

# THE PORT HENRY FACT FINDER

Reporting the News and Needs of Port Henry and Surrounding Area

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## “WHO” IS PORT HENRY VILLAGE?

The “who” of a village is its residents, every last one of them; those who were born and grew up here; the retired returnees; the long-ago absorbed “outsiders;” those newly arrived, wishing to take an active part in the life of their new home; the long-time renters and those who, for whatever reason, call this village their home for just a short stay. Whether we like it or not, we residents in the village of Port Henry *are* Port Henry! We are how we react to our surroundings, to one another, to outside forces. We are its day-to-day, month-to-month, year-to-year self. Being a Village (a small village), knowingly or unknowingly, each of us must play an important and deciding role in “who” the village is and becomes.

The dissolution process now in progress has given Port Henry an unusual gift. Dissolution demands that the Village of Port Henry make a choice, does its factual (numerical) majority wish to remain a self-governing entity or does it not. It is time Port Henry discovers who, as a village, it really is. Are we, each resident, courageous enough, responsible enough to perform the demanding, sometimes difficult, requirements of being a Small Village villager?

What does it mean to be responsible in a small village? **First** it would seem to mean, **not** expecting that someone else will get “the job done.” There can never be too many volunteers. Probably **second** would be, being active in the running of a small village, being willing to take on the trials and pittance pay of the part-time job of governance. However, don’t be too zealous in seeing that everyone gets a chance to be mayor. There is a lot more to being a mayor (much to learn that one learns only by doing) than it would seem, observing from the outside. Mayors should stay in office, at the very least, two two-year terms, provided they were elected by an informed and large majority of the voters. With this scenario a term or two more might be preferable.

Are residents courageous enough to put aside pre-conceived ideas and beliefs and consider (at least mentally and for awhile) “walking in the opposing sides shoes?” Are villagers strong enough to set aside “who’s my enemy?” and “who’s my friend?” to be able to consider the real desires and needs which will bring each and every one of us that which we truly want, a peaceful, attractive, prosperous, well-functioning village, a home

in which to raise children and enjoy day-to-day life for as long as we are allowed to live life.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### **Dissolution Plan Not Legally Binding on Town**

A headline like “Port Henry Board Adopts Dissolution Plan” gives a true fact but does not tell the true story of the April 5<sup>th</sup> public hearing.

Without exploring other tax saving options, last June several village residents petitioned, on the promise of tax relief, to have a vote on dissolution of the Village of Port Henry. In October, by 19 votes, the measure passed. At that point village and town officials were legally required to draft a plan for dissolving the village. With the help of the LaBerge group of Albany, they did so.

Since then, public hearings have been held and villagers were told they will have a chance to vote on the final version of the plan for dissolution. We get our chance only if petitions with 25% of the registered voters are presented within 45 days of the last public hearing.

Several reports of the April 5<sup>th</sup> meeting describe it as “contentious” or “hostile”. Well, there's a good reason for that which was not mentioned in any articles I read.

The fatal flaw in the plan for dissolution, no matter how well worked out the details sound, is that it is not legally binding. It takes very few words to describe that very big problem.

When I first heard this I really did not believe it. I e-mailed a representative from the LaBerge group asking if the plan was legally binding. Her response: “There is no legal weight of enforcement that the plan carries” and “The dissolution plan represents the recommended implementation strategy from the village to the town.” In other words, the plan is a polite note to the town to please be nice to us.

When the town gets into budget trouble, which will happen, any promises made to the village costing the town money will be dropped. At that point our only recourse will be to pull out our copies of the plan and say “but you said...you promised.” Because of the relative population numbers, after dissolution voters from Port Henry will have much less effect on Town policy. We will have voted away our political voice.

In case the reader has not guessed by now, petitions for a referendum on the plan are now circulating. It is my sincere hope that these petitions are filed with a large excess of signers, the plan is rejected by village voters and dissolution is stopped.

Kim Gilbertson

Port Henry, NY

## NOTES FROM THE APRIL PORT HENRY VILLAGE BOARD MEETING

Prior to the Village Board's monthly meeting, the Board held its Annual Organizational Meeting. At this time, the newly elected trustees were announced: for two year terms, James Curran and Linda Smyth and for, a one year term, Mark Davenport. The following appointments were made by Mayor Guerin: Bill Ball, temporary Code Enforcement Officer; Christopher Wolfe, Village Health Officer; Trustee Mark Davenport, Safety Officer for one year; Betty LaMoria, Village Historian; Art Brassard, Bingo Inspector; The Times of Ti Sun was designated as the official newspaper of the Village of Port Henry. Village employees hired before July, 1976 are covered by a non-contributory plan with the NYS Employees' Retirement System. Personnel hired after July of 1976 are required to contribute 3% of their gross earnings, under the plan. Per fiscal-year, to be paid in four quarterly installments, the Mayor's salary is \$8,000, the Deputy Mayor's is \$4,500, each Trustee's is \$3,500. Returning lifeguards will be paid \$12.00/hour, a third lifeguard will be paid \$10.00/hour. Resolutions which are adopted annually were formally adopted for 2016 and the Annual Organizational Meeting was adjourned and the regular monthly began. Department Heads reported that their departments were running smoothly and managing seasonal requirements as needed.

Chief Hughes suggested registering Henry's Garage on the National Register of Historic Places, in order to better pursue preservation-grant and tax-credit programs. Chief Hughes had given Thomas Henry and Steven Engelhart of Adirondack Architectural Heritage a tour of the fire station on April 1<sup>st</sup>. The purpose of the four hour meeting was to discuss and determine alternative funding opportunities for the 14 Church Street building to include restoration, preservation and request to be added to the National Registry.

A question had been asked about the ex-Nu-Way Laundry property. The long journey to becoming a zoned municipality is about to be completed. The next step will be the creation of Zoning Board of Appeals. A reminder, zoning was begun to save Port Henry's Main Street store fronts.

The Rice Lane Project will begin in July or August and the Manhole 13 Project is still inching along toward completion. Its speed has been hindered by the fact that many different permits and OKs from many different sources and not the speediest in their responses. Most resolutions the Board must pass are just necessary but dull "house-keeping" resolutions. Some are interesting such as the Board passing a resolution allowing the Moriah Chamber of Commerce the use of the Port Henry Campground's beach house and beach for its Champ Day activities on Sunday July 17<sup>th</sup>.

The next regular meeting of the Village of Port Henry Board of Trustees will be May 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM at the Village Hall. Fact Finder urges the public to attend these meetings. The Fact Finder offers only notes, what it considers the highlights of the

meeting. Also, the Board needs the support of the people it is serving to know it is steering in the direction.

### NOTES FROM THE APRIL MEETING OF THE MORIAH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The monthly meeting of the Moriah Chamber of Commerce was held Tuesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>. Guest speaker was Ciara Thompson of the Times of Ti Sun. Advertising is vital for businesses and Ciara explained the types of advertizing offered in the paper and in North Country Living, a beautiful expensive-looking FREE magazine published four times a year, Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. It is an inviting mix of ads and articles which encourages you to read the ads along with the reading of the interesting articles. It offers a lot of reading and information for FREE.

There were continued discussions concerning Champ Day and Labor Day.

There will be a members' "*Meet and Greet*" April 28<sup>th</sup> 7 PM, at the Chamber Office. Wine and Cheese should aid the flow of conversation.

Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup> is the Chamber's Coin Drop Day. Wish for a lovely, sunny spring day!

Fact Finder heard from Chamber's president, Cathy Sprague that the recent Mother/Son Dance event was a lot of fun, a huge success.

### NOTES FROM THE APRIL TOWN OF MORIAH BOARD MEETING

Thursday the 14<sup>th</sup> the Town of Moriah Board held its monthly meeting. Captain Lou Paris of the Town of Moriah Ambulance Squad addressed the Board as a special guest. He reported that the Squad, as of May 1<sup>st</sup>, will change over to an electronic billing service to obtain reimbursement for their services. The Squad's insurance is, now, well over \$10,000 per year. The price of having equipment checked and certified is costly. The Squad is losing people to retirement, although here, Medicare picks up some of the cost. Captain Paris noted that the hours of training had increased from about 80 hours, when he began as a volunteer, to around 190 hours now. Supervisor Scozzafava said that State regulations have killed the volunteer emergency service. The Supervisor also said there was interest in creating a county-wide paid emergency service, but that would be, if at all, in the future.

The Highway Department reported that spring cleaning and sweeping was going forward. Friday and Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, the transfer station will have a chipper and be accepting brush. There is a 3" limit on diameter and it must be brush only, absolutely no garbage. It was reported that two containers of scrap metal were full and a third was near being full.

There was a great deal of discussion on the very real and difficult-to-solve rat problem, created by hundreds of garbage bags not being taken to the “dump.” Absentee landlords are one of the main offenders. Supervisor Scozzafava has “had it,” no more citations, “the gloves are off” no more “slaps on the wrist!” It will be notifications of “have your property cleaned up by such-and-such date” or a court date will be set at which you must appear. The problem is so difficult because of laws protecting property owners’ rights. The Town cannot send employees to pick up the bags, as no one knows what they may contain. Also, the Town may not go on to any property unless there is an emergency or they have the owner’s permission. Scozzafava said that if you get rid of the rats’ source of food, the garbage, you will have no more rats, “no food, no rats.”

The Water/Sewer Department reported the cleaning of the reservoir tanks and flushing of hydrants. A camera is needed to inspect the sewer veins. The Town and Village will jointly share in obtaining a camera using grant money.

The Moriah Chamber of Commerce report was read to the Board.

Elizabethtown School requested that the fifty-or-so students of their summer-youth-program join with Moriah’s around 150 summer-program students. This was discussed but needed more information before a decision was made.

The Bulwagga Bay Campsite will be opened May 7<sup>th</sup> and closes October 9<sup>th</sup>. The Board received very good news, the campsite suffered very little erosion during the winter, making it much easier and less expensive to ready for its May 7<sup>th</sup> opening.

The Moriah Town Board granted the Village of Port Henry an easement needed to complete the Village’s Manhole 13 Project.