

THE PORT HENRY FACT FINDER

Reporting the News and Needs of Port Henry and Surrounding Area

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Louise and Skip Belden, Maid in the Mountains Craft Gallery

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Friends of the Sherman Free Library will meet on **Tuesday, May 19, at 6 pm** at the library to discuss the upcoming wine and cheese tasting event. Wine and cheese tasting will be on **Saturday, June 13** at the library. Anyone interested in helping with this event or becoming a member of the Friends group is invited to attend this meeting. For further information, contact Jackie Viestenz, 546-9855

MORIAH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

An organizational meeting for the Moriah Chamber of Commerce was held May 12th at the Chamber office on Main Street in Port Henry. The “elephant in the room” was will the Moriah Chamber continue or be absorbed into the Ticonderoga Chamber of Commerce. The reason for the need of this discussion was the seeming lack of interest in a Chamber of Commerce for our area by businesses and people in general. One of the reasons for *this* was the fact that for many years the Chamber did not have a legitimate office space, but this corrective step, *step number one* was accomplished by Tim Bryant while he was president. Now that the Chamber has a lovely office on Main Street, it is ready for *step number two*: revitalizing interest in the Chamber by promoting programs which will benefit all the businesses in our community and area and, with the completion of zoning, will offer the necessary encouragement needed for new businesses to wish to establish themselves in our area. The decision was unanimous among those in attendance, that the Moriah Chamber of Commerce choose NOT to be absorbed by the Ticonderoga Chamber of Commerce and called another meeting at its office for this coming week May 20th at 7 pm. Any person or business that would like to join the Chamber in this exciting time of growth for it and Port Henry, come to this May 20th meeting and get in on the ground floor of this area’s already burgeoning growth.

NOTES FROM THE VILLAGE BOARD MEETING

May 11th Village Board meeting began with reports from the department heads. Fire Chief Hughes gave a detailed report of the departments continuing efforts toward the maintenance of our excellent volunteer fire department. Fire Chief Hughes then asked Captain Phillip Smith to report on his attendance, along with Frank Gilbo and Rob DeFelice, at the “Crude by Rail Training” sponsored by CP Rail at the Security and Emergency Response Training facility in Pueblo, CO. The purpose of their attendance was to show firefighters how to extinguish crude oil if spilled from railcars and to contain the spill safely. The information they gained will be shared to all the other firefighters in our area. I myself was very impressed with his report and came away feeling a bit safer.

Water and Sewer facility is functioning well. **Note:** if your water bill for this period is more than usual because of having to allow water to run to keep pipes from freezing, you are due an adjustment. Check with Village Hall about this.

Five residents from Grove Street asked the village to try again to have the routing of huge, heavy trucks on Grove Street changed. It makes safety a question when cars are parked and an enormous truck barrels through and houses often vibrate. Grove Street's road bed and surfaced were not designed to withstand heavy truck traffic. Last year a geyser of water erupted from a broken buried pipe right after a truck had passed. The village bears the brunt of these repairs, as Grove is a village street, not a county or state road. The Board is trying to find a solution to this potentially hazardous and expensive problem.

The Campground Manager Norman Wright opened the campground to its summer inhabitants Friday May 8th and welcomed them with pizza. He had kids go around to every camp there and let them know there was pizza for them at 6 PM. What camper could resist that sort of welcome?! Sunday, Mother's Day they offered muffins, cupcakes and cookies in celebration and in the works for the younger generation, a pool table, crafts and games, which should all be ready-for-use installed by Memorial Day.

Norman Wright, I am sure I am not the only village resident wishing to say thank you for beginning camping season in such a generous and promising way. Watch out, you and the campers may have the whole village down there with you.

As of April 13, 2015, John Hickey stepped down as Working Foreman and Daniel Laing stepped up. The Board has since decided to abolish the position of Working Foreman and re-create the position of Deputy Superintendent of Water and Streets and the Mayor appointed Daniel (Digger) Laing to this position effective as of May 1, 2015.

Rich Redman received a permit from the Village to sell firewood at the campground again this season. Another Vendor's Permit was issued to Keystone Fireworks to sell NY legal sparkler devices and July 4th novelties at 4242 Main Street (the old Wheelock garage) from June 25th through July 5th.

NOTES FROM THE TOWN BOARD MEETING

The Town of Moriah held its monthly Board meeting at the Courthouse in Port Henry May 14th. The Department Heads each reported work associated with a normal Spring clean-up. There was discussion about properties which were below expected standards of up-keep and had received complaints from neighbors. It was decided that these properties would receive a warning and if it was not heeded, they would be taken to court. Supervisor Scozzafava felt that people had a right to complain when their property value was being reduced due to a neighbor's use of or non-care of his property.

The tax case with Old Chimney Regarding the Assessment for Van Slooten Marina Property was eventually settled through arbitration for \$550,000.00. The following is Fact Finder's understanding of this. The assessors raised Van Slooten's taxes from \$820,000.00 to \$1,200,000.00. The Town, the school, the county and Port Henry will have to return overpaid back taxes, which will be a tidy sum no doubt.

It seems that the assessors could have sat down with Van Slooten and probably would have been able to have come to an acceptable compromise, but they did not try this alternative. Also, if the State rules allowed it, the Town Board itself could have worked with Van Slooten and probably been able to avoid a large part of the legal fees, not to mention the valuable time spent on the whole process. Fact

Finder has complained before about the assessor system, its inherent problems and that the State should correct it.

The Board amended its contract with Kubricky Construction to buy more rock, top soil and sand for Bulwagga Bay Campground.

The Board approved the use of \$2,169.00 for the installation of a Water Lateral for Sara Arno. The money will be from the CDBG (Community Development Block Grant).

The Board approved a refund on a water bill, due to the extra running of water needed over the winter to combat freeze-up.

It was announced that Bulwagga Bay Campground already had 189 seasonals and that some of the sites which were unusable last season because of flooding are functional again.

Paul Salerno said 110 bags of winter roadside garbage has already been picked-up, but that it seemed there was always the same amount more the next day.

The Youth Conservation Core will be able to hire only 16, 17 and 18 year olds due to the increase in the minimum wage, knowing that the younger people will still be able to participate when they reach this age group.

There was discussion on the benefits of shared services among communities and which services, not as yet shared, might be. Supervisor Scozzafava again mentioned having a central firehouse instead of three separate ones, feeling it would save residents tax monies. Having a central firehouse would be an excellent idea in fairly flat terrain, but to increase area of coverage means increasing response time to the areas furthest from the central firehouse and add hilly terrain and long winters, well, this Port Henry resident is willing to pay a bit more taxes and maintain a firehouse close by. I would rather spend my concern and efforts on our school and the assessors. True, I may not have all the facts.

ABOUT TEACHERS AND TEACHING

I am restating something I wrote in response to an entry on a Facebook site, as maybe there are those of my readers who, through lack of factual information, may think as the person on Facebook did. Many people seem to believe that a teacher gets a free ride in the summer while schools are not in session. Not so. They are paid on a yearly basis and must decide how to divide that twelve month salary so they have money during the summer months

Another belief, though possibly a bit less entrenched, is that a teacher has it easy, getting off at three in the afternoon. The fact is that a teacher's job is seldom finished at three when they leave the school room. They must attend special school events, such as parents' night, walk-throughs, etc. in the evenings. They are expected to take classes themselves to keep their minds sharp and their knowledge up-to-date. They are always spending their own money for items they feel are important in teaching their students and which are not furnished by the school. But most importantly, is their job *less* important than a doctor's or a lawyer's? Everyone seems to accept that you pay top dollar for a doctor's or a lawyer's services, but many seem to think teachers are overpaid. They who, in one day of teaching, are expected to be able to be a counselor, a nurse, an assessor of a child's welfare and raise a red flag if they think something is amiss (this is the worst part of the job) and somewhere in all these extra duties they must move children's minds along the path of knowledge. This has become more and more difficult as programs such as Core Curriculum, with its timed tests, are put in place and teachers must teach so that students will do well on the tests, as it seems there is a tie-in to State Aid to schools and, now which is suggested, may significantly figure in to the teacher's own yearly evaluation. I write

this with a lot of factual background knowledge as my father was a teacher, probably never making more than \$400. a month which, true, was assured and not too bad for the times, but he always worked at a summer job. My husband was a teacher and cared for our family of six on a teacher's salary. We were always looking for supplemental money and also worked during the summer. Part of our supplemental income came from my own teaching as a substitute, a very instructional experience.

I certainly have not researched the following statement in any proper way, but from the things I *have* read, it seems a large number of countries, particularly the European countries, have much better systems of teaching, much more understanding of the value of a teacher in the lives of its future generation and are having better over-all results. A teacher in Finland feels they have the best school system in the world. “We pay our teachers like doctors, students enjoy over an hour of recess and there is no mandatory testing – the opposite of what America does.” I was curious if this was but one devoted Finnish teacher’s opinion, so I went internet and discovered *Business Insider’s* web site **Finland’s Education System Best in the World**, with some source material attributed to the Smithsonian and the New York Times. Upon reading this site thoroughly, I did discover a slight discrepancy in the teacher’s statement and the article: it seems there *is* one mandatory standardized test, one given when children are sixteen.

It seems Core Curriculum and similar programs do not take into consideration that children are, of course, all unique, and require an understanding of their individual needs. Each child must be given the tools it needs to fulfill its potential, with an understanding that each potential will be different. Required standardized testing is far from what nature suggests to us. Nothing, absolutely nothing in nature is exactly the same, not even a clone, so why the imperative to make our children all the same. Bring them to a table filled with choices, give them the tools to understand these choices and they will become curious – and curiosity is a match which ignites learning.

Look for the next issue on **Saturday, May30, 2015** at Mac’s, Moriah Pharmacy, Sherman Free Library, George’s Restaurant, John Eisenberg’s Service Center, Ken and Paula LaDeau’s Champlain’s Best Wash, Don Foote’s “Miss Port Henry” Diner, and TFCU. NOTE: The Fact Finder may also be found on-line at porthenrymoriah.com. “Fact Finder” is the first item on the third drop-down menu.