

THE PORT HENRY FACT FINDER

Reporting the News and Needs of Port Henry and Surrounding Area

vol. 5, issue 3

October 18, 2014

**This issue has been made possible by the generous support of the following:
Frank Martin, Moriah Pharmacy, and Mac's Village Market**

NOTES FROM THE MORIAH TOWN BOARD MEETING

The Moriah Town Board's monthly meeting was held Thursday 9th. Deputy Paul Salerno was in charge of the meeting as Supervisor Scozzafava was out of town. The agenda was very short, however, two bids on the transfer station's piles of metal were opened and read but a decision was delayed until later.

When the meeting was opened for public comment, Village Trustee Staley Rich read the Village of Port Henry Board's response to the Town of Moriah Board's resolution requesting the Village of Port Henry put its dissolution up for vote again. This response, quoted in its entirety, follows:

"The majority of residents who attended the special meeting were against looking at dissolving at this time and had many sound objections against such action. However, during discussion we all agreed both municipalities need to develop a vision plan that incorporates both the town and the village to work together for a long term strategy for the area instead of choosing to rely on additional unguaranteed AIM funding from New York State as a means of progress.

The key areas of concern expressed by Port Henry residents were as follows:

1. It was widely thought that the intent of the Town in asking Port Henry to dissolve was not to take away a layer of government but to absorb the village assets and tax revenue, along with obtaining a central business district and a viable beachfront. AIM funding is already paid to the village and town and is contingent on a percentage of the tax levy. It was felt that it was very short sighted of the town to focus on that funding long term and fiscally irresponsible to even consider it short term, as 70% must be used to offset the taxes and it is not guaranteed after the first year.
2. It is widely understood that in dissolution or consolidation, the village residents would see substantial tax savings regardless of ANY additional AIM funding – however, this is not the case with the town of Moriah residents. Are the Moriah townspeople aware that any change in the AIM funding will mean a possible tax increase for them of up to 20% based on the old 2009 figures? Village dissolution means the Moriah townspeople have no vote in the matter of absorbing Port Henry. Consolidation means both municipalities have a say in developing a long term plan and a chance to vote on the proposed plan. Was consolidation not suggested because you feel the townspeople of Moriah would not support this potential tax increase and it was an opportunity to acquire quick AIM money and easy tax revenue for the town without openly bringing it before your voters?
3. Currently, the residents of the village have representation in their local government. If the town wants to consolidate with Port Henry and do away with a layer of government then the residents would want two (2) designated seats added onto the town council to reflect Port Henry's interests in addition to keeping all of Port Henry's full time employees.
4. We also have concerns in regards to zoning. The Town of Moriah, in the past, has not been in favor of zoning. Our legal counsel has advised us that by law, in order to have an established "Business District," an area must have zoning in place throughout its borders. Does this mean that the town and its residents are willing to adopt zoning throughout Moriah in order to

preserve the Port Henry business district and waterfront area?

5. The cost of acquiring assets in a centralized community means providing basic services such as garbage collection and sidewalk maintenance to maintain a clean and pleasing appearance and allow foot commerce to the residents. These services are considered the cost of the town maintaining a populated residential community and downtown area. This was a deal breaker last time and would severely impact the senior citizens and the business community.
6. Having committees to oversee hamlets in the township, including Port Henry was not a favorable idea and not well thought out. Village residents could not see any noticeable areas of growth, or positive change in the hamlets and did not deem it a successful strategy. If the town has a long term plan for Port Henry the village would like to see it.

In closing, the village board cannot and will not recommend dissolution to the taxpayers of the village of Port Henry or have it forced on the townspeople of Moriah. The impact and financial outcomes of dissolving are too far reaching for us to do so in good conscience.

However, as a village board we would consider an open dialogue to discuss consolidation. Consolidation would allow both sets of residents to vote on a well thought out plan that takes into consideration both communities working together for one unified future, not further dividing the area into special tax districts and isolated hamlets.

Should a reasonable long-term plan be thought out and developed and be brought forth to both sets of residents to vote on, then perhaps you would see true change and reorganization of government within our joined community and real progress within all the areas of Moriah.”

Village resident Sandra Lovell then spoke, “I have one request and one concern, but before I begin, I want everyone to understand that I am not here as a representative of the PH7 Committee nor as the editor of the Port Henry Fact Finder. What I say, I say as a very concerned resident of the Village of Port Henry and the Town of Moriah. I respectfully request that a joint meeting of both the boards of the Village of Port Henry and the Town of Moriah be held in an open public forum as **soon as possible** and, yet, still give time to advertise enough in advance that as many people as possible are given the opportunity to learn of this meeting.

My concern is the misinformation which seems to be being given to the press. Quotes are from the Press Republican of September 19th. After having quoted Councilman Garrison’s requesting the passing of a resolution concerning the Village of Port Henry and dissolution, which passed unanimously, again quoted him, “the town would receive at least \$400,000 **annually** in state dissolution aid....it would remove a layer of government from the people. The reason I did the resolution....can be answered in two words: the future.... For five years I have been looking at how we can improve our economic situation and our sustainability as a community. The answer always comes back to having **one less layer of government**....The Department of State is putting monies on the table for towns that have villages that dissolve. In our case, it is a substantial amount of money almost \$400,000 a year.” *I personally was appalled by several errors of fact in Councilman Garrison’s previous statements, until I kept reading and discovered that, “...there’s no time frame from the state for getting the money, so it could be for years to come or only a short span – but it would be at least a year.”* Then Councilman Garrison says “**The only kicker is that the state doesn’t tell you how long they will give this money to the town.**” As I stated in the Fact Finder, I sincerely hope this confusing mix of incorrect facts and real facts was a case of truly “**bad reporting**”.

Finally, I called Albany and was told the AIM money is a budgeted amount, which I assume can change as State finances change.

Village resident Sandra Lovell had to change her resident’s hat back to a reporter’s hat and leave early to attend a portion of the Sherman Library’s book signing event for local authors: Jean Breed, E. A. Cunningham (represented by Ronnie Cunningham), David Donohue, Mary Anne Johnson, Jeff Kelly, Frank Martin and Jackie Viestenz. If you were unable to attend the book signing and would

like to buy or read these authors' latest books, be sure and visit the Sherman Library as soon as possible.

FROM OUR SCHOOL

Before the school year progresses any further, before another Fact Finder issue is printed without representation from Moriah Central School and before a crop of new writers appears, Fact Finder is printing student offerings, from prior years. They definitely deserved publication but (for lack of paper time or space) went unrecognized. It is with real pleasure that Fact Finder is able, in some small part, to correct this loss to both students and readers. Here is the first story from past student, Jonathan Brassard who is now in his freshman year at Clarkson University in Potsdam, NY.

Margot's Members

by Jonathan Brassard

Margot was the ordinary girl down the street. She had always been content with her life as a school girl in a small Polish town. She had a mother and a father, although no siblings like most people at the time. Over the years simplicity had become safety and safety had become complacency.

Margot had an especially strong relationship with her father, Frederic. His surplus time was due to the loss of his legs caused by an explosion at the coal factory in which he worked. In exchange for his pain and suffering he received monthly settlement checks. This meant that he could spend all the time in the world with his daughter and wife.

Margot was not quite so close to her mother, Jadwiga, in that she was left with the responsibility of maintaining the entire household. Margot's mother preferred to play the role of the supportive advice giver. Margot had learned to always rely on her in times of need.

For the longest time things had remained stagnant, calm and tranquil. Each day stood on its own, never leading to anything. Then the changes in the everyday started to come and then each day's events overflowed into the next and the next and the next. Life had never been more stressful or overwhelming.

Margot could find only one place to escape from her dreary existence, a small park near her home. When things became too much for her, Margot would go to her park to think and relax. This was the only place available to her that was untouched by other people.

Most of this turmoil originated from socio-economic tension caused by the communist-like government. At the time the Polish government was mainly concerned with the expansion of the economy rather than the quality of life for their citizens. Coal mining was a major foundation for the economy in that respect. This made people upset and life's simplicity decreased. This was the source of Margot's distress.

A man walked through a pair of massive iron gates, into a park, and took out his equipment. Within moments the machine began to spit out a roll of paper with readings printed in plain black print. The man, having read the results, ran back to report his findings to his superiors.

"Sir, there seems to be significant deposits in this area. I recommend we begin the normal process. There's too much of an opportunity there to pass up" reported the man. "If these deposits are as large as you say, this operation will take much longer than usual. We must start now before someone else does. Get our people working on buying the property and building codes" said his boss.

Ten years later, Margot went to her park, as any other day, and was rudely informed that she couldn't go in. In the distance she could see massive machines moving and tearing up the landscape.

She had lost the final remaining point from her former reality. She felt an abnormal amount of loss set in on the way home. She even began to cry a little bit.

Her mother did her best to console her when she got home, as was her duty as the advice giver. She even tolerated some rather childish amounts of grieving. Grief quickly became anger and anger quickly became contempt. Eventually, those feelings shifted from the actual event to those responsible.

It seemed that the world was against them when the prices for everything suddenly soared to new heights. Gas from the Middle East stopped completely for all countries linked to US Arab Oil policies, this included Poland at the time. When gas prices went up everything else went up too. Things got to the point where Margot's family could barely get by between settlement checks. They needed a new way out and there didn't seem to be any in sight.

First, they started to receive letters from their bank. Their food quality declined steadily along with quantity. Their country's drive for economic domination and complete control over the people completely backfired. The entire nation was opposed to the communist rule and policies. In fact, a notable number of people were still loyal to the "Polish government-in-exile" based out of London.

Another brutal blow to Margot and her family was the death of her grandfather. Frederic's father had been living with the family for the past several years since his wife had passed away. He died in his sleep of heart failure and Margot had the traumatizing experience of going to his room to wake him on that terrible morning. Margot's grandfather had been one of the few anchors holding them to the area and his death became one less reason to stay.

The funeral costs were yet more expenses they could not afford on their decreased budget, although they were not focusing on that as much as the actual death. It is always difficult to lose those closest to you, especially in such a situation, where family is the only thing in one's life. Margot couldn't help but think "What else can go wrong?"

The family was in need of a break from their new situation, when they heard that their good friends the Petros were moving to America. The Petros hadn't been affected as much as the Kieslowskis by the economic crash but they decided they should leave Poland for America and a better life. They had been saving all they had for months but still would have to sell many of their things in order to be able to start off their new life.

Margot was reminded of all the stories of the country where the streets are paved with gold and there is money and opportunity ready for the taking. She thought of the New York City skyline with the glistening windows and tall towers. Most of all she pictured the famous American icon, the Statue of Liberty. Margot so longed to go with them but knew she could never leave her family behind as she went to go enjoy the life in the land of plenty.

At the same time the country as a whole declined economically and was in uproar. As the peoples' resentment for their oppressive government built up, over the course of several weeks, to the point where it was unacceptable and intolerable, people began to riot in the streets. Dozens of people were killed and hundreds were injured by the military forces called into action by the country's leader's declaration of martial law in December of 1981.

Among those injured in these *social disruptions* was Margot herself. She and her mother had gone all the way to Warsaw to sell some of their things. While they were in one of the shops on the main street, people began to gather outside. As they were finishing their business, they looked out the window and saw that the crowd had grown. As they exited the store, they heard people shouting as they bounced their signs up and down. "Best be getting out of here quickly" thought Margot to herself. They were half way through the crowd when it became unruly and the soldiers came to subdue the *enemies of the state*. **BANG!** It was a warning; no one had been shot, not to say no one got hurt from it. The shot had scared the crowd and everyone panicked. Hundreds of bodies rushed by them and Margot fell down in the midst of it all. Jadwiga searched for her frantically and found her on the ground, causing an anomaly in the flow of the frightened "cattle." She hadn't been seriously injured, just some nasty scratches and bruises.

Things had been getting worse but this was unrecognizable as her country, life, as her reality. They looked to one side and saw a woman lying in a glistening pool of crimson. They ran over to help her but she had breathed her last breath before they could reach her. At that point they knew it was time to leave and with the exchange of one glance they both knew they agreed on this point.

Three months after the incident in the street, the Kieslowskis were nearly ready to leave. When they had gotten home, Margot and her mother had described the ordeal they had gone through to Frederic. They started to save. They struggled to account for every penny and save all they could. Margot and Jadwiga even got jobs.

After having saved enough to leave, and with the social problems in Poland growing, they decided to “go for it.” As had been decided, they would live with the Petros while they got on their feet and found jobs that could sustain them. The Petros had kept in touch by sending letters. When they learned about the Kieslowskis’ plans to come to America, their friends offered to assist them upon arrival. It turned out to be the only reason they were able to make it in America.

In a final act of dedication to this course of action, they sold most all of their possessions, all but the most valued, and it was enough.

Finally they were on their way to America. Packing very little, as they only had very little left, all three anxiously raced to the port to get on their boat. As she stepped on the boat, Margot realized that this would probably be the last time she would ever look out on Poland again. The boat left port and set out to their new home and new lives.

The boat ride was not the most pleasant experience. The worst part of the voyage for Margot was waiting as she seemed to float aimlessly through nothingness. She tried to entertain herself while an eternity passed her by each day. As the coast line came into view and the light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel seemed to be within reach, Margot’s mind drifted back to the New York City skyline with her “Lady Liberty” guarding the entrance from all things that could cause harm. They had made it and nothing stood between them and their lives in the “New World.”

Upon arrival they waited in a line for hours. They were each taken to different rooms, separated by certain characteristics, such as gender, age, country of origin, etc. They found themselves in crowds of hundreds of strangers. Each of them was eventually looked over by a doctor for a grand total of one minute each. They all made it through inspections without any trouble, except for Frederic’s injuries, which required some explanation. For all the doctors knew, the cause of his paralysis was contagious, maybe even polio. As they came out, one by one, they proceeded to regroup and, after they finished their paperwork, boarded a boat to shore.

They met the Petros at the docks at the time they had decided in their most recent letters. They called for a cab, in order to transport their luggage to their temporary home. As the adults chatted while they waited, Margot slipped away to look at the famous statue off shore. Suddenly Frederic, Jadwiga and the Petros heard a scream. As Frederic turned around he saw Margot’s hand disappear from view, slipping below the pier.

NOTE: Student papers are written as hard copy and I, as editor, must copy them into the paper. I have found I prefer to read just a bit, discover I want to use it, then, I begin to type as I read. In this way I am not bored with just mechanically typing. I reached “slipping below the pier,” turned the page in anticipation of finding out what happened next and – NO NEXT PAGE! I thought I just didn’t receive that next page, so I called teacher Pat McCaffrey, he didn’t remember exactly what the assignment had been. I even called the author. It seems to have been an assignment having a surprise ending, well, it did just that. If any of you readers have an idea for an ending and want to be published, just call 546-3161 and make arrangements with Fact Finder. I would be grateful and I am sure all other readers would be also. From now on the ending as well as the beginning sentences will be read before typing, even though this *was* a fun read.

EDITORIAL TID-BITS

Today, Sunday, has been an absolutely gorgeous autumn day. I went down to the Port Henry Campground and found it totally empty except for manager Marge's camping setup and a large flock of migrating Canada geese using the campground's swimming area as their private refreshment stop and spa. The lake and the sand is no more a campground it is our winter beach. Again it is a quiet place for walking and thinking, falling into the ever changing rhythm of the waves and the shifting light on the mountains across the lake. Again it is for romping children and dogs. Its official metamorphosis will be on Wednesday the 15th.

I stopped by the Port Henry Marina too. It was quietly busy. One bay is empty of everything except lake water. The floating docks are already up out of the water and stored on land and only about seven or eight boats are lined up waiting to be hauled. One couple was busy loading items to be stored in their yacht which was already perched in its cradle and covered in plastic. There were still a few diehard sailors out in their boats. The marina is not quite yet in hibernation.

A THOUGHT: for the next two weeks, SMILE! even if you are not on Candid Camera. You will catch people off guard and they will smile back, you will be happy in spite of yourself and a lot of worry lines will disappear. Notice there is no guarantee except that it is a lot of fun making others smile in spite of themselves.

Look for the next issue on **Saturday, November 1, 2014** at Macs, 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. Go to "Living Here" and you will see "Fact Finder" to the far right, one line down.