

# Town of Johnsburg Newsletter

## Supervisor's Report

### Short Takes

#### Dynamic Duo

A special note of thanks to Senator Betty Little and Assemblywoman Theresa Sayward whose commitment to the Ski Bowl interconnect has been unwavering. At the moment when this project seemed to be slipping away our two legislative leaders emerged to provide our town with significant assistance in securing ORDA's commitment to funding for lift operations which will permit construction to begin.

#### County Crisis

A first wave of layoffs and budget cuts is expected to take effect in Warren County by July 1. So far 22 positions have been eliminated and approximately half a million dollars in funding reductions to programs such as cooperative extension and economic development have been targeted. Significant additional reductions will be necessary to avoid a double digit tax increase as the county grapples with debt service issues and reductions in state funding.

#### Highway Savings

Town Highway Superintendent Dan Hitchcock and the Town Board have agreed to not fill a highway position recently vacated by resignation on a year round basis. Instead, the position will be filled during the snow season only. Estimated budget savings for this change is \$12,000 annually.

#### Park Grant

Summer will see the first tangible effects of the Ski Bowl Park Grant with resurfacing of the town tennis courts. Town resident Kelly Neale is assisting with implementation of the grant.

#### ZEO Opening

The Town board will be interviewing to fill the position of Zoning Enforcement Officer. The opening was created by the resignation of Ed Tuttle. Thank you to Ed for his hard work in a difficult position.

### We're Back!

After an unnerving roller coaster ride which first saw the Ski Bowl Interconnect tabled by the ORDA Board and finally approved on Friday, May 8, our region seems poised on the edge of fulfilling its destiny to create a sustainable economic environment based on our attributes as a ski community.

It only took 60 years.

The long dreamed of connection between Gore and the Ski Bowl is an event of economic consequence that is hard to measure. The project will create and save local jobs, continue momentum in the Mountain's development, making it 6th largest east of the Mississippi and sustain the local business community that has hung on through the hardest of times. One New York State Comptroller's analysis concluded that the interconnect would stimulate the local economy by bringing as much as \$4.7 million annually.

A recent study conducted by the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages identified the Park largely as struggling with a slow death as youth abandon it and business growth is largely unheard of. The report further concluded that the aging residents of the Park were poor, had difficulty in qualifying for mortgages and faced significant everyday challenges.

In the face of this economic reality stands the interconnect. Some residents oppose various developments or proposals that will also change our local landscape. The beauty of the interconnect is in viewing it as a separate identifiable asset apart from other projects which can be reviewed and ultimately supported or opposed on their own merits.

Bringing skiers to Little Gore means they will no longer bypass our business district. It means our local economy may stabilize. Tom "Buckshot" Butler said to me a few months back that our area is more used to the current economic difficulties because the Adirondacks never came out of the Great Depression. Perhaps the interconnect finally offers financial stability, creates an environment that Junior might wish to return to after college and permits us to retain and grow services (medical, pharmaceutical and recreational) that will enhance our quality of life.

Ironically, the interconnect will in some ways return our community to its status just before the Second World War when a New York City newspaper reviewed our region as the St. Moritz of America. As Laurie Arnheiter points out, back then there were a half dozen grocery stores, several doctors and a booming commercial environment. Or maybe the project helps fulfill the promise of 1963 when so many thought the state ski center would solve all.

*(We're Back, cont on back)*

## Beach News

Plans are underway for the opening of the Town Beach. Town Engineer Jim Hutchins has been assisting town officials with a plan to keep water levels consistently high enough for installation of the dock and more use of this resource.

## Lodge Renovation

Work is underway to renovate the red enclosed pavilion in Ski Bowl Park. When completed later this summer, the expanded facility will help house the town youth program, be available for community use and during winter months will serve as a ski lodge for ORDA.

## Sodom Field Improvements

The Town Board in conjunction with the parks department is planning improvements at the baseball field in Sodom. These would include bringing electrical service to the snack bar/gazebo and restaining of the gazebo.

## Parks Work/Highway Workers

The parks department under Matt Olden is at work on town parks and also maintaining and mowing the town's cemeteries. Rather than bringing on two temporary workers as in past years, the town board and town highway superintendent Dan Hitchcock have agreed to temporarily move two highway workers to the park's department. The money saved by this move will go to the highway budget to help with additional equipment expenses.

## Highway Balance

The town highway committee consisting of councilmen Gene Arsenault and Arnold Stevens have been meeting with highway superintendent Dan Hitchcock to attempt to develop a long range plan for the town roads. Each year the town receives CHIPS funding from the State of New York. Deciding how best to use these funds is a key issue. While many roads are in a poor condition, the cost to pave has become exorbitant. For example, according to research done by Superintendent Hitchcock, the total cost to pave 1.3 mile long Durkin Road is \$449,625.00. At the same time restoring the highway fleet is an imperative as well. A general discussion of these matters aimed at striking the appropriate balance is planned for the June 16 board meeting at the town library. If you have an interest in highway issues and long range planning, this would be a good meeting to attend and provide the town board and highway superintendent with your input and ideas.

## Moving Toward Cell Service

Major strides have been made in an effort to secure cell service for the region.

Initially, several cell companies evaluating the best sites for cell tower installation had identified town owned land in Ski Bowl Park as providing the best location for maximum service.

Recently the Town has been working with a new company, Independent Towers, who has significant experience in cell tower installation within the Adirondack Park. One result of this switch has been a greater depth of service and experience and a more streamlined process.

An engineering review of sites in North Creek concluded contrary to prior studies, that the best locations for maximum service reward are not on town land at all, but rather on several privately owned parcels. If a lease agreement can be reached between the cell company and the private owners, an expedited process is anticipated. The advantage is that less legal work is required on the private parcels and because these parcels are within hamlet designated zoning classifications, less rigid APA review would be necessary.

Securing service for the hamlet of North Creek, portions of Peaceful Valley Road and the Gore parking lot is thought to be the best strategy to attract a national carrier to the area.

After an initial tower in North Creek, a network of towers could expand coverage to blanket our town. It would be anticipated that a tower covering Wevertown and reaching in a westerly direction toward the hamlets of Johnsbury and Bakers Mills would follow up the North Creek installation.

## Trail Cut Scheduled

With ORDA's commitment to the interconnect project, visible signs of the project will appear quickly on the local horizon.

On May 26, 2009, trail cutting will begin from the base of the Burnt Ridge Pod. The cutting will move upward and across the mountain, ultimately ending at the Ski Bowl Summit. This trail will constitute the interconnect from the Ski Bowl to Gore.

Thereafter, cutting will occur in the Ski Bowl proper.

## Waiver II

Legal review is underway which will ultimately permit the Town of Johnsbury to take title to additional historic ski trails at the Ski Bowl. Under the master agreement with Front Street the Town will convey to Front Street a small wetland buffer parcel and building rights. In exchange, the Town will receive the historic Hudson trail, Hudson Bypass and Thruway trails.

*(We're Back, cont.)*

Rarely do projects come along which promote economic growth and are consistent with environmental and historic concerns. The interconnect is such a project. It is certainly our future, but looking quite closely, it is also our past.