

Town of Johnsburg Newsletter

Supervisor's Report

Short Takes

Outreach Center Social Services Update

Efforts are moving forward to decentralize our county social services office by permitting the county to process applications at the North Country Outreach Center. In mid-August county officials reviewed the facilities at the Outreach Center with local volunteers including Anita Abrams of the Community Economic Coalition.

Planning for The Worst

The Community Economic Coalition, headed by Anita Abrams, Jean Comstock and Barbara Thomas will monitor financial conditions of service providers through the 08-09 winter. It is planned that the town budget will have funding earmarked and available if groups such as the North Country Ministry and Outreach Center are unable to provide assistance within their current budgets.

Sept. Town Board
Meetings
Thur, Sept. 4
Wevertown
Tue, Sept. 16 - Library

Budget Preparation Begins

With the end of summer, so begins town budget preparation in earnest.

Though submission of the budget will follow state timelines, it is fair to say that issues affecting the budget have been dealt with daily in town hall. We have actively pursued any possible savings to trim the budget burden and have also tried to think "outside the box" in restructuring the way the town does business. These changes have included modifications in the way the town handles legal bills, changes to health insurance and attempts to establish revenue lines within the budget where they did not previously exist.

Over the last several months a group of concerned citizens from diverse backgrounds have reviewed the budget. The group has divided into sub-groups and addressed specific budget challenges. Simply put, the idea has been to think about municipal budgeting from a different perspective with new eyes looking at old numbers.

The challenge is a huge one. At the present rate of growth the amount of budget funded by taxpayers doubles every seven years. This rate is simply unacceptable. To attack this burden on taxpayers we begin by acknowledging that our town budget faces many of the same challenges as our household budget does.

Among these challenges are the consistently rising costs of fuel oil coupled with the acknowledgment that our town maintains and heats more buildings than most. Our highway department must maintain road mileage that exceeds the burden of other towns. Also, the general price escalation which the current recession is fueling has the same effect on goods and services on the town purse that it does elsewhere.

The budget that will be presented in coming weeks will be a different one. First, there will be an effort to better explain the budget through a narrative guide which will accompany the numbers. This narrative guide will highlight particular stresses in the budget and identify mechanisms installed to hopefully provide taxpayer savings. This process will be a transparent one.

Beyond the way the budget is presented though, it is my sincerest hope that the document itself will mark a fundamental rethinking in how the town does business. It is not just that we are getting leaner, saving pennies and dimes here and there. The idea is that shifts in how services are provided and overall budget structure will institutionalize tax payer savings. The budget narrative will detail these concepts.

It is too early to know where the numbers will be by Nov. but there is reason for cautious optimism in the face of very challenging economic times.

Elsewhere in this newsletter appears a brief article about the town judge situation. The cost

(budget cont. on back page)

More Takes

Youth Program Success

Though final numbers are not in yet this past summer's youth program was a big success. Kids from ages 4-16 participated. Special thanks to Ann Dingman, Phil Goodman, Anna Goodman and all the wonderful youth counselors who helped out this year. Good luck to Noah Dingman as he starts his freshman year at Duke!

Ski Bowl Park Grant Delay

Last year the Ski Bowl Park was awarded a major grant through the State of New York Parks & Rec Dept. The grant will fund improvements to the town's tennis courts, hiking trails and much more. Unfortunately, due to personnel changes in the state, the town has yet to receive a contract from the state. Despite weekly efforts to secure the required documents, state officials have been unable to provide the required documents. We will keep at it.

Dam Update

Last Spring the weir dam at the town beach suffered serious damage. At the same time, Warren County in conjunction with the town and DEC was attempting to reestablish a fish habitat in North Creek. The town's hope has been that the dam might be repaired as a part of the same DEC application covering the fish project. Frustratingly, the DEC has not been responsive to this plan and summer swimming has suffered. To be sure, the pond itself is in jeopardy. More to come..

(We hope)

(Budget cont.)

savings identified in the article is approximately \$8000-\$12000, not a huge amount. Symbolically however the proposed shift marks a new way of thinking. Take a potential bit of bad news and convert it into a budget opportunity.

The public is welcome at all budget presentations and board meetings and is urged to call Candace (ext 4) or Sterling (ext 1) at town hall.

Judge Will Not Seek Re-Election

Town Board Proposes Position Merger

Recently the Johnsbury Town Board accepted with regret Judge Dubai's resignation and his indication that he will not seek re-election. Judge Dubai has served our community for decades and as a town we are grateful for his dedication and work.

In discussing the situation created by the vacancy the town board has authorized an election referendum item which will eliminate the position occupied by Judge Dubai. The proposal in eliminating the position is to move Judge Dubai's former responsibilities to Judge French. The town will increase Judge French's salary to keep pace with his increased workload.

The proposal, which will appear on November's ballot, merges the two positions into one. In so doing, a cost savings occurs because the town will not be obligated to cover the benefits package of the second town justice. The total current savings will be \$8000-\$12000.

This sort of opportunity is an important one. Government gets smaller and cheaper, but services provided are not affected.

Interconnect Edging Forward

The connection between Gore and the Ski Bowl is moving towards reality. Aside from what happens with any particular developer, the physical linkage of the two mountains promises to be an economic catalyst not just for Main Street, North Creek, but for the entire region. This winter Gore will open the Burnt Ridge Trail Pod and continue with the new small chairlift and tubing at Little Gore. The town and ORDA are working jointly on a shuttle project that will permit skiers to access both mountains and the North Creek business district in the coming months. The interconnect is about more than linking the two ski areas, it is also about linking the thousands of skiers at Big Gore to the businesses who have struggled for years in our difficult Adirondack economy. After Burnt Ridge we are hopeful that a chairlift replacing the former big lift at Little Gore will be installed in the 09-10 season. It must be added that Assemblywoman Theresa Sayward was instrumental in the funding of the Burnt Ridge project and our State Senator Betty Little has secured the dollars necessary for the new ski lift at Little Gore. Won't it be great to ski Hudson and Ridge again?

More Takes

Waddell/Kellogg Property

The town has received a major grant for waterfront revitalization in this historic, riverfront part of our community. Townspeople have worked with the Elan Design Group in an effort to identify best uses for the facility. While the work is continuing it is apparent that this project is one of the most exciting ones in recent history.

Enclosed Pavilion

A proposed joint project between the town and ORDA to redesign and expand the red enclosed pavilion is hopefully gaining momentum. Warren County economic officials are working with National Grid officials to establish a time line for grant funds totaling about \$130,000 that would fund the changes. In winter the building would serve as a community ski lodge for ORDA. In the summer season the town could use the building for Youth Program and possibly as a teen center with the assistance of Teen's Only.

Extra Helpings Reminder

The members of the Economic Coalition Committee would like to remind all area residents that the Extra Helpings Food Program, located at the North Country Outreach Center, is open to all. There is no criteria or qualification necessary, if you want to stretch your family's food budget during these difficult economic times, just place your order and pick up your food. The food menu changes so for more information and order deadlines, call the Outreach Center at 251-3481.

Highway Reality

If you believe everything you hear over coffee at Stewarts, Stop reading now. What follows are the facts about the recent upheaval at our highway department and what is necessary to fix it. Before going any further let's begin by noting the hard work and conscientious service of so many of our employees these past several years.

In late July, Highway Superintendent Curt Richards resigned due to personal reasons. The timing of his resignation prevents party candidates from carrying petitions. Those petitions in fact were due about the same time as the resignation.

Persons interested in running as an Independent without a party can still carry a petition to get on the ballot since that time has not expired. Major party candidates (Democrats & Republicans) will be selected by the parties' political committees in meetings over the next several weeks. Thereafter the political committees advise the board of elections of their choices to establish the November ballot.

In the interim the town board has labored with whether to appoint a temporary superintendent between now and the election. The board, after much talking and public discussion has decided to continue with the deputy, Rick Sprague. Board members were concerned that appointing someone now might harm the election system.

The board has also grappled with other issues involving the highway department and with hard work it is expected that the difficult situation may stabilize by the end of the year.