

THE PORT HENRY FACT FINDER

Reporting the News and Needs of Port Henry and Surrounding Area

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EDITORIAL

Although Fact Finder prefers facts to editorials, the beginning of this shiny-new-penny year seems to demand a brief look backward at December 2013 and a long look forward into 2014. We must find solutions to best solve our ongoing needs and problems, but, all the while, expecting much more from ourselves to gain the much more we deserve for ourselves. It absolutely can be done, but not without each and every resident's support, either physically or, just as important, mentally. This does not mean you have to agree with every project that is proposed, no! but at least know what's out there and, if you disagree enough, you might become an active participant. "Active" is the operable word. Does it take time? Yes! But everyone can take a bit of time from TV or texting or such and it is such a beneficial exercise, patting yourself on your back.

It is pretty hard to look back on Christmas 2013, as there were no lights at night. Fact Finder asked our mayor and Town supervisor what happened and here are the series of events that lead to no Christmas lights for our streets, our Park or the Jeff Winters-donated perfect tree for our Oval.

National Grid was needed to replace "thing-a-ma-gigs" at the top of their poles on either side of Main Street. They did just that, even though a bit later than had been anticipated. Everything was ready for Christmas lights across Main, except that the County's bucket truck had to be used and therefore scheduled for which became just another hitch in plans, as by the time the truck could arrive, the weather took over and our crew was busy with just basic weather-related problems. So no Main Street lights! What about Park and Oval lights? Tom Scozzafava did the required wiring to be ready for a second visit from National Grid, but National Grid was not able to do their bit in time for Christmas, in fact they are still due this visit to us. Port Henry's Christmas lights became a victim of the "domino-effect" caused by many factors. BUT – there is Christmas 2014 just a year away and then, Adirodacks, just watch us shine!

Ah, 2014! I feel about the turning world's new year the way I used to feel about a new school year - new note books, new pencils, new Crayolas, new shoes - everything new, everything just bursting with infinite potential of successes not even imaginable. True, the new year drags along a lot of "baggage" from the old year but the possibility of solutions just around the next thought is a powerful enticement to keep the search going.

As to the unexplored possibilities of a new year, no wonder the new year is portrayed as a baby. However, like all things in the future, no outcomes are predictable and looking into the future can be done only as conjecture, so the following are fabricated of my now-understandings, my dreams, my wishes, my hopes and a few thoughts as how these might be brought to fruition, with the only fact being my hope for a year of positive progress achieved by the participation of many, many people.

Here is my list of what I view as concerns which may present problems for Port Henry and thoughts on some first steps toward solutions: (1) the recent State mandated Core Curriculum with which our school, its teachers, its students and parents have to deal, (2) the State rules that an assessor must use do not seem to fit well for those of us living in the Adirondack

Park, plus, how to decrease the inherent subjectivity in an assessors job, (3) the State's new Tax Free Zones, (4) how to expand the criterion by which small, finite municipalities can offer tax abatements to in-coming businesses.

(1) No one, least of all I, would fault trying to raise the standard bar for our children's education, however, I do question the way the program was introduced, as a great lump of expectations, instead of incrementally absorbable steps over several years. Teachers were given a large amount of information on what to teach, how to teach it and testing expectations, so it would seem teachers are expected to teach toward the standardized tests, rather than creating a school room atmosphere of subject-curiosity for students, which is where real learning begins, for each and every student in that classroom. Students, whose talents may not lie in test-taking, may well begin to feel badly about themselves. How might little ole you and I be able to help this situation? Besiege Albany requesting that a new look be taken at the program and for them to find a way to spread out the time frame for fulfilling all of the program's requirements.

(2) It would seem that a small municipality, lucky enough to have someone come in, buy a beautiful old building and be willing to spend a lot of money on restoring it rather than tearing it down, would be able to welcome this newcomer with tax help of some kind rather than have the assessors rush in and put such a large tax assessment on the property that the property has to be sold at a great loss. Then when another savior appears, buys, spends lots of money and asks for a tax reduction, to help him not only help himself but the village, he is turned down two years in a row. Fact Finder has not checked recently to see if he has tried again and been turned down a third time or, hopefully, the third time was the charm. However, there is still an existing problem and, again, the solution seems to be hiding somewhere in the governmental halls of Albany.

(3) Great idea, Tax Free Zones, the infomercials are very inviting but, somewhere in the back of my mind, I remember reading and/or hearing - at the beginning - that it would be on or close to College Campuses. This would be great for the small under-endowed colleges, but how about some enticing Tax Free Zones for the small, struggling communities in the Adirondack Park. Here I rush to admit I have not done near enough research on this to become too adversarial at this time. However, it is a very good subject for further exploration. Anyone, out there, up for the job?

(4) This fourth rumbling is put here as a challenge for correction in my understanding, provided it is incorrect. At this moment, I understand the Village may offer some tax abatement but within very limiting restrictions. If this is so, it certainly is not what we need. We need to be able to offer tax help to new residents and new businesses wishing to use our wonderful old and empty buildings.

*Please, **please*** remember that much of my above list is not necessarily based on provable fact, at least at this moment. "Then why print it?" you might ask. Well, sometimes you just have to put your private-thinking thoughts out there to test the waters, to see what floats and what sinks. If, factually right or wrong, it sets others thinking, then it's floatin' down that river of potential progress.

FROM THE MAYOR

Our mayor Ernie asked that I let everyone in the Village know how aware he is that sidewalks and streets have not been cleared in the way to which we have become accustomed; but this recent storm was just a bit stronger than the capabilities of our machines and crew. Even now there are areas, particularly between the plowed streets and the sidewalks, which need removal. He asks that everyone, businesses and residents, pitch-in and help a little, even just a few feet of cleared sidewalk means the crew can go to other clearing and address usual tasks. He thanks you for your understanding and help.

FROM OUR SCHOOL

In One Ear, Out A Different Mouth – by Janelle Brassard

Did you know that in 2010 about 56% of all students have witnessed bullying while at school? In fact, 15% of students didn't show up that year due to fear of being bullied. Also, 71% of students reported bullying as an on-going problem at school; this caused one in every ten students to drop out or switch schools to get away from the incessant harassment. This is just scratching the surface on the effects bullying has on students, teachers and parents. Bullying is rupturing the peace within our nation's educational institutions.

There are four main types of bullying: cyber (using digital technology), physical (hands-on action directed toward another person), verbal (demeaning and rude comments), and social (excluding a person from events, groups or conversations). This tormenting has increased annually, but why? There are multiple reasons that could be listed, one of which would be the unlimited opportunities adolescents have to be brutal to one another without facing consequences. In result, more and more teenagers have suffered physical and emotional abuse from their peers.

Everyone plays a role in bullying, students, teachers, parents, etc. The effects can be harsh on all of us. The pupil who is getting bullied is very likely to have low self-esteem and enter a state of depression. Within this state of mind they can develop health problems, get poor grades and have trouble sleeping. The victim is vulnerable to an overall low feeling and aura of misery.

The target of the bully is not the only one who suffers. Observers are affected as well. As one witnesses bullying, it is expected of them to join in with the oppressor. This can lead to either a guilty conscience for the witness or, if they choose to take the road less traveled, they may become a target of bullying. Also, a fear of school may evolve. The spectator will feel powerless inside a place where they should feel safest.

Now one large question is who this said bully is and what is happening to them? A bully can be defined as someone who harasses or torments another person. They are usually seen as the bad guy in the situation, but what made this person so full of anger, so full of hate? After watching a recent performance put on by Moriah Central School's "On Common Ground" theater group, it was brought to my attention that most teenagers who bully their peers aren't born like this, but taught it. They may have at one point been the victim of bullying and soon resorted to doing it so they wouldn't feel defenseless again. As they hector other youths they, too, are negatively affected. They may get into frequent fights and start drinking alcohol along with vandalizing property. Also, their grades will very possibly decrease and they may even start bringing weapons to school. This proves that bullying truly does have an impact on everyone in a school.

Furthermore, bullying results in children skipping school. They feel like on one is listening to them. Also, they feel scared. This may result in future criminals. In fact, among

students of all ages, homicide perpetrators were found twice as likely as homicide victims to have been bullied previously by their peers.

Since in-school harassments have inflated so much, adults are forced to get involved. Teachers have been stepping up to isolate bullying from classrooms. But there have been a few shocking reports of teachers themselves being the bullies or provoking it. They may yell, or make snide comments towards students. They might be trying to be accepted by their students, but that does not make it right.

Yet, there are still many teachers who have taken a stand against bullying, one of them being Moriah Central School's French teacher, Miss LaBombard. In a short interview with LaBombard she spoke about her opinion on bullying, stating "It is something that is happening all around us. It's something that I try to stop when I see it." Miss LaBombard is an adult who has always made it clear that bullying is completely unacceptable.

In addition to adults taking stands, many parents have been getting involved by reporting bullying. They have gone to school boards and worked with staff within the institutes to prevent the torments. Parents must be patient and caring when it comes to this subject, whether their child is the bully or the target. Since children are often discouraged of speaking up about bullying, a parent must ask their kid and pay attention to changes in behavior. Not all bullying is noticeable, but it is always preventable.

Although parents and teachers are working hard to teach adolescents the importance of kindness, it can be encouraging to see a role model take a stand as well. Many celebrities have made anti-bullying videos and shared their own personal experiences with the public. An example would be Jennifer Lawrence who stated in an interview "I changed schools a lot when I was in elementary school because some girls were mean... They were less mean in middle school, because I was doing all right, although this one girl gave me invitations to hand out to her birthday party that I wasn't invited to." Another celebrity would be Demi Lovato who said in an interview for Seventeen Magazine "I was bullied when I was 12 years old. I'm not saying I was totally innocent – I had my bratty days! But at the end of the day, no one deserves to be bullied. I ended up leaving public school because the bullying got so bad. I just couldn't deal with it." These few celebrities are contributing to end bullying through their inspiring stories.

If you are being bullied or have witnessed it go to an adult. Don't be afraid to speak up! Every 30 seconds a teen commits suicide in the U.S. due to something bully-related. This is no laughing matter. In point of fact, in 2012 there were 13,400 hospital cases where 15-19 year-old girls received treatment for an external cause of intentional self-harm. Also, there were 4,000 case among 15-19 year-old boys. Along with self-harm, teens have abused drugs and alcohol.

The aftermath of this on-going problem has impacted all of us and the youths of this generation have been disheartened for long enough. It's time to take a stand. Young adults are struggling now more than ever. We must work together as neighbors, friends and families to remember the morals we once had as a nation. It is through this that we will regain our sense of community and compassion for one another.

Look for the next issue of the Fact Finder on **Saturday, *January 25, 2014*** at all the usual places and on-line at porthenrymoriah.com. Go to "Living Here" and you will see "Fact Finder" to the far right, one line down.