

November 2013
TOWN NEWSLETTER
Published by the:
Berkshire Community Association

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

Vol: 2013 Issue: #4

SUPERVISORS NOTES

Hard to believe that another quarter has gone by so fast. The summer went zipping by with people and the town receiving severe damage from the June storms. Those storms were concentrated only in northern Tioga County, Cortland and Tompkins counties. The State and Federal government declared a disaster for Cortland but not Tioga. That meant that all the costs for repairs to both public and private property would be borne by the residents. For the town that used all of our highway improvement and repair funds on storm damage repair. The estimated cost of repairing road damage is approximately \$400,000+ and that made the roads able to be driven on. Now we have been planning expenses and needs for the 2014 town budget and must consider the loss of funds used for storm repair. Fortunately we have a reserve balance to draw on in times like this and feel that we will be able to maintain property taxes with only a small increase.

The County has a new Director of Economic Development and Planning, LeeAnn Tinney, who attended our monthly meeting and has offered assistance in any way possible to help our town. This is a great change and we look forward to working with Ms. Tinney both in development and planning issues. I would like to say that it has been very nice to see more people attending our monthly meetings. It certainly helps the Board by letting us know the thoughts and wishes of our residents. As always follow the town activity on our Web site www.BerkshireNY.net and you can follow the fire department at www.BerkshireFireDepartment.com.

Until next time, I hope you get a chance to come see us at the Board meetings on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7:00PM in the Town Hall. Your Supervisor *Ron McEwen*

BERKSHIRE FREE LIBRARY

The book sale went very well this year, Thanks to all who came in and bought books. We will continue to have some books for sale in the library on the sale shelves. We will be selling hats, mittens, scarves and bookmarks again during the holiday season. These can be great gifts for someone on your nice list. The bookmarks make a nice bow on a package and can be stuffed into a holiday or Birthday card for a last minute thanks to someone far away. We are starting it the week of Thanksgiving and will have a raffle during the same time. We will be posting what the prizes are in November.

We have started Story Time up in Berkshire and it is on Tuesday morning at 10-11am. We have lots of new things planned for the young ones. If you know of anyone with pre-school aged children let them know. We want to start the Story Time back up in Richford too but we need to know what day and time is best for people. Pass the word to our neighbors to the north and have them call the library during business hours

Some of you may not know the newer things we have for you at or through the library. You can now borrow through our system Xbox games, DS & 3DS games, Playstation 3 and Wii games. There are always new DVDs and books on CD added to the system that can be requested. If you don't know how to order these items or don't have internet please come in and ask for a staff member help you. We are putting new books on our shelves all the time. Come on in and check out Debbie Macomber's "Rose Harbor in Bloom", Nicholas Sparks' "The Longest Ride" Lee Child's "Never Go Back" and many more. Our Young Adult collection is getting bigger and better all the time and we welcome input from our young people as to what is popular.

We sent the mailing out for our Annual Fund Raiser. Please remember the important part your Library plays in your community. We are reaching out more and more to the people who are home bound by delivering and picking up books for them. We work with the children through the summer programs to keep them reading thus helping them to do better in school. Our free internet service has helped those looking for work, students doing research, people looking for help on almost any topic, college students applying for financial aid and entertainment for all ages. You can print, copy and fax right at the library. Please help keep your Library OPEN. Hours: Tues. 12-5, Wed. 1:30-7, Thurs. 1-5, Fri. 1:30-7 & Sat. 9-2 Located on the corner of State Rte. 38 and Jewett Hill Rd. Phone 607-657-4418. *LuAnn Whirl – Director*

BERKSHIRE PLANNING BOARD

At the direction of the Town Board, the Planning Board is working hard on developing a Road Use Agreement for use in the Town of Berkshire. A Road Use Agreement works with our existing Road Preservation Law (which will be updated as soon as the Road Use Agreement is complete) to further protect the Town and its roads in the event of specific planned activity that is expected to cause undue wear and tear. The Road Use Agreement is implemented prior to such activity and guarantees that the party responsible for the activity will also be responsible to repair the road if damaged or even upgrade the condition of the road prior to use to ensure minimal damage or disruption.

We are also happy to report that Frank Kunik has joined the Planning Board as of our October meeting. Frank has been an active member of the community for decades, and we are pleased to have him join the team! If you would also be interested in serving on the Planning Board (as a regular member or as an alternate) please contact Ken Ceurter, Planning Board Chair, at 657-2831. Terms run from January-December at lengths from one to five years (alternate membership is a one-year term). We are still taking volunteers to help develop a town-wide survey to help the Town Board develop a Consolidated Plan. It is very important to have representation from all demographics (various parts of the town, different age groups, etc.) in order to frame the survey in a way that will truly give opportunity to address all resident needs. Sarah Albrecht is chairing this committee as the representative from the Planning Board. If you would be interested in helping, please contact her at 657-8331 as soon as possible.

For more information, go to: <http://berkshireny.net/planning-board.html> Sarah Albrecht

BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY HALL UPDATE

The two story Berkshire Community Hall, which is on the national Historic Register, has experienced an amazing comeback as a functional facility for a wide spectrum of area community activities. The Berkshire Community Association (BCA) has been working on the huge restoration project since planning began in 2005. BCA received generous and sometimes multiple grants from such organizations as the Mildred Faulkner Truman Foundation, The Community Foundation for South Central New York, New York State Council of the Arts, Senator Tom Libous, NYSEG and Gannett Corporation. Two tremendous donations from Alan Westfall, a former Berkshire resident, were supplemented with hundreds of individual donations from area residents and businesses. McElwain Engineering provided all the engineering work and drawings: Spoonhower Construction volunteered many hours helping with framing, wiring and plumbing. Chuck Talcott installed the water system free of charge. The Berkshire Free Library, one of the Hall's most frequent users, not only provides the Community Hall with water from their well but gives BCA a generous donation each year. Cooperative assistance from the Berkshire Fire District, the Town of Berkshire, and Tioga Opportunities, Inc. have proven invaluable. Thousands of volunteer hours helped to keep costs down.

Some of the accomplishments to date include: repair and reinforcement of the foundation, exterior drainage, major interior structural improvements, complete new electrical system and wiring, repair and paint the roof, restoration of the three original entrances, repair and paint the exterior siding, and constructed an addition that will be the main entrance with handicap access and ADA compliant restrooms. Currently one restroom is functional with water from the library and a complete septic system. A handicap lift was donated and when funds become available it will be modified and installed. A heating system was installed last year. The upper level is now fully functional and is being used several times a week. So far this year the Hall has been used for three weddings, anniversaries, dances and dance classes, graduation parties and many library and youth activities. In January, the

Continued on page 3

HIGHWAY NEWS

A very wet summer has kept us busier than usual. Although the rains delayed some of the planned roadwork, the extra moisture helped to deteriorate gravel and single coated tar & stone roads faster than normal. Because of the torrential rains we had on 2 different occasions, Berkshire suffered worse flash flooding damage than was caused by Hurricane Irene or Tropical Storm Lee 2 years ago. To make matters worse, since the damage was localized (most serious in Berkshire and Richford) we have been told that there will be no disaster relief funding in Tioga County from FEMA. In addition to repairing severe washouts such as the one on Jewett Hill Road, many miles of ditches were badly eroded and filled in. We spent many weeks cleaning creek beds where very large quantities of gravel and stone impeded flow and created potential future trouble spots.

We closed the gravel pit that we shared with Richford for many years. Quality of the gravel was deteriorating, and negotiations with the owner had bogged down. On the upside of the creek dredging though was that we hauled out and stockpiled thousands of tons of creek gravel. I plan, with Town Board approval, to hire a contractor next year to size and crush this stockpile, giving us a good supply of high quality gravel for next year at least. Our sand stockpile for this winter is in pretty good shape, thanks in part to about 80 loads of cinders that we were able to get at a fraction of what we pay for sand. I was hoping for at least 200 loads of cinders, but the stockpile, located in Johnson City, turned out to be smaller than we originally thought. Good to see the Fire Company in the new station. I am also happy that we could provide them with temporary space. While they were good tenants, it is nice to have the space back for winter equipment storage as well as extra space for extended maintenance.

Karl Spoonhower

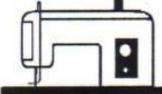
BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY HALL UPDATE

continued from page 2

Helping Hands Food pantry relocated from the basement of the Congregational Church to the handicap accessible first floor of the Community Hall. The first floor has a new concrete floor but is un-insulated and unfinished except for the Food Pantry rooms. Our next project is to upgrade the entire first floor including wiring and lighting and an exercise area/weight room for the Fire Company's use. BCA has recently obtained a \$7,500. grant from the Mildred Faulkner Truman Foundation (MFT) to be used for this project, however, this is a matching grant, and BCA must acquire an additional \$7,500. Before the MFT funds are available to us. BCA is in the process of soliciting donations from local area businesses. We have as of Nov 1 received a total of \$4,250 toward the \$7,500 needed to obtain the funds from MFT. The following businesses, groups, or individuals have generously contributed: Berkshire Community Association Board of Directors, Frost-Klossner-Swan, Hollenbeck's, MacPherson Funeral Home, NBT Bank, Dean and Nina Smith, Tioga Hardwoods, Dov and Tom Treiman, UHS, Visions Federal Credit Union, and Ward & Van Scoy. In addition many hours of volunteer labor have been pledged toward insulating the first floor. These hours are valued at \$15 to \$20 and can be used in computing the BCA share. The treasure that is the Berkshire Community Hall belongs to you, and the only purpose in the restoration effort is to provide the people of Berkshire and Northern Tioga County with a very special place for your use and enjoyment. We are asking you to help reach our \$7,500 goal if you possibly can. Every dollar brings us closer to realizing the improvements on the first floor that will greatly expand the versatility of the Hall, provide the Firemen with their exercise/weight room and help us to conserve our energy costs. Tax deductible donations can be sent to BCA, P. O. Box 113, Berkshire, NY 13736. For further information contact Fraser Williams, 657 2742 email fraserw@citlink.net, or Skip Hartwig, 657 8418, email skhartwig@frontiernet.net.

Fraser Williams

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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, Rodney Russell
Meetings 4th Wednesday, 7 pm

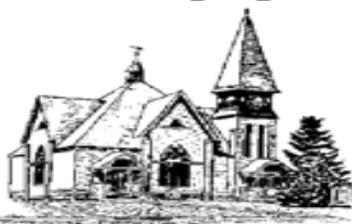
Fire Chief: Bret Welch

Berkshire Fire District EMS Squad Captain: Darlene Wait



The Red Brick Church
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**Corner of RT 38 & Glen Road
PO Box 196
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Sunday Service 11:00 AM
Summer Hours 10:00 AM
Sunday School 9:30 AM**



BERKSHIRE FIRE
COMPANY NEWS

First let me say we are very excited to be in our new station. On October 1st we received our permanent certificate of occupancy from the town code enforcement officer. Our final USDA inspection was scheduled and then cancelled when the federal government was furloughed, but it has been rescheduled now they are back to work. We have moved many items back in, and are doing business

from there, but we are still in the process of settling in and getting all items in their place. The new radio system will be installed shortly and then you will be hearing the siren blowing again.

The open house was a huge success. I estimate over 300 people came out to attend that day. I want to thank all that were there. If you were not then you missed out. We gave away hotdogs, hamburgers, fries, soda, Gatorade, popcorn, and lots of free items for the kids, including a boy's and a girl's bike. We even had fire truck rides for the kids later in the day. Many people had a lot of positive things to say about the new building. Since the open house we have been busy. We had a class from the school come in and we served them all lunch and let them tour the station and get photographed in the trucks. The same day we had a spaghetti supper put on by our fire police and emergency squad. Election Day we had a chicken and biscuit dinner put on by the auxiliary. And, the auxiliary is also having a pancake breakfast Sunday November 17th. Watch the sign out front as more dinners and breakfast will be coming soon.

Once again we would like to thank Karl and his crew for all they did for us while we were homeless. Not only did they allow us to keep our trucks and equipment in the old section of the town barns, but they also helped us with maintenance while we were there. Also, thanks to the First Congregational Church for allowing us to meet there. And, thanks to all the town people that have supported us. It just shows how great it is living in a small town. Everyone is willing to help each other.

As the winter comes around remember to get your chimneys cleaned and be careful with space heaters. We like to see our neighbors at events not by coming to house calls. But, as always we are here if you need us and don't be afraid to call. We are always willing to help no matter what the problem. One thing we still need is new members. Remember we have a job for everyone young or old. No experience necessary we will train you. If you are interested in joining our family, stop by the first Tuesday of any month for our meeting and see if you like it. Or you can call me and we can discuss it (607) 427-0964. *Bret Welch, Chief*

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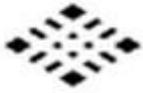
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ASSESSOR NEWS

STAR PROGRAM

there are Two
types of STAR
exemptions:

- available for owner-occupied, primary residences where the resident owners' and their spouses income is less than \$500,000
- exempts the first \$30,000 of the full value of a home from school taxes

New legislation requires all homeowners receiving a Basic STAR exemption to register with the New York State Tax Department in order to receive STAR exemptions in 2014 and subsequent years.

Basic Star-property owners should have received a letter in the mail to renew by phone or on-line. New property owners need to fill out application and mail in to my office.

You must reregister for STAR B by the end of this year. You can do so at the TAX Department's website www.tax.ny.gov or by phone at (518) 457 2036. If you have difficulty registering or have questions, contact **Michael Maxwell - Berkshire Assessor**- 315-391-8323 or email maxappraisal@hotmail.com

Office hours at the Berkshire Town Hall for November & December 2013, 8:30 till 10:00 AM:
Monday, Nov. 11, 2013, Monday, Nov. 25, 2013, Monday, Dec. 9, 2013, Monday, Dec. 16, 2013

Enhanced STAR

- provides an increased benefit for the primary residences of senior citizens (age 65 and older) with qualifying incomes
- exempts the first \$63,300 of the full value of a home from school taxes as of 2013-14 school tax bills (up from \$62,200 in 2012-13)

Enhanced Star/Senior exemptions renewal forms will be mailed to you by January 1, 2014. Applicants will need income verification to qualify.

STAR exemptions apply only to school district taxes.

Agricultural Assessments - Agricultural land can be eligible for an "agricultural assessment" to provide property tax relief to the property owner if the farmland satisfies certain gross sales and acreage eligibility requirements. Landowners must file [Form RP-305, Agricultural Assessment Application](#) or [Form RP-305-r, Agricultural Assessment Application Renewal](#) with the assessor to receive an agricultural assessment for their parcels. Agricultural exemptions renewal forms will be mailed out by Jan. 1, 2014

ALL EXEMPTIONS HAVE TO BE FILED BY March 1, 2014 to qualify for the 2014 roll year.

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

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East Berkshire, NY 13736

SPECIAL THANKS

We are very grateful to our faithful helpers. Telessa Bean spends a lot of time organizing and laying out the plain vanilla version of the newsletter that we hand her each quarter. Artfully inserting the many ads from our sponsors is no easy task. Barbara Williams, Millie Stout, Louise Beebe and Tina Williams are always there to help with the time consuming task of labeling and preparing the newsletter for delivery. Please take note of our sponsors who make it possible to bring you the newsletter without using a penny of your tax money. *Fraser Williams*

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www.cornfieldmaze.com**TOWNWIDE 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 11 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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BERKSHIRE'S NEW FIRE STATION OPEN HOUSE

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 news letter 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



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Sat 7:30 AM till 11:30 AM