



Town of Franklin

February 2003 Newsletter

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February 2003

Town of Franklin

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TOWN OFFICIALS

Town Supervisor

Mary Ellen Keith

Deputy Supervisor

Gene Goff

Town Councilmen

Timothy Goff

Walter Kretser

Janet Ordway

Town Justice

Roger Symonds

Highway Superintendent

Donald Vorrath

Deputy Highway Supt.

Eric Merrill

Town Clerk/Tax Collector

Lauren LeFebvre

Attorney for the Town

Edward Murphy

Assessor

Douglas Tichenor

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Code Enforcement Officer

Edward Lagree

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TOWN BOARD MEETINGS

Regular town board meetings are held the second Monday of each month at the Franklin Town Hall. The meetings are open to the public.

The next regular meeting will be held Monday, March 10, 2003, at 7:00 p.m.

Check the town Website for up-to-date information on upcoming town events and meetings, minutes of past meetings, and agendas for upcoming meetings, plus lots of other information on the Town of Franklin. ❖

Board to Request Audit

Councilmen Gene Goff and Walt Kretser have served as the Town of Franklin board's liaison with the town's highway department with the goal to keep costs down while providing services needed for the safety of the residents and adequate long-term maintenance of the town roads. At the February meeting, they asked the board to consider requesting an audit of the town's highway department by the New York State Comptroller's Department of Municipal Affairs.

According to Goff, the

Town of Jay recently went through an audit, and they recommended that the Town of Franklin consider it. "The town supervisor said they did a thorough job. Everyone – including the highway superintendent – was pleased," Goff said.

"We've researched many of the past practices in different areas, and we need some expert help," Goff said, asking for permission to draft a letter to the Department of Municipal Affairs. "We would like the audit to look

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Lifelight and FREMSA Presentations

The Town of Franklin contracts with outside agencies for services that would be too expensive for the town to provide on its own. Two of them are Lifelight and FREMSA. With the contract renewals for 2003 coming due, Mary Ellen Keith invited each of them to have a representative meet with the town board to present the details of the services they are providing.

Lifelight is an air medical program that serves the North Country from the Adirondack Airport outside of Saranac Lake. According to Lifelight's Mary Jane Connor, a helicopter can get to Vermontville within only a few minutes and can transport to the Adirondack Medical Center or Champlain Valley Physician's Hospital in Plattsburgh. Except for the flight nurse, the program is run by volunteers. Each flight also is attended by advanced EMT personnel. Connor said the flight nurse is a paid position to provide continuity of care.

The helicopter is owned by the New York State Police, who also provide the pilot. The medical equipment, uniforms, and other costs are covered by Lifelight.

"We provide service twenty-four hours a day,

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Paye Road Electric Update

Niagara Mohawk, town board members, and residents of Paye Road who met on Monday, February 3, agreed that the next step towards getting electricity to the end of the road should be a survey of the road.

On original maps, Paye

Road is a straight line off Swinyer Road. As it became developed over the years, the path of the road has meandered this way and that.

Board member Walt Kretser said, "After all is said and done, before we begin cutting

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From the Supervisor

by Mary Ellen Keith

Senior citizens who are eligible may apply for the STAR exemption for their 2003 property taxes. The paperwork must be returned to assessor Doug Tichenor by March 1, 2003.

Applications are available at the town hall. Forms also can be downloaded from the Internet by searching "NYS

2003 Star Application."

Anyone who applied last year will need to fill out a renewal application for their 2003 taxes.

The exemption can be claimed on a primary residence, and the exemption applies only to the land portion of your school tax bill.

Forms can be mailed in or left at the town hall. ❖

Celebration Committee Notes

The town's Celebration Committee has begun to set their calendar for events for 2003. They will be hosting a Town Tuesday Ham Dinner on February 18. The Easter Egg Hunt will be held on April 19, and the July 4 picnic will be held on . . . well . . . July 4.

The committee also decided that last year's Halloween haunted house was so much fun and was so successful that they'll sponsor another one this year. And the annual Christmas party, which has been held for so many years, will

again bring Santa to the town hall in December.

The committee is soliciting nominations for the Town of Franklin Citizen of the Year, and names should be passed on to any of the committee members.

The next planning meeting will be held February 27, 2003, at 7:00 p.m. at the town hall. Committee members Mary Ellen Keith, Miriam Lawrence, Lauren LeFebvre, and Janet Ordway invite anyone who would like to join in on planning the festivities to come. ❖

HUD Applications Being Accepted

The Town of Franklin has HUD grant money available for a second round of applications for rehabilitation and replacement of homes for eligible residents.

Friends of the North Country, who administers the town's grant, says that residents need to act quickly to get their names on the "Inquiry List" by the end of February.

The first step is to contact town supervisor Mary Ellen Keith at the Franklin Town Hall, or the Friends of the North Country at P.O. Box 466, Keeseville, NY 12944. The phone number at Friends is 834-9606.

Last spring, Friends of the North Country chose 17 residences from the first round of applications, and work already has begun on most of them.

This grant, formally named the 2001 Housing Rehabilitation and Replacement Program, is the third HUD grant the town has applied for and won with the help of Friends of the North Country to bring aging and inadequate housing in the town up to standard.

Residents who are not sure if they are eligible are encouraged to apply now, and the Friends of the North Country will help with evaluating eligibility during the next step in the process. ❖

FOOD PANTRY SOUP SUPPERS PLANNED

March comes, and it begins to feel that spring never will come. Cabin fever begins to feel like a permanent state.

Mary Ellen Keith has an invitation that will help lift your spirits: Come to annual Wednesday Food Pantry Soup Suppers.

The suppers will be held on three Wednesdays in March and April. In addition to getting out for a good meal and mingling with neighbors and friends, your donation at the door are an important source of fundraising for the Food Pantry.

The Soup Supper dates are held throughout lent, March 12 and 26, and April 9, from 4:00 until 7:00 p.m. In a change from past years, they will be held

at the Franklin Town Hall.

There is no set cost for the suppers. Guests are asked to make a donation of any amount. ❖

911 Addresses

Residents have been notified of the new numbers assigned to their properties by the Franklin County Office of Emergency Services 911 Numbering Project. Postal customers who have home delivery will need to begin using their new mailing addresses. Those who have post office boxes will keep their current mailing addresses, but are encouraged to identify their homes with the new emergency number in preparation for the E911 emergency service which will be on line later this year.

The Town of Franklin has received its new street addresses for its properties. The town's mailing addresses will not change because the mail is delivered to Vermontville post office boxes. However, town custodian Russ Robertson will post the numbers on the town's structures as recommended by the Office of Emergency Services.

The town's new street addresses are: Franklin Town Hall, 7 Cold Brook Rd.; Franklin Town Garage, 16 Town Barn Rd.; Kate Mt. Park, 8321 State Rt. 3; Merrillville Town Hall, 55 Pine Grove Lane; and Merrillville Town Garage, 59 Pine Grove Lane

Post offices that deliver to addresses in the Town of Franklin include Vermontville, Bloomingdale, Saranac Lake, and AuSable Forks. Mail posted to the old addresses will be delivered for one year. It is the postal customers' responsibility to notify anyone they receive mail from of the new addresses.

Town Tax Collector Lauren LeFebvre would like to remind all property owners that address changes for tax bills should be directed to the Franklin County tax office. ❖

Upcoming Town Meetings

Tues., Feb. 18, 2003 – Town Tuesday Ham Dinner, 4:00- 7:00 p.m.

Thur., Feb. 20, 2003 – Food Pantry

Thur., Feb. 27, Celebration Committee meeting, 7:00, p.m.

Wed., March 5, 2003 – DEC Unit Management Plan meeting for DeBar Mt. Wild Forest, Paul Smith's College's Freer Science Building, 6:30 p.m.

Mon., March 10, 2003 – Regular Town Board meeting, 7:00 p.m.

Wed., March 12, 2003 – Soup Supper, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m., town hall

Wed., March 12, 2003 – Building Use Committee meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Wed., March 26, 2003 – Soup Supper, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m., town hall

Wed., April 9, 2003 – Soup Supper, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m., town hall

Town Policies Reviewed

In January, town supervisor Mary Ellen Keith asked board members to review the town's policies and guidelines. At the February meeting, councilmen Walt Kretser and Gene Goff and attorney for the town Edward Murphy recommended that the Town of Franklin begin to gather the town's various policies, codes, and handbooks into a comprehensive general policy handbook.

Regarding the town's Code of Ethics, Murphy told the board that he felt it should be made into a local law. "Ethics laws in New York State are a mess. There are a lot of contradictions. If there's a conflict between state and local law, local law will govern."

In the case of the Procurement Policy, Kretser said, "It's a good policy, but we've got to start using it." The policy

had been brought up to date by the board last year.

With negotiations with the Teamsters coming up later this year, Goff has been looking at the employee handbook, and feels that it could be brought up to date and be more explicit in its guidance.

Kretser and Murphy volunteered to form a committee to draft a general policy handbook of operations to include the Code of Ethics, the Procurement Policy, and the employee handbook. "We may also include other issues," Murphy said.

"There's no real time element," he said. "As it is now, we are in compliance with New York State law."

Town clerk Lauren LeFebvre asked the Franklin Town Board to consider drafting a policy for the use of the town hall by residents. According to Le-

Febvre, there are many requests every month -- private parties, fundraisers, club meeting, dinners -- and it would be helpful to her to have some guidelines.

Past supervisor Frank Karl also noted that the board should set a fee. While it could be nominal, the State of New York requires that municipalities at least charge for the costs of utilities and maintenance when private individuals use public buildings.

The town already has a resolution on the books against serving alcohol and renting town property for commercial use.

LeFebvre was given permission to work a policy to present to the board. Ed Murphy recommended that the policy also include the use of the park, and added that the policy could eventually be part of the general policy handbook. ❖

Lifeflight and FREMSA Representatives Meet with Board

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seven days a week," Connor said.

In addition to responding to emergencies, the service transports patients from Saranac Lake to Plattsburgh, Burlington, or Albany for special care. "If necessary, we also can transport patients by airplane," Connor added.

The service is free of charge to patients. "We are funded by private donations and by municipal support," Connor said. The program's budget is around \$350,000 a year. "A single flight to Albany from a commercial service could cost a patient up to \$12,000. We spread the cost out through fundraising rather than burdening individuals."

Lifeflight is using a new Bell 430 helicopter. "The New York State Police bought five of them last year. That means if ours is down for repairs, they can supply another one up from Albany so we won't be out of service," Connor said.

Town resident David Liddy asked Connor about landing sites for the heli-

"The designated place in Vermontville is the town park," Connor said. If the helicopter needs to go into an undesignated area, Connor said FREMSA volunteers are trained to designate an area and prepare it for a landing.

FREMSA is another health and safety service contracted by the town. FREMSA member Bruce Sawyer explained to the board that they provide first responder emergency and life support service trained volunteers. FREMSA works closely with Lifeflight and the Saranac Lake Rescue Department. While the rescue squads can pick up and transport, FREMSA personnel have training and equipment to provide immediate care to stabilize a patient, including administering drugs, before the patient is moved from the scene of the call.

As with Lifeflight, the service is provided free of charge to the individuals with the funding coming from municipalities. Sawyer said that they might at some time in the future consider billing third parties -- insurance companies -- to

help with the costs of running the service.

The Town of Franklin's proximity to Lifeflight's base at the Adirondack Airport and its access to FREMSA's volunteer services means that the town has exceptional emergency medical service, which will be enhanced again once the E911 service is in place.

The town board passed resolutions to renew the \$1,250 contracts. ❖

Audit Request

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into different areas of operations, mostly in the highway department and with the procurement policy."

Kretser told the board that the comptroller's office may or may not actually agree to the audit, but that if they do it would provide the town with an independent expert to look into areas of concern.

The board agreed to have Goff and Kretser, with help from the attorney for the town, Ed Murphy, draft a request. ❖

Highway Superintendent's Report

by Donald Vorrath

This month has been a time of "breaks" – some good and some not so good.

The extreme cold snap and the incessant snow have put additional stress on equipment causing what seems to be a myriad of daily breakdowns. Broken cables and belts, worn pins and stiff arms, flat tires, broken spoke wheels, worn shocks and brakes, stretched sander chains, blown hydraulic hoses are some of the inconveniences this type of equipment is subject to.

When a truck is down for repair the other trucks will cover as best they can to remove snow and sand, but it may not be the exact schedule you're used to. We all have to be patient during these

times.

Another break of far more consequence occurred when Eric Merrill (deputy highway superintendent) broke his leg. At this writing, I'm not sure how long he'll be recovering but in the meantime, I asked Hugh Tyler to assume duties of deputy and hired Shane Kilroy on a per diem/probation period to help fill this void.

OK. For some good news. We actually had a break in the weather, albeit a short one, where we were able to scrape some ice off the roads. Also, each day the sun is helping with melting as its plane is higher and more intense.

When not needed for loading, our loader and backhoe have been out pushing back intersections and, in some cases,

access to mailboxes. Also, cutting banks back has been ongoing.

I met with the Paye Road delegation for installation of power and committed the highway department to whatever we can do to help in this endeavor within the legal bounds and boundaries. Personally, I feel it's about time for this basic need not to be denied.

Other projects during the month have included installation of shelving for filter inventory, cleaning the old filter room for other stock, painting superintendent's office, and straightening up the bulk oil area.

And, finally, I wish Eric a speedy recovery with his injury. If you see him on crutches around town, give him room – he needs it. ❖

Citizens' Building Use Committee Report

With the guidance and help of new member Bob Hammond, the town's building use committee has begun to put their ideas for a new town hall into a "statement of need" to present to the town board. The statement will be a summary of all of the items and needs to be addressed by this building project.

Final plans will depend on limits of the site – whether at the current town hall site or at Kate Mt. Park. Hammond also reminded committee members that the project will be limited by costs. "We have to consider what is economically

feasible – what will the tax base support?"

In addition to what is needed for operating the town business and for upgrading an aging building, the committee also has plans to roughly double the current community meeting space.

Looking over a list of the events held at the town hall, Hammond remarked that he was surprised at the number.

"You can see on the calendar on the door of my office," town clerk Lauren LeFebvre said. "All those dates written in are non-town events that we hold

here."

Jean Baltzly asked whether a new building at the town park or renovating the old town hall would be more expensive. Hammond said cost estimates for both project options probably will be close. Building new is expensive, but there may be space that can't be used in the town hall as it is renovated into office space. Also, the current additions to the town hall may have to be torn down for new additions.

The committee will meet at 6:30 p.m. on March 12, 2003, at the town hall. ❖

Town Hydrants Need Work

Councilman Gene Goff is concerned about the dry hydrants throughout the Town of Franklin. He has been looking into the dozen or so hydrants with the fire department, and has found some of them are not set up to work in the winter, and many of them are not in working order. He also reported his concerns about access to the hydrants.

While conceding that probably only three of the dozen or so hydrants are in working order or winterized, he would like to see access to the water plowed out in case of an emergency.

The hydrants were originally installed in 1980. Many of the hydrants were re-

placed by platforms, which are not good in winter. Some of the hydrants have been damaged or not maintained.

Keeping the hydrants working has been a problem in the town for many years. Finding contractors who will work on them is difficult. Also, fire equipment has been updated, and the hydrants have to be evaluated to see that they still will work with the equipment.

For now, Goff would like to see the water access plowed out, and he will continue to work on getting the hydrants all working. ❖

Paye Rd.

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trees and having Niagara Mohawk install poles, we need to know where exactly the west line lies. We need a survey of the road as soon as possible."

A legal ad soliciting bids for the surveying already has been sent to the Adirondack Daily Enterprise for publication.

Several Paye Road residents attended the recent town board regular monthly meeting. Mark Winters, who had been working closely with the board on this issue over the past several months, is very pleased with the progress. "Thank you guys for making the Paye Road issue a priority," he told the board members. ❖