

Town of Johnsburg Newsletter

Supervisor's Report

Short Takes

Budget Advisory Group

A group reviewing the Town's financial situation met recently to discuss ideas for budget reform. This larger group has now divided into 3 small groups reviewing expenses associated with solid waste, health insurance & energy.

Tannery Pond Revenue Stream

The Town is exploring a new fee structure for TPCC. The new proposal identifies about a dozen groups who are consistent, longerm users of the facility. These groups will negotiate with Town officials to enter into use contracts. The contracts will create a budgetary revenue line from the consistent users and will also provide a cost savings to those users on annual basis

Youth Program To Begin

The Johnsburg Youth Program will begin its 2008 season on July 7.

Rebuilding the Highway Fleet

Another step has been taken in the effort to modernize the Town of Johnsburg Highway Department.

Johnsburg Highway Superintendent Curt Richards has placed an order under state contract for a new truck. This truck is one of the larger vehicles used for snowplowing and sanding in the winter months.

Purchase of the truck was entirely financed through the use of CHIPS funds without any impact on the Town budget.

Examining the Future of the Waddell/Kellogg Property

One of the great assets in our community is the Waddell/Kellogg buildings, located along the Hudson River near the train station. In addition to being a beautiful historic property, the buildings also link the Hudson River to the businesses along Main Street.

The property, which is now owned by the Open Space Institute, will soon be conveyed to Warren County. Warren County will then look to the Town to define the best use for the property.

Groups have already worked hard on this project include the Johnsburg Historical Society and the North Creek Depot Preservation Association (NCRDPA). In addition, the Upper Hudson Festivals, Inc. is scheduling concerts at the site with an eye toward a future music festival.

The County is assisting Johnsburg with plans for future use by retaining a planning and design firm to help town's people with identifying best uses and beginning planning. The Elan Group will begin this process with a workshop at Tannery Pond on May 29 at 7 p.m. Anyone interested is urged to come and participate in the project.

Three Senator Little Grants

Three grants from Senator Betty Little have just been awarded to the Town. These are as follows:

- \$13,000 for generators for North Country Ministry. Special thanks to the North Creek Rotary Club for their work on this.
- \$12,000 for Ski Bowl Park. Special thanks to Kelly Nettle for her work on this.
- \$12,000 for town hall computer and software upgrades. Special thanks to Candace Lomax for her work on this and assistance researching municipal software packages.

All grants will be administered by the Town of Johnsburg.

Short Takes

Shuttle Work

Supervisor Goodspeed and Gore Mountain Manager Mike Pratt met recently with officials from Greater Glens Falls Transit to review the viability of a potential shuttle operation serving the Gore/Ski Bowl interconnect, Main Street Business and accommodations.

More Park Vandalism

Several acts of vandalism have occurred in the Ski Bowl Park recently. The matters are under investigation by the Warren County Sheriff's Department.

Art & Nature Camp Returns

Art and Nature Camp, under the direction of local artist Kate Hartley, will return to Tannery Pond Community Center July 1-July 31. This year's theme is Discover "Wild Water." For more information, call Kate at 251-2235

Train Station Issues

The Town is in discussions with board members of the NCRDPA regarding the financial future of the organization. The Town is exploring, along with JCS School Superintendent Mike Markwica, the potential for the museum facility to be incorporated into the elementary curriculum requiring state and local history components.

Cemeteries

The Town's park crew has been expanded earlier in an effort to get more work done at one of the busiest times of the year. One priority includes the mowing of cemeteries in all the hamlets by Memorial Day. We will start with Bates Cemetery and Union Cemetery.

Cell Tower Update

Supervisor Goodspeed has signed a 60 day letter of intent aimed at exploring a land lease of town property near the landfill for the possible construction of a cell tower

Use of Johnsburg Occupancy Tax Funds

by Ed Milner

Five years ago Warren County joined most of the rest of the country in assessing a tax on money paid to occupy its hotel and motel rooms. The stated purpose was to enhance the local tourism industry. A significant portion of the resulting revenue was set aside to support countywide events such as Americade, which brings more than 50,000 visitors to Lake George, but who ride out to other towns and hamlets in the county.

Each township in the county is allocated a portion of the occupancy tax funds with minimal instructions regarding how these funds are to be used. Johnsburg funds (bed tax dollars) have been given to various groups in the past on a first come first served basis. Most of the projects were worthwhile but there was no effort to direct the funds to applications where they would do the most to enhance our portion of the tourism business. We need to look at the overall effort rather than just individual projects.

The county resolution gives limited guidance for spending bed tax funds, other than that they are not to be applied to support ongoing operational costs of a group or project. The general suggestion has been that a continuing project should be fully supported in its first year, with diminishing percentages in subsequent years. A four year time line was suggested for projects to become self-supporting. The County Board of Supervisors held out a portion of the bed tax funds to support county-wide projects such as Americade. Johnsburg agreed to a three year allocation for its share of a dedicated computer kiosk in the County Visitors Center in Lake George. This year there was also a Board of Supervisors decision to draw from township allocations to support \$150,000 paid to get the NY State Fire Chief's Association Convention to come to Lake George.

Last year the Johnsburg Town Board realized the problems involved with its item by item approach to the use of bed tax funds. They asked that all requests for 2008 expenditures be submitted by December 1, 2007. To their surprise there were requests for over \$95,000 in project support against less than \$40,000 in available funds. The Town Board appointed a committee to review the applications and recommend the most effective places to apply the funds. The committee includes Kelly Nettle, Karen Smith, Roger Thomas, Geoff Konis, Trena Riedinger, Erwin Morris and Ed Milner.

Before looking at any of the applications, the committee worked to set up criteria for scoring applications. The major categories established were: short term communication, long term communication, actual events or things to do, beautification, collaborative potential, fostering of hospitality, leveraging capability and the contribution to the tourism business in the Town of Johnsburg. The committee set relative values for each criteria, and defined its elements. We remembered that Johnsburg benefits from tourists visiting neighboring towns as well as those who stay with us. Many use our bank or drug store, our grocery store, our hardware store, our restaurants and other local businesses in addition to skiing at Gore or rafting the Hudson.

We are now in the process of looking at each application in detail. While the overall county objective is to produce immediate "heads in beds" business, the need of Johnsburg is to move from a day trip destination to destination area. This involves identifying our area as a separate region, creating its own "brand" or identity, making it more welcoming to visitors and encouraging visitors to stay long enough to enjoy more of what we have to offer.

The overall keys to our economic development are our attitudes and actions regarding hospitality. Visitors need to feel they are welcome and appreciated. The buildup of infrastructure, nightlife and more bedrooms is in process.

As we study applications and make recommendations we are closely focused on what will help the most to grow our long term economic stability, resulting in more jobs, better jobs and better facilities and services for the residents of the Town of Johnsburg and its Gore Mountain Region.