

February 2012
TOWN NEWSLETTER
Published by the:
Berkshire Communities Association

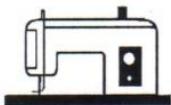
BCA
PO Box 113
Berkshire, NY 13736
Phone: 607-657-2742
www.berkshirenyc.com

Vol: 2011 Issue: #4

SUPERVISORS NOTE

My name is Ron McEwen, and as your new Town Supervisor. I would like to thank you for electing me to serve you. My wife Kathi and I have lived in Berkshire for 15 years and love the area. I have been working with government finances for over 30 years. A small community, such as Berkshire, is something to cherish. It is small enough to enjoy the open air, easy to get to know the people and yet close enough to everything you need. Together we are facing some difficult times with the economy and the State of New York pushing down their requirements. Unfortunately the lawmakers in Albany and Washington sometimes lose track of the fact that one solution does not help all areas. Every area has its own characteristics and needs. These do not always fit with the laws and regulations passed on to us to enforce. We, the residents of Berkshire, have a small tax base. This places a larger burden on each of us when it comes to financing local services. I will be striving to look for efficiencies in the Town operation. That having been said, it will be very difficult to improve on what my predecessors have done since they have been concerned with the very same issue. Our single largest expense, which is also the biggest single service provided to the residents is the highway operation. The expenses related to this are always increasing. We are in control of so very little of what happens to us at the local level; we need to pursue every opportunity to save money; even if it means changing the way we do business. The revenues that our community must operate on are limited to four major sources. The first source would be the town share of the sales tax collected in the county. The success of established business, and the growth of new business, is a primary concern to generate increased growth in this revenue. This growth need not be in the town for the town to benefit. As an example, the business of Tioga Downs in Nichols has generated a larger sales tax which benefits all communities within the county. The second source would be the Federal and State aid for highways. For 2012 year it has been estimated that this will pay for \$73,000 of the highway expense to maintain our town roads. The State has tried for years to reduce the amount we receive for this aid. The fact is that this aid is generated from state taxes established for the single purpose of maintaining and improving the highway system throughout the entire state. The third source is what is referred to as New York State Revenue Sharing. This is an extremely small amount and has been decreased every year. For the year 2012 is has been estimated at \$10,000. The fourth source, which is the one that is the hardest on all of us, is property tax for the town and highway operation. We will strive to provide the best possible service at the lowest possible cost. I welcome input from the residents on ideas for making our town even better than it already is, and look forward to my next two years as your supervisor. *Ron McEwan*

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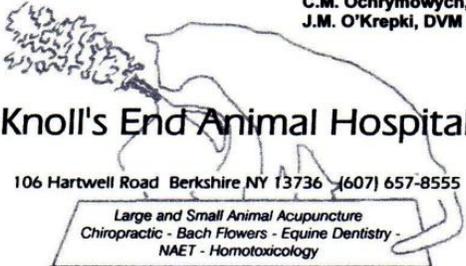
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HIGHWAY NEWS

So far Old Man Winter has given us a break. Our equipment hasn't been used all that much, our overtime is down and the stockpile of sand is in much better shape than the past few years. That is especially important for we can no longer get any cinders which we mixed with the sand. Cinders cost about 5 times less than sand. As it has been for several years now CHIPS funding from NYS is less than certain. We will really have to tighten our belt if we do not get CHIPS. I am hoping for some FEMA money from damage caused by last year's 2 major rainstorms. Although the amounts could be substantial, I don't count on it until we actually receive the money. As I mentioned in the last newsletter our Gradall is beyond economical repair. We have been looking for a rubber tire excavator which would not only replace the Gradall, but also eliminate our need to rent an excavator nearly every year for block, stream, bridge, and gravel pit work. Berkshire was the high bidder on one late last year, offered on an internet auction by the Town of Montour Falls, but they rejected our bid. Once again we plan to complete the upgrade and paving of McMahan Road and it is our number one priority after we hone the other dirt roads. *Continued page 2...*

C.M. Ochrymowych, DVM
J.M. O'Krepki, DVM



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...Highway News continued

We need to improve the paving on some of our oil & stone roads and top coat some others, but we will have to see how the funding works out. We have new radios in our vehicles with a discreet frequency which will allow us to communicate and coordinate much more effectively. The old radios had a common frequency used by the County and most of the other Tioga County Highway departments and there is often so much chatter that we could not talk to each other. We still have the ability to contact and monitor the County and other Highway Departments but will not be totally dependent on the single overused frequency. Thanks to Mike Simmons for all his efforts on this project. We had to replace the burner unit in our waste oil heater early in the heating season, but that cost is a drop in the bucket compared to what we used to pay for heating oil. The furnace is running great now and is burning more efficiently than before. We have considerable waste oil on hand this year, but can always use more. Drop it off at the highway garage or if you have large enough quantities, we can pick it up. Just call me at 657 2705. My thanks for those who supported me in last year's election.

Karl Spoonhower

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BERKSHIRE FIRE DISTRICT: NEW FIRE STATION PROGRESS

The fire district is still working towards getting the new fire station. We had a public meeting to discuss possible options on January 19th. The architect, attorney, and financial person were all there to answer questions. As most of you all know the bids last year came in way over our budget. Currently the architect is working with NYS Emergency Services to settle the discrepancy of how long the loan can be for. It was originally approved for 30 years but because of the type of construction and material used, the loan period was lowered to ten years. The architect feels he has proven it should be a 25 year loan for this type of structure. As of right now we are still waiting to hear from the state if they will accept the evidence and the loan can be for 25 years. If is not accepted the structure will have to be changed to meet their requirements. Once that is settled the financial people are going to run the numbers of borrowing the money from the state and USDA with the \$100,000 grant vs. borrowing through a regular bond council and bank to see which will be the most economical. Also, at this time the architect will prepare for another bid. The current plan is to rebid for the entire station with deducts for not building the offices, and not finishing the kitchen, (these things the company has offered to do after we get the building with our fund raiser money). Also with using the existing well and no septic, a local contractor has offered to install the septic for free if the members assist and the company buys the materials. Lastly with a gravel drive instead of black top. These cuts should provide some substantial savings to the project. The plan is also to get bids for just a truck bay with no meeting hall or kitchen. After the bids are received and reviewed we will then once again ask all of you to come out and vote. At this vote we will know the exact cost the building and will have plans available for you to see just what you are getting for the money. We apologize for having to ask you to vote again but this is the only fair way to be sure the public supports the changes. We hope you continue to support us and if you have any questions on this project please come to the commissioner's meetings the 4th Wednesday of the month

Bret Welch, Berkshire Fire Chief



BERKSHIRE FREE LIBRARY

Have you read any good books lately?? The Berkshire Free Library has a lot of them, available for your reading pleasure. For instance, if you adventure stories, we have Tom Clancy's latest, "Locked On", a new one by Chris Kuzneski called "The Secret Crown" or Clive Cussler's "Devil's Gate. If you prefer mysteries, James Patterson's "Private: #1 Suspect" is here, as is "The Rope" by Nevada Barr. Sue Grafton's "V is for Vengeance" is available, as is "Cat Telling Tales" by Shirley Rousseau Murphy. Then there are two new ones by Janet Evanovich: "Explosive Eighteen" and "Love in a Nutshell". Other good reads are "The Scottish Prisoner" by Diana Gabaldon, "A Dublin Student Doctor" by Patrick Taylor, "Three-day Town" by Margaret Maron and "The Litigators" by John Grisham. If you enjoy non-fiction, David McCullough's "The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris, 1830-1900" is very interesting. Of course, there are many more that you'll have to come in and see for yourself! Also available are audio books on CD and a selection of DVDs. There are many books for children too, from picture books to young teens. We have the latest in the Eragon series, "Inheritance" by Christopher Paolini, some new ones in the Encyclopedia Brown series, a new story about Amelia Bedelia, and many others. We also have two Nook Color devices available to borrow. There are over 30 books already loaded on it, such as "Napoleon's Pyramids" by William Dietrich, "Gap Creek", by Robert Morgan, the complete collection of Agatha Christie mystery novels and two other anthologies of old favorites. If you are planning to retire, you might want to read "Retirementology" by Gregory Salsbury, Ph.D. How about "Don't Know Much about Mythology" by Kenneth Davis or a book to jog your memory, "I Used to Know That – Stuff You Forgot from School" by Caroline Taggart. For the children, you'll find "Skippyjon Jones" by Judy Schachner or "Puff, the Magic Dragon" by Peter Yarrow, complete with the song! If none of these titles appeal to you, you may download books to borrow for two weeks from www.fls.org and the Overdrive program. All you need is a program that you can install for free on your home computer called Adobe Digital Reader, plus the number on your library card. Directions for downloading the eBooks can be obtained at the library. These books may also be downloaded to a Kindle, iPad or other eBook reader. Overdrive also has audio books and music to borrow. Come visit the library and get ready for the cold winter days! We are located at the corner of Rte. 38 and Jewett Hill Road, next to the Berkshire Fire Station. We are open Tues., noon – 5:00; Weds., 1:30 – 7:00; Thurs., 1:00 – 5:00; Fri., 1:30 – 7:00 and Sat. 9AM – 2:00. There is handicapped parking and a ramp to the back door behind the library. Our phone number is 657-4418

Marleta S. Anderson, Director



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BERKSHIRE FIRE COMPANY

2011 was a busy year for us. We had 209 calls for the year between fire and EMS calls. This means on average of 4 times a week volunteers were asked to leave their homes, families, work, or whatever they were doing to go help someone in need. So if you see any of our dedicated members be sure to thank them for volunteering.

We have purchased a couple new items recently to help us help you. We have ordered and will soon be getting a new defibrillator. This new unit has the best in modern technology to save a life when someone is having a heart attack. The old unit will be kept on our rescue as a backup when the ambulance is already on a call. We also purchased rescue jacks that are used to stabilize a vehicle after an accident to protect both the occupants and the responders and can also be used to lift a vehicle off from a trapped victim. These jacks can also be used to stabilize the floor in a building that was damaged by fire while we are working in it. Both of these new purchases will be helpful for our responders to do a better and safer job of serving you.

Our members are also attending state courses to keep up with the times. We had 4 members complete the fire police course last fall. They are now trained on how to protect our firefighters during an incident. We had one EMT get recertified. She had been out of the EMS business for several years and we are glad to welcome her back. We also have two more members that are currently in the EMT program for the first time and hope to be graduating soon. Four of our members just started the firefighter one program in Owego. This is a 78 hour program that will teach them the basic principles of firefighting. We have also requested to host a hazmat 1st responder ops class this spring. This class will train our responders how to protect themselves and others during hazardous materials incidents.

Along with our responses and trainings we are also continuing to do fund raisers to help keep taxes down. We made and sold chicken wings for the super bowl for the first time. We hope to make this an annual event if there is enough interest. We are also having a dance with the very popular local band Generations on April 7th from 7-11. We will have food and nonalcoholic drinks there. People can bring their own beer as long as they are responsible with it. These dances have been a good time to enjoy friends and neighbors and we hope to see everyone there. Our ambulance crew also had a pancake supper in January. This was a welcome break the usual dinners and we hope everyone enjoyed it.

So as you can see we have been and continue to be very busy. We are always looking for new members to join our family. We are at the station every Tuesday at 7:00 pm. The first week of each month is our meeting and the rest of the month is our trainings. Please stop by and see how great volunteering can be. Any questions can be directed to me. My cell number is 427-0964 feel free to call me anytime. *Chief Bret Welch*

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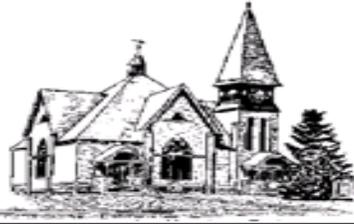
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Sunday School 9:30 AM**

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 426-4567
1st and 3rd Sat 10 am -12pm, 2nd & 4th Sat 9-11am

Dog Control Officer: Ron Raab 426-4567

Berkshire Fire Commissioners: Don Liddington, Chair,
Bob Waite, Donny Liddington, Butch Ceurter, Philip
Davis
Meetings 4th Wednesday - Jan, Feb, Mar 5 pm. Apr
thru Dec – 7 pm

Fire Chief: Bret Welch

Berkshire Fire District EMS Squad Captain: Scott
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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 Boxholder. 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

TOWN PLANNING BOARD

The Town of Berkshire Planning Board consists of 5 regular members and 2 adhoc members. Meetings are held on the 1st Tuesday of each Month at 6:30 at the Town Hall.

The Planning Board is comprised of:

Ken Ceurter, Chair
John Gehm

Jim Lacey, Vice-Chair
Joe Palmeri

Tim Pollard, County Planning Board Rep
Wayne Antal, Adhoc

Sarah Albrecht, Adhoc/Secretary

Recent Accomplishments:

- A new "Dog Control" local law is official and filed with the state; see below for more details.
- A new "Unregistered Vehicle" Local Law was recently approved by the Town Board and will be filed with the state immediately. Some extract is provided below.
- A new "Fee Schedule" became effective January 1, 2012. These fees primarily pertain to construction and dog control.

Note: To see local laws on the town web site, go to <http://www.berkshirenyc.com/> and choose the "Laws and Ordinances" link. The fee schedule is also available.

Dog Control Local Law

A new Dog Control Law was filed with NYS in October which replaced a 1999 version. The law deals strictly with dog issues with the key focus on licensing, rabies vaccination, controlling dog behavior, and owner responsibility. Listed below are some primary issues:

- 1) All dogs that are 4 months or older must be registered/licensed and have rabies vaccinations.
- 2) Licenses must be worn by dogs at all times (excluding show times).
- 3) A Dog Control Officer (DCO) must be assigned by the town and will perform duties to control dog behavior by enforcement of the Dog Control Law. The current DCO is Ron Raab, 426-4567 or 565-2859.
- 4) Fee are set by the town for licensing (see town fee schedule) but significant costs may be assessed if any dog is seized and taken to the humane center.
- 5) Owners that do not control their dog and do not comply with this law may be given a court appearance ticket and subject to paying fines. Typical noncompliant behavior issues include running at large, being a nuisance by chasing cars or bicycles, barking, or biting humans or domestic animals.

Unregistered Vehicle Local Law - A Revision to the New York State Uniform Code now only allows open storage of one unregistered vehicle on a property (the law previously allowed two). In addition, some simple land owner responsibilities and expectations are outlined along with variance and appeals procedures. The Code Enforcement Officer is the administrator for this law. The previous version of the law included Junkyards but they will be treated separately now.

Definition of unregistered vehicle: Any vehicle which is parked, stored, or abandoned by anyone, owner or otherwise, on lands, public or private, in the Town of Berkshire when the Vehicle:

- Does not display a valid registration sticker authorized by an agency of any State, or
- In the case of vehicles intended for use on public roads, does not have a valid inspection sticker from an inspection station registered under the laws of the State of New York, or
- Is no longer in an operable condition for its intended original use, or
- Is kept or used for the purpose of salvage or resale of parts thereof.

Regulations:

- (a) Not more than one Unregistered Vehicle in Open Storage is permitted on any parcel of land in the Town of Berkshire, provided that:
 - The vehicle does not present an inherent safety risk or environmental hazard,
 - The vehicle is not located within 10 feet of any adjoining property line or public highway,
 - The storage location is regularly maintained and does not present an unsightly appearance.
- (b) Any property with an unregistered vehicle in open storage must have any additional unregistered vehicles in enclosed storage
- (c) No unregistered vehicle may be stored on the premise of any multiple family dwelling.
- (d) No storage or accumulation of vehicle parts is allowed in open storage.

HELPING HANDS
FOOD PANTRY

The Helping Hands Food Pantry is located in the First Congregational Church of Berkshire (the Red Brick Church) on the corner of State Route 38 and Glen Road. It is open to all residents of Berkshire, Richford and Speedsville as an emergency food source. The regular hours of operation are Monday evenings from 6:30 to 7:30 PM and Thursday afternoons from 2:00 to 4:00 PM. In case of emergency, call 657-2501.



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CODE ENFORCEMENT

Now that we are starting a new year here are some issues and codes everyone needs to know about.

Permits are needed for all new or replacements wood, pellet, and any other type of stove.

Permits are needed for electrical, plumbing, and septic work

CO2 alarms are required in all homes new and old except for total electric homes

NO BURN barrels allowed - this includes farmers NO BURNING for March 15th to May 15th need DEC permit to burn and only trees and shrubs may be burned

Permits needed for all new construction. Not needed for a shed that is less than 144 sq ft

Only one unlicensed vehicle allowed on a property. If inside a garage or barn you can have more
 All buildings that are falling down need to be removed

Permits are needed for installation of new windows. See code official for questions.

Outdoor wood furnaces within 150 feet of a building must have a chimney 2 feet higher than the highest part of any building within 150 feet. New and old construction. This is a new DEC law.

House numbering - 4 inches is the minimum. The Squads are finding that it is hard to see numbers that are not there or too small. Local law states that all houses will display their address numbers. Code official number is 607-760-5551. Call and leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as I can. Let us have a good and safe year.

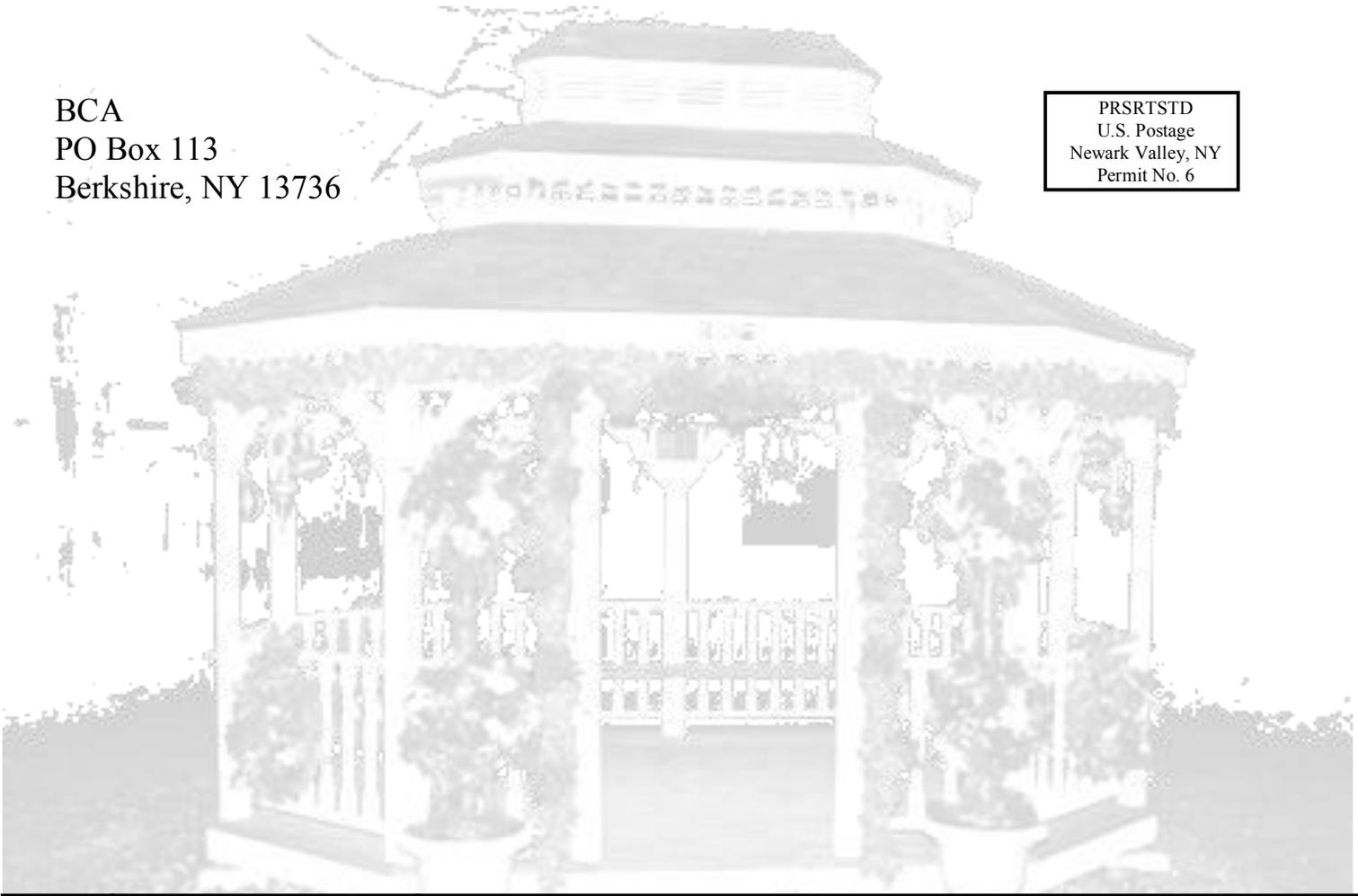
Lee Virtue, Code Enforcement

BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY HALL

There is excitement in the air at the monthly Berkshire Community Association (BCA) meetings lately. After more than 6 years of hard work by and generous donations from, a lot of folks, we can start to see that there is an end to the tunnel. If (and it a really big if - but BCA is optimistic) we are lucky enough to receive a grant that we recently applied for, we plan to install heat for the upstairs hall area and have working restrooms by late summer. This would make the upper level usable year round. We are exploring the possibility of a **donated** vertical platform handicap lift. While BCA will still have to pay for the removal, repair and installation of this lift in the Community Hall, the cost should be far less than the purchase and installation of a new one. With the distinct possibility of functional completion of the upper level, we are beginning to focus some attention on the lower level. The big first step is to remove the multi-level and decaying concrete floor and replace it with a new one. The Helping Hands Food Pantry, currently using space in the basement of the Berkshire Congregational Church, suffered severe flood damage during the September deluge. Repairs to the church basement are required and while the Food Pantry is still operating there, the damage and potential repairs necessitate a less than desirable environment for distribution and storage. And of course, though perhaps remote, the chance for recurring water damage, caused by an abnormally high water table, is still there. The lower level of the Berkshire Community Hall remained completely dry during the monsoon like rains of September. At this time Helping Hands and BCA are only in the discussion stage but the possibility of using a portion of the lower level of the Hall for the Food Pantry is realistic. The potential project has the support of Tioga Opportunities. Longer range planning for the lower level of the Community Hall also includes an exercise room, kitchen, restroom and large meeting area. If any of this sounds interesting or exciting to you, please consider visiting us at one of our BCA meetings, held at the Town Hall on the first Monday of each month at 7PM (this month Feb 6). If you would like to see the Hall to review progress to date, future plans, or see what is available now, contact: *Skip Hartwig, 657 8418, skhartwig@frontiernet.net or Fraser Williams 657 2742 fraserw@citlink.net*

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Berkshire Town Newsletter

TOWN-WIDE EMAIL LIST

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 170 addresses on the list so far and have been using it for almost 10 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 hartwig@frontiernet.net.

SPECIAL THANKS

Thanks to all who contribute to the production of this newsletter. Including, all those who take the time to write articles, collect ads, maintain the address database, manage the layout, and affix labels to the newsletters.

NORTHERN TIOGA NEIGHBORS NETWORK

(NTNN) Having troubles getting to doctors' appointments? Doing your shopping? Doing basic repairs in your house? NTNN can help!! Northern Tioga Neighbors Network is a group of Richford and Berkshire residents who provide these basic services and more to their neighbors. Last year, our volunteers drove more than 5,700 miles transporting clients to various locations. Let us help you! website: www.ntnnonline.org
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Saturday 9:00 – 11:00