

Town of Johnsburg Newsletter

Supervisor's Report

Sterling Reflections

High Blood Pressure, Low Taxes

and the Roller Coaster Ride to a Community of Consequence

For the last four years it has been my honor and privilege to serve as your Supervisor. I believe that my terms of service have coincided with the most tumultuous and challenging times in the recent history of our community, times marked by massive challenges and equally significant opportunities.

It really has been a roller coaster ride, both politically and personally. At times the ride has been an exciting one with swift turns and panoramic views. It's a ride I'm glad I took, but I also have learned that the natural consequence of staying on a thrill ride too long is brain damage.

While it is not in my nature to hop off, bake bread and watch the wheels, I also look forward to a time when I can repay my family the cost of my service, rebuild my business and perhaps stabilize my cardio vascular function.

I have to be honest though. I don't think I would have been a very good supervisor on a merry go round or Ferris wheel. The roller coaster of growth, development, fiscal challenges and controversy has kept me interested. I've found that I'm more productive on the thrill ride, even if it takes its toll.

Permit me then, as I disembark to reflect for a moment on the ride we all shared. Our Town has changed fundamentally, growth occurring that was absolutely necessary to create jobs, retain health care services and survive in a dismal economy unparalleled since the Great Depression.

Make no mistake, when Wall Street crashed and the American banking system teetered on the edge of oblivion, Main Street in North Creek saw the establishment of more than 15 new businesses. After years of hard work by so many, the inner connect between Gore Mountain and the Ski Bowl debuted last year, rendering Gore the 6th largest ski area east of the Mississippi River. I was proud to work with team players like Bill Thomas, Betty Little and Mike Pratt to help return skiing to Little Gore and equally proud to see our business community emerge and partner with government to establish the shuttle system.

This year will also mark the return of ski trains to North Creek for the first time in more than half a century. Serving on the negotiating team that helped bring Iowa Pacific to the table, I can confirm the strength and depth of their operation and the contents of a contract that reaps the benefits for our small community.

Sure, there are naysayers. Some people say that under Goodspeed, North Creek got everything. That argument is an old and unduly divisive one. Our Town has a center and when the business center grows, jobs are created for all the hamlets.

Another person said recently that not much has happened lately. My suggestion is to go down Main Street some Saturday in the winter and ask what things might look like without a revitalized business district, a successful train operation and the Gore inner connect.

(See Supervisor, page 2)

Short Takes

Transition Underway

Supervisor elect Vanselow and Supervisor Goodspeed are meeting several times each week to discuss issues facing the Town from budget and personnel to development and taxation. Ron is also being briefed on current Warren County issues having significant impact on the North Country.

Front Street Approval

Supervisor Goodspeed signed a confirmatory correspondence in late October indicating Front Street Mountain Development had completed Town requirements regarding septic, waste and other infrastructure requirements thus concluding more than 5 years work between the Town and the developer. The Town's goal throughout has been to protect the Town and tax payer interests as the project moved through state and local regulatory procedures.

Budget Software

Town Hall is exploring a software option that would essentially automate payroll operations and streamline day to day budget and book keeping work. A demonstration will take place in coming weeks and it is hoped that the Town can move toward the new program by January 1.

Budgets Move Forward

It is expected that by publication of this report the Town Budget will have moved to final approval with a projected tax increase of 1.98%. The County budget contains a slightly less increase but when property values and equalization rates are applied, Johnsborg's share of the county tax is expected to decrease slightly. Given the volatility of this year's budget cycle and current New York State financial problems, I believe the two budgets are significant success stories.

\$ Back to County Planning

After significant lobbying efforts by Johnsborg and other up-county communities, the sum of \$50,000.00 has been returned to the County Planning Dept. These funds will help the County complete several projects that significantly affect Johnsborg including the First Wilderness Heritage grant program and current applications to enhance sidewalks and building facades.

Meal Site Info

As of print date, Warren County has agreed to continue with the current lease obligations for the Johnsborg mealsite but will not continue to fund employees at the site. It is expected that prepared meals will be delivered to the site from other centralized county locations. By honoring the lease agreement, the county is essentially agreeing to keep the facility open and will honor its obligation to pay 85% of utility obligations via reimbursement.

A Note of Thanks

For the past four years JCS has permitted distribution of the Town Newsletter with Jaguar Jottings and I am thankful for the opportunity to get as much information as possible to everyone's post office box.

As my last newsletter goes to press, I must reveal a little known fact about publication. Throughout the nearly 50 publications, each issue has been laid out by Susan on our business computer. She has been my editor, layout designer and biggest supporter. And as she points out, sometimes she has been my only supporter.

Simply put, the newsletter could not have been done without her and I offer my heartfelt thanks for all her work. She tells people that if I run for public office again, it will be with my second wife, but I must point out the roller coaster car has always had two seats.

(Supervisor, Continued)

While all this was happening, government got smaller, not bigger and your taxes went down. Over my four years in office your taxes decreased by 1.33% and I leave the office with the bills accounted for and no debt. I have been guided by an incredibly talented, underrated and sometimes abused financial department who have helped us "turn the ocean liner around."

So too, we faced these past several years the daunting challenges of Front Street. My position has been clear; whatever your feelings about the project, the Town itself, its water, infrastructure, resources and tax payers were to be protected from a development that at times took several unsettling turns. The challenge created a unified response from the Town, APA, DEC and the Department of Health and it is that unified and professional response that protected the community.

I have been a loud voice at the County as well, trying to not just protect the North Country, but promoting its resources as well. Two years ago I delivered a multi page memoranda to every supervisor outlining a series of proposals to save hundreds of thousands of county dollars. The document was a private one and not reported on but at this point, nearly every recommendation has been followed.

In leaving, I tip my hat to the team that supported me, staff and board as well. So too I acknowledge my parents and particularly my father who brought economic growth to Johnsborg and a low tax rate. Like me, he also ticked some people off, but as a friend of his said when he passed away, he led with his chin.

I urge our community members to rally behind Ron, fight less, work together and be good to each other.

And finally, I acknowledge what for me has been the most important thing. Over the last 4 years, Susan and I have experienced significant personal challenges with regards to our family. I pride myself in having made the right decision for our kids without regard to political consequence.

I think I lived up to Teddy Roosevelt's quote, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." Time will tell.