is November 2, 2025. He asked what happens if it isn’t accepted by then. Mr. Whipple stated in many ways this project has commenced but there should be a push to have grants agreements in place by that date.

Mr. Kevin O’Connor from the Advance Albany County Alliance wanted to impress upon the town that this is an opportunity to add to the infrastructure of the county and town. He feels the best way to generate small business is with big business. Albany County concentrates on attracting alternative energy products. Mr. O’Connor explained a Community Benefit Agreement to those in attendance. The larger entities such as the county or potential businesses will work with the community to plan projects that will benefit the town. He stressed this structure is to benefit potential new business within the current footprint of the Port of Coeymans. He offered the assistance the Advance Albany County Alliance to monitor the grant. Council member Hotaling asked if the Alliance was to manage the grant would the town still be in a position to negotiate a Community Benefit Agreement. He answered yes.

County Legislator Zach Collins stated he has been in extensive talks with County Executive Dan McCoy and Mr. O’Connor in regards to a traffic study to help with truck traffic and feels it is a good idea to involve the County and the Alliance.

Council member Stott stated the big unknown is what comes next for the town. He feels it gives people trepidation to put the cart before the horse. Mr. O’Connor replied that no one is talking about building a power plant it is just to improve the utility infrastructure. He understands it is difficult to not know what you’re going to get but if the town doesn’t do this the town will get nothing. Council member Bruno said we are not turning over our authority but looking to work together with the county. Council member Stott said the board needs to be proactive not reactive.

Council member Schmitt stated nothing has been done within the last 15 months. Council member Stott feels no one has come forward to discuss this in 15 months.

Supervisor Donnelly asked Joe Navarro of Carver Companies to clarify a few things. Mr. Navarro explained the utility company would be responsible for the actual substation. Supervisor Donnelly asked if he knew where the substation would go. Mr. Navarro said the locations the utility is looking at are vacant properties that eliminate any environmental issues. One potential spot would be along the side of Route 144 and the NYS Thruway. The equipment is built out to handle 50 megawatts but there is still a step down in power. Supervisor Donnelly asked what the structure would look like. Mr. Navarro said it has not been designed yet but will take up to 1-2 acres. He did restate any parcel they are considering is within the industrial footprint. Mr. Navarro had a map outlining the Port of Coeymans property to illustrate the potential areas other manufacturers would be looking. He stated a current tenant is looking to expand their operation within the foot print but cannot due to the lack of power. This potential substation lets current and future tenants of the industrial area know the port is looking for solutions to these utility problems. He reiterated is this is a Central Hudson line, not a Carver Companies’ line. Mrs. Tanner, a resident, asked why the town needed to be involved. Mr. Navarro explained Carver initiates the process, but due to the grant being a municipal grant it can only be awarded to a municipality not a private company.

Barbara Heinzen lives in New Baltimore on the boundary of Coeymans. She asked Mr. O’Connor about a substation in Saratoga County and how many acres was needed. Ms. Newcombe answered the site was about 1,000 acres. Ms. Heinzen referred the substation as “the bait” for manufacturing. Ms. Newcombe stated the substation is owned by Central Hudson. Ms. Heinzen reviewed the amount of property that could be potentially be used. She asked if potential manufacturers would spill over into residential areas. Mr. O’Connor said that could never happen as it is not zoned for industry. Council member Schmitt asked for Ms. Heinzen to direct her questions to the town board, not Mr. O’Connor. She asked the board if they are supporting the invading of existing residential land. She stated the consequences of the substation are what the community has to live with. She feels more discussion is needed amongst those who live here and it is a bigger question than one substation on a few acres in the Port of Coeymans. Mr. Navarro stated Carver has gone through SEQRA long with permit applications and the information is publicly available. The potential business will have to stay within the parameters of those existing permits.

Laura Lee Ross lives in Columbia County and requests people thinks about the effects this could have on real estate values. She feels bringing more industry to this area of the Hudson will be detrimental to real estate.

Town Attorney Reilly asked if the board had any other questions for those presenting as this was the main purpose of this meeting. He then suggested to move to public comment.

Council member Schmitt passed out a resolution in which he prepared and read:

**Resolution # 061-25Authorizing NYS FAST Grant with advanced Albany County Alliance**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Present* | *Absent* | *Aye* | *Nay* | *Abstain* |
| Stephen Donnelly |[x] [ ] [ ] [x] [ ]
| Linda S. Bruno |[x] [ ] [x] [ ] [ ]
| Stephen J. Schmitt |[x] [ ] [x] [ ] [ ]
| Ronald J. Hotaling |[x] [ ] [x] [ ] [ ]
| Michael J. Stott |[x] [ ] [ ] [x] [ ]
| *Total* | 5 |  | 3 | 2 |  |

I, Council member Schmitt offer the following resolution and move its adoption:

**WHEREAS,** the Town of Coeymans, in 2023, applied for and was awarded a Seventeen Million ($17,000,000.00) Dollar Track C FAST NY Grant for electrical infrastructure upgrades to support the growth of our local economy; and

**WHEREAS,** this award supports an $83.8 million-dollar project that will make Coeymans a key player in New York State’s growing clean tech and renewable energy manufacturing sectors; and

**WHEREAS,** this project will address power constraints that are limiting economic growth in Coeymans, while benefiting our small businesses and residents by improving overall grid reliability; and

**WHEREAS,** this project will have no out-of-pocket costs to the Coeymans Taxpayers; and

**WHEREAS,** the Town Board recognizes that this project is essential to transitioning our region to a green economy, with the Town of Coeymans leading the way; and

**WHEREAS,** the Town Board recognizes and acknowledges that this project is in furtherance of and consistent with the Town’s Comprehensive Master Plan; and

**WHEREAS,** the Town Board and representatives from the Advance Albany County Alliance Local Development Corporation (Alliance) have discussed this grant and project on numerous occasions, as well as the limitations that the Town possesses with regard to administering a grant of this size, given its limited resources and expertise in such matters, as well as the benefits that would be realized by both the town, the project, and the Alliance should the Town authorize the Alliance to administer the grant on behalf of, and for the benefit of the Town of Coeymans; and

**WHEREAS,** the Town Board recognizes that the Alliance, as the lead economic development organization for Albany County, has the capacity and expertise needed to implement a grant of this nature, and has extensive grant and financial management experience and a track record of working with utilities to facilitate power infrastructure improvements of this kind;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Town Board of the Town of Coeymans does hereby request that Empire State Development assign implementation and administration of this Grant (ESD Project #137,585) to the Advance Albany County Alliance Local Development Corporation, on behalf of, and for the benefit of, the Town of Coeymans; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the Town Board of the Town of Coeymans hereby authorizes and directs the Town Supervisor, or in his absence the Deputy Town Supervisor, to execute any and all agreements and documents necessary to assign implementation and administration of Grant (ESD Project #137,585) from the Town of Coeymans to Advance Albany County Alliance Local Development Corporation, and to effectuate the purpose of this Resolution, in a timely manner.

Seconded by Council member Hotaling, offered for discussion and duly put to a vote, the results of which appear above.

**Discussion:** Supervisor Donnelly asked the Town Attorney if he had seen this resolution and what his legal opinion was regarding it. Mr. Reilly stated this is the first time he has seen this resolution and he feels there are a lot of moving parts associated with this grant and its benefits to the town. He stated from a legal perspective he would not recommend passing this resolution without knowing what the potential involved agreements would look like. Council member Schmitt stated this resolution allows the Alliance to move forward with potential agreements in regards to community benefit agreement. Mr. Reilly agreed but still recommend to see those opportunities should be reviewed before proceeding.

Council member Stott read the following statement:

“Let me begin by saying that I support economic development, as long as it is environmentally conscious, safe, and doesn't impose negatively on the lives and well-being of our residents. That being said, in 2021, the Town Board at the time, consisting of Supervisor George McHugh and Councilmembers, Dan Baker, Zach Collins, Brandon LeFevre and Linda Bruno adopted through a resolution an updated Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Coeymans. For those of you who don’t know, the purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to create a community's goals and vision for the future. One of the categories of this Comprehensive Plan pertains specifically to what we are talking about tonight, which is economic development.

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From what I’ve just read, there are really two parts; one part stating the importance of industry for jobs, tax revenue and the school district; and the other part warning of the dangers of such industrialization and growth; specifically, harping on the fact that industry should not expand outside of pre-existing industrial zoned, mentioning this warning several times.

Furthermore, to add to the protection of residential/agricultural spaces from industry, the two years after the Comprehensive Plan was created, the previous town board that consisting of Mr. McHugh, LeFevre, Tutay, Bruno and Schmitt, had been adamant about this protection, proclaiming over and over to residents and to anyone who had concerns regarding the actions of industry in our town that they, the town board, are here to protect the people from any “Industrial Creep” and also here to keep a balance between residences and industry.

So, you would think that between these two town boards, one creating an updated Comprehensive Plan and the other swearing to uphold it, that the town would be secure in its ability to not allow industry outside of industrial zones; ensuring to keep that balance mentioned above?

Two years after the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan, on **May 24, 2023**- I received a phone call from former Supervisor McHugh in which he explained a situation that he has been made aware of. He stated, Mr. Powell, Holcim and General Electric were planning to use 30 acres of Powell’s agricultural land in order to build a wind turbine manufacturing facility. By the end of that conversation, we both agreed that this would violate the Town’s Comprehensive Plan. Mr. McHugh even created a local law in which landowners who had multiple-zoned acreage could no longer convert their agriculture spaces into industrial ones. I was proud of Mr. McHugh at that time for creating that law and upholding the Comprehensive Plan.

However, on June 13, 2023, George McHugh sent a completed application to Albany County for the 17-million-dollar grant for the Port of Coeymans. As I read through Mr. McHugh’s answers to the application’s questions, it became very apparent that what he had told me he was trying to prevent in our phone conversation on May 24th, he was now actually supporting just a couple of weeks later.

For example:

**Q13414- Describe the workforce within a 45-minute commute of the proposed site. Also include how it meets the needs of the targeted industry. -** Necessary to support Offshore Wind

**Q13358-Describe any additional adjoining acreage that could be available**— 130 acres of Powell’s property (WE own the rights to use)

So while you tell me that the grant isn’t for Offshore Wind, I find that hard to believe. Or at least at the application's inception, I think that that was the grant's purpose.

As many of you may already be aware, while the application for the grant was submitted in June of 2023, a few months later, Carver Companies put forth an application to our PBZBA asking for a site use variance for roughly 30 acres of Mr. Powell’s residential/agricultural land.

I personally spoke out against this application, not because I am anti-industry or because I don’t support economic development, but because I believed the application violated the comprehensive plan, asking to use 30 acres of Agricultural/Residential land, in which the plan clearly warns against. Secondly, the application was asking to use an agricultural accessory use variance. I also don’t support the idea that industry should be allowed to use an “Agricultural Accessory Use Variance” for industrial purposes. Any accessory use under such variance, should be for solely agricultural purposes and not industrial.

But the more important question to the previous town board is: “Where were you?” In my opinion, you created a fairly specific comprehensive plan and then preached to the public that you would defend and protect residents from industrial creep; but none of you ever spoke out against, or even questioned the wind turbine application. Instead, it seems as though as soon as industry snapped their fingers and mentioned “economic development”, regardless of how that development would occur, you have those same people actually support the things they previously rallied against. For example, Marissa Tutay wrote a letter to the PBZBA supporting the turbine application, Brandon Lefevre sat next to Carver Laraway at the public hearing in support of the application and George McHugh obtained a grant for it and even wrote a letter to Carver Companies telling them that the Town of Coeymans would extend their sewer lines for the project.

None of the people on the previous board practiced what they had preached, and in my opinion, when you should have been slapping industry on the wrist with their attempt to move outside of industrial zones with their wind turbine application, you were instead patting them on the back.

In closing, economic development, and more specifically industrial development is only as good as the regulation, checks and balances and oversight that go along with it. We cannot as a town be complacent and continue to be simply reactive, we need to be proactive. We need to plan ahead to protect our residents and their quality of life. If we allow certain additions to our industrial footprint then we need to be forward thinkers in not only how such additions could be beneficial to the town but also how they could be detrimental to the town in the future as well. As a board, if we were to accept this grant, it should come with guaranteed protections for the people of this town. It should come with much needed discussion from all parties involved, and it should be something that benefits all people in the Town of Coeymans.”

Council member Stott stated tonight was the first time he had spoken to any of these people in 15 months. County Legislator Collins asked if a personal phone call was had with himself, the county and Mr. Stott regarding this. Mr. Stott stated there has been a phone call. County Legislator Collins asked how many times the County Executive has come to Coeymans to discuss this. Mr. O’Connor answered with twice. Mr. Collins asked how many email threads were there regarding this. He advised against spreading false information in which the Supervisor replied it wasn’t false they had never seen the map Mr. Navarro presented tonight. Mr. Navarro interjected to say he has had that map in the Supervisor’s office. Mr. Collins asked them to not discredit the hard work all have put in regarding this project. Council member Stott felt the phone conversation they had could be summarized as this is an opportunity but there are still some issues. Council member Stott feels the town struggles with the balance of industry vs residential. Council member Hotaling reminded everyone nothing being discussed tonight will be outside of the current industrial footprint. Mr. Collins is currently working on a traffic study with the county and feels this is a necessary step. Council member Stott feels there was a precedent set with the last board and they didn’t speak up when they should have. Council member Schmitt reminded them that is why there is a PBZBA separate from the town board to review potential business.

Supervisor Donnelly stated a community benefit agreement has not been negotiated and feels the resolution is incredibly reckless. He feels this is the wrong way to proceed. Mr. Reilly stated he cannot advise the board to blindly hand over grant management to the Alliance. Council member Stott asked if it will take anything more than a resolution to accept the grant in the future months. He stated he supports the grant but doesn’t want to make a hasty decision. Supervisor Donnelly reminded the board they are going against their council.

**Further Public Discussion:**

Barbara Heinzen stated she feels this is a reckless vote and does not feel the resident of the town have been properly consulted.

Diana Abadie lives in Athens and spoke in regards to cancer statistics which are higher in our area. She feels from a public health standpoint it should be further discussed.

The resolution was then voted upon in which the results are above.

**Other Business:**

**Approval of Minutes:** The following minutes were approved:

-February 25, 2025 Town Board Workshop Meeting Minutes

-February 27, 2025 Town Board Meeting Minutes

-March 7, 2025 Special Board Meeting

Council member Donnelly made a motion to accept the minutes for February 25, February 27, March 7, 2025, Council member Stott seconded the motion.
APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT 0 – ABSTAIN - SO MOVED

**Motion to Adjourn** wasmade by Council member Donnelly and Seconded by Council member Bruno. APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT 0– SO MOVED 8:11 pm

***Respectfully Submitted*,**

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***Candace McHugh, Town Clerk***