

THE PORT HENRY FACT FINDER

Reporting the News and Needs of Port Henry and Surrounding Area
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Tim Bryant and family, The North Cheever Sailing Club, Debbie and Ernie Guerin**

PLEASE NOTE: In the last issue of Fact Finder, readers were alerted to the fact that due to a vacation there would be a hiccup in the paper's every-two-week's schedule, so it was planned to have only one week elapse between issues # 24 and # 25; **however** (pause for thinking) that meant all the info about our Labor Day Celebration would be two weeks old. **Therefore** (another pause for thinking – thinking *is* hard) the every-two-week's schedule will be reset and begin again with this issue.

LABOR DAY CELEBRATION!!!

Here is a quick reference list of our Labor Day Celebrations' major events and the times at which they begin. In order of occurrence, beginning on Saturday, September 5th:

- A Sailing Regatta (Port Henry's very first) will be held at the Port Henry Marina, designated race time is 1 PM.
 - A DJ will be at Port Henry Beach at 6:30 PM.
 - Fireworks will be shown at the pier, beginning at dusk.
 - Remain for the Parade of Lights at Port Henry Marina and Van Slooten's Harbor Marina.
- Sunday, September 6th:
- Vendors will begin opening for customers at 10 am.
 - There will be the 4th Bob Vannier Memorial Sailboat Race at Van Slooten Harbor Marina (celebrating its 25 year of service.) Join everyone at 10:30 am to watch the race!
 - The PARADE will be at 1 PM.
 - To be enjoyed before and after the Parade:

Vendors' offering jellies and jams, knitted goods, T-shirts, area crafts and touristy items ("the bridge" cups, painted Champ hats, various logoed T-shirts, etc.); face painting by Penelope; foods (our Port Henry fire department will be doing the BQ chicken, there will be drinks, ice cream, and all the other expected noshing foods available from carts). Kids can enjoy all kinds of games (most with prizes) and, at long last, Pony Rides! An exciting new activity is to be offered - a drumming circle. It will have extra drums for anyone wishing to experience drumming for the first time or a drummer who did not bring their own drum. A 50/50 raffle will be held. And now the Parade! To the sounds of pipes and drums and a brass band, the parade begins: the Color Guard precedes the Grand Marshal's car. There will be government officials and candidates for up-coming offices; clubs, organizations and businesses represented by marchers and cars and six or seven floats. Fire engines? Of course! There will be enough fire engines to satisfy even the most avid of young firemen-to be.

An important announcement! - this year's first place Regatta winner will receive a fully paid electric deck (slip) for the 2016 boating season, compliments of the Port Henry Marina. There also will be other prizes from local Sponsors.

"SPONSORS", this is a magic word, truly a magic word, right up there with those used by Merlin and other great magicians! With their "magic" support of donated money and prizes, our Labor Day Celebration will be much more than it would have been without their generous participation. "Thank You!" one and all. A specific "thank you" to each sponsor will be in the next issue of Fact Finder. We can't take the chance of missing anyone because of Fact Finder's printing schedule.

Everyone! There are going to be two days of very exciting and fun-filled celebrating in Port Henry–Moriah, **guaranteed!** - with but one proviso, no pouring or steady rain. Weather of any kind accepted, except pouring or steady rain!!! Hello out there!?

TOWN OF MORIAH BOARD MEETING NOTES

The Town of Moriah Board met Thursday, August 13th. Their guest speaker was Rob Boula, the CEO of the Elizabethtown Community Hospital, one of four health centers (soon to be five with the addition of Malone's Alice Hyde Medical Center) in our larger area, which are connected to the University of Vermont Health Net Work. This was Mr. Boula's annual report to the Moriah Board. It was a very heartening and reassuring report in all areas.

One of their important areas of up-grading is the "acute care" (patient bed rooms). There are 25 beds, but only two have a private "jon." They are planning to have at least eleven private rooms when the \$10,200,000.00 renovation is completed. Three million of this amount will be the facility's own money and three million will come from fund raising. Mr. Boula felt this was very "doable" as the 2008 renovation of the emergency room came in slightly under expectations and that was during the fiscal "down swing." Work on this project will begin next month.

As of this past May, Ausable Forks has a new health center in full operation, with Dr. Rosenthal and a PA serving its needs.

There is a possibility that Ticonderoga's Inter-Lakes Health facility may be brought into the network through the E-town facility. An eight million grant would be applied to re-do the Ti Health Center. There would be a reduction of beds in the emergency room; seemingly there is very seldom a need for more than a few beds. There would be a tele-linkage to CVPH.

Elizabethtown Hospital now has two mobile MRIs and looks to add a third. It has a 2nd in-house transport which makes having to use EMS or paid transport much less likely.

E-town Hospital has been awarded more than one award based on patient and employee satisfaction. It has won the Guardian Award in patient satisfaction three years in a row. Also it has received note on reduction of patient re-admission.

Fact Finder was not surprised to hear that the financial report was also very "good."

Trustee Tom Anderson read the police report for the months of June and July. Fact Finder has found that usually these stats are important only to the participants or a detective novelist.

There were four building permits issued and the filtration plant needs a new filter, the purchase of which was approved by the Board. If you think your housekeeping is tedious (and expensive), try the "housekeeping" needed to keep a community running.

Another "housekeeping" report came from Jaimie Wilson, Superintendant of Highways. There has been a lot of paving done in the Town. Some of the roads are the joint concern of both the town and the county so both the work and cost have been shared. Work has been done on sidewalks and culverts. As part of a program promoting healthier living, a professional grade Shuffle Board, which will be placed at the Bulwagga Bay Campground, was granted to the Town. The boat rentals at the campground have been doing quite well; although canoes seem to have taken a back-seat to paddle boards.

The Town was fined a \$1000. Because of a sewer over-flow on Planke Road. The "new" sewer system is 30 years old and the DEC is promoting prevention for infra-structure. This combination would seem to mean up-coming work on the system.

The Youth Summer Program was very successful. 110 were signed up for the program with about 90 participants each day. To keep them busy, there were hikes, bicycling, swimming, and many more summer activities. Evidently, everyone was pleased. Supervisor Scozzafava said his office had received *no* complaints from parents.

The bid for work on the Moriah Pump Station was awarded to Emerick for \$27,469.76; the

installation of a Ten Foot Chain Link Fence for the Pickle Ball Court was awarded to Cedar Ledge Fence Company for \$5,000.

For the residents of the Town of Moriah only, there will be town-wide household-clean-up days as follows: Friday and Saturday, September 11th and 12th for Witherbee, Mineville and Grover Hills; Friday and Saturday, September 18th and 19th for Moriah, Moriah Center and Port Henry. Free items for each household: 1 couch, 1 chair, 1 dresser, 1 box spring, 1 mattress, 1 bed, 1 dresser, 1 buffet, 2 tires up to 18", miscellaneous items at the discretion of the transfer station manager.

VILLAGE OF PORT HENRY DISSOLUTION INFORMATION MEETING NOTES

On Tuesday, August 18th, an informational meeting on the dissolution of the Village of Port Henry was held at 7 PM in The Knights of Columbus Hall in Port Henry. 50 - 60 people came to listen, question and offer opinions on the subject.

The meeting began with the following resolution which was adopted: "A resolution authorizing the Village of Port Henry's Mayor, Ernest Guerin to submit an application to the Department of State 2015 Local Government Citizens Re-Organization Empowerment Grant (CREG) Expedited Assistance Program for grant funds to support costs associated with the development and dissemination of information to the Village of Port Henry prior to the required referendum in the amount of \$45,500. with the Village committing to provide a 10% local cash match of \$4,500. is required to be submitted with the grant application."

The Laberge Group, a professional consultant company, was expecting to attend our meeting on Wednesday the 19th but could not make the change to Tuesday the 18th when the Village had to change the date because the KOC had another event that Wednesday. The Company sent a seven page informational packet covering the material they would have presented in person. Trustee Matt Brassard read the material and each person there was handed a copy. For those of you who were unable to be at the meeting, copies of this informational packet may be obtained at the Village Hall during office hours.

The first to speak was Tom Scozzafava, Town Supervisor. He assured us that the Town and Village **do** work together. It seems he believes consolidation is the way to go and mentioned the Waste Water Plant as a good example. It is run by Port Henry but owned by the Town of Moriah which includes Port Henry. He noted that, in New York State, Villages must part of a Town. He then bravely touched on a very sensitive subject, the consolidation of Fire Departments. The Village Board has jurisdiction over the Port Henry Fire Department. However, because a Town may not own a Fire Department, Moriah's fire departments are under the jurisdiction of five Fire Commissioners who have complete say over the needs and expenditures of Moriah's fire departments. They levy taxes for these needs. Mr. Scozzafava said at least the consolidation of Moriah's two fire districts will be discussed, in an effort to get rid of tax rates that are "all over the board."

Next to speak was ex-mayor and Port Henry business owner Gary Cooke. He said it was hard to do business here and if it would make business better, he would be for dissolution. But by delving into the previous dissolution study of 2009 to obtain numbers and then projecting them forward to now, it seemed to show that the Village did better than the Town in the matter of taxes then, and now. He then brought up the fact that over \$300,000.00 in taxes is paid by Port Henry to the Town for highway and lighting services which are not received because the Village takes care of its own roads and lights. Gary Cooke prepared a study on the validity of his accusations and gave it to Supervisor Scozzafava who told Gary that he had done a good job and it was correct; however, Moriah has no intention of waiving these taxes as then it would have to raise the taxes on the residents outside the village by an uncomfortable amount. The

Town *can* waive the payment of these taxes, but Tom Scozzofava said he knew of only two villages who had waived such taxes. Mr. Cooke used up his allotted four minutes and then a resident gave up his own four minutes so Gary could finish his statement.

Margaret Parah spoke to the importance of everyone in the village knowing exactly what they are voting for, the pros and cons on both sides. If someone would create a paper showing this, she offered to deliver this to every resident. Later, in answer to a question received by mail, Trustee Matt Brassard said that the LaBerge Group will just that, after they have been able to study the “now” numbers for both the Town and the Village.

Walt Wojewodzic really couldn't understand why we were again going through the dissolution process just five years after having done it in 2009, particularly as the consultant firm, at that time, said both the Town and the Village had done an excellent job with their part of the process. He also pointed out that although the village had to pay only \$4,500 of the \$45,000 total cost, we, as State tax payers, are paying more than “just” \$4,500. He noted that over the years, since it lost its real tax base by losing the mines, Moriah has lost about 2000 households, a sad statistic. He also noted that the cost of everything continues to go up and that many Town and Village expenses are mandated by the State. Even so, he believes that what has been down will come back up.

Amanda Lovell noted that she had been an accountant for about 30 years and explained the expense figures she was handing out which had been obtained from the Village and Town budgets. She urged the residents of the village to recognize the power they, as a village, have and to use it.

Sandra Lovell said she suspected something was amiss when she learned that the State had lowered the percentage of voters, needed to sign and obtain a petition of dissolution, from 60% to 10%. She explained further that she believed it was that the State found it easier and more profitable to have only one municipality instead of two applying for grants and loans, as a combined request would be less than two separate requests. She also pointed out that she had heard some comments about it being beneficial to get rid of a layer of government by dissolving the Village into the Town. She voiced her opinion that dissolving into the Town would be only swapping one layer of government for another, as governments levy taxes and the Fire Commissioners levy taxes.

Fire Chief Jim Hughes introduced himself by stating previous positions he had held within the village government – on the Board for seven years, Deputy Mayor for a short while, and served on the 2009 committee on dissolution. He said this dissolution should be easier as the previous study could be used as a template and just update the today's numbers. He stressed the necessity of the public knowing the facts from each side. He mentioned that he feels the Port Henry Fire Department gives great service for the money spent – “a big bang for the bucks.” He has worked in Albany for many years and has come to the opinion that Albany thinks the “world is flat”, that the “cookie cutter, one size fits all” approach is the way to go. He strongly disagrees. He reminded the audience that this village was once prosperous and that he believes history will repeat itself.

Supervisor Scozzofava was allowed to speak again to further clarify the town-wide tax, the receiving of taxes for which the village receives no service and his reasons for not waiving this tax. Gary Cooke requested quite strongly that he also be given a second chance to speak. His request was granted. There was a bit of a heated exchange between Mr. Cooke and Mr. Scozzafava before Mr. Scozzafava explained that there was a town-wide tax on highways and street lighting which meant that the village paid its own taxes for highways and street lighting but also its portion of both these town-wide taxes. He said to waive these would mean a large increase in taxes for the residents outside the village and he did not plan to waive this unfair but State-permitted tax, saying “it's not my law, it's not my rule.”

Gary Cooke's additional information was how the village could use a process of law, by going to the Town and requiring discussion with them concerning this problem, it seems the State could be brought into this process. This is in case the village remains a village, otherwise it is a moot point, useless information. Gary finished his second time at the microphone with, "The Town is not the answer; it is the problem."

The meeting ended with questions mailed in from interested residents unable to attend. **On zoning** – if the village were dissolved, the Town could make the Village into a district that is zoned. Unlike a village which may not zone a specific area only, but must zone the whole village, a Town may have areas zoned and not zoned. **On Village assets** – if there were a vote to dissolve, could the Village dispose of its assets prior to official dissolution and pay down their debts? Yes. Could they use the General Fund for the same reason? Yes. However, if the Village were to be dissolved, after the official dissolution the Town would own all the Village's previous assets and use them at their discretion as if they had always owned them. **On water** – if the Village were dissolved, the Town would then have two water filtration plants and would probably close the Port Henry facility, Whatever debt remained on this facility would remain the Port Henry residents' responsibility, so they would continue to pay off this debt and, of course, pay their Town Water bills. Also, if the Town has or incurs a water debt, the ex-village residents' would, of course, have to pay their share of this debt. **On sidewalks and garbage** - would sidewalks in the Village be plowed as they are now?, only if the residents ask that it be done and pay for that service. The same seems to be true of garbage collection, the only difference being that there are outside garbage collection companies from which you may choose. It was an excellently informative and well handled meeting. There will be two more such meetings, Wednesday, September 23rd and Wednesday, October 21st. Both meetings to be held at the Knights of Columbus at 7 PM, as was this meeting.

Look for the next issue on **Saturday, September 12, 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.