

Town of Farmersville Supervisor's Newsletter

Dear Town of Farmersville Resident:

I hope this newsletter finds you and your family well during these difficult times. I wish to update you on the status of the Town of Farmersville. We are working hard for the Town and are exploring some innovative ideas since taking office. I also wish to address some disturbing rumors that have been circulating and set the record straight.

The Town's Finances.

There have been many rumors regarding the state of the Town's finances and rumors of "bankruptcy." That is false. I am pleased to report that the Town is in excellent fiscal shape. Under my leadership and with the help of the Town Board, we have a strong future. This is documented in the attached statement from the independent accounting firm of Berry & Berry. A key take-away from their statement is that the Board addressed unexpected and unprecedented challenges, but was still able to minimize the tax increase. The tax rate was at a lower level than the rate approved by the previous Town Board. There is also some sort of rumor that property taxes are going to exponentially increase next year. That is also false. New York has a tax cap that is based on a formula, 2% or the inflation rate whichever is lower. We were under the tax cap this past year and there is simply no reason why we would exceed the tax cap next year. Anyone who is claiming otherwise is ill informed or stirring the pot.

The Highway Department.

The rumor is that the Highway Department's budget was cut in 2021, and that is why the Town's roads are in poor shape. The Highway Department is the largest budget expenditure of town funds each year. The Highway Department has been allocated over \$3,000,000 in the last five years. The Board has looked to address this expense in the most recent budget, which was unanimously adopted by ALL Town Board members. The fact is that the Board's budget removed Highway monies reserved for part time positions that had never been filled by the Department and reduced so-called "rainy day" savings accounts, while still allowing for the purchase of new equipment such as a new high lift Loader. Further, at last month's Board meeting, the Board approved a new Loader Sweeper attachment that will hopefully eliminate the terrible road "dust storms." The Highway Department also has received notification from the NYSDOT that it still has over \$30,000.00 of unused funds from 2020 and has over \$154,000.00 available to it this year, which totals over \$184,000.00, with the possibility of NYS deferred funds becoming available.

The Board also secured a favorable bond for the unexpected Kingsbury Hill Bridge repair. This repair will take place soon. While securing funding for the bond the Board

gave several opportunities to the Highway Department to address any other possible equipment needs, but we were informed that new equipment was not needed.

Lawsuits.

Another false rumor circulating in the Town is that the Town is being “bankrupted by lawsuits.” This is false. It is indeed unfortunate that a developer who claimed to want to “work with the Town” decided to sue us, but our attorneys are not concerned with the merits of the claims. In any event, the Town has insurance coverage for such things and the claims have not impacted our budget or finances, as noted above.

New Code Enforcement Officer.

In order to assist residents, the new Town Board decreased the Town’s Code Enforcement Building Permit Fees and brought on a new, knowledgeable & experienced Code Enforcement Officer, Lance Jobe. The Board has received wonderful positive feedback about Mr. Jobe and his professionalism. He is eager and willing to address residents' questions and needs. Please do not hesitate to contact him at 716-378-9820.

Preserving Home Rule and Resisting Governor Cuomo’s Overreach.

The New York State Constitution grants local governments certain rights with respect to the control of laws affecting its property and affairs. This is known as “Municipal Home Rule,” meaning that Towns like ours should be able to control our own destiny and not have Albany telling us what to do in Farmersville. Governor Cuomo has been steadfastly chipping away at Home Rule. The new Town Board passed a resolution opposing Governor Cuomo’s actions and stated our support for preserving Home Rule. Four members of the Board voted in favor of this resolution (Lounsbury, Vickman, Westfall, Heberling) and one voted against it (Tilton).

Other matters.

The new Town Board was also able to settle an unresolved and a long overdue Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Town Highway employee’s Union that was left over from the previous Board. The Town Board also has capitalized on shared services to cut Town expenses and we expect to see some revenue from that project this year.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions, comments or ideas.

Sincerely, Pete Lounsbury, Farmersville Town Supervisor

(716) 353-2652

(In case you were wondering—I paid for this newsletter personally, not with taxpayer dollars –Pete)