

May 2013

# TOWN NEWSLETTER

Published by the:  
Berkshire Communities Association

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

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## SUPERVISORS NOTES

Spring is finally here, I think. Well at least the heavy lasting snows are over for a few months anyway. I would like to take just a few minutes to talk about the Board's decision not to renew a contract for ambulance service with Berkshire EMS, Incorporated. First and foremost I would like to say that throughout the process of negotiations, the safety and service to our residents was a top priority for both of us. I am not sure how many of the residents realize that the Berkshire Fire Ambulance has been put back in service, has a squad and is capable again to transport patients. Many years ago a decision was made that caused the formation of the Incorporated Squad to serve the three northern towns – Berkshire, Newark Valley and Richford. When that was done the 3 towns agreed to contribute toward the cost based on a formula that was agreed upon. That contribution was to offset any deductible (20%) that insurance did not cover for the service. The balance of the funding was to be from private insurance, Medicare or Medicaid with no other charge to residents. At the time of contract renewal the Town was requested to pay just under \$15,000 and as long as we, the Town, had a contract we would also be responsible for their Workers' Compensation insurance presently around \$20,000 and in addition any resident that was transported would be billed the balance of uncovered charges less 10% which would come from the Town's contribution. After several months, and many meetings and discussions, the Board felt that it would be in the best interest of the residents to not renew the contract and instead use the Berkshire Fire Ambulance service. That service requires no payments when transported by them unless there are special services required such as Advanced Life Support to be on the ambulance. This does many things – it saves our residents on the out-of-pocket expenses – it will help reduce the cost of this service in tax dollars for the Town – and it supports our Fire Department services. As of April 1<sup>st</sup> should a Town of Berkshire resident require an ambulance the Berkshire Fire Ambulance is being dispatched first and if not available then the Berkshire EMS, Inc. will be dispatched as a mutual aid to Berkshire Fire. The two squads work together extremely well and both are dedicated to putting the care of patients first. We are very fortunate to have the Berkshire EMS, Inc. available in northern Tioga County and wish them continued success in their efforts in Newark Valley and Richford and as a back-up to our Fire Ambulance. On another note I would like to inform the residents that the Board will be in the process of updating a consolidated plan that was first established in 2002 by BRAG. At some point we will be asking for input and sharing the progress on a vision for the future of our Town. With costs ever increasing it is important to have a plan for the future years for the providing of services and improvements as well as possible means of funding other than property taxes. If there are any groups or individuals interested in volunteering to help take care of the flower beds under the Town signs at both ends of Town please contact myself or any Board member. As always follow the town activity on our Web site [www.BerkshireNY.net](http://www.BerkshireNY.net) and now you can follow the new fire station construction at [www.BerkshireFireDepartment.com](http://www.BerkshireFireDepartment.com) with photos of the progress. Until next time, I hope you get a chance to come see us at the Board meetings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month at 7:00PM in the Town Hall. Your Supervisor *Ron McEwen*

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**BERKSHIRE FREE LIBRARY**

The Library is abuzz of activity with the onset of spring. • We had a great turn out for Jerry Marsh's presentation on the soldiers from Berkshire and Richford who were in the Civil War. His book "The Brotherhood of Battle" covered the men from Newark Valley, though many have ties to Berkshire and Richford. He is writing two more books about Civil War soldiers who came from Berkshire and Richford. • We received the Bernard Carl & Shirley Rosen Library Fund Grant for Pre-school Story Time for 2-5 year olds in both Berkshire and Richford. Tuesday Story Time at the Berkshire Free Library will start May 7, 10-11am. Friday Story Time for Richford will be at the Hubbard Community Center starting Fri. May 10, 10-11am. We will take a break at the end of July and start the story time back up once school starts in the fall. If anyone would like to volunteer for any of the programs please contact the library. • Sat. May 11, 12:30 to 2 we will have a free Memoir Writing Workshop lead by Susannah Risley, a fiction writer from Schenectady, NY. Please sign-up by calling or stopping in at the library by May 8, since space is limited. Bring a pen, paper and a family photograph. • Sat. May 18<sup>th</sup> we are planning a Plant Swap from 10-2. All are welcome whether you have a plant to swap or not. There will be on hand Master Gardeners to answer questions about your plants and gardening. We will Raffle a perennial plant from Stoughton Farms and have plants to buy for a free will donation. The library has lots of books you can check out on gardening. Come and have some fun swapping plants, telling stories about gardens and getting your hands dirty. • Our annual Summer Reading Program will run Thursdays July 11, through Aug. 1 from 10-12. This year's theme is "Dig into Reading". Watch for notices about our special programs. We will have sign-ups starting on June 19. Parents can sign up their children, ages, beginning June 19 until the day of the program. All children can read independently throughout the summer and do not have to attend the programs. Each step of reading time will have better prizes. There will be lots of fun, prizes, games and crafts to make as well as worm farming to do, dinosaurs to dig up and flowers to eat. This program funded by grants from New York State Summer Reading Program Mini Grant and the BOOKS Program sponsored by Senator Libous. • We are looking for donations of children and family DVDs in good condition that your family has out grown to add to our collections. You may also adopt-a-movie through the adopt-a-book donation. • Lastly, we love that our meeting room is now being used so much lately by tutors, groups having a meeting and programs. However, to avoid conflicting schedules, please reserve the room beforehand. • The Library is on the corner of State Route 38 and Jewett Hill Rd. The hours are: Tues. 12-5, Wed. 1:30-7, Thurs. 1-5, Fri. 1:30-7 and Sat. 9-2. Handicapped parking & entrance from Jewett Hill Rd. *LuAnn Whirl – Director*

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**HIGHWAY NEWS**

Now that winter is behind us, we have gone over all of the equipment and have finally started on the roads. We ended up with very little of our sand pile left and will have to replenish it by fall. Some good, though temporary news. Berkshire and Richford will have access to a big pile of cinders. I like to use cinders mixed with sand on winter's slippery roads for several reasons: they are lighter than sand for a given volume which means lighter loads on our trucks; I believe cinders are more abrasive than sand therefore provide better gripping for tires on icy roads; they are darker than sand so they absorb sunlight helping to speed up the melting without the harmful effects that salt causes, but most of all I like cinders because of the cost – these cinders will cost us \$20 per load, sand is \$130./load. I will start with 200 loads and when mixed with sand, will replenish our stockpile at the highway garage for next winter. The coal burning power plants and industries in this area have either switched to natural gas or have closed, so cinders are no longer regularly available. The pile that we have found is a one-time source, so I will try to find a suitable location to stockpile some for the next few years.

We are working on ditches now and then the dirt roads. Plan to finish the remainder of McMahon road this year and work on the south end of N. Ketchumville Rd. Paving will depend upon CHIPS funding. Hopefully we will get the same support from NYS that we have in the past several years.

Gary Brigham will retire in July after nearly 30 years with the Highway Department. Gary has worked with seven different Highway Superintendents; has served several times as interim Superintendent and has been my Deputy since I took office. We in the Highway Department wish Gary the best of luck in his retirement.

*Karl Spoonhower*

**HELPING HANDS FOOD PANTRY**

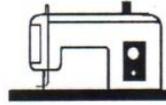
We have been busy since moving into the Community Hall at the beginning of February. Besides the regular Monday evening and Thursday afternoon hours, we have provided three Senior Pantry days. On each of those days, we served around forty families with people sixty years of age or older.

We have had a few food deliveries from the Food Bank of the Southern Tier in Elmira. That is where a large portion of our food products come from. The truck drivers are very pleased with being able to bring the pallets directly into the building for us, but not nearly as pleased as the volunteers who unload the pallets and stock our shelves. Not only can the pallet be dropped inside the building, but there are no steps to maneuver. (We have new volunteers since steps are no longer an issue, too.) On March 9<sup>th</sup>, there was an open house that showcased our new facility and gave local residents an opportunity to check out the progress being made throughout the entire building. The open house was very well attended, including reporters from the Tioga County Courier and the Broader View Weekly. Refreshments were provided by the volunteers of the Helping Hands Pantry. The only requirements to utilize the Helping Hands Food Pantry are that you need help feeding your family and that you reside in our service area. This area includes towns with zip codes of 13835 and 13736. While we cannot be your only food source, we can help you feed your family. Hours are as follows: Monday evenings 6:30 to 7:30 and Thursday afternoons from 2:00 to 4:00. There is a Senior Pantry once a month that is on a Saturday morning. Seniors are called during the week when that is scheduled. (We considered a senior to be 60 years of age or older.)

For further information, call Emily at 657-8158 or Joan at 657-2501.

*Emily Shelton*

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**TOWN OFFICIALS & MEETINGS**

Town Board Meetings 3<sup>rd</sup> 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

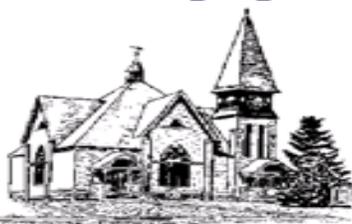
Berkshire Fire Commissioners: Don Liddington, Chair,  
Bob Waite, Donny Liddington, Butch Ceurter, Philip  
Davis  
Meetings 4th Wednesday, 7 pm

Fire Chief: Bret Welch

Berkshire Fire District EMS Squad Captain: Darlene Wait

**BERKSHIRE PLANNING BOARD**

The Planning Board has been working on the revisions of the Manufactured Home law (formerly referred to as "Mobile Home") during the first quarter of 2013. Review and update of this law is now mostly complete, and a final version is expected to be submitted to the Town Board for approval in May. We are also happy to announce our new Alternate Member, Marty Mattrazzo, who began service on the board in February following approval of the Town Board. Wayne Antal, previously an alternate member, has been appointed as a regular member filling the vacancy left by Jim Lacey's retirement. If you have questions for the Planning Board, please feel free to contact any of our members: Ken Ceurter (Chair), Joe Palmeri (Vice Chair), Sarah Albrecht (Secretary), Tim Pollard (County Representative), Wayne Antal, or Marty Mattrazzo (alternate). We meet on the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall. If you are interested in being involved with the Planning Board, we do have room for another alternate member; please contact *Ken Ceurter* (657-2831) if you are interested.

**The Red Brick Church****"Neighbors loving Jesus and you!"****The 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational Church of Berkshire, NY**

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Sunday Service 11:00 AM  
Summer Hours 10:00 AM  
Sunday School 9:30 AM**

**BERKSHIRE FIRE**  
**COMPANY NEWS**

The fire company is still without a station but progress is coming. We would again like to thank Karl and his crew for being such gracious host to us. They have not only moved things around to give us room to park the trucks inside the old highway garage but they also have been very helpful with minor repairs and lifting equipment for us. We could not have asked any better host. Hopefully, we will be out soon and you guys can have your building back. We would also like to thank the Congregational Church for allowing us to use the church for our meetings. Having a warm and dry place to meet certainly helps morale. There has been little fund raising activity but we are planning the summer events. We will be selling food at local motorcycle races again this year. There has also been some talk of bringing back the raffle to win a trip to the NASCAR race at Dover. So look for tickets to be coming soon and if you see us at the races be sure to stop by and say hi. In 2012 we were called to help our friends and neighbors 197 times. Of these 197 calls 131 were ambulance calls only. So the ambulance is by far the busiest part of our business. That leaves 66 calls that were in some way fire related. The good news is of those 66, 41 were mutual aid calls to a neighboring district. That means we only had 25 calls for the fire company in Berkshire. Although, I would like to see that number be 0 it is not practical, but, if we all try to be a little safer maybe we can we can get below 20 this year. 7 of those 25 were motor vehicle accidents so that is one area we can all work on. Think before you act. The life you save may be your own or someone you love. Grass, brush and forest fires were down to only 2 last year, so it would seem the burn ban helped. But, once the ban is over on May 15<sup>th</sup> be sure to be safe when having outside fires as well. Although, the fire company has almost 100 members only about 25 are currently active in some way. So, if you are a member that has not found much time to help lately try to find a way to step up and help again. And, if you are not a member think about joining. There is something for everyone to do in the fire service. We don't all charge into buildings. Someone has to fill all the support roles as well or the ones charging in will not be able to do their job of putting the fire out. From the person collecting money at a fund raiser to the person on the end of hose everyone is important and every job needs a body to fill it. Our meetings are the first Tuesday of every month at the Congregational (red) Church, please stop by and check it out. Or you can call me to get an application or get any questions answered at (607) 427-0964.

*Bret Welch, Chief*

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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*

**NEW FIRE STATION NEWS**

Well as I'm sure you all know the new station is under way. Construction began in March and it is progressing very

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well. As expected the project has had a few minor issues but nothing that wasn't easily handled and progress has not been stopped. We will have a new station this summer. It is still too early for an exact date but the estimated completion should be some time in August barring no major setbacks. Originally we believed the fire company was going to finish the kitchen and build the offices but the architect said USDA would not finance an incomplete building so the contractors are doing this as part of the bid. The company is still buying the appliances and the materials for the septic system. The fire company will also be putting a new sign out front to keep everyone updated on events after the building is completed. For those of you on Facebook there is a page with pictures posted on it. The page is New Berkshire Fire Station, like it and you will get updated pictures. Probably the best news I have is the interest rate for the bond. We had borrowed \$300,000 from NYS at 3.5%, and received a grant from USDA for \$100,000. The remaining money was put out to bid for bonds and The Bank of Green County gave us the bond for .89%, this rate is much lower than expected. We would again like to thank everyone that has supported this project and us. The new station has been a long time coming but the end is in sight. Once the station is complete we will be having an open house and showing the community's new building.

*Bret Welch, Chief*

**BERKSHIRE FIRE AMBULANCE**

As of April 1st, we have become the transporting ambulance for our district. We would like to thank Berkshire EMS Inc. for their years of service, and will continue to work alongside them here in Northern Tioga County. We are excited about the future as we watch the new fire station being built and anticipate a future with many new opportunities serving our community. We are a fully equipped Basic Life Support ambulance. We recently acquired a new power stretcher which makes patient transport much easier. We have four certified EMT-Basics and some dedicated drivers from our fire department, but would welcome more volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering you can contact Bret Welch at (607) 427-0964. One thing we ask is that the residents check your house numbers to see if they need replacing so we can easily locate you in the event of an emergency.

*Darlene Wait (Captain)*

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

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### PANTRYPIGS

In an effort to feed the needy started by one man, fulfilled by our community. I'd like to introduce PANTRYpig, a community outreach effort started by the Corson Family in Newark Valley in 2011 that grew out of a Don Corson's retirement and his yearning to help his needy neighbors. That year Don, with the help of his family, was able to raise one pig to split between two food pantries in our community. With a little hard work, some brainstorming, and a lot of scrapping the Corson family was able to meet a widespread need right in our backyard. In 2012 they raised two pigs, with the pantries getting the meat from one pig each. The PANTRYpigs' donations came at a time when food donations were low but need was high and pork was expensive (still is) and was greatly appreciated by the food banks! This year they are raising eight pigs for the outreach effort, giving two pigs each to the food pantries in Berkshire, Newark Valley, Waverly, and The Open Door Mission in Owego. What started as one man's desire to help his neighbors now calls for expansions to the pigsty which are currently underway, and members of the community have come forward to help in their own special way. In 2012 the Corson family scrapped a total of \$588.35 at Weitsman's in Owego, saving 1.91 tons of metals from the landfill. It is true that one man's trash is another's treasure! The total cost of raising one pig that year was \$587.23, with the cost of the other pig coming out of their own pocket. This year they have already scrapped close to the cost of feeding and butchering one of the eight pigs they are raising. PANTRYpigs never touches the money. It is picked up at Weitsman's by the Open Door Mission and put straight into an account specifically for PANTRYpigs at Ward and Vanscoy. Please keep PANTRYpigs in mind when you're doing your yearly cleaning! Don and family will gladly, and with thankful hearts, come out to you for scrap metal pick-ups. There are also accounts at Ward and Vanscoy, and Ben Weitsman's in Owego should anyone like to make a monetary or scrap metal donation. For more info, or to schedule a pick-up, call Don at 972-4765. You can also find PANTRYpigs online at <http://pantrypigsnv.weebly.com> and on facebook <https://www.facebook.com/PantryPigs>. Don posts Weekly Updates to keep everyone in the loop. *Jamie O'Connor*



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*Housing Consultant*

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**BERKSHIRE'S NEW FIRE STATION UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

**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](mailto:skhartwig@frontiernet.net).



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