

February 9, 2006

The Stuyvesant Town Board held its regular monthly meeting on February 9th, 2006 at the Stuyvesant Town Hall. In attendance were Supervisor Valerie Bertram, Councilperson Kenneth Hummel, Councilperson Bradlee Webster, and Town Clerk Lori Ennis.

Highway Superintendent Bernard Kowalski and Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer Gerald Ennis were also present.

A motion to approve the January minutes was made by Councilperson Bradlee Webster, seconded by Councilperson Kenneth Hummel, carried.

COMMUNICATION:

- **Columbia County Land Conservancy** - Letter from Judy Anderson to the Department of Agriculture and Markets supporting the Town of Stuyvesant's application for funding through the state Farmland Protection Program for the Harrier Fields Farm owned by Michael Scannell. .
- **Columbia County Board of Supervisors** - Gerald Simons, Chairman, wrote a letter supporting the Town of Stuyvesant's application to purchase the development rights for Harrier Fields Farm.
- **Letter from Dr. and Mrs. Matthew Asbornsen** - Letter supporting the County giving the State most of the abandoned Boston-Albany rail bed.
- **Posting from the Columbia County Civil Service Commission-** An open competitive examination for a Budget Analyst #63175.
- **Letter from Faith Robertson-** Letter resigning from the Stuyvesant Town Board. Supervisor Bertram stated that Councilperson Robertson jumped right in and took over the job of rehabbing the playground. She also did a great job on the summer recreation program, as well as many other community projects. The Town Board wants her to know that she will be sincerely missed.

A motion to accept the communications as read, and be brought up under proper heading, was made by Councilperson Bradlee Webster, seconded by Councilperson Kenneth Hummel, carried.

TOWN CLERK:

- Received \$874.25 of which \$675.36 was given to the Town Supervisor.

HIGHWAY:

- Superintendent Kowalski reported that the Highway Department is doing some body work on the 22 year old truck, ditch work and routine maintenance on the road ways.

CEO/ZEO REPORT:

- Report is on file with the Town Clerk's Office.

Supervisor Bertram did away with the reading of other reports due to the large crowd attending the meeting, those reports received, will be on file with the Town Clerk.

New Business:

- JoAnne Mistler would like to be on the Board of Assessment and Review. JoAnne is a realtor by trade and Supervisor Bertram stated "she thought she would be a good candidate for the position".

A motion to appoint JoAnne Mistler to the Board of Assessment and Review was made by Councilperson Kenneth Hummel, seconded by Councilperson Bradlee Webster.

- Contract with the County Sheriff's Department for requested coverage at meetings and on court nights.

A motion to accept the contract with the Columbia County Sheriff's Department was made by Councilperson Kenneth Hummel, seconded by Councilperson Bradlee Webster, carried.

- Animal Trespass Act - Supervisor Bertram stated that the farming community was upset and concerned by this law. Apparently, not everyone saw the public notice in the paper. David Ross and Supervisor Bertram have been working on possible language changes. Supervisor Bertram stated that since many farmers were in attendance, she would like to set up a meeting with the farming community to get their feed back on this law.

Those who addressed the Town Board:

Kent Keller, Carl Williams, Eric Ooms-President of the Columbia Farm Bureau, Sharon Hall, Gerald Ennis, Martin Roby, Iris Smith, Robert Ornoshi, Chuck Colaruotolo-Member of the Farmland Protection Board, Dawn Jennings, Steve Montie, Peter Donahoe, Larry Kline, Geoff Johnson, and William Gumeear.

Supervisor Bertram stated that she would also like to thank everyone for coming to the meeting, and noted that the board will certainly take everyone's comments into advisement. The board will be working with the farming community for their input and will not proceed with this law until this is done.

Assessments:

Supervisor Bertram stated that last year we did a 25% town wide increase in assessments. The board felt that this would have the least amount of impact on certain areas. The assessments are broken up by the state into sections of the community. For example: housing by the river, hamlet of Stuyvesant Falls, North-end of town, Stuyvesant Landing, Route 9, Gypsy Rock and Stuyvesant Manor. CLT stated that if the assessments were raised overall by 19%, the equalization rate would be approximately 95.6. If all residential properties were increased by individual areas as suggested by the state, the Town would be at approximately 97.1. Vacant land values need to be increased by 25% overall and commercial properties need to be increased by 11% overall if the town would like to be at

(or near) 100%. Previously, each town in the county was in a six year plan, when school taxes were figured, each neighboring town paid an equal amount. If Kinderhook is at 100% and we are considerably lower, we will have to pay a disproportionate amount of taxes. Supervisor Bertram stated that the Town Board can consider three options; to leave the rate at approximately 80% (where it currently is); second, to increase 19% across the board; third, to go with the suggestion of neighborhood increases. The suggested increases are as follows:

25% River, 22% Stuyvesant Falls Hamlet, 16% Route 9, 10% Stuyvesant Manor, 14% Gypsy Rock, 24% Stuyvesant Landing, 18% North-end of Stuyvesant.

Supervisor Bertram stated that the board fears that if we do not do anything, next year the increase will be exorbitant.

Some town residents expressed dissatisfaction regarding the town's proposed increase in assessments, and explained that the rise in taxes makes life financially difficult.

Supervisor Bertram and Councilperson Hummel explained where the increase in tax dollars went this year.

Steve Montie, Stuyvesant Fire Company, explained some of the reasons that the fire companies have had to increase their budget.

A full re-evaluation of all properties will be performed within the next two years. A question arose regarding the senior exemptions, the board explained that the State sets the cap and the Town of Stuyvesant gives the highest amount allowed.

A motion to accept the following resolution was made by Councilperson Kenneth Hummel, seconded by Councilperson Bradlee Webster, carried unanimously.

By action of the Town/Village of the Stuyvesant Town Board, adopted at its meeting on February 9, 2006, it was

RESOLVED that the following recommendations be submitted to New York State Senators Stephen Saland and Joseph Bruno, New York State Assembly Representatives and Pat Casale, Sheldon Silver, and Governor George Pataki, with a letter on behalf of the citizens of the Town of Stuyvesant urging their immediate attention.

WHEREAS the residents of the Town of Stuyvesant have collectively considered the local issued of greatest concern to them and identified high property taxes as one of the highest priority amount them; and

WHEREAS funding for local governmental services, including public education, is provided primarily through a tax on the estimated value of property; and

WHEREAS the welfare of Stuyvesant homeowners is jeopardized by the rapid increase in the costs of public education and the inability of many homeowners to pay these increased costs; and

WHEREAS the increasing burden of public education on taxpayers also impacts on the ability to raise other taxes to provide services and to fund Town-specific and local initiatives important to the well-being of the community.

THEREFORE the Town Board of the Town of Stuyvesant appeals to New York State public officials to implement new measures for financing public education, including the following suggested actions:

1. Ensure equity in a formula for funding public education based on the taxpayers' ability to pay.
2. Decrease the revenue raised from tax sources based on the value of dwellings.
3. Refrain from imposing state mandated requirements upon school systems without corresponding state funding.
4. Adjust the formulas on revenues earmarked as aid to education from state lottery and other future gaming activities so that the annual percentage is substantially increased from current levels.
5. Maintain the enhanced STAR exemption for the town's neediest citizens, but also increase the STAR exemption for senior citizens specifically at all income levels.
6. Regain lost tax revenue from the above actions through income tax.

A motion to raise assessments by neighborhood rather than raise them town wide was made by Councilperson Bradlee Webster, seconded by Councilperson Kenneth Hummel, carried.

Cathy Knott, Assistant to the Assessor, stated that the Assessor's office will be opened on February 28th from 10:00am to 2:00pm, and on March 1st from 10:00am to 2:00pm.

Councilperson Hummel stated that the Railroad Restoration Committee will be holding a "fund raising" dance at the Stuyvesant Fire House on February 11th at 7:00pm.

Clerk, Lori Ennis, reminded the public of a cookie bake on February 11th.

Sharon Hall had a complaint regarding a horse farm that has gone up in the Town of Kinderhook on the Stuyvesant line affecting the Stuyvesant Manor neighborhood. A long discussion ensued. Supervisor Bertram stated she will contact Supervisor Doug McGivney.

A motion to close the meeting was made by Councilperson Kenneth Hummel, seconded by Councilperson Bradlee Webster, carried.

2006 ABSTRACTS

THE FOLLOWING BILLS WERE PRESENTED FOR AUDIT:

009	Empire Alarms	21.95	022	The Independent
010	Treasurer	7778.86	023	Hudson Valley News
011	Kingston Oil	1249.16	024	Metzwood Harder
012	Carrie O'Hare	132.73	025	Morris Assoc.
013	Humane Society	610.00	026	US Postal Service
014	Gerald Ennis	18.80	027	Hudson Valley Gas
015	Charlene Leach	72.00	028	Kivort Steel
016	All Clean	500.00	029	Tractor Supply
017	Schwaab, Inc.	61.05	030	Mario's Home Center
018	Bonnie Sutherland	38.85	031	Mooradian Hyd.
019	Howard Gleason, Jr.	95.00	032	Lisa's Silkscreen
020	Staples	20.72	033	Col. Co. Towns
021	Berkshire Telephone	238.57		

Recorded this 9th day of February 2006

Approved this 9th day of March 2006

TOWN CLERK

SUPERVISOR

COUNCILPERSON

COUNCILPERSON

COUNCILPERSON

COUNCILPERSON