

THE PORT HENRY FACT FINDER

Reporting the News and Needs of Port Henry and Surrounding Area

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NOTES FROM THE VILLAGE BOARD MEETING OF OCTOBER 14, 2014

Finally, finally, the Village has received \$167,000 from FEMA, the last payment for the Campground Restoration Project. This is very good news since the campground manager's report showed a loss of campers, bringing its revenue below expectations. The campground seems not to have fully recovered from Irene's devastation and the huge Mill Brook flood of a couple of years ago. With a bit of judicious advertising and upgrading the bathroom facilities, next year should bring improved attendance and therefore a better end-of-the-season monetary report.

The fire department is having an OSHA Chimney Fire training this month. They did not get the fireman's grant that was applied for, but were encouraged to reapply. The department did get a \$1,000 from a DEC grant for a needed 4" supply hose. There were two applications for new fireman and they were approved. The village owes a real debt of gratitude to these young men who wish to become volunteer firemen. It is a hard job which requires a lot of time in training. Thank you and good luck.

Recently two of our village trustees met with Jodi Olcott and Carol Calabrese of the County Economic Development/Planning/Publicity Committee and Thomas Eliopolus, Jr. concerning his old school property. Mr. Eliopolus stated at this meeting that he wanted to lease it to someone for a motel/hotel. He is not interested in selling the property, only leasing it.

The board extended the Moratorium on Street Level Residential Development for six months which is needed to protect storefronts until zoning is in place for a resident vote.

The Board awarded the village oil contract for October 2014-September 2015 to Gordon Oil for a price per gallon of \$3.09.

The board agreed to a three year plan that provides Volunteer Firefighters Benefits and Workers Compensation

The Board was questioned as to their time line for finishing the zoning process in preparation for presenting it to residents for vote. They said that they are continuing to work on zoning and that it is now in the hands of the lawyers. The subject of zoning came up because a lot of work has gone into researching, preparing a plan and reporting on zoning and the resident who brought up the subject thought this work should progress as quickly as possible. It was stated that the Board would work on completing the zoning within the next six months.

A resident asked if the Village could sweep the streets and sidewalks on a regular basis during the summer. He stated that we have a business district and we should maintain it. The Board said perhaps the sweeping could be done once a month during the summer. This was not brought up at this meeting but another important concern for the village and its businesses is signage and should be addressed much sooner than later. Signs on a pole at each street corner, pointing to and designating each business on that street would be a way of being sure each business is recognized equally and bring consistency to the signage rather than using sandwich-board signs which are a visual detraction to the overall visual impression of the village.

NOTES FROM THE TOWN OF MORIAH COMMUNITY FORUM

The Town of Moriah held its second Community Forum Thursday, October 16th at the Moriah Fire House. It was not a large crowd, but it was a very interested group and asked questions which drew informative answers from the board.

Supervisor Scozzafava spoke first about current ordinances and local laws, and current efforts that are underway.

Richard Lapier, the Code Enforcement Officer for the Town of Moriah (excluding the Village of Port Henry) discussed why certain problems of non-compliance cannot be “fixed” or are very expensive to “fix.” A question came from the public asking if Mr. Scozzafava did not think this was a priority. Mr. Scozzafava indicated that, of course, he did.

Both Mr. Lapier and Mr. Bill Ball, Port Henry’s Code Enforcer, are part-time. One of the Board members suggested that it might be worth looking into hiring a full-time Code Enforcer. Supervisor Scozzofava said that he felt the problem would be addressed more efficiently by dividing the job into two separate categories, one for buildings and one for property maintenance and hiring a Code Enforcer for each.

Later in the meeting the subject of non-compliant buildings and causes for their non-compliance surfaced again and the following causes were discussed: the care of real property which has been foreclosed by banks and is a bank’s responsibility are frequently not cared for while it is owned by them. Another problem is property on which foreclosure has not as yet occurred and the owners simply move out, leaving the property in limbo. Another *real* problem (no pun intended) is absentee landlords. I doubt there is any municipality that does not suffer some form of this cancerous disease. Apartment houses seem to be a particularly virulent form of this disease. A building which has three or more apartments must be inspected after each tenant moves out and before a new tenant moves in and the owner is responsible for seeing that this inspection is done. They seldom do. Many apartments are under HUD jurisdiction and HUD inspects these apartments once a year. What happens within that year is not overseen unless the tenants themselves complain..

72 letters were sent out on code violations. Happily most violations were corrected. 15 buildings were condemned but you need a court order to enter and the consequences for the owners are difficult to enforce as a municipality cannot charge fines back onto these owners’ property taxes.

The Town Board members also made comments, mostly in response to public comments or questions. When a question about what the transfer station takes and does not take was asked, the audience discovered that while residents pay for their garbage by volume, the transfer station must pay by weight and that can become very costly for the transfer station when they are accepting disposal of construction materials. There was also discussion about the special “trash” days. One of the board suggested that everyone cannot make it on the designated day and could there be a designated area set aside for “drop off” on other days. An interesting tidbit of information was that the Town owns the Transfer Station land but the County owns all the equipment.

There was so much discussion concerning assessors that there it was decided to schedule another Community Forum, soon, just to address this problem.

NOTES ON THE MORIAH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEETING

There was Board of Directors Meeting October 28, 2014. The physical offices of the Moriah Chamber of Commerce are a real accomplishment. It presents an attractive and informative venue for travelers and area businesses. The Moriah Chamber is the coordinator-producer of the Labor Day Parade, probably the most anticipated and attended event of the Port Henry/Moriah calendar year. The last two Labor Day Celebrations were successes, each in its own way. A year ago something new was tried. There were two separate sites for celebrating Labor Day, one at the beach and one on Main Street, the usual place. Not too many people seemed to visit both sites, which had been the plan; so of those who watched the Parade, most did not partake of the fun at the beach and many of those at the

beach didn't bother to enjoy the Parade. It was unanimously decided to revert to the old tried-and-true and have all of the Labor Day Celebration return to Main Street which it did and was a celebration enjoyed by a hearty, rain-resistant crowd.

President Tim Bryant and the members of the board are concerned that area businesses have not been using the Chamber as an information center for new ideas in promotion of their business, as a coordinating source between businesses which might have areas in which they could help promote each other's business, as an advertisement for our area businesses, and as a possible source of help with business problems.

The Chamber of Commerce should exist to help promote commerce as well as host events. The board discussed how we could help businesses understand that membership is more than making a donation, it becomes an investment of concern for the whole business community, which also means an investment of time, at least once a month, just enough time in which to meet and share your business life with other people in business. The simple act of having other businesses' cards prominent at your business shows this concern for the business community and many businesses already do this, but the Chamber feels that even more of this positive action could exist if there was a close interaction between the Chamber of Commerce and its business community. Such a united effort encourages a healthy atmosphere for business growth.

This year the Chamber offered an internship scholarship to a Moriah High School upper classman. Tanner Conley was the recipient and often was the voice on the other end of the line, when you called the Chamber of Commerce.

HOME BUSINESSES

In Port Henry and the surrounding area there are many businesses which do not have a storefront but they run a legitimate business from their homes and Fact Finder has often wanted to interview and introduce these home-based entrepreneurs.

A year or so ago, I spoke with Sherry Morin over the phone, misplaced the information and never wrote about her. Recently I unearthed the mini-interview and decided she would be the first in this category. She does alterations in her home on Tuesdays and Thursdays. She also creates teddy bears and memory bears out of old fur coats. They must be wonderful because for twelve years Sherry worked at the Teddy Bear Company in Shelburne, VT. and it is no surprise that now she works in Addison County as a personal care provider. Until now Sherry's sewing business has been advertised by word of mouth only. She can be reached at 546-9859 for bears and your other sewing needs. I plan to call her, I have an old Mouton coat, about sixty years old, but a lot of it is still beautiful and I can just see it as two or three soft dark brown bears.

JUST FOR FUN

Look for the next issue on **Saturday, November 15, 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.