

November 2011 TOWN NEWSLETTER

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Berkshire Community Association

BCA
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SUPERVISORS NOTE

Although I have nearly two months remaining on my term as Supervisor, this will be my last chance to address you in the Town Newsletter. I have enjoyed my work with the other Town officials and the people of Berkshire. The major reason that I chose not to seek another term is the "part time" job at Lourde's Hospital that I began a couple of years ago has been demanding way much more of me than I had originally expected - especially with all the recent severe weather and flooding. Despite dramatic increases in the cost of health insurance, worker's comp., building and vehicle insurance and the continued staggering costs of fuel, road paving material and heating oil, the Town is holding its own financially. We are working on the budget for 2012. Although our projected overall 2012 budget will be less than this year's, we may have to increase the tax rate very slightly. The main reason for this apparent contradiction is that we have a lower estimated fund balance (money left over after all the bills are paid at the end of the year) that we can pump back into next year's budget to help offset taxes. A few reasons include: some tax issues dating as far back as 2008, greater than normal major equipment repairs, and flash flooding repairs to roads, ditches streams and culverts. By the time you receive this newsletter, the Preliminary 2012 budget should be available for your review at the Town Clerk's office or on our website - berkshirenyc.com. A public hearing on the proposed budget is scheduled for 6:30PM on November 21 at the Town Hall. Remember that we only have control over the Town portion of the tax bill that you receive in January. Other components of this property tax bill over which we have no jurisdiction are: the Berkshire Fire District, Tioga County and Solid Waste Disposal/Recycling. While the past few years have witnessed some real progress in Berkshire such as new sidewalks, highway equipment upgrades, and major Town Hall renovations, I do regret that we have not been able to make any significant progress in eliminating some of the unsightly solid waste and unregistered vehicle violations in Town. It is not that we haven't tried. Thanks to the planning Board and some prior administrations, we have the laws in place. But in a small town with no police authority, it is extremely difficult to enforce some of these laws when people refuse to comply. However, we have recently completed an agreement with the current owner of the former Howland Brothers Lumber Mill and hopefully will begin to see some progress in cleaning up that property in the near future. Finally I would like to thank the Town Board and the Planning Board for their consistent professional help without which I could not have survived. Many thanks also to our Highway Superintendent, Karl Spoonhower, who has been a major factor in much of our progress over the past 3 years. By using his crew to do the work, Berkshire was able to construct four times as much sidewalks than we would have if we had to hire a contractor. He donated, at absolutely no cost to Berkshire, the use of his own backhoe to do all the excavation work for the sidewalks. He also donated the use of a light crane and a forklift during the construction of the Highway garage addition which was completed with a tremendous savings to the taxpayers. He has recently used his own bulldozer, again at no cost to the Town, to assist in repairing recent flood damage. (see picture)

Mike Simmons

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HIGHWAY NEWS

It has been a very wet and unusual summer season for us. While we were spared the severe damage and devastation experienced by many of the surrounding towns, the extremely heavy rainfall, especially the storms in both May and September definitely took its toll on Berkshire. Road damage was relatively minor and confined to some of the smaller dirt roads, but the effect of creeks culverts and ditches was severe. We are still working on repairs. I have had several meetings with FEMA. We are eligible for some disaster relief funding from both storms and should get some financial relief, but the exact amounts are still unknown. The heavy rains diverted our efforts and funds away from some of our planned road maintenance and upgrades. The near continuous rainfall kept us from doing much of the rebuilding of McMahan Rd. We also at times could not even get into our gravel pit to screen or even haul the gravel. In addition, since the bad weather was so widespread, the paving companies were so backlogged that when we did get any break in the weather, we had to stand in line with all the other Towns and contractors and just could not get what we wanted when we needed it. We did complete enough roadwork to qualify for CHIPS funding. I have submitted our application and we should get our money in November. Once again CHIPS funding for next year is uncertain at best. Nothing official has been forthcoming from the State and rumors cover the whole range from nothing to at best, the same amount that was budgeted for this year. Our Gradall has serious mechanical problems both structurally and with the drive train. Repairs would be extremely expensive and not economical. We are testing a rubber wheeled excavator as a possible replacement. We are using it now to repair damage on Ford Hill Road.(picture attached) Depending how well it fits our needs, I may petition the Town Board to purchase the excavator. The Gradall has served us well and Weitsman & Son estimate for scrap price is more than we originally paid for it. We have to do some repairs on our waste oil furnace before cold weather sets in, but the heater paid for itself many times over last winter alone. 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.

Karl Spoonhower





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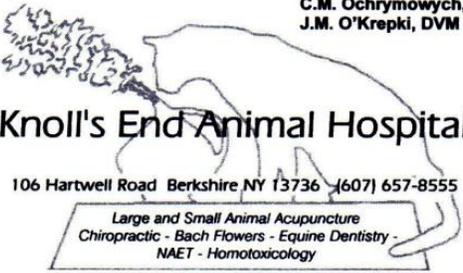
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BERKSHIRE FIRE DISTRICT: NEW FIRE STATION PROGRESS

Status of a new Fire Station Because the bids for a new fire station came in significantly over budget, some major adjustments to the station plans might be needed. With that as a backdrop, the Fire Commissioners formed a committee to recommend a course of action. The committee is composed of Don Liddington (Chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners), Bill Morrison, Donna Connery, Phil Davis, Tim Pollard, and Dick Bierl.

“On the table” options being considered by the Committee include :

- Apparatus Bay + Community Center (Can a way be found to get the costs within the \$800,000.)
- Apparatus Bay only
- Apparatus Bay + Community Center (Use the existing building as a Community Center)
- Apparatus Bay + Berkshire Community Building next door. (This building is owned by the Berkshire Fire District, and remains in place under all options being considered).

Action Items currently being pursued by the Commissioners are:

- Get legal clarification on what conditions would require that the Fire District seek public approval to modify the scope of project to keep it within what’s authorized by the approved referendum.
- Contact financing entities (USDA, NY Fire Emergency Services, etc.) to confirm any impacts on grants/loans if there are changes in project scope or phasing. Completed.
- Bids received from construction contractors are older than 60 days and bidders do not have to continue to honor their pricing. If we can’t negotiate with the low bidders then the Commissioners need to reject all bids and possibly re-bid.
- There is a concern that the District won’t be able to get the costs down to referendum amount and will need to pursue other options. If the Commissioners must go back to the public, they must be confident that all costs are included and that the scope and costs of options are fully elaborated.
- When/if a re-bid is required, the bid/specs need to be structured with “add” and “deduct” alternatives for components (such as a well, pavement, kitchen, community center, HVAC, etc...). This approach requires the cost impact of specified items to be identified by the bidders. Then the district can accept the “adds” and “deducts” in a way that keeps the project within budget. This creates a more complicated bid evaluation process to arrive at the lowest bidder. Therefore the Commissioners need to follow up with the Engineer to assure his capability in this area.
- The Committee agreed the proposed building is a Class B building (based on NYS Local Finance Law) rather than the Class C rating assumed by NY Fire. The Commissioners are submitting an appeal to NY Fire and USDA on the classification so the payback period is extended. A Class C rating yields payback period of 10 years, whereas a Class B rating yields a 25 year payback. This would have a direct impact on the local tax rate.
- In order to meet a construction schedule for summer 2012, new bids should be awarded by March 2012. This would indicate all decisions on the project scope, and its cost, must be made in 2011.

A final note: The Commissioners budget for 2011 and 2012 includes \$43,667 for the new station. This money is used to pay incurred costs (Engineering fees, bidding costs, etc) for the project. Any monies that remain at year end are allocated to the “Building Reserve Fund”. Monies in this fund can only be used for the building, and that use must have voter approval.

Dick Bierl



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BERKSHIRE FIRE COMPANY

The fire company has continued to stay busy. We were very active during the recent flooding. There is much more detail on this in another article. We will again be hosting the NYS Fire Police training program for the county. This course trains fire police how to safely and properly do their job to protect firefighters as well as the citizens. This is a 21-hour class given over 3 Sundays. We have also completed our budget for 2012. There will only be an increase of \$1000 over the 2011 budget. This increase is primarily due to raising cost of fuel for both the trucks and to heat the station. In the budget is the \$43,000 planned payment for the new station, which we don't have yet. This money will be placed into a capital reserve fund which can only be used only for building a new station or major renovation of the existing station, whichever way the District and voters decide to go. Once in the reserve, the money cannot be used without a public hearing. There is also a capital reserve fund that was started a few years ago for the next fire truck purchase. The 2012 budget also includes the \$17,000 that was used this year to make the last payment on the rescue truck we purchased in 1996. That money will be placed in the truck reserve fund. By using these reserves we gain interest before the purchase instead of paying interest after the purchase. We had our annual beef bar b cue and the profits were very low. Due to raising cost of beef and all the other supplies this was probably the last one of these. The beef is very good but with the way we prepare it the time and expense, we do not gain much profit. Our chicken supplier was affected by the flood so the chicken BBQ for Heritage Day was cancelled. We did use leftover meat from the beef bar b cue to make sandwiches and they were a big hit. The fire company also held an open house this year. Sunday October 9th we had several informational pamphlets, flashlight key chains, coloring books, and kids helmets to give away. We showed off many of the items we used and let kids sit in the trucks. The auxiliary made cookies and we supplied drinks. We also answered many questions on safety. It was a fun day for those who attended, if you missed it be sure to be there next year as we plan to make this an annual event. Watch the sign for upcoming activities. We hope to have some dinners or dances or maybe both during the winter months. We are still trying to raise money to reduce the cost to the taxpayers for the new station. As always we are looking for members. We have something for everyone to do and we will train you. So if you are looking for a way to help the community, come out and see us. Meetings are the first Tuesday of every month stop by and say hi. Or you can call me for an application or to talk about what we do at (607) 427-0964. *Bret Welch, Chief*

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BERKSHIRE FIRE CO. EMERGENCY SQUAD

The Fire Company Emergency Squad received the much anticipated permanent Certificate Of Need (CON). The process started last year during the week between Christmas and New Years with meetings between the EMS Chief, Scott Albrecht, representatives from the Tioga County fire service and, regional EMS council. The process involved authoring and sending letters of notification to surrounding hospitals, fire departments and ambulance services. A public hearing was held so that members of the regional EMS council could get public comment regarding granting BFDEMS the CON. The fire commissioners also had to send a check for \$5000.00 to the regional EMS council for expenses incurred while processing the CON application. Melinda Case provided much support with the mailings and notarization of documents. Many thanks go to all who helped the Fire Company Emergency Squad gain their permanent CON. A permanent CON means that, as long as we continue excellent care, and carry appropriate staff to answer the calls, the fire company emergency squad will be there for YOU! Donna Davis, Ron Sharp, Kelly Sharp, and Darlene Wait are all enrolled in basic EMT classes. Ron, Kelly, and Darlene will be testing in mid- December and will find out their results in January Donna, who is enrolled at TC3 will test in March and should know her results in April. Good luck to those candidates. If you have any interest in taking EMT class talk to one of those folks the can give you the "up to the minute" information on what it take to complete the training. On another note, Berkshire EMS Inc. carries a contract with the town for ambulance services. They are the primary transport agency for the town. When you need an ambulance, the fire company ambulance and Berkshire EMS will be sent to your residence. If BEMS is able to send a staffed ambulance they will transport, if not, you will ride with us. Until Darlene Wait completes her training the fire company ambulance has no day time staff available, BEMS is there to provide coverage. We are very fortunate to have 2 agencies available close by to provide the town with ambulance service. Thank you to all who support emergency services in our town.

Scott Albrecht Chief BFDEMS

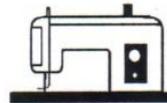
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CANDIDATES CORNER

Local elections take place this year. In Berkshire the positions of Supervisor, Town Board (2), Clerk, and Highway Superintendent will be on the ballot. Listed below are the candidates for those positions.

Town Supervisor: Ron McEwen Town Board (vote for 2) John Stoughton - incumbent- Democratic Party; Anthony Marzolino - Independent; Sara Spoonhower - Independent; Ronald Sharp - Independent. Highway

Superintendent: Karl Spoonhower - incumbent - Republican Party; Karl Spoonhower - Independent; George Hoffmier Jr. - Independent. Town Clerk: Connie Liddington - incumbent - Democratic Party

Election Day is Tuesday, November 8. Polls will be open at the Town Hall from 6AM till 9PM.

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BERKSHIRE FREE LIBRARY

The Berkshire Free Library is 90 years old this year! We are planning a “Mug n’ Muffin” Open House on Tuesday, November 8, from 9:00AM – 5:00PM. Join us for a cup of tea or coffee and a delicious homemade muffin while you browse and see what we have to offer! We will begin a Silent Raffle on November 1 at the Library. A new DVD player, hand-knit and crocheted lap robes and shawl, and collectable dolls will be some of the items available. Tickets will be \$.50 ea. Proceeds go toward operating expenses. Drawings will be held on Weds., November 23. The Adopt-a-Book Program that was begun in the Spring has been a great success and has helped to purchase Adult books. It will continue through the rest of the year. However, we were informed that a \$300 Grant for children’s books will not be available this year. As a result, we are starting a program called “Celebrate a Child”. Recognize a favorite child in your life by selecting a children’s book in honor of the child’s birthday or other special occasion for a donation of \$20.00. A label will be put in the book with the child’s name on it and that child will have first opportunity to read it. A book may be chosen from a list at the Library, or you or the child may suggest a book to add to our collection. We now have two Nook Color eReaders available to borrow, through a Grant to the Finger Lakes Library System from Sen. David Valesky. Anyone with a Berkshire Free Library card may borrow one for three weeks. There are some books preloaded on it and more are available to “borrow” for two weeks through www.flls.lib.overdrive.com. This would be a great opportunity to find out if you’d like to add one to your Christmas or birthday wish list. If you are planning to go on a trip, books loaded onto the Nook Color are much easier to pack than a stack of books, too! Come to the Library for further information. Basic operating instructions will be given at the time the device is borrowed. The Library is located at the corner of Jewett Hill Road and Route 38, next to the Berkshire Fire Station. Our hours are Tues., Noon – 5:00, Weds., 1:30 – 7:00; Thurs., 1:00 – 5:00; Fri. 1:30 – 7:00 and Sat. 9:00AM – 2:00PM. Handicap parking is available behind the Library on Jewett Hill Road, for anyone who needs it. Our phone number is (607) 657-4418.

Marleta S. Anderson, Director

BERKSHIRE HISTORY BUFFS

BERKSHIRE HISTORY BUFFS: The Berkshire History Buffs, a group of area residents, has been interested in preserving Berkshire’s heritage and keeping future generations aware of our history. Past projects have been restoring the George M. Smith Memorial Field sign and restoring and preserving old photos of the Town. The History Buffs are also responsible for publishing two recent books about Berkshire:

*History and Life Around The Town of Berkshire, New York
More History and Life Around The Town of Berkshire, New York*

This year the group would like to thank the community for their support of Heritage Day by donating \$2,000 each to the Helping Hands Pantry and to the Berkshire Free Library. These donations were made possible from Heritage Day raffle

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BERKSHIRE HISTORY BUFFS

tickets sales and the book sales. Berkshire History Buffs would like to thank the community for their support of Heritage Day over the past 25 years. The Helping Hands Pantry, located at the Berkshire Congregational Church at the corner of Route 38 and Glen Rd., is a voluntarily run food pantry serving residents of Berkshire, Richford and Speedsville supplying emergency food needs as well as holiday food boxes.. Due to the recent flood, the pantry lost over seventy (70) cases of food and supplies as well as several pieces of storage equipment. The Berkshire Free Library has served Northern Tioga residents for 90 years. It is located in an historic building, which also houses the Berkshire History Museum and the Town Historian's office. The funds will go toward a Capital Building Reserve to help cover costs of renovations and upkeep for the library building at the corner of Route 38 and Jewett Hill Rd. If Heritage Day is going to continue the History Buffs need your help. Most members are over 70 years old and it is getting more difficult to get everything done. We are in need of help with: **PR, parade organization, Soliciting raffle prizes, and Help setting-up and cleaning-up.** If you are interested in joining this community minded group, contact Ray Hunt at rayhunt@frontiernet.net ph 657416 or Maurice Stoughton at amstoughton@frontiernet.net ph 642-5422.

Ray Hunt.

BERKSHIRE POST OFFICE

For some time now there have been concerns that the Berkshire Post Office hours of operation don't match the hours that the citizens of Berkshire have available. For instance, if you are employed outside of Berkshire the only time that you have to do business with the Post Office is 2 hours on Saturday morning. So I talked with our new Post Master, Scott Parmelee, and he tells me that the hours of operation are dictated by USPS, he has no control over them, and he doesn't expect them to change. However, I know that if you have a special request just call Scott, 657-2755, and more than likely he will be available to handle the request. I have noted that service has been changing for the better. Again, if you have a question please give Scott a call; you will find that he is most accommodating and knowledgeable.

Berkshire Post Office Lobby Hours are: M – F 7:30 – 5:00 Saturday 7:30 – 11:30

Berkshire Post Office Window Hours are: M – F 9:00 – 12:00 and 1:30 – 4:45 Saturday 9:00 – 11:00

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TCAT BUS SERVICES

In January of 2012, Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT), plans on discontinuing bus service into Tioga County. Termination of this service into Tioga County will leave many looking for alternatives for their transportation needs into Tompkins County for work, shopping, appointments and other daily business. At a meeting held on October 11 at the Berkshire Town Hall, many local riders expressed their concerns at the ending of this service TCAT buses have provided local residents reliable transportation to Cornell and all of the Ithaca, Tompkins County area for many years. TCAT is currently working with Tioga Rides/Tioga Transit to develop connecting or overlapping routes to help continue service for our residents into Tompkins County. TCAT is also offering information on other alternatives such a van pooling. If you wish to make a comment or get more information, contact Patty Poist TCAT, Communications and Marketing Manager, 737 Willow Ave. Ithaca, NY 14850, Fax (607) 277-9551, Office (607) 277-9388 ext. 560, Cell (607) 351-0839 e-mail ppl@tcatmail.com and/or Russ Barber Operations Manager for Ride Tioga/Tioga Transit; 607-687-RIDE (7433) or e-mail topsman@stny.rr.com. Forward your comments to your county representatives, Ronald N. McEwen, 28 Ballou Hill Rd. Berkshire NY. 13736, 607-657-2531 and Ed Hollenbeck, 11 Cook St. Newark Valley NY 13811 607-642-3201.

Charlie Davis

RURAL ECONOMIC AREA PARTNERSHIP (REAP)

REAP is a citizen led non-profit organization aimed at helping residents and community leaders organize, plan, and implement their own grassroots projects that will stimulate community revitalization and improve the quality of life. It was formed in Tioga County in 1999 by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) due in large part to our economic downturn. Tioga County is one of only five REAP zones in the United States. Projects sponsored by a REAP Zone are eligible to receive preference points on USDA grant and loan applications. Each of the fifteen municipalities in Tioga Co. has one member on the REAP Board along with six at-large members. This board oversees the Strategic Plan and Executive Director, as well as fostering communication between the program and community. Dick Bierl is the current

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RURAL ECONOMIC AREA PARTNERSHIP (REAP)

representative from Berkshire. By fostering community partnerships and collaboration, REAP has been successful in building local capacity and stimulating greater civic involvement. Projects in the REAP Strategic Plan have helped bring in over 20 million dollars to Tioga County since the zone was created. Some projects REAP has assisted with are: Tioga County Mobile Dental Van to serve needy children. Water and sewer upgrades to Town of Barton. Rehabilitation of Nichols Pond Park in Spencer. Sustainable Tioga. Offers participants the opportunity to learn community & business development. for a sustainable future. Development of the Town of Berkshire Master Plans. Conversion of the railroad depot into the Town Hall for Berkshire. The New fire station for Berkshire. Tioga County's designation as a REAP zone expires next year. The Board and the USDA will be discussing its future during 2012. Any input on this process can be given to Dick Bierl or any member of the Town Board.

Dick Bierl

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