

February 2013
TOWN NEWSLETTER
*Published by the:
Berkshire Communities Association*

BCA
PO Box 113
Berkshire, NY 13736
Phone: 607-657-2742
www.BerkshireNY.net

Vol: 2013 Issue: #1

SUPERVISORS NOTE

With very cold weather and snow, it seems like some of the winters past have come back. I am ready for spring but have to wait patiently with the rest of you. As I sit here writing this article I have just completed my 1st full year in office as your Supervisor and am looking forward to my 2nd year. Over this year I have had the opportunity to meet several residents at our meetings and look forward to meeting many more. If you have not been able to attend our meetings I would encourage you to visit your Town Web Site at www.BerkshireNY.net, which has been completely redesigned and contains up-to-date information about the Town. You can read the minutes of meetings that you missed or agendas for upcoming meetings. You will also find information on the Planning Board including minutes of their meetings and much more. It has been a difficult year financially with the constant decreases in funding and the increases in the cost of operations for the town and highway for which we have little or no control over. Even with this we still managed to keep the 2013 budgeted tax increase under 2%. This is very important to me in that neither I nor you can afford large increases and we will continue to work to manage the costs that are under our control. During 2012, we completed the siding and painting of the Town Hall that was funded and started in prior administrations. We hired a Town Attorney, Nicholas Canizio, to help with enforcing code violations and helping to get our Town cleaned up. We were able to pass local law changes necessary to maintain eligibility for FEMA funding and continuing eligibility for Flood Insurance. We put two local laws in place that required mandatory referendum on the November ballot, changing the term for the Town Supervisor and Highway Superintendent from 2 years to 4 years beginning with the November 2013 election and taking office January 1st, 2014. We are looking forward to projects to attract new business to our Town. Tioga Hardwoods has a large expansion in their business and the old Howland Mill has been torn down and in the process of being cleaned for redevelopment. I have appointed Board Member Fraser Williams to represent the Town on TING "Tioga Investigates Natural Gas". I feel that it is important to stay current on the topic and this is a group that has representatives from all the county municipalities so we will be in tune with our neighbors' activities. Our Town Clean-up days will be the last full week in April, and will again include electronics recycling and tires. Please watch the Tioga County Courier and Owego Pennysaver for full details as they are finalized. I personally thank Jim Lacey for his 22 years of service to Berkshire and the Planning Board. Other developments are being completed that are not under the Town Board, such as the Berkshire Community Hall completion, the moving of the Food Pantry and the demolition and rebuilding of your Fire Station. All these efforts help to draw additional companies and new residents to our town. As all of this happens I am very fortunate to have been elected by you as your Supervisor and look forward to continuing to serve the residents. If you have the opportunity, and when the warm weather returns, please try to attend our meetings on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7:00 pm *Ron McEwen*

BERKSHIRE PLANNING BOARD

The Planning Board regrets to announce that after 22 years of continuous service to the Town of Berkshire, Jim Lacey has resigned his position on the Planning Board. Jim has been an active member of the Board for his entire tenure, serving at various times as Chair, Vice Chair, and the County Planning Board representative. His dedication and involvement have been exemplary, and he will be sorely missed. When you see him, please join us in thanking him for his community service and a job well done. The snowmobile and ATV signs that were missing have now been replaced. Thank you to the town highway crew for installing the signs. Please remember that these signs were purchased at the expense of the clubs and respect those groups by leaving them in place so that we are compliant with current laws regarding the posting of roads for their use. With Jim Lacey's resignation, the Planning Board has an opening for another member. If you are interested in joining us, please contact the Planning Board Chair, Ken Ceurter, at 657-2831 for more information

BERKSHIRE FIRE COMPANY

We don't have a station right now but we are still here for you. So don't be afraid to call if you need us. We would like to once again thank Karl and his crew for sharing their building with us. Although space is cramped, having a warm place for the trucks is the important thing. The town highway garage has been working wonderfully as a safe and warm place to work from. We would also like to thank the Berkshire Congregational Church for allowing us to hold our meetings there. Not having a station has slowed our fund raising efforts but we will be serving food at a square dance to be held in the Berkshire Community Hall on March 23rd. We will also continue selling food at many local motorcycle races this summer. We hope to be in our new station next winter and back in the swing of having dinners and breakfast for our community. During these cold winter months fires occur more frequently so we would like to remind everyone to be extra careful. Be sure your chimneys are clean and safe before starting your stoves. Also, be careful with space heaters and keep combustible items away from them. Be careful driving on slippery roads. We are here to help but would rather not have the business. Our job is best when things are slow. We held our elections in December the officers for 2013 are listed on page

Chief	Bret Welch,	President	Butch Ceurter	1 st Assistant	Ken Bean
VP	Roger Howland	2 nd Assistant	Ron Sharp	Secretary	Kelly Sharp
Captain	Dean Belden	Treasurer	Bill Leonard	Lieutenant	Clair Rupert
Squad Capt.	Darlene Wait	Squad Lt.	Bob Wait		

As always we are looking for new members. If you are interested please call Bret Welch at (607) 427-0964 and I will get you an application and help get you started on a fun and rewarding career. Or you can stop by the Congregational Church the first Tuesday of any month at 7:00PM and sit in on our meetings. There is a job for everyone in the volunteer fire service so come and join our family.

Bret Welch Fire Chief

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Sunday School 9:30 AM**



HIGHWAY NEWS

Although we have not had a lot of snow, this winter season is more what we are used to and plan for. We are getting some overtime and moderate use of our accumulated sand, mostly due to the frequent pesky snowfalls of an inch or less which take as much time, fuel and sand as major snowfalls. We had a new (used) waste oil heater installed last summer and it is operating well and is more efficient than the old one. Our used oil supply is adequate, but we can always use more. Drop it off at the Town Highway garage or if you have 50 gallons or more we will pick it up. Cooking oil is OK but no antifreeze though. It can cause serious damage to the burner nozzles and disrupted burn patterns will harm the heat chamber. We are using the breaks between snows to look at routine maintenance on the equipment. Trucks are in good shape thanks in great part to the 5 year replacement program that we have had in place for more than 15 years now. We buy a new plow/dump truck every 5 years, keep them in primary duty for 15 years, then as a backup for 5 more. Next planned truck purchase is 2015. The Town Board adds funds each year to an equipment capital reserve fund so that we do not have to borrow money and pay interest when we make a purchase. We are doing a lot of preventive as well as required maintenance of the brush shredder that we share with Richford. It is just about ready to go and if we get a break in the weather we will be putting it to use. Once the Townwide Trash pickup week is behind us we will be concentrating on honing the dirt roads, ditching and some shoulder work. Our first road upgrade will be to complete the unpaved portion of

McMahon Rd. Then there will still be some FEMA money coming from Tropical Storm Lee.

Apparently the huge amount of damage caused by last year's Hurricane Sandy has glutted the FEMA administration, but I am being assured that we will eventually receive our money.

Karl Spoonhower



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NEWSLETTER DELIVERY

Our goal is to get this newsletter to everyone in Berkshire. Obtaining and keeping the address list current is one of the hardest and most time consuming things that we do. We really need your help. Please let us know if: you or someone you know is not receiving a newsletter or getting duplicates; have a change or correction of a name or address or email; you can receive the newsletter via email saving us printing and mailing costs; are receiving the newsletter but it is addressed to Current Resident or Box holder. We would like to have your name on our address list. Contacts: Fraser Williams, 657 2742, fraserw@citlink.net or Skip Hartwig 657 8418, skhartwig@frontiernet.net

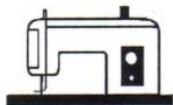


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NEW FIRE STATION NEWS

Things are still progressing. All paperwork is in and approved by USDA. The building planning meeting with all three contractors, USDA, architect, clerk of the works, code enforcement officer, legal counsel, fire district, and any other stakeholder is set for early February. At this meeting the construction plan will be determined. After this meeting the contractors will be ready to start as soon as Mother Nature is ready, so hope for an early and mild spring. The old station that was sold to Ed Brown/E&B Salvage was not fully removed by the buyer so members

of the company volunteered their time to finish removal of the old station. Although exact timelines are not yet set, they will be part of the planning meeting. We hope to have the station completed and turned over to the district by late summer. At that time the company will finish the kitchen and build the offices. We hope to have an open house for fire prevention week in October that will be the biggest in Berkshire history. Keep watching and you should see things happening soon.

Bret Welch, Fire Chief

TOWN OFFICIALS & MEETINGS

Town Board Meetings 3rd Monday, 7:00 pm

Supervisor: Ron McEwen 657-8678 h 657-2531

Town Board: John Stoughton, Fraser Williams, Lillian Hoffmier, Ron Sharp 657-8678

Planning Board Chair: Ken Ceurter 657-2831 Meetings
- 1st Tuesdays, 6:30 pm

Highway Superintendent: Karl Spoonhower 657-2705
Town Clerk: Connie Liddington 657-8131 12421 St.
Rt. 38. M-Thur 6-8pm, Sat 10 am – 2 pm

Justice: Charles Brundza, 657-8286 Court 3rd Monday-
5:00pm

Assessor: Michael Maxwell 315-391-8323, 657-8635
18 Railroad Ave.

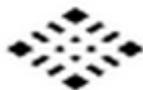
Town Code Enforcement: Lee Virtue 657-8635 c 760-5551
Thursdays from 1 to 7 pm

Dog Control Officer: Ron Raab 426-4567

Berkshire Fire Commissioners: Don Liddington, Chair,
Bob Waite, Donny Liddington, Butch Ceurter, Philip
Davis
Meetings 4th Wednesday, 7 pm

Fire Chief: Bret Welch

Berkshire Fire District EMS Squad Captain: Darlene Wait



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**BERKSHIRE POST OFFICE
MEETING DISAPPOINTING**

As both a resident and your town supervisor, the meeting held on January 10th at our Post Office was disappointing to say the least. As soon as learning about the meeting we sent a notice in the Berkshire Happenings email, and even though the meeting was held when many residents were working, the turnout was really good with 40 to 50 people attending it was my understanding that based on the survey results and

input at the meeting a final decision would be determined about the fate of our Post Office. The meeting was run by David W. Clark, from the Binghamton USPS District Office, which is over Newark Valley, Berkshire and Richford. Mr. Clark was introduced by Scott Parmelee, Interim Post Master. Mr. Clark stated that is by far the largest attended meeting of any that he has held in his region. He handed out the 13736 Survey Results and propaganda sheet which stated that: **"We will take into account all information received at this meeting before making a final decision."** A lot of serious questions were asked of Mr. Clark

- Isn't Berkshire a newer and more efficient Post Office than Newark Valley
- Berkshire is Handicapped accessible and Newark Valley isn't
- Berkshire is in the middle of all three making it easier for everyone to get to
- There is far more parking in Berkshire
- The exchange continued with numerous additional questions and comments

In response to these questions Mr. Clark stated that as a federal government service agency they **are not** required to comply with OSHA or Handicapped Access Laws so that is not a factor in the decision. That means to me they do not care about our residents or how they get into a post office. Postal window service sales are down and therefore that is a big part of the decision. If sales are up next year then we will re-evaluate our decision. From a business stand point, if you reduce the hours you are open you are going to further reduce your sales. After about an hour of dialog from those in attendance, I came out and asked Mr. Clark does anything that has been said today make a difference in the decision? He flatly said NO the decision has already been made...to which I stated "what was the purpose in even having this meeting?" Mr. Clark was given a chance to respond to this in our newsletter and refused. It is needless to say why I use the caption for this article "Post Office Meeting Disappointing". At some point in the very near future the window hours will be changed to:

Monday – Friday 7:30 am to 11:30 am Saturday 9:00 am to 11:00 am

All other services will remain as they presently are with the exception that we will have a new person in charge of the operation. For more information you can go to <https://usps.com/ourfuturenetwork> then click on "Preserving Post Offices" You may also want to contact all of our Federal Representatives and share your displeasure on how Berkshire Post Office Changes are affecting our Community.

Congressman Tom Reed
23rd District of New York
1504 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-3161
Fax: (202) 226-6599

Senator Charles Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 224-6542
Fax: (202) 228-3027
TTD: (202) 224-0420

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibray
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BERKSHIRE FREE LIBRARY

Fabulous February!!! Need an extra few books to have around in case you get snowed in or you just don't want to go out in the cold? Come on in for the month of February we will be having a Paperback Book Sale. All books are \$.25 and when you buy 4 you get one free. There are also some of the hats, mittens and scarves left. With this cold weather we are having stop in and buy something to help keep you warm. When the weather is nasty don't try to come to the library to return a book or movie please just call and we will be happy to renew the item for you. If we are closed there will be no overdue fees charged for those items due on that day and the items will be due the next day we are open. If you have questions please feel free to call us at 657-4418. I have just finished working on two grants. One is for a Photo-Storybook project where the students will have the opportunity to use a digital camera to take pictures and then put them into a story that they create. The second is to start story hour at the library and in Richford as well as start a outreach program with the Pre-K classes at the school. We want to reach as many of our little children as we can with books, stories, songs, games and crafts. The grant will let us buy puppets, storybook characters, books and lots of other supplies to make this lots of fun for our little ones. If anyone would like to help with these projects please let one of the staff know. We will be starting a story hour in May even if we don't get the grant. We just may not have everything at the start and it may take longer to start the Richford program but we will. The Photo-Storybook will depend upon the grant. It is not too late to donate to our Annual Fundraising Campaign. We are still more than \$1,000.00 short of our goal of \$4,500.00. The grants will pay for programming but we rely on your support to keep the library running. Thanks to all who have already sent in their donation." New books are coming in all the time but please feel free to let me know if there is something you want. If we are not buying it I can get it for you from another Library in a very short time. We have James Patterson's "Zoo" and will be getting "Alex Cross, Run". There are also books coming out by Deborah Crombie, J.D. Robb, J.A. Jance, Jodi Picoult, Lisa Gardner, and Maeve Binchy. We also want to know what children and teens want to read. I am looking at writing another grant to pay for young adult books so I need to know what they are like to read. Come on into the library to check out what is new and when programs will be starting. The Summer Reading Programs are just around the corner. Now is the time to be planning our gardens. The seed catalogs are out so you should be planning what to buy and when to start planting, remember peas go in the ground in March and April. You can also spread your poppy seeds on top of the snow now. Library Hours: Tuesday 12-5, Wednesday 1:30- 7, Thursday 1-5, Friday 1:30-7, Saturday 9-2. Keep warm & stay safe, *LuAnn Whirl – Director*

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HELPING HANDS FOOD PANTRY

About a year ago, Tioga Opportunities, Inc. and the Helping Hands Food Pantry were approached by the Berkshire Community Association about moving the pantry into the lower level of the Berkshire Hall at 11 Jewett Hill Road. At that time, it seemed like a crazy idea! The concrete flooring was all broken up; there was only one big room with no heat or electricity (but a lot of junk!). And, I must admit, it was a bit scary to think about moving out of the First Congregational church's basement. That's where the pantry got its start back in the mid to late 1980's and we were "comfortable" there, even though volunteers and clients alike needed to navigate fourteen steps to and from the pantry. But, representatives from TOI, the food pantry, and BCA met and came up with ideas for what might make a "perfect pantry." Then throughout the year, grants were procured from the Community Foundation for South Central New York, Mildred Faulkner Truman Foundation and NYSEG as well as hundreds of hours of volunteer labor, enabling BCA to refurbish a portion of the Community Hall which would house the food pantry, incorporating many of the ideas earlier discussed. Soon, the existing flooring was dug out and a new concrete floor was poured, walls went up, new windows were put in, and heat and electricity was installed. The addition of a ramp-like sidewalk from Jewett Hill Road to the oversized doors recently installed in the lower level of the Community Building makes the food pantry finally handicap accessible. We finalized the move to the lower level of the Community Building during the last week in January. (Brrrrr!) Over the years, the Helping Hands Food Pantry has helped hundreds of families in the Berkshire and Richford areas to put food on their tables. It is operated solely by volunteers. We depend on our friends' and neighbors' generosity to remain in operation. If you'd like to help, either financially or with an hour or two of your time, please contact me (Emily) @ 657-8158 or Joan @ 657-8158 or stop by our new facility during regular hours: Monday 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm and Thursday 2:00 to 4:00. We will have an open house to show off our new facility on Saturday, March 9, from 1:00 til 3:00 pm. Please visit us and find out what we have and what we do

Emily Sheldon

ASSESSOR NEWS

A reminder that all exemption applications have to be in my office by March 1st. I will have office hours in the Town Hall on Feb 4,11,25 and March 11,18, from 8:00am -9:30am. You can reach me at (315) 391 8323.
Mike Maxwell



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TOWN WIDE EMAIL

We maintain a list of email addresses to disseminate information of significant happenings in and around Berkshire such as major projects, meetings, fundraisers, public hearings, new or proposed legislation, etc. We have 190 addresses on the list and have been using it to help keep you informed for more than 12 years. It has proven to be a very effective way to get near real time communications to those people in Town who have email capability and wish to keep up with what is happening around Berkshire and surrounding areas. The program also serves as an excellent way for us to receive feedback. As a protection against personal use and SPAM, messages are sent out as Blind Carbon Copies so the entire list will never be sent to any recipients. Comments on the information provided and the use of the list has been very positive. To be placed on the list or to change an email address, contact Skip Hartwig - 657 8418, email skhartwig@frontiernet.net.



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