



TOWN TALK

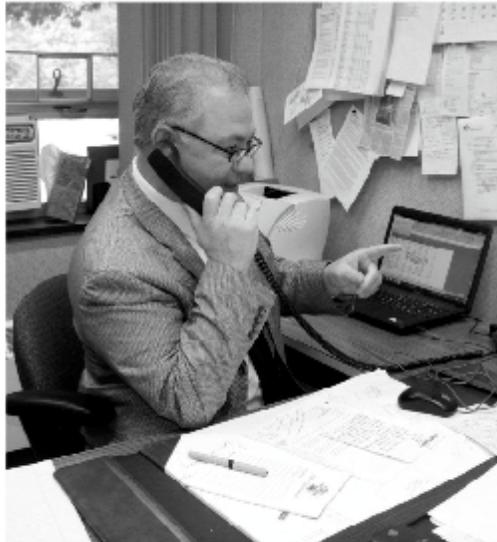
News from the Town of Elmira

F A L L - W I N T E R 2 0 1 1

Number 32

GREETINGS

Tax Levy Tumbles Again!



Town Supervisor, David P. Sullivan

Dear Friends:

As this Town Talk goes to press your town board has passed a final budget for 2012 that reduces the overall tax levy by about 2%. We accomplished this through many months of planning and deliberation, as well as input from our dedicated department heads. Municipalities across New York State are struggling to stay under the tax cap passed by the state legislature. The good news for the Town of Elmira is that drafting a budget that reduces the tax levy for a second consecutive year is possible because of another strong year of sales tax revenue, a healthy fund balance and the board's commitment to keeping expenses in check.

Once again, services have not been sacrificed! Highlights for 2012 include investing \$175,000 in roads, resurfacing the Pirozzolo Park tennis courts and accepting bids for a new concession stand. Construction of the stand will be paid for through bonds so we can spread the cost of the project over many years, thus reducing the impact on the tax base in the Park District. Keep watching Town Talk for more information on these and other exciting projects.

If you want to know what's up BEFORE the next issue arrives, join us anytime at the town board meetings. You'll find a friendly group of

folks convened in the courtroom on the third Monday of the month at 7 P.M. Agendas and past meeting minutes are available on our website, TownofElmira.com.

Happy Holidays!

GREAT NEWS

The Town of Elmira is Growing!

A Community Garden, that is. Last spring, several residents, including some who've lent their time and talents to the thriving Community Garden at the City's Katy Leary park, suggested the Town of Elmira create such a growing, gathering place as well. Town supervisor and board members are continually cultivating new ideas to enhance residents' quality of life, so this idea was met with great enthusiasm. Due diligence to protocol and procedure was particularly important, so discussions at public town board meetings took place well before the plan was implemented.



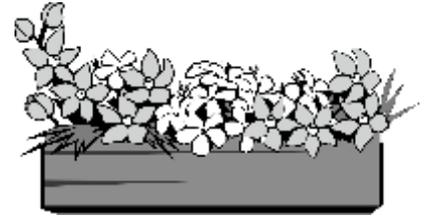
Scott Eschbach at Work on a Garden Box

Continued page 3

SEASONAL SHORTS

Gotta Get a Garden Box?

Good gardeners know a successful garden begins now. If you want to be considered for a 4" x 12" raised wooden "plot" in the Community Garden at Pirozzolo Park for spring 2012, please submit your name to Town Supervisor, Dave Sullivan by phone, mail, email, or in-person. Boxes will be distributed on a first come, first serve basis. If demand exceeds availability then boxes will be distributed by lottery.



Helping Hands

Do you need assistance raking leaves, shoveling snow, fixing a fence or putting away your flower pots? Consider calling the Boy Scouts of Troop 101. Scoutmaster, Dan Carpenter can harness several dozen helping hands in a hurry and says they are always looking for more ways to be of service. Give him a call at 607-331-1193

By the Numbers

Code Enforcement Officer, Chip LeValley wants to see you! Well, your house numbers, actually, especially in the case of an emergency. "All homes in the Town of Elmira should have clearly visible house numbers at least 4" in



height on the front of the house," he says. "New York State's Property Maintenance Law requires they be that big and in a contrasting color to the house so they can be easily spotted from the road."

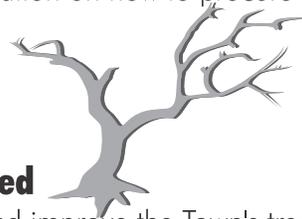
COMMUNITY GARDEN continued

Members of the board, recreation committee and the gardeners themselves proposed centrally-located Pirozzolo Park as the logical location. Several sites were sourced for sunlight, soil quality, accessibility and most-importantly, cost-efficient development. A perfect parcel adjacent to the former Jewish Community Center, just beyond the soccer field was identified, procured and primed.



Prepared Garden Plot with Top Soil Under Tarps

Town Buildings and Grounds Custodian, Scott Eschbach expressed his support for the project. "I think it's a great idea," he says. "I have raised-bed gardening experience myself, so I hope folks feel free to ask me questions." This fall, Eschbach constructed twenty-four 4' x 12' wooden garden boxes. Once completed, the fenced garden will have room for thirty-two. Eschbach and others hope the garden grows into a multi-generational gathering spot. Could Master Gardener classes on responsible growing practices and maybe even a produce giveaway or harvest festival be next? That's totally up to town residents! For information on how to procure a plot, call Town Hall at 734-2031 and/or check out our Seasonal Shorts section!



Town Trees Targeted

The Community Tree Board continues its efforts to manage and improve the Town's tree canopy. According to Matt Mustico a certified arborist, contracted to investigate trees targeted by last year's tree survey as "in need of assessment" has identified ten trees considered hazardous. "We'll let folks know when we're taking them down," assures Mustico. "Residents with affected trees will receive written notification by mail from the Town."

Clipped Grass & Falling Leaves

Together with Highway Superintendent, Matt Mustico, LeValley also reminds residents that raked leaves and clipped grass need to be kept far away from storm drains. If you're not using a bag, please keep the blower facing the "grass side" not the street. Also, Mustico says the Town Compost Facility (open until the end of November) is the place to dispose of sticks and yard waste, "Please don't put them in your leaf pile."

Leaf pick-up will continue until...



... The First Snow!

As much as we'd like to avoid it, we all know the cold, white stuff is on the way! Please remember to keep the roadways clear, especially near the ends of driveways. Visibility is key to vehicle and pedestrian safety.



Odd/Even Parking

Police Chief Pete Michalko remembers watching "a bunch of guys running up a side street in West Elmira with a backboard and a defibrillator" when cars parked on both sides of the narrow road prohibited the rescue vehicle from reaching the house. "Imagine if it were you or your loved one," he says. "I never want to see that again." Everyone can help prevent it by remembering Odd-Even Parking runs from November 1st through April 1st. Michalko adds he's stepping up enforcement, "This year there will be no warnings, just tickets."

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

National Fire Prevention Week Open House



West Elmira sure knows how to make Family Fire Protection fun! This year hundreds of town residents braved rainy, cold weather to join the party. Along with fire trucks, rescue vehicles, hot dogs and fire hats, the Fire Department teamed up with a host of community helpers including Erway Ambulance, the Elmira Police Department, the Chemung County Sheriff's Department, Smokey the Bear and a host of other regional fire companies to provide hands-on experiences for all!

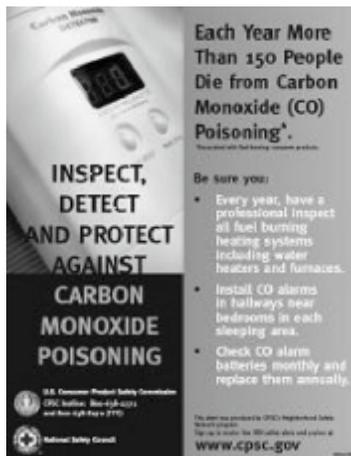


Free giveaways included smoke detectors, batteries, pencils, pins and lollipops. Chief

Michalko and his team fitted kids for free bicycle helmets. Bobby K and WLKY provided the bounce and the beat!

Fire Chief Jack LeValley's Check List

- ✓ Change the batteries on smoke and carbon monoxide detectors now
- ✓ Clean the chimney and/or fire box
- ✓ Confirm fire extinguishers are ready and at-hand
Call with any questions



Chip Chimes In

New rules require that smoke and carbon monoxide detectors (whether individual or so-called "combo" units) be sufficiently present and in good working order throughout the house. "There should be one (of each) in all the sleeping areas," says Code Enforcement Officer, Chip LeValley. "Additionally, smoke detectors are required on every level of the house, generally in the hallways near sleeping units and carbon monoxide detectors are required on the lowest sleeping level, as well as near the fuel-burning furnace or boiler, itself." Questions? Call Chip at 734-3608; he'll review what you've got and what you'll need to keep your family safe in all seasons.

Changing Of the Guard

Nearly every kid at Hendy Avenue Elementary School, along with most of the parents, teachers, administrators and staff knows Patsy Cornacchio. The popular West Elmira crossing guard braved many years of rain, snow, sleet, cold, hot sun and hazardous traffic to keep pedestrians and cyclists safe. He also provided a great example of community, sharing many laughs, observations and stories with his "customers" over the years. He'll be long remembered and remain much-loved now that he's relinquished his reflective vest and bright red stop sign.



Denny Barnes is Well-Known on Water Street

Keep your eyes open... you'll still see him "checking his corners" from time to time in his silver van and coffee at Cozy Corner continues, of course.

Patsy, Denny and Ron All Say **SLOW DOWN!!!** Obey School Zone Speed Limits & STOP for pedestrians and cyclists at the Crosswalks."

Pay Attention; It's the Law!

Police Chief Michalko says pedestrians and cyclists can help by wearing light clothing, especially now that it's getting darker, earlier!



Ron McConnell Keeps Church Street in Check

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR

Lois Gridley

"We had a little bit of everything here," remembers the elegant woman sitting on the sofa in her sun-filled townhouse. In 1947, Lois Gridley came to Elmira with her husband, Lyman who joined his uncle's Ford dealership, Clute Motors. She quickly became enmeshed in the bustling life that thrived here. Her husband eventually owned and operated his own car dealership, Hartman Lincoln-Mercury, for more than twenty-five years. She raised four children, three of whom have made bustling lives for themselves right here; the fourth is only as far away as Burdette.



The Gridley Home, High Pond Road on East Hill

SUMMERTIME IS TOPS

Here are some hot shots to warm you through the cold, winter months ahead.



Your Town Recreation Commission brought you another summer of fun at Pirozzolo Park! This year's musical guests included local favorites, Top Shelf. Parks & Recreation Superintendent, Chip LeValley says the "drier than average" season gave him time to complete ball field maintenance and reduced the usual amount of mowing. "I love seeing all the facilities used by the community -- from the GETA tennis lessons and tournaments at the courts, to all the baseball and softball leagues and of course, the kids swimming and playing."



Off-Season Reminders
Cross Country Skiing is Welcome at the Park
Rollerblade Hockey on the Tennis Courts is NOT!



Top Shelf photos by Peter Herchanik



Popular Post-Season Play

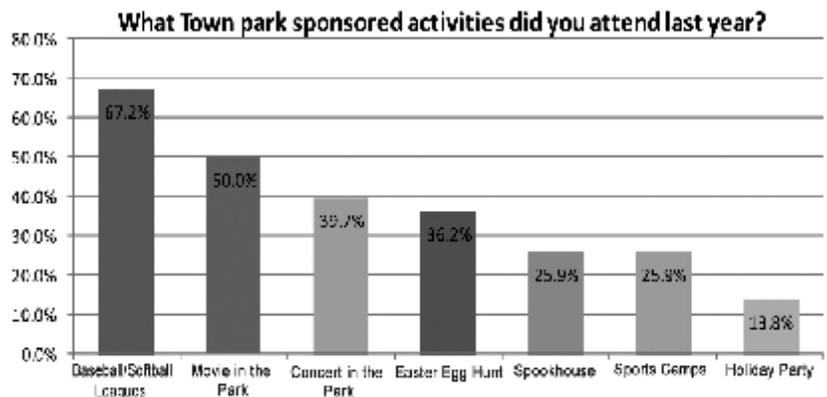
Boys have been playing Fall Ball at Pirozzolo Park for years, so it seemed long about time some girls got involved. Enter Sarah Welliver, mom of three softball enthusiasts, aunt to four more and active member of the Town Rec Commission who "threw out the first pitch" and offered to help get the little ladies a league of their own. Needless to say, it was a big hit! In fact, according to Parks & Recreation Superintendent, Chip LeValley turnout for Girl's Fall Ball was twice what was expected! "We had to scramble a little bit to accommodate the demand," he laughs. "But all in all, it was another great use of the town ball fields."

Sue Henbest, mom of Megan is thrilled the girls got the extra playing time. "Megan wasn't sure she was going to continue to play softball in middle school," says Henbest. "But since she's been in this league, improving her skills and building her confidence, she definitely wants to play for Ernie Davis next spring." Welliver appreciates all the time and hard work of the coaches and families. "It was a lot of fun for the girls," she notes. "So many of them have come a long way since September."



THE SURVEY RESULTS ARE IN!

In the spring newsletter the Town of Elmira Recreation Commission included the "Voice of the Community" survey to establish priorities for the future development of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services within the Elmira Town Park. We had a good response to the survey, with over 80 households responding representing over 260 residents of the Town of Elmira. Thank You! Some of the most interesting results came from the write-in comments included with the responses, where there was an overwhelming outpouring of pride and love for our Town Park. We gathered lots of great data on the types of park facilities being utilized by the community today, as well as the desire for additions to the park in the future. Here are some of the highlights from the survey:



- Town of Elmira residents love the pool (who wouldn't after the summer we had) and the playground was high on the list as well.
- On the top of the list for new facilities in the park was a hard loop walking trail and a strong desire for a larger park structure to accommodate picnic outings and special events.
- It appears we could do a little better with the communication of park events and activities. The 70+ e-mail addresses we collected will sure help with this along with a new proposed website for the park (coming in early 2012). Stay tuned!

The Town of Elmira Recreation Commission will be using all of the data collected along with the constant informal feedback we get from Town of Elmira residents to guide our future efforts. Thanks again to all of you that took the time to respond and rest assured we have heard your voices! - The Town of Elmira Recreation Commission

Let's Assess

Congratulations to Town of Elmira Assessor, Melanie Purcell! She has earned the distinction of State Certified Assessor as conferred by the State of New York Department of Taxation and Finance Office of Real Property Tax Services. Most impressively, Purcell completed all the necessary coursework to earn her certification more than a year ahead of schedule!

So what exactly does she do? In addition to assisting folks with their STAR status (see related article), her main occupation is to maintain the assessment roll. This is the document that contains every property's assessment and appropriate exemptions. In order to do this, Purcell must verify that the physical description, inventory and market value estimate of every single parcel of real property in the Town of Elmira is up-to-date.

New York State law demands all property within a municipality be assessed at a uniform percentage of market value so that everyone shares the tax burden equally. After carefully insuring the accuracy of the assessment roll, Purcell must also make sure this inventory is available for public inspection (by appointment) and that the tentative roll is filed by the state-mandated deadline.



Melanie Purcell
Town of Elmira Assessor

Every year, after the period for public inspection, the Town Board of Assessment Review acts on assessment complaints during Grievance Day. It then orders any change to the roll before it is made final, and again filed with the state.

As you can imagine this is no easy task and there are many steps along the way. "I'm always happy to help people understand the process," says Purcell. So, for starters, she has provided the following "assessment primer":

Real Property - land and any permanent structures attached to it, such as houses, gas stations, office buildings, vacant lots, shops, etc.

Market Value - how much the property would sell for in an open market, under normal conditions.

Property Value Estimate - an approximation of a parcel's "worth" determined by one of the following three methods -

Comparison - often referred to as the "market approach" this method compares the property to others like it that have been sold recently without any undue pressure on the buyer or seller. Residential, land and vacant properties are most often valued using this method.

Calculation - often referred to as the "cost approach" this method calculates the cost (using today's labor and materials) to replace the structure, with consideration paid to depreciation since original construction. The value is added to an estimate of the market value of the land and this method is used primarily for special purpose and utilities properties.

Analysis - often referred to as the "income approach," this method is most often used to evaluate apartment buildings, stores or industrial properties. Income produced by the property (if rented) is considered along with all operating expenses, insurance, maintenance costs and financing terms.

Enhanced STAR Renewal Reminder

By **Melanie E. Purcell, Assessor**

If you have the **Enhanced STAR (School Tax Relief)** Exemption there are now two ways to renew your application.



If you signed up for the Income Verification Program (IVP) last year when you filed your renewal application, you will not need to fill out an application nor submit income tax returns to the assessor's office at this time. You will receive a postcard from my office stating that you applied for the IVP and therefore Department of Taxation and Finance has verified your income. This postcard should be received around the middle of November 2011. If you receive this postcard you need take no further action.

If you did not sign up for the Income Verification Program, a renewal application will be mailed to you around the middle of November 2011. You will need to file this application and a copy of your 2010 income tax return by March 1, 2012.

If you receive the Enhanced STAR exemption (over age 65, limited income) and you do not receive either a postcard or a renewal application by December 1, 2011, please call my office at 734-1486. Becky and I will be glad to help you.

Basic STAR recipients do not have to renew their application. New Basic STAR applicants must file their applications by March 1, 2012.

MYTHS vs. FACTS

FACT: We still have property owners in the Town of Elmira who have never applied for a STAR Exemption for school tax relief.

MYTH: STAR is only for senior citizens.

MYTH: I can't apply because I'm not 65 yet.

FACT: If you own your home and it is your primary residence there is a STAR Exemption for you.

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR continued from page 5

Like many women of her generation, Gridley devoted a great deal of time to volunteer activities; she taught knitting classes at the Neighborhood House and drove for Meals on Wheels. For eight years, however, she and a friend also owned and operated a gift shop, The Collector's Cupboard. Currently, she enjoys her adult children, six grandchildren and four great grandchildren, as well as summertime spent at Glenora on Seneca Lake.

At first, she lived in an apartment in town, but then spent forty-three years in a "country" home, off Crane Road on East Hill within the limits of the Town of Elmira. "We had a wonderful view of Downtown Elmira, Pennsylvania and into the valley," Gridley recalls. "Of course it meant a lot of driving to and from school, but we enjoyed it, especially the trails and the woods." Her two girls had the opportunity to work with horses and her two boys had adventures of their own with neighbors just their ages. Of course, many friends from the "flats" would come up for a quick getaway. "We would coast, sled, ice-skate, cross country ski and picnic," says Gridley.



FABULOUS FUTURES



Alison Werner

The Town of Elmira recognized two more Outstanding Youths for exemplary service to their schools and communities. EFA 2011 graduates, Mariah Collett and Alison Werner received their awards in April and July, respectively.

Collett, who has begun her studies in Physical Therapy at Daemen College in Amherst, New York was nominated by her high school guidance counselor, Terry Nicklaus. In her letter of recommendation, Nicklaus notes Collett's intelligence and overall involvement, as well as her athletic and musical talents. Whether in the classroom, on the tennis court, in the swimming pool or in the orchestra, Nicklaus says Collett brings her determination, strength and grace. "She is incredibly organized and accomplished."



Mariah Collett

Werner, now attends Mansfield University for Music Education. She was also nominated by her guidance counselor, Eloise Streeter. As a musician, scholar and athlete, Werner excelled in each area throughout her high school years. Outside of school, Werner volunteered at Hendy's Blacktop Carnival, the West Elmira Library and the First Presbyterian Church. Streeter says she's enjoyed watching her "blossom... into a confident and poised leader."

Outstanding Youth Awards are given quarterly by the Town of Elmira to lifelong residents who have made significant contributions to their schools and community, as well as demonstrated qualities of leadership, character and good citizenship. Youth leaders, parents, educators coaches and clergy are encouraged to nominate young people in grades 7 - 12 who reside in the Town of Elmira. Nominations are accepted year-round.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Christmas Tree Pick-Up

This end-of-season ritual begins right after the holiday and continues straight through January. No need to bag the tree, just strip it of its ornaments and place it beside the curb.

Thanks.

ESSENTIALS

-SAVE-

-SAVE-

-SAVE-

Join Us

Town Board Meetings

3rd Monday of the month (Workshop - 2nd Monday)
7 P.M. at Town Hall
(except January, February & December)

Call 734- 2031 for accurate meeting dates/times for Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Assessment Review, Recreation Commission & Justice Court.

Town Hall Hours M-F 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.
Justice Court Hours 8:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M.
Night Court Wednesdays @ 7 P.M.

Call for Submissions

Do you have a feature suggestion for a future issue? Do you have a great Town photo, poem or story? Do you know a neighbor whom we should highlight? Call us. 734-2031

Town Talk is produced bi-annually as a vehicle for news and information about the Town of Elmira which includes West Elmira, West Hill Road, Hillcrest Road, Gordon Circle, Sunset Drive, East Hill and sections of the Village of Elmira Heights. Please contact the Town Hall if you have questions about residency.

Writer/Editor: Blink Creative Services
Designer/Printer: Copy Express

Check us out on the Web: www.townofelmira.com

Contact Us

Seriously, we'd love to hear from you. Better yet. Stop by for a visit!

David Sullivan (Supervisor) 426-4673 / 734-2031
Lori Rupp (Deputy Clerk) 734-2031
Liz Lucarelli (Court Clerk) 734-5971

Jo Ann Sherwood (Town Clerk) 734-2031
Joe Cost (Bookkeeper) 734-2031
Melanie Purcell (Assessor) 734-1486

Fred (Chip) LeValley (Code Enforcement Officer) 734-3608
Becky Carpenter (Code/Assessor Clerk) 734-1486 - 734-3608
Peter Michalko (Chief of Police) 8:30 - 4:30 -- 734-2031
Matt Mustico (Highway Superintendent) 734-0199

Councilpersons

Ron Allison 734-6474
Kenneth Bush 733-4373
Thomas Milliken 732-6760
Marilyn Karski 734-8661



Police Business After Hours 735-8600



Town of Elmira
1255 West Water Street
Elmira, New York 14905

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ELMIRA, NY
PERMIT # 420

TOWN TALK

News from the Town of Elmira

S P R I N G - S U M M E R 2 0 1 1

READ ALL ABOUT IT

News

Tax Relief Redux
Community Garden
Rec Committee Survey Results

Features

Seasonal Summaries & Schedules
Resident Profile -- Lois Gridley

Writer/Editor: Blink Creative Services
Designer/Printer: Copy Express



Check us out on the Web: www.townofelmira.com