

Town of Spafford Newsletter

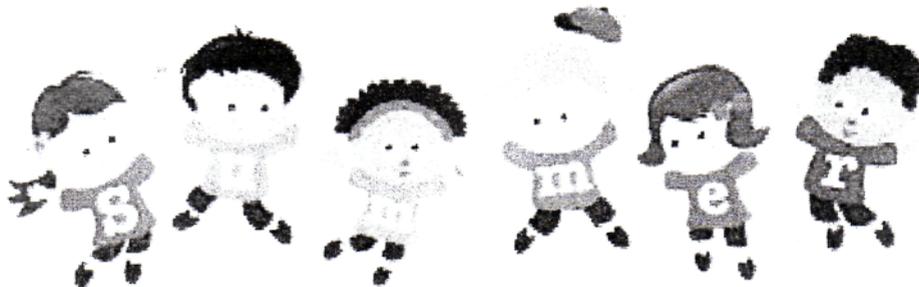
Mary Bean, Supervisor

June, 2014

Recreation Committee

A town Recreation Committee was formed in April. Frank Moran, Ann Furzee, Merrill Clark, Pat Strodel and Brad Wirth sit on the committee with Mary Bean as coordinator. The Town of Spafford owns no recreational park land and the only public access to either Otisco or Skaneateles Lakes for water side recreation is Borodino Landing. Town residents have been complaining that commercial developers and builders working on Skaneateles Lake are using the landing to off-load materials making it difficult to use the landing for recreational purposes. Our first action was to send a letter to commercial users asking for their cooperation in assuring the landing is prioritized for recreational use. Joe Phillips, a Spafford resident and land surveyor, helped the committee identify the boundaries of the landing without charge and we thank him for that assistance. We also discussed the \$2000 given to the Town of Scott annually that allows children in Spafford to attend the Scott recreation program and use the Town of Scott park facilities in Glenn Haven. We will be reassessing that line item in the budget over the summer as numbers of participants become available. I would love to have a lake side park in Spafford where families could picnic, swim and boat but with the high value and limited availability of lake side property, I don't hold much hope of that happening without a significant gift or cooperative agreement.

Spafford Offers Day Camp Opportunity To Town Children



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The town of Spafford is partnering with Lourdes Camp to offer scholarships for a week of day camp to town residents.

- Camp runs Monday-Friday 9am - 4:30pm
- Available weeks are July 7, 14, 21, 28
- Campers must be 7-11 years old
- Need own transportation to camp

Interested: Contact Lisa Valletta, town clerk at 673-4144 or lisa@townofspafford.com

Introducing Scott Chatfield, Attorney for the Town of Spafford

Scott Chatfield was raised in Central NY, was educated at OCC and Syracuse University and is a former Marine. Scott now lives in Marietta and his wife Kathy assists with his clerical work. His current municipal clients include the Towns of Clay P/B, Elbridge ZBA, Granby, Salina P/B, Sennett P/B and Village of North Syracuse. Scott was an Adjunct Professor at SU of Development Law, and lectures for many organizations on land use planning and municipal law. He is currently Chairman of the Town of Marcellus Conservative Party.

Benefits of Having a Town Attorney

Shortly after my election I began receiving phone calls from lawyers soliciting the business of the Town. I was aware that in the past the town had often declined to seek legal advice as those services cost \$125 or more per hour. It was my decision to hire one lawyer on retainer skilled in land use and municipal law who was willing and able to be at meetings on a regular basis and be available to advise all town officials as questions arose. The results of that decision have been gratifying and Spafford's Boards and committees now are operating according to the law and the feedback from our constituents is positive. Any Town official has my permission to call our lawyer for answers to their questions at any time thereby avoiding mistakes.

As a result of not having to consider the per hour charge for services, we have been able to move forward on code enforcement cases dating back to 1998. As we tackle each case, Scott is helping us to develop a template and policy and procedure so we will be able to proceed without his direct intervention in the future. Being able to enforce code is important because it protects everyone's property values, promotes safety and encourages consideration of ones neighbors. Growth and development in our rural and scenic town is inevitable but managing that growth is challenging. The Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Board both have benefited from Scott's guidance and are working diligently to rewrite their procedures and Town Law to correct flaws and comply with accepted process. Architects and contractors have remarked that Spafford now is operating more like the other towns they deal with and they are more willing to accept our decisions, work with us and work in Spafford.

The recent settlement of the Barrows View (old Midlakes Golf Course) tax certiorari case ongoing since 2009 is an example of the benefit of having the town's lawyer on retainer. By following Scott's advice, the town saved thousands of dollars in legal fees and benefited from piggy backing on the school districts settlement. The amount of tax money the town had to pay back was approximately \$6000 and likely, less than the legal fees had we continued with "per hour" services.

Highway Department Workers Accept Contract

The three workers in our Highway Department joined the Teamsters Union and signed their first contract with the town in 2010. That contract was negotiated by the town's law firm who charged by the hour. The contract was being renegotiated by the town's law firm during the fall of 2013. All negotiations ceased after the election so I inherited an expired contract on January 1, 2014. Many municipalities negotiate their own union contracts. I have had some experience with union negotiations and with the confidence gained by attending training provided by the NYS Association of Towns and an attitude of respect for the value of the work done by our experienced workers, we were able to come to an agreement that is beneficial to both the Town and our workers saving thousands of dollars in legal fees. Our Town lawyer reviewed the revised three year contract before it was approved by the Board in June.

Town Hall Roof

The Town Board is still wrestling with replacement of the leaking roof on the Town Hall. As Counselor Fesko pointed out at the recent Board meeting, we are experiencing "a steep learning curve" as we attempt to purchase a new roof while learning about municipal procurement policy, resolving inherited engineering issues and negotiating individual Counselor's definitions of "responsible fiscal management". Based on preliminary estimates, it looks like a steel roof is the best value for your tax dollar and we have estimates of less than half the \$50,000 allocated in the budget. Choosing the color is the next challenge and I am wrestling with how to facilitate the citizens of Spafford making that decision. Any ideas?

Veteran's Memorial

Many thanks to Councilor Lou Hanlon and Johanna Frittelli and their many helpers who are working to refurbish the plantings, lighting and fencing at the Veteran's Memorial. An anonymous gift of \$500 was matched by donations to fund new plants, new lighting and painting and repairs to the fence.

Fracking

Breaking news! Mary Menapace passes on news that the NYS Court of Appeals has upheld local bans on Fracking.

Willowdale Road Detour

Onondaga County will be replacing the culvert on Willowdale Rd. between Willow Hill Rd. and Burma Rd. for the next four weeks. Thru traffic will be detoured and only local traffic will be allowed.

Next Town Board Meeting

July 10, 2014 7PM

Agenda will include the following as well as issues arising until the meeting:

- Presentation by Cooperative Extension on Emerald Ash Borer
- Borodino Landing Issues update
- New Town Hall Roof
- Church Road Bridge Repair Plan
- Highway Report Delayed until 8/14

Highway Committee Report

The Highway Advisory Committee has been meeting since January to identify opportunities for savings on this most expensive of our budget appropriations. The members of the committee are Leland Springstead, a former highway superintendent; Mark Delany, a retired school district facilities manager; Kathy Adams, who has skills in data management; Lou Hanlon, retired owner of a paving business and Luke DeWitt, who works for Lake Country Construction. This bipartisan and experienced group has finished their analysis and will be presenting their report at the August 14th Town Board meeting. Copies will be available for all in attendance. I want to thank the committee for the many hours of work they have volunteered to this project. I believe we will realize significant tax savings as a result of their work.

Emerald Ash Borer

It is hard to escape information on the radio, TV and in the newspaper about this bug that is projected to wrest havoc on our community. When an ash tree dies, it generally falls over intact within a few years, taking down power lines, blocking roads and crushing structures in its path unlike maple trees that tend to fall gradually over time in smaller pieces. Many municipalities have developed a plan for taking down or treating ash trees in their road right-of-ways to avoid further damage and the added expense of overtime incurred in repeated emergency responses to a fallen tree. The first step in developing a plan is to conduct an inventory of ash trees along our town roads identifying those that present a problem should they die and fall or are important to the landscape and should be treated. Counselor Fesco has arranged for an inventory to be conducted by a student from SUNY ESF and we hope he can have a report for the Board by the July 10th Board Meeting. We will also have educators from Cornell Cooperative Extension that evening who will provide the Board with the information needed to develop the town's plan for management of EAB and its effects. The town is not responsible for ash trees on private property. We urge you to educate yourself and plan to either treat with insecticide or remove the ash trees on your property before they die. Forest Management students at ESF are skilled in identification of trees and Lisa Valletta, Town Clerk, has student contact information should you need assistance.

Day Camp for Spafford Kids

Frank Moran, member of the Town Recreation Committee, visited Mike Preston, Program Director at Lourdes Camp, a few weeks ago and asked if there was a way that children from Spafford could access the wonderful facilities at Lourdes Camp. Mike, very graciously offered to allow Spafford children between the ages of 7 and 11 to attend Lourdes Day Camp for a week this summer. Ann Furzee, a retired teacher and

committee member, followed up and negotiated the logistics of the deal with Mike. Enclosed please find a poster with more information about this opportunity. The fee for Spafford children is \$25 and a few camperships are available. Call Lisa at the Town Hall for more information and application 673-4144. Please act now as openings are only for weeks in July.

Grievance Day

The Board of Assessment Review was presented with 24 appeals of assessments on Grievance Day this year. Many of those appeals were based on the assessor having incorrect information about the property, such as number of bedrooms, interior quality or lot size. Where the assessor has incorrect information, she is willing and able to meet with the property owner at any time during the year to correct misinformation. Please look online or come into the office if you believe your assessment is based on incorrect information so the next assessment is based on accurate information. In 2015, the town will undergo another full reassessment so it is important we have accurate information about all current properties. I want to thank the Board members, your peers in the community, for their time and diligence during this review process.

Mark Your Calendar Enjoy Local Entertainment at Borodino Hall

July 11th Mike McKay and the Beautiful Mess, \$15, starting at 7:30 PM

August 22nd Bright Lights and Country Music, Free or modest contribution, 8 PM

August 30th John Delaney, \$15, starting at 7:30

October 25th Dusty Pas'cal and Charlie Orlando

December TBA Delaney Brothers

For citizens who do not receive the Skaneateles Press, I will reprint articles about Spafford as they are published.

Community News

Spafford town board confronts questions of payments for labor, retaining wall

The Spafford Town Board meeting on July 10 was heated and rancorous at times as the board tackled another lengthy agenda.

The most controversial issue was the motion by Counselor David Venezia to pay the bills for labor and concrete block used to build a retaining wall on private property in the highway right of way, authorized by Highway Superintendent Carl Weir.

Payment of those bills has been on hold for the last two months as the Town Supervisor Mary Bean worked with the Attorney for the Town, Scott Chatfield, to identify how this unauthorized commitment of town resources occurred and explore options for payment of the bills with other than town funds.

The first knowledge of the project by Bean occurred in April when the bills for construction of the wall were received.

Weirs was not present at the meeting after announcing he would be on vacation.

Chatfield informed the board that many local and state laws were broken when the contractor, Eric Brillo, and Weirs entered

into a verbal contract in February when the project was begun without board knowledge, approval, or compliance with town and state procurement policies.

Brillo told the board that this is the way business has been done in Spafford for many years and he had no reason to question the highway superintendent's verbal authorization to commit town resources to the project.

A heated discussion ensued with counselors Venezia, Jeff Ireland and Chris Fesko pressing for payment of the bills on the grounds that Weir's actions reflected ignorance of the law as opposed to malicious intent and the contractor, a local resident, should not be penalized for the highway superintendent's failure to follow processes established to guard town resources.

Bean and Counselor Lou Hanlon voted to deny payment of the bills because the contractor should have known that the project created liability for the town, was not authorized by the board and did not comply with municipal procurement policies.

The board did agree that dealing with internal problems between the board and the highway superintendent including

lack of communication needs to become a priority.

Development of the 2015 budget was also discussed at length with Bean calling for a zero based budget that will require an early start to this process, new to Spafford board members.

Bean said that significant savings can be identified in the highway budget through the use of this budget process as Spafford has the highest cost per mile in Onondaga County for highway maintenance.

Counselors Venezia and Ireland pressed for any savings realized from the highway budget being returned to the taxpayers.

Bean reminded the board that maintenance of town buildings and equipment has been a low priority for years and that Spafford is now faced with a list of projects needed to maintain efficient and effective operations.

Replacing the leaking roof on the town hall was approved by the board but regrading and repaving the town hall parking lot was put on hold in spite of past flooding caused by poor drainage.

Apology and Updates

My apologies for the lack of timeliness of the content of this newsletter but this is the busiest time of year for the staff of the Town offices and we have no clerical help. The newsletters are put together now by volunteers and with vacations and visitors, volunteers were in short supply when we needed them.

Emerald Ash Borer

Jessie Lyons of Cornell Cooperative Extension presented a program for the Town Board at the July meeting. During the meeting it was mentioned that EAB was found in Spafford during our survey. Jessie reports that finding was in error and at this time the closest infestation is in the Town of Onondaga. EAB is coming however and citizens need to educate themselves so they can make good decisions on how to protect their property. The Spafford Area Historical Society will be presenting a free concert at Borodino Hall on August 22, 8 PM and the town will have free literature available about EAB before the concert. Plan to attend the concert and pick up colored brochures that will help you identify Ash trees and the bug.

Church Road Bridge

An assessment of the bridge on Church Road was completed within the past month and the good news is that the concrete culvert is viable. The bad news is that the creek has eroded the sides of the road. The engineer has given the Highway

Superintendent a plan for supporting the roadsides and preventing further undermining of the culvert and road. Carl hopes to get that project completed this fall as soon as we receive the promised funding from the state. Meanwhile the bridge will have to remain officially closed to prevent collapse of the roadsides.

Highway Advisory Committee Report

The long awaited report of this committee established in January to make recommendations to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Town Highway department to aid in Town Board and Highway Superintendent decision making will be presented at the August 14 Town Board meeting. The report was delayed due to the death of the mother of Kathy Adams who was preparing the report for the committee. As the 2015 budget development process begins, the findings of the committee will be critical to development of next year's budget.

Day Camp

The very generous offer from Lourdes Camp to offer a week of Day Camp for only \$25 (with camperships available) to children, 7-11 living in Spafford, left us with not much time to get the word out. The good news is that at this time, Lourdes Camp is indicating that they plan to offer the program again next year. Meanwhile, the Recreation Committee continues to develop ideas for more recreational opportunities for Spafford citizens, young and old.