



Town of Somerset

Volume 30, Issue 3

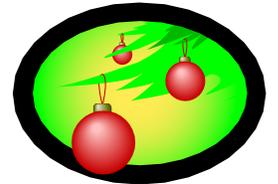
Holiday 2015

From Your Town Clerk - Tracy Carmer - 795-3575, Ext. 2

Dear Residents,

I would like to take a moment to remind everyone that we have the following available at the Town Hall for your convenience:

- * Flag box to dispose of your worn flags
- * Lion's Club Eyeglass box to donate any glasses that you no longer wear
- * Recycling box for ink and toner, cell phones and small electronic gadgets
- * Box to collect Box Tops for Education for school
- * Business card display that still has room for more business cards for Somerset residents wishing to advertise their business



We also make copies for 25 cents each, and provide fax services (both incoming and outgoing) for \$1.00 per page.

All of us here at the Town Hall would like to extend to you and your families best wishes for a joyous holiday season.

Tracy Carmer, Town Clerk

Your Town Officials At a Glance

Supervisor Dan Engert	795-3596
Councilman Randy Wayner	264-0242
Councilwoman Robin Jansen	622-2317
Councilman Gary Alt	795-3151
Councilman Jeff Dewart	795-9268
Town Clerk Tracy Carmer	795-3575
Highway Superintendent Mike Flint	795-3866
Water/Sewer/Grounds Superintendent Mel Denny	795-9919

Town Clerk hours: Monday - Friday 9:00AM - 4:30PM

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A Word From Your Supervisor

Daniel Engert 795-3575, ext. 3

The year-end holiday season is upon us and we look forward to our traditions, celebrations and family gatherings. It's a time of reflection, of gratitude and rejuvenation as one year ends and another year begins. It has been an extremely busy year in Somerset and much is behind and before us. I want to provide a brief update on the 2016 budget, the power plant and then discuss the most significant issue before us, the Lighthouse Wind Project.

The 2016 budget was recently adopted by the Board. The tax rate was held flat and there will be no increase to property owners in 2016 or any cuts in services. The power plant is undergoing a sale process and a new owner is anticipated to be in place by the first quarter of 2016. The taxing jurisdictions are in discussions with the new ownership regarding a new PILOT agreement but we are anticipating that the revenues will further decline as a result of the decreased value of the plant at this time. I'm sure you will agree that this isn't a shock to us as we can see very clearly that the plant has not been operating very often over the past two years in particular. The decreased value of the plant has reduced revenue from the largest taxpayer in the Town and County significantly (78%) over the past four years as the plant endures increased market pressures and delivery challenges. Over the past four years, the Board and I have directed significant efforts to right size your Town workforce, deploy core duty staffing initiatives and make investments in new technology and equipment to improve operational efficiencies in order to meet the increasing revenue challenges. Thus far, we have been able to reduce the cost side of ledger and have avoided raising taxes. Moving forward, this will be even more difficult. Considerable challenges remain ahead for the Town unless we are able to secure economic development projects to replace our significantly diminished revenues from the power plant in order to position ourselves for the next period in our community's future. I am very aware that the key here is to secure the right economic development projects for our Town. You have been very, very clear that an industrial wind turbine project is not the answer.

For the past year or so, I have heard from literally hundreds of residents in our community via meetings at my office, Town Board meetings, email, phone calls, letters and messages on social media to voice their concerns and outright opposition to the Lighthouse Wind Project. In addition, I spent many afternoons and evenings going door to door, as did Councilman Wayner and Councilman Dewart, to speak directly with residents about the issue. Moreover, the Town Board initiated a survey which was sent out to each household in an effort to reach as many residents as possible and to give them an opportunity to provide feedback. Over the same period of time, I heard from very few who contacted me to voice their approval or even acceptance of the project. There have also been very few who came to speak at Board meetings, very few who sent letters or emails and very few who directly spoke to me in favor of the project. Through each and every outlet, Town residents have and continue to speak loud and clear that they do not want 60-70 incredibly massive industrial wind turbines with heights up to 630 feet to completely transform the Town of Somerset. I think it's extremely important that moving forward, we respect everyone's views and keep it entirely about the issues, not the people. This is clearly a difficult time for our Town.

I want to spend a moment discussing the financial impact to the town that Apex Clean Energy has reported. They say they will only pay as much as \$1.5 – \$1.6 million dollars in PILOT payments to the taxing jurisdictions. It's important to know that these payments will legally be required to be split between **SIX** different taxing jurisdictions and will not be equally shared between them.

Continued on page 4



WESTERN NEW YORK WARRIORS FLIGHT TAKES OFF FOR D.C.
Inaugural Trip Flies WWII and Korean Veterans to Visit War Memorials

On October 21, we led two dozen local veterans in an inaugural Western New York Warriors Flight to Washington, D.C. to visit several war memorials dedicated in their honor. Prior to take off, the American Legion Stephen Sikora Post 1322 held a special sendoff ceremony at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport for the 24 World War II and Korean War veterans on the Warriors Flight.

This one-day trip allows members of the Greatest Generation, who are now in their 80s and 90s, and other generations of Americans who have served our country, to travel to the nation's capital to see their monuments for the first time. The World War II Memorial wasn't completed until 2004, so sadly, many members of our Armed Forces who served in that era did not get to see this momentous monument. This WNY Warriors Flight is a way for us to honor our veterans and to show that we are forever grateful to them for selflessly putting on a uniform to protect our country. In a small way, we're saying thank you to our nation's heroes.

The senior veterans were chaperoned by local volunteers as they traveled around the nation's capital. The group visited the National WWII Memorial, Korean War Memorial, Vietnam War Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Iwo Jima Memorial, the "Changing of the Guard" ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, among other notable sites. At the WWII and Korean War memorials, the group participated in an emotional wreath laying ceremony.

Congressman Chris Collins (NY-27) and Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-26) were both honored to have the opportunity to meet with the group during their time in D.C.

The trip concluded with a salute to the veterans from the Patriot Guard Riders as they welcomed them home at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport.

The WNY Warriors Flight was made possible with a \$20,000 grant from the Walmart Foundation, making the trip free for the veterans. Other partners included the Niagara USA Chamber of Commerce and Health Systems Services, which lent the vets wheelchairs. The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, Transportation Security Administration and Southwest Airlines also assisted in making the trip an enjoyable experience.



I hope to make the WNY Warriors Flight an annual tradition for years to come. Veterans I spoke with said visiting the national monuments dedicated to their fallen comrades was one of the best, most memorable experiences of their lives. I was truly touched by their outpouring of emotion throughout the day. It was a privilege to be among these heroes and host this trip in honor of their service and sacrifice.

Robert G. Ortt

Continued from page 2

This is due to the fact that the project (number of turbines and associated infrastructure) will not be divided equally and also as a result of how PILOTS are structured by the local Industrial Development Agencies in Niagara and Orleans counties, respectively. Apex has reported that at least 75% of the project will be located in Somerset (Niagara County) and only as much as 25% of the project will be located in Yates. It should be noted that the projected revenue from this project, if approved, would amount to approximately 23% of the total PILOT payments currently received from the Somerset power plant. So, while it could certainly be revenue, it would not nearly replace the revenue lost from the plant as has been suggested. It is my belief as well as the Town Board's, that the overwhelming majority of residents who are opposed to this project have weighed the potential revenue and believe that the associated costs are too great in terms of potential property value declination, potential health impacts, transformation of the rural character and landscape, potential impacts on migratory and other wildlife, potential impacts on the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station radar and operational systems among many other considerations.

So, where are we at with the project? On November 23, 2015, despite overwhelming opposition from the community, Apex steamrolled ahead to the next phase and filed the Public Scoping Statement (PSS). This document gives the "environmental setting", tells in general what the impacts could be (what Apex will study), how they will study it (extent and quality of information), some potential mitigations and reasonable alternatives. They also break it into construction related impacts and operational impacts. The Town believes that Apex is much too general and non-specific throughout the document. This has been a consistent problem from the beginning in that Apex refuses to provide any specificity concerning the project including wind data measurements, wind turbine design, wind turbine heights, wind turbine placement locations and the number of wind turbines being considered, just to name a few. Upon the filing of the PSS, we are in the midst of a review and comment period which has been extended until January 6, 2016. However the Town has requested additional time since Apex chose to file it in the midst of the Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, and New Year's Day holidays which present obstacles and barriers for the Town's experts and consultants to appropriately review and provide substantive comments on the document in order to protect the residents. I encourage residents to submit comments to the Public Service Commission on this project. You can find a link on the Town website. (www.somersetny.org)

Lastly, I chaired a committee of residents, who met numerous times since July working on recommendations to present to the Town Board for the adoption of a revised Wind Energy Conversion System law which will strengthen and provide greater protections for the residents of the Town. By the time you receive this letter, I expect that those recommendations will already be completed and the town attorneys will be drafting a new law. There will be a public hearing scheduled on the new law sometime in January 2016 and all residents are encouraged provide feedback.

The Board and I remain committed to working hard and putting forth much effort on behalf of our community. Our desire is to effectively represent you and your interests. On behalf of the Board, we extend the warmest wishes for a joyous holiday season and we wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

In your service,

Daniel M. Engert – Town Supervisor



News from the Somerset Conservation Club**Rogene Jody Styres, President**

As another year comes to an end, members need to remember to bring their dues up to date. Election of officers will be in January.

Everyone here at the club would like to thank everyone in the community for their support this year with our events.

A special thank you to Steve Haight for helping with the history of the club.

Remember to get out and enjoy everything in nature...it's never closed.

WE WISH EVERYONE A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR, AND HOPE EVERYONE STAYS SAFE.



HAPPENINGS AROUND TOWN:

- ♦ **December 12th 5:00PM - Christmas Community Celebration at Faith United Methodist Church. Activities include a cookie walk, sub dinner, Christmas music, and a carol sing along. Door prizes and Christmas shopping available.**
- ♦ **December 13th 9:00AM - Advent and Christmas message of JOY at County Line United Methodist Church**
- ♦ **December 15th 1:00PM - 6:00PM - Red Cross Blood Drive at Faith United Methodist Church**
- ♦ **December 16th 7:00PM - Blue Christmas Service (a service for those who may be grieving this Christmas) at Faith United Methodist Church**
- ♦ **December 20th 9:00AM - Advent and Christmas message of LOVE at County Line United Methodist Church**
- ♦ **December 24th 7:00PM - Christmas Eve Service at Faith United Methodist Church**
- ♦ **December 24th 8:00PM - Candlelight Christmas Eve Service at County Line United Methodist Church**



**NEWS FROM THE HIGHWAY DEPT.
Mike Flint 795-3866**

The highway department is prepped and ready for another season of snow. Two new trucks will be out this winter, hopefully eliminating some breakdowns or problems while we deal with Mother Nature.

Please be aware that at no time do we try to do mailbox damage while plowing the roads. In the event yours does become damaged during snow removal, please call the garage and leave a message. I assure you the problem will be corrected as soon as we can.

Also, remember it is against NYS law to plow snow onto the roads while clearing driveways.

The highway department wishes you a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

HISTORIAN'S CORNER

By: Pete Devereaux 795-3575, ext. 7

Wishing Everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Barker Public Library Toddler Story Hour

Toddlers and their caregivers can join us three Mondays a month from 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM at the Barker Public Library for Toddler Story Hour. These are always fun filled sessions that help children learn to love reading. We'd love to see your toddler there! Stop in or call the library @ [716-795-3344](tel:716-795-3344) to register.

Water/Sewer Department News

**Mel Denny, Water/Sewer/Grounds Superintendent
795-9919**



During the winter months, it is important to keep your fire hydrants and sewer vents clear of snow for emergency purposes.

With many homes selling within our town, it is good to remind our neighbors that only proper materials are to be flushed and washed down the drains into the sewer. To save on the cost of repairs and to ensure the proper function of your sewer utility, items such as diapers, rags (wipes) toys (plastic materials), and excessive grease are examples of materials that should not be disposed of in the sewer system.

Have a safe and enjoyable holiday!



SOMERSET TOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT Deputy Supervisor Randall Wayner

We are pleased to provide police services to residents and businesses. We strive to enhance the quality of life in Somerset by providing regular patrols to deter and detect criminal activity and we also provide vehicle and traffic law enforcement to keep the roadways safe for all of our different types of commuters.

House Checks: If you are going away and would like for your home or property to be regularly checked, please submit a House Check Form. You can find the form on the Town website or you can stop by the Town Hall.

Driving Safely During Freezing Weather: The Somerset Town Police Department would like to ensure that all drivers and commuters stay safe on the roadways and we ask drivers to remain alert and drive slowly, especially when temperatures hover at or below freezing. Keep in mind even though you may feel confident that you know how to drive safely on black ice, the driver in front of you may not. Always be prepared in case other cars start to slide.

Please consider the following safety tips when driving during black ice conditions:

- Leave plenty of space between your car and all other cars on the road, leaving extra distance between your vehicle and the one in front of you.
- It is very important to slow down when you are driving on black ice or in any other winter road conditions. If your car begins to skid, take your foot off the accelerator.
- Do not slam the brakes - this will only cause your car to lose control and slide even more. Tap the brake pedal lightly instead of pushing down hard on it.
- Always be alert for trouble spots ahead. If you see cars in front of you sliding and you think that there may be black ice ahead, downshift to a lower gear before you drive over the black ice. The lower gear will give you better control of your car.
- If your car does begin to skid on the ice, turn the wheel in the direction of the skid.

Stay Safe While Holiday Shopping

While most people are full of the holiday spirit and goodwill this time of year, criminals look for the opportunity to take advantage. The Somerset Town Police Department offers these holiday shopping safety reminders:

- Use the buddy system and shop with a friend. You are more likely to be a target if you are alone.
- Park your car in a well-lit area and keep track of where it's parked. This will get you in your car and on your way faster.
- Check the back seat before getting back in your car.
- Carry your keys in your hand while you are walking toward your vehicle, and pick a parking space that's easy to exit so that you can leave the parking lot quickly.
- Stay alert while you are walking to your car. Talking or texting on your phone or digging in your purse for your keys is a distraction and makes you an easy target.
- Wear your purse across the body to keep your hands free for your keys, both when heading to your car and into your home.
- Hide purchases from view in your parked car to prevent break-ins.
- Be careful what you post online. Don't alert others that you aren't at home.
- Lock your car doors.

Your officers and I wish you a safe wintertime and a blessed Holiday Season!!

Randy Wayner

**Volume 30, Issue 3
Holiday 2015**

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P.O. Box 368
Barker, NY 14012-0368

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Phone: 716-795-3575
Fax: 716-795-9041

Website: www.somersetny.org

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BOX HOLDER

The Barker Fire Department is looking for volunteers and there is an application for membership inside this newsletter. If you are interested in joining, please complete the application and return it to the Fire Hall with a membership fee of \$5.



The Friends of the Barker Library are having a Silent Auction that will run through December 12th, with the winners being notified that day. The proceeds will be going toward children's programming.