

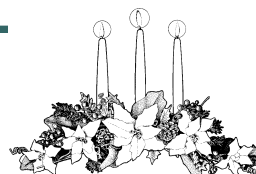


Town of Somerset

Volume 34, Issue 4

Holiday 2019

From Your Town Clerk



Dear Residents,

Many of you may not be aware of this, but you can sign up for notifications from the town. Just visit our website www.somersetny.org and click on the link to e-subscribe. You will need to supply your email address and check off the boxes for any information that you would like to be kept up to date on. Then any time that part of the website is updated, you will get the information, along with a link, in your email. This is a great way to stay informed!

As another year ends, I would like to
a very Happy and Healthy Holiday season!



take the time to wish everyone

Tracy L. Carmer, RMC

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HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

Did you know that Niagara County has a program that allows residents to get rid of their household hazardous waste **FREE OF CHARGE**? They will accept FULL latex paint cans, oil-based paint, wood stains and preservatives, automotive fluids (antifreeze, brake, power steering and transmission fluids), pesticides and fertilizers, flammable products (gasoline, kerosene, thinners, strippers, etc), household cleaners, driveway and roof sealer, pool and photo chemicals, mercury (thermometers, thermostats), and fluorescent bulbs. Alkaline batteries, motor oil, electronics and explosives are NOT accepted. You must pre-register online <https://www.rethinkyourwaste.com/hhw> and you are allowed a maximum of 150 pounds per vehicle. There is a lot of great information on their site and you can sign up for notifications for dates and times of upcoming events.

A Word From Your Supervisor

Daniel Engert 716-795-3575, ext. 3



I would like to begin my year-end report by extending the very warmest greetings to all of the residents, friends and neighbors in the Town of Somerset. As we draw down on the remaining weeks in 2019 and begin to gear up for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of us in 2020, I am continually mindful of the incredible responsibility that you have entrusted in me to serve at this time. Thank you again for the honor to serve you as your Town Supervisor.

Let me begin with a summary of the town budget for 2020 - 1.) There is a zero increase from 2019 in the general fund town-wide tax rate; it remains flat at \$1.68; 2.) The overall tax levy for the town increased by less than 1% from 2019; 3.) Overall spending (appropriations) at \$3.064m was slightly increased by 1% from 2019 levels; 4.) Modest 1.96% pay raises were included across the board for all employees; 5.) The Fire District tax rate remained flat at \$.94; and 6.) There are zero service cuts in 2020.

I was saddened but not surprised when I was recently advised that the Somerset Operating Company Power Plant filed for notice of the intent to retire operations. The intentionally unachievable emission regulations for coal plants that the Governor and DEC finalized this year spelled the end. The market pressures and the intense political opposition to coal in New York were too much to overcome. I'm told the next step will be a deactivation assessment conducted by the NYISO to evaluate the impact on the reliability of the grid if the plant retires and is shut down. In the meantime, the plant plans to operate this winter until the results of the assessment are released. I will also continue my advocacy for the remaining employees at the power plant. It's not typical for the state for no other reason than for a policy agenda to write a business out of existence. To that end, I have called for the Governor to provide training opportunities, tuition assistance, job placement assistance and/or all of the above for these employees.

At the same time, the plant owners continue to pursue their proposal to repurpose the site into a large-scale data center. This \$550 million dollar local capital investment would be among, if not the largest in the history of Niagara County and would provide computing power for artificial intelligence, machine learning and other advanced computational power services sought by end users. If approved, the project will produce hundreds of construction jobs and 160-170 new long-term jobs paying \$40,000 - \$60,000 annually. High level discussions continue to take place but I don't have any additional information to share at this time. I have and will continue to support this project for our community.

Also as previously reported, we were successful to receive funding from the NY Dept. of State and are finalizing the feasibility study for the development of a recreational park on the site of the Somerset Operating Company power plant. My committee, assisted by our engineers at Wendel, is currently assessing the site constraints and opportunities, evaluating potential environmental issues and the final report will result in a master plan for park development. The more than 150-acre property, along Lake Road, rests atop the former coal ash pile that underwent full remediation and now rises 200 feet above the surrounding landscape, offering some of the best views in the area. The feasibility study is nearing completion and the first public meeting is being scheduled for early December. We are very excited about the preliminary results so far and are looking forward to gathering further input from the community.

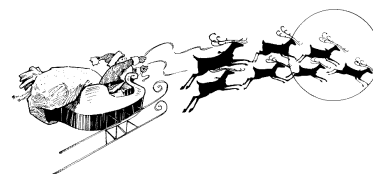
In a related matter, earlier this year the Governor announced the formation of the Lake Ontario Resiliency and Economic Development Initiative (REDI). I participated on the Niagara/Orleans REDI committee and submitted a number of projects for the entire shoreline in Somerset. I am pleased to report that two projects were awarded funding, the YMCA Camp Kenan received \$87,000 and the second being the site that we are studying for the town park! The Town received an award for \$1.3 million dollars for shoreline protection and mitigation measures! I am encouraged to see that the state is very interested in assisting Somerset to develop and protect this parcel for potential future recreational use.

Unfortunately, I don't have any new information to share concerning the ill-conceived Lighthouse Wind project, namely an official withdrawal of the project. I truly believe that Apex knows full well that they have absolutely no chance of advancing the project here; they've closed their office and have recently agreed to take down their remaining meteorological towers. In late August I was joined by Yates Supervisor Jim Simon to send Apex officials a formal request to officially withdraw from Somerset and Yates and to cancel the Lighthouse Wind project out of professional courtesy for closure in our communities. Apex, as usual, never responded and continues to hold a dark cloud over our town. Although Apex has been silent and idle regarding Lighthouse Wind for most of this past year, the Town remains vigilant and ready to defend the overwhelming will of our community to defeat this project if they suddenly reverse course.

Finally, please have a safe and memorable season with your family and friends and may each of you enjoy a joyous and blessed Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

In your service,

Daniel M. Engert - Supervisor



Councilwoman's Corner



Did you know? From Councilwoman Jansen

STOP THE INVASION – Protect New York From Invasive Species

There are many invasive pests in the United States and Canada that are broadly distributed primarily due to people inadvertently transporting infested nursery stock, unprocessed logs, firewood and other commodities. I'm sure by now you have heard of the Emerald Ash Borer. According to the NYSDEC about 14% of trees in New York State are Ash. There are many other pests that we now need to be on the lookout for.

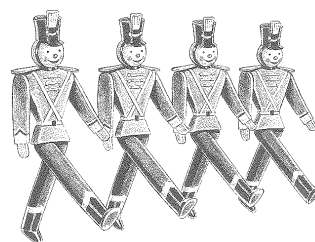
Help Stop the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. These invasive insects are spreading throughout New York State and have the potential to devastate our hemlock population. The hemlock woolly adelgid was first confirmed in New York State in the lower Hudson Valley in the 1980's and has since spread north and west. It was spotted in Erie County in 2017. These aphids like insects damage hemlock trees by sucking moisture and nutrients while it feeds. Adults are purple-black, 1.5 mm long (barely visible) and they stay attached to host trees for most of their lives. Woolly egg masses look like small cotton balls on the underside of hemlock branches, measuring about 1/16 to 1/8 inches. Each egg mass contain 50-300 eggs. Eggs hatch into crawlers that spread to other trees attaching to the underside of twigs near base of the needles.

Hemlock trees are highly beneficial to the environment. These evergreens prevent erosion and maintain water quality because they are well suited for growing along steep slopes where their roots stabilize soil. They offer habitat for birds and other wildlife and provide cool shade for many fish species.

Help us track this tree killer by learning to identify and report hemlock woolly adelgid infestations. For more information and reporting your findings to the DEC visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7250.html.

Protect your Oaks: Avoid spreading Oak Wilt– Prune in fall and winter. Oak wilt is a serious fungal disease that kills thousands of oaks in the United States each year. There is no known treatment, so limiting exposure to the fungus is key to keeping it from spreading. One way oak wilt spreads is when fungal spores hitch rides on insects. Pruning healthy oaks during the growing season greatly increases the chances of insects infecting them with Oak Wilt. To avoid the threat of Oak wilt, prune Oaks from October to February, when insects and fungi are inactive. For more information visit the DEC Oak Wilt page www.dec.ny.gov/lands/46919.html

What can you do? Adhere to the NYS firewood regulation which limits firewood movement to no more than 50 miles and obey the rules of the protective Zones which prevent firewood or oak wood from leaving those areas. For more information visit www.dec.ny.gov





FOR RELEASE: November 7, 2019

CONTACT: Andrew Dugan | (518) 852-1282

ORTT HOSTS ANNUAL WARRIORS FLIGHT

Bronze Star recipient and New York State Senator Rob Ortt and fellow veterans travel down to Washington, D.C. to visit memorials and lay wreath



Recently, I was joined by 40 veterans and guardians on my annual Warriors' Flight down to Washington, D.C. where we visited the various war memorials and paid respects to the men and women who have perished in service to our nation. I accompanied veterans from WWII, the Korean War, and Vietnam War as we visited several monuments including the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, the World War II Memorial, the Korean War Vets Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

Each year, this flight is one of the things I look forward to most, and something that I cherish as an American and as a public official. What is really special is that for many of these veterans, this trip is the first opportunity they have to go down and see the memorials that had been built in their honor. Bringing these heroes to the memorials – where they can pay their respects to their fallen brothers and sisters – is something that I see as a duty of mine.

Along with visiting the memorials, we also had the opportunity to place wreaths at the World War II and Korean War Memorials. This was just one way we could help those veterans who joined us on the trip pay tribute to the memorial dedicated to them.

Thanks to the good people at Walmart, each year, this trip comes at no cost to any of the veterans or guardian volunteers who accompany them on the trip. Because of generous sponsorship, we are able to continue this flight year after year and I cannot thank Walmart enough for its willingness to give back to our veterans.

This is always a very emotional trip for the veterans who join us and for myself as a veteran. Because of the sacrifices of these heroes, we are able to live in the greatest country in the world and that is something we should all be extremely grateful and thankful for.

Those interested in joining me for the WNY Warriors' Flight next year can call my office at 716-434-0680 and ask to be placed on the contact list.

Barker Lions: We Serve

The Fall has been busy for the Barker Lions. We did a roadside clean up with the Barker Boy Scouts, a group we are proud to sponsor. Our annual Halloween Party was well attended and kept everyone out of the rain. Fun fact: the first Halloween Party was held the year we were chartered, 1947, and has been held every year since. We also held an eye screening for students in Pre-K until First grade.

Our loan closet has been active, with many wheelchairs, ramps, chair lifts and other pieces of medical equipment going to those who need them. This service is free and open to any members of the Barker Community. We also support the Barker Food Pantry, especially at this time of year.

Currently, our Blind Seals fundraiser has been mailed to homes in the district. Those are the funds we use to provide eye glasses and hearing aids to those in our community who cannot afford them. We are also selling American Flags. These top quality flags are made at the Olmsted Center for the Visually Impaired in Buffalo. We have 3 foot by 5 foot flags for \$29. It is important to note that all money raised goes to the various charities and projects.

Our next Chicken Barbecue will be part of Light Up Barker on December 14. If your organization would like one as a fundraiser, please contact us.

We invite the members of our community to join us by volunteering for one of our projects, visiting or speaking at one of our meetings, making a donation and asking about membership. For more information about our activities, please check our website, www.BarkerLions.org or email Roar@BarkerLions.org, or call 778-7001.



Lion Scott Ecker receives an award pin from District Governor Regina Cecconi

Water/Sewer Department News

Jonathan D. Dewart, Water/Sewer/Grounds Superintendent
716-795-9919



A couple of reminders from our department: With the winter weather upon us, it's important to remember to keep your fire hydrants and vent pipes clear of snow. Also, if you have not already done so, please remove crocks, vases and other items from the Town cemeteries.

Have a safe and blessed holiday!

HERBERT W. CARR AMERICAN LEGION POST 425

Jon Hotaling, Commander



The Herbert W. Carr Post 425 is pleased to announce **Emergency Assistance Veteran's Relief**. All veterans and active military in the Somerset area are eligible. Vet relief supports our community and their families with immediate financial assistance. Applications may be picked up at the Town Hall or by calling Jon Hotaling at 716-345-2799.

MEMBERS WANTED

ATTENTION VETERANS: on June 30th the President signed the American Legion Act, making all veterans eligible to belong to the American Legion. If you would like to become a member, contact Jon Hotaling at 716-

HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Peter Devereaux 716-795-3575, ext. 7



Here are some traditions you may use and maybe some you don't.

Nutcrackers – Nutcrackers were a common Christmas gift even before Tchaikovsky wrote the famous ballet. This was true especially among the poor. They were a beautiful and useful gift that could be made from a piece of scrap wood. After the ballet was written the nutcrackers were usually dressed as soldiers or government officials.

The Star – The star of Bethlehem was an astronomical phenomenon that led the Wise Men to Jesus' birth. Some believe that the star was a supernova or a comet others a conjunction of planets. There is a theory that it most likely happened around the year 7 B.C. the probable year of the birth of Christ. In modern days stars are often used at the top of Christmas trees and adorn home decorations in remembrance of that night.

Poinsettias – It was named after Joel Roberts Poinsett who imported it from Mexico in 1828. The old Mexican legend says a poor boy had nothing to give the Christ Child on Christmas. When he was praying sincerely a plant called The Flower of the Holy Night grew at his feet in the brilliant colors red and green.

The Christmas Tree – Originating in Germany in the 16th century, it was a fir tree decorated with roses, apples and colored paper. The trees were used both inside and outside. Most believe that Martin Luther began the tradition of lighting the Christmas tree with candles because he was struck with the starlight shining through the branches of his tree. It became popular in Great Britain in the 19th century and brought to America by Pennsylvania Germans in the 1820's.

WISHING EVERYONE A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR.



Niagara County Legislature
14th District - John Syracuse

I want to take this opportunity to provide a summary of some of the major accomplishments achieved by the Niagara County Highway Department. After a slower than normal start to the season due to the weather, the following significant projects were completed:

RECONSTRUCTION OF CARMEN ROAD TO TOWNLINE ROAD

Prior to the final paving and striping, the County first had to repair/replace infrastructure; the largest was to replace the 13 failing cross-culverts. The next step was to perform ditch maintenance. Once these objectives were completed, the crew was able to mill and re-profile the road surface. Shortly thereafter, a leveling coat of asphalt was laid, then the final coat of high-quality asphalt was applied. The County then stabilized the shoulders with the recycled millings.

GASPORT ROAD FROM ROUTE 77 TO BUNKER HILL AND BUNKER HILL ROAD

This section of Gasport Road was milled, re-profiled and subsequently repaved. The same process was completed for Bunker Hill.

NORTH BEEBE ROAD

After years of being left out of the initial Beebe Road reconstruction project, the County was able to complete this much overdue rehab/reconstruction. They replaced 9 cross-culverts, milled, re-profiled and repaved with high quality asphalt.

Cont'd. on page 7



Cont'd. from page 6 **Niagara County Legislature 14th District - John Syracuse****RANSOMVILLE ROAD**

The County was able to complete phase one rehab by replacing 9 cross-culverts.

HESS ROAD

Shoulder rehabilitation on the entire stretch from Route 18 to Route 104 was completed using recycled millings.

MAIN AND EAST INTERSECTION, VILLAGE OF BARKER

This was a small pavement repair project in the Village of Barker.

**OTHER UPDATES**

The County will be starting rehab to West Somerset Road (I know, it's about time!) The first step this year will consist of replacing/repairing as many cross-culverts as possible before the snow really starts to fly. The County will be working from Hess Road and moving toward Hosmer. The County will be partnering with Somerset's Superintendent of Water and Sewer, John Dewart, in order to ensure the integrity of water line infrastructure is maintained. Thank you Superintendent Dewart! Niagara County crews will be out doing some final road patching to Quaker and Hosmer. Over the past 4 weeks or so, the crews have completed 10 large-scale piping projects for residents who wish to have their ditches covered. These resident work-orders are "on-going projects", weather permitting of course.

Aside from the road work, the workforce was busy simultaneously revamping the County's fuel facility. This refueling station is located on the Niagara County Highway Department Headquarters. Work began in July. First, the topsoil was removed down to the clay layer. It is here where the electrical conduit trenches and drainage layout were excavated. The County was able to coordinate the drainage with our existing contaminant separator. This saved us significant costs. Another cost-saving effort achieved was to partner with the City of Lockport to resolve storm water run-off issues at this site.

SHARED SERVICES

Lastly, I wanted to identify a few areas wherein the County Highway Department worked/are working together with various municipalities in order to realize taxpayer savings and improve efficiencies. Sharing services continues to be one of my highest priorities. Throughout the last few years, we continue to see advancement in this area. For example, let's look to road reconstruction. Not only does the County rely heavily on your Highway Superintendent Mike Flint for trucking asphalt, we also need him and his crew to haul millings. In turn, some of these millings are utilized by Somerset for various projects. Thank you Mike! Another shared service venture between the County and Somerset Water and Sewer is under way. Together, under Jon Dewart's leadership, we are working on plans to utilize millings for parking lot improvements at the Town's athletic fields.

Millings are a commodity. They have many uses. Recognizing such, there is a balance between stockpiling millings versus strategic usage of such. That led me to the conclusion we need to look at selling some of our inventory on the secondary market. Well, for the first time I can recall, we did just that. The County issued an RFP (Request for Proposal) late summer seeking bidders for our millings. The successful bidder agreed to pay the County approximately \$20,000 for our surplus millings. These funds will be utilized to reinvest into our county-wide infrastructure and therefore help decrease our tax burden.

I wish all of you a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a safe New Year!



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BARKER FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS

- Be sure to keep fire hydrants near your home clear of snow
- Hope everyone remembered to change the batteries in their smoke detectors when they changed their clocks
- Kids Christmas Party is Saturday, December 14th starting at 10am. Includes a visit from Santa and fire truck rides
- Reflective house number signs still available and very helpful to first responders, stop by the town hall for an order form or contact the fire hall at 716.795.3011
- Be sure chimneys are cleaned for those burning wood
- Thank you to the community for your continued support



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- ◆ December 8th 1:00PM Somerset Historical Society Victorian Christmas
- ◆ December 14th 10AM Children's Christmas Party at Barker Fire Hall
- ◆ December 14th 1PM Barker 5K Walk or Run
- ◆ December 14th 4PM-6PM Chicken BBQ pickup at Barker Lion's Club
- ◆ December 18th Somerset Conservation Club Building Fund Raffle

