

Town of Johnsburg Newsletter

Supervisor's Report

Short Takes

Reval Revisited

Discussions are continuing between Supervisor Goodspeed, Town Assessor Ann Deppe, County Tax Services Director Mike Swan and state officials about a tax revaluation process to begin in 2010. Johnsburg has been described by state officials as having a tax valuation system that is so inaccurate as to be among the worst in New York State. The goal will be to move to full valuation in the near future.

White Water Derby

Mark your calendars, the Derby is here again. This year the annual White Water Derby will take place on Saturday, May 2 and Sunday, May 3

EMS Expansion Scratched

At the April 2009 board meeting the Town Board rejected planned expansion of EMS facilities into Scout Hall. Acknowledging that the current facility is certainly cramped, the board felt that the proposed 12 foot expansion into the public area of Scout Hall would limit citizen use too dramatically.

Highway Department Research

After public comments at a recent board meeting the Town Board is continuing to research and discuss the possibility of moving from an elected to an appointed town highway superintendent. Supporters of the proposal argue that it will create more efficiency and accountability. Opponents believe the position should remain one selected by all voters. Do you have an opinion? Email townhall@johnsburgny.com or drop a letter by any week day. The matter will continue to be discussed at board meetings and the board hopes to hear from as many citizens as possible.

Question? Suggestion? Email us
info@johnsburgny.com

Budget Soup

While presentation of the 2010 budget is still about a half year away, the time to start planning for the future and evaluating our present status is certainly at hand. Several articles follow, each which addresses the budget from different perspectives.

Targeting Taxes

Last year, thanks to the hard work and great ideas of many, our Town was fortunate enough to reduce taxes for the first time in many years. Perhaps more important than the small reduction itself is the fundamental shift in spending that it reflects. That shift was described in an earlier article as being akin to turning an ocean liner around.

As attention turns to the next budget cycle, the question is a simple one: Can we lower taxes again?

Next year's budget will face different challenges than last's. Among these are establishing a fund to begin a long overdue reval process, predicting fuel prices in a volatile market and confronting issues associated with insurance and solid waste. Solid waste for example is a budget item where revenues are vastly outpaced by expenditures.

Add to this mix the challenge faced at the state and county levels and control of local taxes becomes even more important.

As we approach the budget it is important not just to crunch numbers but to think conceptually as well. Can we reorganize and restructure different departments to effect the bottom line? Can we change the way we handle garbage and recyclables to save money without compromising services? Can we better control wasteful spending by policy changes? Can we shop for a cost effective way to do the reval?

One thing is for sure, in about six months we'll know for certain whether we have been able to repeat last year's success. As the old saying goes, "only time and taxes are for certain." We'll never turn back time, but with much hard work, another reduction may well be within reach.

First Quarter Check up

With one quarter of the Town's fiscal year now concluded a review of the functioning budget shows the Town's financial situation to be quite stable with a few unpredictables on the horizon.

Goods news from the 08 budget has arrived in the form of an unexpended fund balance that slightly exceeds the estimate contained in the 09 budget. Likewise, highway and general fund budgets are all performing within costs. (See 1st Quarter, back page)

New Laptops at Town Hall

Two new laptop computers have arrived at Town Hall. The laptops are part of new technology for the town provided by a state grant secured by Senator Betty Little.

First County Layoff

As the financial crisis has hit home with the Warren County Budget, dozens of positions have been merged or eliminated as county employees retire. On March 27 the first non attrition layoff occurred in the county when funding sources at Up Yonda Farm were found insufficient to meet costs. Supervisors directed DPW coordinator Bill Lamy to operate Up Yonda without expending county dollars, thus resulting in the layoff of one natu-

Wevertown Improvements

Local resident Paul Logercio is donating his time to resurface the lower floor at Noxon Hall in Wevertown. Paul has already rehabbed a conference table at Tannery Pond.

(1st quarter cont.)

The contingency fund which was increased to \$26,900 remains largely intact with only just over a thousand dollars having been spent so far.

Uncertainty exists in the area of solid waste where revenues are not keeping pace with expenditures. CHIPS funds (used for capital improvements and purchases) were initially reduced by 43%. The governor has indicated that the reduction will be eliminated and the money restored, but as of press deadline state officials were unable to confirm this.

Finally, the pressure for heating and energy will be minimized for at least the next seven months.

State Mess

Significant uncertainties with the state budget continue to create confusion regarding budgets locally. The State's budget process has largely come down to 3 leaders meeting in a room to create a budget outside of public process.

The very nature of this process creates grave uncertainty for counties and towns in the following areas among others:

*It is unknown whether the Governor will insist on capping state tax payments on real property, a measure that will be catastrophic to local governments. (note: at press time it appears the cap has been rewarded).

*Confusion over CHIPS dollars dramatically affects local planning..

*Delay in the state transmittal of tax payments to counties has resulted in cash flow issues.

*Proposed new taxes have been discussed, but no one knows what's in or out.

*Given proposed state layoffs and funding cuts, availability of programming is uncertain.

Survey Says...Grey, Poor, Unamortgageable

A preliminary presentation of survey results based on two years of research by representatives of the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages (AATV) has generated statistical results on issues ranging from education to income levels that will no doubt be the basis for pointed discussions for years to come.

The survey was concluded based on documentation from DEC, APA, census data and interviews with some 103 communities.

Among the most surprising of the survey results is the clear indication that youth is draining out of the park and being largely replaced by the older population moving to the park after successful careers elsewhere. The average age of a park resident is now 43. The average American age is presently 35.

The frontline of the youth drain are the schools. Since 1970 school population in the park has dropped 39. During the same time period the number of teachers has increased by 43%.

The survey also found the median combined household income within the Blueline to \$43,852. Government appears to be the largest employer and of government, prison employment accounts for the largest volume of employees.

The survey alarmingly concluded that when comparing income to housing costs many parts of the park create a dilemma for residents. Essentially many residents cannot qualify for mortgage funding under normal bank analysis.

While the survey is not yet completed it is expected to be available in a couple of months.

Johnsburg was one of the many town's who participated in the analysis which was the brain child of Arietta resident Brad Dake. The survey was partially funded with a \$93,000 grant from the Department of State.

Barton Layoffs

Local employer Barton Mines has announced via press release a layoff of 13 local employees. Supervisor Goodspeed has spoken with Barton officials regarding the layoffs which are rooted in the current economic crisis and decreased demand for garnet. It is hoped that once the economy is on track again these jobs will be restored.

Interconnect Crossroads

The April 21 meeting of the ORDA Board will likely decide whether the state authority funds operation of the interconnect ski lift. Press deadline is before the meeting. The Town has accumulated many resolutions of support from towns in a multi-county radius which have been delivered to ORDA and will be a part of the presentation heard by the ORDA board.

Cell Update

Efforts are continuing with regards to siting and planning for cell service in town. Meetings have occurred with a number of providers or liaisons over the last several weeks and slow progress is occurring. The project is more difficult in Johnsburg due to legal challenges associated with preferred sites and topographical issues. More to follow.