



Town of Franklin

February 2002 Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 2

February 2002

**Rt. 3
P.O. Box 209
Vermontville, NY
12989**

PHONE NUMBERS

Town Hall - 891-2189
Town Garage - 891-1578

WEB PAGE

www.townoffranklin.com

TOWN OFFICIALS

Town Supervisor

Mary Ellen Keith

Deputy Supervisor

Gene Goff

Town Councilmen

Janet Goff

Timothy Goff

Walter Kretser

Town Justice

Roger Symonds

Highway Superintendent

Donald Vorrath

Deputy Highway Supt.

Michael Canty

Town Clerk/Tax Collector

Lauren LeFebvre

Attorney for the Town

Edward Murphy

Tax Assessor

Douglas Tichenor

483-0188

Code Enforcement Officer

Edward Lagree

891-5976

TOWN BOARD MEETINGS

Regular town board meetings are held the second Monday of each month. The meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. and are open to the public. The next meeting will be held Monday, March 11, 2002.

Updating is continuing on the town Web page. When it is completed, information available will include board meeting agendas and minutes and the town newsletter.

Town Assessor to Prepare for Property Assessment Update

THE TOWN OF Franklin board met on Monday, February 11, 2002, with all board members present.

Town Assessor Douglas Tichenor was given permission by the board to begin a town-wide update of property assessments. Tichenor's goal is to get the town on a three-year cycle to keep the equalization rate at 100%. This assessment update will not be as invasive or complicated as the town's original re-evaluation process of a few years ago, and he will do most of the work. The state will give the town \$5 per parcel for "maintenance aid"; most of the cost will be for postage to notify residents of changes and the county's charge of \$1 per parcel for processing.

Tichenor also noted that Tax Status Day is March 1. The status of property as of this date is what is used for the next bill.

Assessor office hours at the Town of Franklin Town Hall will be the first Thursday of each month from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Tichenor is available any time at 483-0188, and he is willing to meet with property owners as necessary at the property owner's convenience.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

In his report from the Highway Department, Superintendent Donald Vorrath reported that maintenance and repair work will need to be done on the town garage this summer. The floor of the garage is sinking and may need to be dug up and redone. The rear doors are in need of repair and may need to be replaced.

OTHER ISSUES . . .

The town is overdue for a procurement policy update and will meet on Wednesday, February 27, at 6:30 p.m. for a work session. The public is invited.

The board voted to act on recommendations of the committee on recycling. Every effort will be made to separate recyclable materials at the park, the town hall, and the town garage. The job of taking refuse to the dump will revert to the town custodian. Careful records will be kept of costs and the committee will judge whether to continue having the refuse handled by a town employee or contracted out to a trash removal service.

Property adjacent to the park playground area in in the process of being acquired by the town. Mary Fredenburg, past supervisor, applied for and won a grant to be used to clear out what is left of the old building on the property.

Continued on Page 4

BOARD RECOGNIZES OLYMPIAN DEMONG



Whereas Bill Demong of Vermontville, NY, Town of Franklin, has been designated as a 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic United States team member and

Whereas the sport of Nordic combined skiing includes ski jumping together with cross-country skiing, requiring perseverance, determination, and physical endurance;

We the people of his hometown in the Town of Franklin do therefore recognize his achievements and congratulate Bill Demong for his dedication and accomplishments now and in the future as "Our Olympian of Vermontville".

Mom and Dad, you must be very proud!

Respectfully submitted by
Mary Ellen Keith
Town of Franklin Supervisor
February 11, 2002

TOWN READY TO GO WITH 2001 HUD/GOSC PROGRAM

THE TOWN OF Franklin, with the help of the Friends of the North Country of Keeseville, has been awarded a 2001 Housing Rehabilitation and Replacement Program (or HUD/GOSC 2001 Program) grant. This is the town's third the HUD grant.

Friends will be 22 years old in April. Executive Director Ann Ruzow Holland, who has been with Friends from the beginning, has worked with the Town of Franklin since the first grant in 1990. Another familiar face is Scott Campbell, Friends' Director of Housing Rehabilitation.

Much of this program is the same as past grants, but there are some significant differences. Although the money from this grant still comes from the federal government, the program is now run by the state through the state Governor's Office for Small Cities (hence the GOSC). Instead of working directly with the federal government, the town, through Friends, will be working with a new state agency.

"SCATTERED" DESIGNATION

Since this has been designated as a "scattered" grant, eligible homeowners anywhere in the Town of Franklin can apply. The past HUD grants were "targeted", which meant that only homes within specific geographic areas within the town could qualify.

The grant is budgeted to serve at least 17 households. The process for homeowners who would like to apply begins with contacting town supervisor Mary Ellen Keith, one of the town board members, or Friends. Names will be taken through the beginning of March. (Friends can be reached at 834-9606, or P.O. Box 466, Keeseville, NY 12944.) The names are then put on an Inquiry List.

The Inquiry List is turned over to Friends for the next step, a screening process to verify that the applicants own their home, that they meet income qualifications, and that the

housing is considered substandard under HUD rules.

"GREATEST NEED" RATING

Next, applicants for the program go through a "worst housing condition, greatest need" rating. The overall objective of the grant is to give first priority to those most in need. There are specific guidelines for Friends and the town to follow in the decision process. Highest priority will be given to family homes that are contaminated by lead.

It is necessary that eligibility be verified, and homeowners are required to provide with their signed and dated applications documentation of income; documentation of ownership; confirmation of substandard housing; proof of paid property and school taxes; proof of homeowners insurance, and other information as requested due to special or unusual circumstances. Friends guarantees that all information provided will be kept confidential.

Once an applicant is determined eligible, a housing rehabilitation specialist from Friends will make a site inspection and meet with the homeowner to discuss the program, from which the specialist will draw up specifications for the work to be done. That write-up is sent to contractors for bids. After the costs of the project are estimated, Friends brings the project to the town board, and with board approval and acceptance of a bid from a contractor, work begins.

The housing rehabilitation specialist will provide instructions and standards before each phase of work is begun and will oversee the project, including inspections at all critical stages. The town's code enforcement officer, Ed Lagree, will also inspect the work to be sure it is in compliance with the town's

codes. Payments to the contractors will be released by the town board when the specialist verifies that a stage of the work is satisfactorily completed.

COMPLETION OF PROJECT

At the completion of a rehabilitation project, the homeowner will be asked to sign a mortgage. Money paid out is considered a Note and Mortgage with the homeowner and is used as the security instrument for the Deferred Payment Loan. This DPL is made at no interest and with no monthly payments.

For a DPL of up to \$15,000, the homeowner is required to remain in the house for three years from the date of final payment on the work done. A homeowner awarded DPL of \$15,001 or more must remain in the house for five years. At the end of this period, the mortgage to the homeowner will be discharged. However, if the property is sold or the title changes hands during this period the homeowner will be responsible for payment of the DPL value pro-rated from the time of final payment. Applicants to the program are urged to discuss this carefully with the housing rehabilitation specialist at the beginning of the process to be sure that it is well understood.

Homeowners may have legal concerns and questions, such as regarding the mortgage, or conflicts of interest. Applicants are urged to let Friends know of the concerns; they will be able to make recommendations or help arrange legal aid if necessary.

The town has a long and successful history with HUD and Friends of the North Country. The initial step is as simple as getting your name on the "Inquiry List" by the beginning of March. The program is ready to go! ❖



ROBERTSON HIRED AS NEW TOWN CUSTODIAN

RUSS ROBERTSON, JR., has been hired as the new Town of Franklin custodian—just in time to get to work helping keep the snow plowed around the town hall. Robertson filled the position left vacant by Donald Vorrath, who was elected as Town of Franklin Highway Superintendent in last November's election.

DO YOU RECYCLE . . . OR CONTRIBUTE TO SOLID WASTE?

By Frank Karl

In 1988, the Legislature of the State of New York passed an act to amend the Public Authorities Law in relation to creating the County of Franklin Solid Waste Management Authority, and providing for its functions, powers and duties.

The statute further provided that the Authority "shall consist of seven members, who shall be appointed by the County Legislature", who will serve for three years. No member shall serve for more than two consecutive terms, except after an interval of at least three years. The Authority shall select a Chairman (Brian Harte), a vice-chairman (Ray Susice), Treasurer (Ray Susice), and a Secretary (Jill Shean, the real Treasurer). The Authority may appoint, and at their pleasure remove, an Executive Director (George Eades), Attorney (Brian Stewart) and Landfill Supervisor (Bruce Stowell).

The facilities of the Authority comprise the regional landfill in Constable and three transfer stations, located in Malone, Lake Clear, and Tupper Lake.

The annual budget is approaching \$4 million, which includes paying off the bonds that made possible the purchase of the necessary equipment and

property, construction of the necessary facilities, and the hiring of personnel. Once in operation, the Authority has the responsibility to set the necessary fee structure to "pay" the principal and interest on the bonds of the Authority, together with the maintenance of proper reserves, the expenses of operating and maintaining the properties, and all other obligations and indebtedness of the Authority.

In other words, the landfill should make money. At the current rate, the bonds will be paid off in the year 2015. Recent court decisions regarding waste generated within Franklin County should have a positive impact on our revenue generation.

RECYCLABLES

"The Authority shall recycle Recyclable Materials in conformity with Applicable Law" (New York State and Franklin County) including Local Law #7 and the regulation of the Authority. The Authority Executive Director Eades, has been working with William Dora of the NYS DEC, in finalizing a Franklin County Comprehensive Recycling Analysis Plan, acceptable to the State of New York. Those of you who utilize our transfer station at Lake Clear will continue to see evidence of our improved recycling program.

Yes, to recycle is the law, but more importantly, it means less use of our natural resources, less waste to be put in our landfill, and less pollution into our environment. Future generations may well exist if we stop trashing our world today. If you are recycling, great. Continue. If you aren't, start. If your family, school, place of work, etc., doesn't, take an active roll in starting a program. If you need assistance, the New York State Solid Waste Commission, the DEC, and the Authority are available to help. Phone numbers of agencies are: Franklin County Solid Waste Authority, 483-8270; Office of Environmental Quality, Region 5, 897-1242; and NYS Solid Waste Commission, 455-3711.

Members of the Authority Board in our area are Rick Dattola, appointed by Legislator Tony Mercurio, and Frank Karl, appointed by Gerry Gillmet.

Does your hauler go to the Franklin County Landfill or transfer station? Who would think that garbage could be so challenging and interesting, can have such an our environment, and yes, be such a money-intensive industry? More on solid waste in future issues. ❖

Frank Karl served as Town of Franklin Supervisor from 1995-1998 and currently serves as a board member of the Franklin County Solid Waste Management Authority.

Local Students Get Free Money For College

The Town of Franklin Scholarship Fund would like to help local students pursue their educational goals. The Fund gives out up to three \$250 scholarships each year to residents of the Town of Franklin who have completed at least one semester of post-high school education with a B average or better. All local students, young and old, are encouraged to apply. The application is simple, and scholarships are granted on a first-come, first-served basis. What are you waiting for? Contact Shir Filler at 891-6755 or e-mail shir@northnet.org. The postal mail the is HCR 1, Box 18A, Bloomingdale, NY 12913.

The Town of Franklin Scholarship Fund is administered by a group of town resident volunteers and is funded entirely by voluntary donations from businesses and individuals for the sole purpose of helping local residents pursue postsecondary education in the form of college or vocational school. Current members of the Scholarship Committee are Fran Oliver, Lorraine Rumble, Al Berg, Reid Fitzsimons, and Shir Filler. Anyone is interested in joining the committee should contact Shir Filler as above. All are welcome.

The Scholarship Committee encourages residents to patronize the businesses who have generously contributed to this fund. They include Agway Energy Products, BC Well Drilling, the Adirondack Daily Enterprise, Hyde Fuel, T.F. Finnigan, Evergreen Auto, Fortune-Keough Funeral Home, NBT Bank, Stewart's Shops, Attorney Bob White, Gene's Grocery, and Wilkins Insurance. ❖

STATE PURCHASE OF LANDS

by Frank Karl

In the mid to late 1990's when the State of New York wanted support for the then-Bond Act, our Senate and Assembly representatives met with town supervisors and asked what it would take to obtain support of, or at least non-opposition to, the Act. After much deliberation as to the few pros and many cons of state purchasing or buying of easements or development rights, the superintendents asked for, and received, the "right of the given town in which the property was located to reject the action." Since that time, such actions have been presented to the appropriate town boards for their approval. Within our own town, the decisions of the town board on several occasions where they opposed the act, their wishes were honored. Hopefully, that procedure will continue.

Why would a Town object? The state pays taxes, don't they? Yes, the state does pay taxes but not necessarily at the same level as a private owner. If there are structures, such as hunting camps, on the land in question, the state would remove or destroy them and thus those buildings would be removed from the tax assessment base of the town. Sometimes this happens right away and sometimes after an agreed upon period of time, but they would come off the tax rolls. In the Town of Franklin, a conservative figure of hunting and/or fishing camps or other structures of this type would be thirty to forty, at a conservative average figure of, lets say, \$35,000 each. If all or part of them were to be removed, the resulting loss of assessed value to the town could exceed \$1 million.

So, when a given town board looks at a given proposal, they must consider how many structures are involved and what impact may result on their taxpayers. Simply said, whatever amount is removed from the tax rolls means the rest of the taxpayers in the town have their taxes increased to make up the difference.

That is not all towns must consider. There will be no improvements or development on these lands, so future tax revenues will be lost. If hunting camps are destroyed, the area loses the revenues generated by its members' buying food, gas, licenses, lodging, etc., during the hunting and fishing seasons.

Jobs are lost for the caretakers and various jobs performed by local residents in building, maintaining, repairing, and servicing these structures. The economic impact can be staggering and should and must be considered.

Are there times when a given proposal benefits all concerned, the state, the town and the taxpayers? Yes. As a case in point, when you consider a parcel of land bordering a natural stream or other bodies of water or a hunting area presently privately owned and posted and with no structures involved, and if this property properly is designated to allow access for hiking, hunting, fishing, etc., it would possibly benefit all concerned.

It should be the right of local government, acting through its residents and representatives, to determine what impact a given proposal will have, both negative and positive, and then have their voices heard. In the early 1960's New York State adopted "Home Rule" that should be followed.

To those who would economically starve the residents within the so-called Blue Line into moving out of the area, give some thought as to who would pay for and maintain the necessary infrastructure needed within the park—to keep the roads, businesses, schools, hospitals, etc., as they are.

The very best "caretakers" of the Adirondacks are the women, men, and children who work, live, and play within their boundaries. We must work equally as hard to protect the economic viability of the residents of the Adirondack Park as we do to protect the surrounding environment.

Those who live in the Adirondacks, whether here by choice, birth or both, realize that the mountains' natural resources are the answer to their economic survival. They want bountiful forests to be home to plenty of wildlife. While they want the Adirondacks to be as free from environmental damage as possible, they also want a viable economic region with jobs for all who desire to work and for their children to find suitable employment without having to leave this beautiful land of their birth.

Gather all the information you can and then make your own view on the particular issue. Having a different view on issues does not make one right or wrong, only different. One issue that most can agree on, the Town of Franklin is truly a part of the Heart of the Adirondacks. ❖

Frank Karl lives in Onchiota.



CONSTRUCTION is in process on the corner across from the town hall. Completion date is projected for August, when it will become home of the Vermontville post office. The owner/builder is from Troy, New York.

Continued from Page 1

The property was taken over from the county tax rolls for a cost to the town of \$1. The purchase is subject to a permissive referendum, which was acted on by the board. Qualified voters who oppose the action have an option of presenting the board a petition challenging the acquisition within thirty days of this action. Otherwise, the referendum will take affect after March 13 with no further action.

The town received a letter from the Department of Environmental Conservation notifying the board that an 86-acre parcel of land in the Goldsmith area has been offered for sale to the state. The property

would provide public access to forest preserve land enhancing its recreational use. The board will invite Tom Martin from the DEC to come to a board meeting to discuss the sale will mean to the town before they vote whether or not to challenge the purchase.

The Food Pantry will again have monthly soup suppers at St. Paul's Church beginning February 13. There is no charge for the supper; a donation to the food pantry is welcome. ❖

The town newsletter is produced by the Town of Franklin. Copies are available at the Town Hall, Gene's Grocery, or by writing or calling the town hall.

