

THE PORT HENRY FACT FINDER

Reporting the News and Needs of Port Henry and Surrounding Area
vol. 6, issue #4 September 26, 2015

**This issue has been made possible by the generous support of:
Louise and Skip Belden, Craft Gallery/Maid in the Mountains, John and Jackie Viestenz**

TWO “BETTER-A-BIT-LATE-THAN-NEVER” REPORTS

Fact Finder would like to be sure its readers know the winners of the 1st Annual Port Henry Sail Regatta which was held September 5th after the Fact Finder had been delivered. Winners in the PHRF Class were: 1st Place - Jim Morris, Debbie Morris and Tim McGill with the *Rita Louise*; 2nd Place – Allan Hickok with the *Trillium*; 3rd Place – Larry Harmon and Cathy Muller with the *Shearwater*. Winners in the J-24 Class were: 1st Place – Rob Knippler with the *KatKnip*; 2nd Place – Josh Girard with the *Gloria*; 3rd Place – Paul Reese with the *Dancing Queen*. First Place Prize of a free slip for the 2016 boating season and other prizes were awarded at a small awards ceremony that evening at the marina.

TOWN OF MORIAH BOARD MEETING NOTES

September’s monthly meeting of Moriah’s Town Board was held on the 10th at its usual place, the Courthouse in Port Henry.

Assemblyman Dan Stec was a guest speaker at the meeting. He impressed Fact Finder with his straightforward presentation of facts concerning the Petro dam, ethics reform in the State government and broadband for areas which do not as yet have it because of delivery difficulties.

The Petro Dam became a headache for the Petros when they became private owners of property on which the dam was situated. To begin with, maintenance has been expensive, then there was Irene. Irene plus Mill Brook plus Petro Dam caused a lot more headaches - for *everyone*, damaged bridges and roadways were major problems as well as damage to water and sewer infrastructure. So everyone was very, very happy to hear Dan Stec announce that, just a few days prior, word had been received that everything was finally in order and bids could go out and work could begin on getting rid of the headache-causing Petro Dam. Next, Dan Stec stressed his disappointment with the State for allowing this legislative session of the houses to close without acting on the already budgeted Ethics Reform Bill, particularly that part which deals with a forfeiture of all pension benefits for anyone found guilty of corruption. The last day the Senate acted on it but the Assembly did not. Assemblyman Stec went so far as to think that the State is not that interested in pursuing the Ethics Bill. He noted that the flip side to not acting on the Ethics Bill, is that the County has received good funding for bridges and roads. The third major subject Dan spoke about was the ½ billion earmarked for broadband for Upstate. It is supposed to happen within the next four years. Dan Stec said it is necessary because students and businesses are at a disadvantage by not having ready access to the internet. Students frequently must travel to a Town Hall or Library just to do their homework, sometimes as far as ten to fifteen miles. In the winter that is really a hardship. Businesses without the internet accessibility of broadband find it difficult to compete with companies which can communicate with internet’s speed. It also can be a public health issue.

Assemblyman Stec and Supervisor Scozzafava discussed the tax-cap, reasons why it was instituted and why it did not work too well. Evidently, it was thought it would help at the time it was instituted and could be removed when the economy came back. Well, it didn’t do so well. It seems Albany thinks that what works for Long Island and Westchester and New York City works for Upstate. Of course it doesn’t. When you are a high-spender then you can easily find places to cut expenditures, but if you have been frugal you have small wiggle space and you are down to the bone pretty quickly. Scozzafava said, as he often has, that taxes based on property are one of the most regressive forms of taxation

because they are not based truly on your income. They are supporting services which were never intended to be supported through real property taxes. Dan Stec was an extremely knowledgeable and interesting guest.

There were two bids which had been offered on fuel for the Town. The lower bid came from Avery, therefore they were awarded the bid.

Jackie Viestenz asked (as she didn't know the outcome of the dissolution vote) to make a budget request to the Town concerning flowers for the Village, including both bridges. She continued saying, if the voters keep the Village, she will be coming to the Town to pay for the flowers at the Johnny Podres sign. Previously they have been included with the Village flower allotment, but she felt that this would only be fair. The Supervisor agreed.

Linda Smyth reported that her mural which has been at the "Wheelock Garage" was taken down with the renovation of the building and she was looking for a new home-site for it. She felt it would be nice to have it in Witherbee, Johnny Podreses hometown, or Mineville; Supervisor Scozzafava agreed. They discussed the possibility of Power House Park (although it is still a work-in-progress) at the end of Tracey Road. She also suggested the side of the Witherbee/Mineville Firehouse (which request, Scozzafava reminded her, would have to be addressed to the Town's Fire Commission.) Linda said that if it were to be free-standing, she would need the Town's help in constructing a way for it to stand and a lip to protect it. The Supervisor assured her of the Town's help.

Cathy Sprague spoke for the Moriah Chamber of Commerce, pointing out there are now definite office hours, Fall and Winter hours are now in effect, Thursdays and Fridays – 10 am – 3 PM, manned by a paid staff. First, thanks to Tim Bryant's Bunyanesque efforts, came a fine office right on Main Street and now the next step has been made to help in making it an involved, useful tool for the businesses of our area. The goal for next year is more manned hours and more members enjoying expanding Chamber services.

She continued with her impressions of Labor Day. Her overriding impression was that it had been truly a team effort. The Labor Day committee of four were joined by the Town of Moriah, the Village of Port Henry, the pH7 Committee, the PH Fire Department and Auxiliary, Sponsors, vendors, other activities offered at other venues to enhance the joy of the day, the clean-up crew (of course) and many friends asking to be volunteers or just helping in any way they could at the moment.

Department Head reports began with a suggestion from Jaime Wilson that the Board make a resolution to put out bids for purchase of the Transfer Station's metal. It was noted that the price was (way down) "horrible." A majority of the roads in the Town of Moriah are also County roads, so there is shared responsibility and cost for the Town.

The Building Code Inspector issued three building permits, did three inspections and had one complaint.

Supervisor Scozzafava brought up the subject of the continuing problem of properties in the process of foreclosure, which no one has the responsibility of maintaining. The owners have deserted them and the banks as yet do not own them to be able to auction them off.

There were discussions on the Summer Youth Program and Time Warner's contract renewal on their tower, but Fact Finder will wait to report on these until next month as there will be more definitive information brought to the October Board Meeting. The Campground, which will close October 11th, reported a good season Paul Salerno took a moment of his time to thank the Fire Departments and everyone involved with keeping the forest fire in check which could have destroyed more than its contained six or seven acres. The rest of the meeting was spent in what Fact Finder calls "housekeeping," absolutely necessary but seldom exciting and what we residents should most appreciate about our Board.

VILLAGE OF PORT HENRY BOARD MEETING NOTES

The Port Henry Village Board held its monthly meeting September 14th. There was an update on Zoning: “the contract received from Nan Stolzenburg of Community Planning & Environmental Associates, for the implementation of a zoning law and to update the Comprehensive Plan was signed by Mayor Guerin and sent back to Ms Stolzenburg on August 14, 2015. The Village is awaiting a fully executed copy of the agreement.”

Only two letters of interest to serve on the Planning Board have been received to date (after almost a year of asking), there are three more seats which must be filled. I look around at Board meetings (Town as well as Village) and I see very, very few residents attending, unless there is something to complain about or Dissolution is being discussed (sometimes used as another venue for complaint and/or accusation). It seems most people would rather receive information from any other source than the organization or person with which they feel they disagree. I am not saying that these persons are aberrant human beings, quite the opposite, it is a deeply entrenched human failing. Fact *is* a hard pill to swallow, it might change someone’s thinking. We cleanse out computers of “trash”, maybe we should cleanse our bionic computers.

Back to the task at hand, September’s monthly Board meeting. “Proposed Local Law No. 3 of 2015; extending the Moratorium on Street Level Residential Development in a Portion of the Village of Port Henry was presented to the Board for review. A Public Hearing will be held on **Tuesday October 13th at 6:45 PM**, prior to the monthly Village Board meeting. A copy of the proposed Local Law is on file for public inspection at the Village office during regular office hours.

DPW reported they spent 5 days cleaning the Dam on Cheney Road, ridding it of all sludge and leaves, by having it sprayed by the Fire Department’s Truck. There was a sewer collapse at the Mobil gas station where, with NYSDOT, where they replaced 40 feet of two different types of pipe and then repaved the area. They cleaned up after the Labor Day Celebrating. Thanks for the nice job! They worked on the Spring Street water needs, permanent and temporary. This just points up how much troublesome “housekeeping” is involved in keeping even a small Village running acceptably smoothly. Fire Chief Hughes met with Nicole Allen and Rebecca Yanus of The Laberge Group to give them information in their data collection effort on the Village Dissolution. Chief Hughes completed and submitted a *Home Depot Foundation Grant* requesting \$5000 for building weatherization project. He requested the Board’s approval for Tori Boisvert’s PHFD membership application. As of the date of this meeting, PHFD has responded to 50 calls.

Angela Wallace was hired to finish out the remainder of the Campground season as part-time maintenance personnel. Jimmy Baker was promoted to a Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO) on August 17, 2015. Tom Slattery was hired as a permanent, full time laborer as of August 24th.

“The Village received a letter from National Grid’s 10,000 Trees and Growing Program that the \$350 reimbursement contribution amount was approved, as well as acceptance into the program.”

The Board resolved to reduce the speed limit on Main Street/Route 9N (entering from the south) from north of Park Place’s entrance north to Dock Lane. **Be on the lookout for these speed-changed signs!** A Property Maintenance Complaint Form was received with regard to the sidewalk and drainage issue at the corner of First Street and 5 College Street.

As only registered voters of Port Henry Village will be allowed to vote on the Dissolution Referendum of October 27th, those of you wishing to vote and are not registered may obtain registration forms at the Village Hill and Sherman Free Library. These forms are processed within two days of being received at the Essex County Board of Elections.

NOTE: Village Hall will be closed on **Columbus Day, Monday October 12th**, therefore the October monthly meeting of the Village Board will be on **Tuesday October 13, 2015.**

It was short meeting, closing before 8 PM. This editor was delighted, it meant being able to see the season finale of The American Ninja Warrior!!!_Was able to watch, not one but, two contestants make it

to and through Level 4 (a first in seven seasons of being on TV!) The winner (by being fastest) won a million dollars.

MORIAH CHAMBER OF COMERCE MEETING MINUTES - Sandra Lovell, Secretary

“The Moriah Chamber of Commerce met Thursday September 17th at its office on Main Street in Port Henry to elect a new roster of officers and to discuss recent activities and future plans for the Chamber.

The meeting began with a brief report and discussion of the success of this year’s Chamber-sponsored Labor Day Celebration. Although the Celebration Committee (Cathy Sprague, Ronnie Cunningham, Jackie Viestenz and Sandra Lovell) was time-stressed, the celebration seemed a huge success as there was only praise from everyone who attended. The Committee was unanimous in attributing this to a team effort from not only the committee and members of the Chamber, but from many volunteers who came forward to help in whatever way they could, even the weather was perfect. Also another positive sign was four or five vendors (before they left) said they were going to return for next year’s Labor Day.

The accepted necessity of fund raising brought forth several ideas other than Coin Drops (which some do not like but seem to be one of the best and easiest ways to obtain funds). Some of the other ideas were: a Memory Tree would be at the Band Stand during the Christmas Train visit, a large Basket (or more expensive Item) Raffle or several smaller raffles, go to Sponsors and get them to “lock-in” to annually sponsoring a specific Labor Day activity for a specific amount of money (both the sponsors and the Chamber would then know exactly the amount of money to be expended/received and save both the Chamber and the sponsors that yearly duty visit.)

Other topics touched on were, would one for-the-disabled Porta-Potty be sufficient rather than one regular and one for the disabled, be sure and request coin-drop time early; the Grand Marshall’s car needs a sign; the Dunking Booth was not in a good place and the Band Bus needs to be moved closer to College St.; how best to support the needs of local businesses (Web Page Ads, etc.); how to obtain more Labor Day help from ROOST (send letters to Roost, showing how much increase in visitors there is over the Labor Day weekend.)

Elections, (the terms of office being from now until elections held after Labor Day 2016) were held with the following results: President, Cathy Sprague; Vice-president, David Koran; Treasurer, Ashleigh Christian; Secretary, Sandra Lovell. John Viestenz was re-appointed as Payroll Officer, with the understanding that he is authorized to discuss Chamber payroll and insurance matters with the IRS, Social Security, Medicare and similar NY State offices, and also to make required payments to those offices via electronic transfers without a second signature. Board Members are: Ronnie Cunningham, Janell Jurkewitz, Gale Baker, John and Jackie Viestenz. The fundraising committee is David Koran, Ashleigh Christian and Cathy Sprague.”

The Moriah Chamber of Commerce invites all persons and businesses, who are interested in seeing the Town of Moriah and the Village of Port Henry prosper with new businesses and new residents, to join the Chamber. The larger the membership the larger the pool of ideas with which to help the Chamber’s new roster of officers promote our area. For further information, call 518-250-1050, email moriahchamber@gmail.com, or, better still, just drop in the office anytime when the “Open” flag is flying.

SECOND INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON DISSOLUTION NOTES

The second informational meeting on Dissolution was held Wednesday, September 23, 2015 at the KOC Hall in Port Henry at 7:00 PM. There was a large group which seemed to fill all seats. I had

understood that at this meeting there would be a lot of figures to compare, this did not happen and I was rather “ticked off” until someone reminded me that this “process” was under a very disabling time constraint which had not been in place for the last Dissolution. Reason? The State! It is so seemingly determined to dissolve all villages in the State that not only did it telescope the time in which all ducks have to be in a proper line, it lowered the percentage of voting residents able to initiate a Dissolution from, previously, 60% to 10%.

Everyone signed in and was asked if they wished to speak. Nine or so people chose to speak and did so within a 3 minute limit, after the Laberge Group did a Powerpoint presentation about the “process” of Dissolution, reading information from a projected screen which was too small to be read by most of the audience. This would be a real minus except that this information is at the Village Office where it may be obtained by merely showing up and asking for it. The time constraint is again hindering in that the meat of the information, all voters need to know to be able to make an informed decision, will not be available until the next and last informational meeting – **Wednesday, October 21st** – until the vote on **Tuesday, October 27th**. The Special Elections will be held at the Port Henry Fire house, with polls open from 12:00 N to 9:00 PM.

The speakers seemed to be pretty well divided between the “pros” and the “cons.” I, as a resident of Port Henry, felt that there were so many question marks to be answered by the non-available numbers. Even then, it seemed like there were too many projected outcomes to any number result and then more than one option to anyone of these non-definitive answers. I can only hope the next informational meeting will bring some non-shifting answers to my question-marked filled mind.

Look for the next issue on **Saturday, October 10, 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.