

Town of Dix Newsletter

Town Hall – 304 Seventh Street, Watkins Glen, NY 14891

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As the Town Board struggles with preparing a budget that is not hurtful to you the taxpayer and yet delivers the services we are mandated to provide, we are overdue in letting you know some of the critical issues affecting you in the Town.

Water District

The movement to form a County Water District failed earlier this year. The proposal, which would have joined the Towns of Dix and Reading and the Villages of Watkins Glen and Montour Falls into a singly-operated water system, was not endorsed by the two Villages. This was a big disappointment to the Dix Board, since it would have made the water rates consistent to all users. Dix Water District No. 2 is very expensive to operate and it not only impacts our individual users with high rates, but negatively impacts the Watkins Glen International and Schuyler Co Business Park facilities at the top of the hill. Currently, WGI subsidizes the electric bill for pumping the water through 4 stations up to the track as well as the Village of Watkins Glen for labor and equipment charges.

The Water District is still struggling with meeting the NYS DOH limit for trihalomethanes, (THMs), a contaminant often formed when water flow stagnates. The Village of Watkins Glen is incorporating recommended system improvements as they develop their new Seneca Lake Water Intake facility. This project, due for completion by fall 2010, should dramatically reduce the THMs to within compliance year round.

Additionally, we are currently trying to negotiate new water rates with the Village of Watkins Glen that has implemented a 13% increase to the in-Village users while increasing the Town District by over 55%. This has been a very challenging process for the Board.

Sewer District

Not much to report right now since the Village raised the rates about 55% a couple of years ago while increasing the rates inside the village limits only modestly. SCOPED cancelled their study on combining the sewer districts of the two towns and two villages due to the huge costs; it will remain a consideration for the future.

Property Revaluation and Budget

The Town of Dix equalization rate will be 100% with the new levy as of January 1, 2010. We know this has been trying to some of you. We are also faced with a 20% increase in the cost of health insurance for our employees. The Board has started eliminating part-time elected officials from insurance eligibility, which will help us offset this huge increase in premium.

An important part of the budgeting process over the last four years was establishing capital reserves for equipment, building, and project work to lessen the cost of financing these improvements to the Town. We are in the process of purchasing a tractor/mower, which follows the addition of a new small truck last year taking advantage of our reserves and not burdening the tax payers with interest costs. We are also preparing to advertise for bids for a front line 10 wheel dump and plow truck next year. We will lessen the financing costs for this purchase by making a down payment through our capital reserve and short term financing at the current low interest rates.

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I am optimistic that with the Board's efforts on the budget, only a modest increase to your next tax bill for 2010 will be realized. We will be having a public budget hearing at 7 PM on November 5, 2009 at the Town Hall.

Highway Improvements

Highway Superintendent Dick Richtmyer and Deputy Superintendent Mike Cole were busy this year taking advantage of the Town's dedicated highway capital funds as well as the NYS Capital Highway Improvements Projects (CHIPS) funds, a NYS Multi Modal Grant thru State Senator Winner, and Empire Pipeline damage settlement funds. Work included reconstruction of parts of Meads Hill and Van Zandt Hollow Roads, a culvert replacement on Bronson Hill Road, and various roadway paving projects around the Town. We are not optimistic the Governor will provide CHIPS funds in the 2010 – 2011 budget proposal. Therefore, we will provide a more modest improvement budget for next year. Should NYS come through with a CHIPS allocation, we will provide a budget amendment next year to take advantage of those funds. Schuyler Co. is in the process of replacing the Van Zandt Hollow Road bridge. Although the Town may make some improvements to the two hills leading into the bridge approaches, we have no investment in the actual bridge project. You also may have heard the Town of Dix is part of the soon-to-open Shared Services Highway Maintenance Facility on South Decatur Street in the Village of Watkins Glen. The Town is only a participant in using shared clerical and purchasing services with the combined staff of the Schuyler Co. Highway and Village of Watkins Glen Street Departments. Again, we have no investment in this facility.

Recycling

The Town was spending over \$5000 a year on recycling. One of our local businesses decided to get into the garbage and recycling transfer business. We are pleased that Swarthout's Recycling is now collecting your recycling items free of charge and taking a modest charge for your garbage bags on the same trip. We appreciate Swarthout's dedication to our community.

Supervisor's Comments

I ask that you participate in your Town government by attending meetings, volunteer for the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Tax Assessment Board of Review, and other committee opportunities in Town government. Please pay attention to our website, www.townofdix.com, and other local publications for meeting notices, etc. We welcome calls to the office at 607-535-7973 to let us know of your needs and concerns, or to volunteer.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in these many tasks that confront us and the Town.

Chuck Franzese, Supervisor

PS: The Town Board is considering establishing a Town Symbol. We need your ideas on what this could be. We previously displayed an outline of the WGI race track with graphics inside, however that was never adopted as an official symbol. Please share your ideas with us!