

IMAGINE AMENIA

NEWSLETTER

www.imagineamenia.org

APRIL 2011

ImagineAmenia Board of Directors

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Janet Reagon
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www.ImagineAmenia.org
info@ImagineAmenia.org

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Adopt A Highway Clean-up Days

Planned Dates are:

April 27, Wednesday, 4 pm

Route 22 (south,
Allen Sand & Gravel to
Deep Hollow Road)

April 29, Friday, 4 pm

Route 343 (Sears to
Crop Production)

**To sign up or for more
info call: Judy Velletri
(845) 373 8950**

Happy Spring to all our ImagineAmenia members

This past winter was a difficult one and seemed endless, but in spite of the cold, snow and ice storms, the IA board managed to meet most months in order to keep up with current issues.

I would like to thank the many IA members who so willingly serve Amenia and Wassaic as volunteers in many capacities on committees, ball/soccer fields, road clean-ups, town beautification, attending meetings — the list is endless, and those who give up their valuable and precious time with their families to help shape our town into the best it can be are surely to be commended. Your impact on our community cannot be measured in dollars and cents. Each person in our community is affected by the choices others make. Thank you for making the choice and commitment to do your share.

ImagineAmenia had two membership meetings in 2010. In May the speaker was Kathy Schibanoff, the local liaison for the Dover Knolls Development Co., who spoke about how the plans for the Dover Knolls project will affect our town as well as others. In September the speaker was Steven Schoonmaker, Superintendent of Webutuck Central Schools. Mr. Schoonmaker pointed out his suggestions on how to make education in New York State more economically viable while better serving our students, staffs, and communities. Both meetings were extremely interesting and generated many questions and informed conversation. I cannot stress enough how valuable these membership meetings are as Amenia, like other small towns across our nation, struggles to seek a balanced future. The need to protect our open land and provide the necessary infrastructure for our businesses, services for seniors, and affordable housing for all who wish to live here, are problems we all face.

The ImagineAmenia banner quotes Margaret Mead: *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”* In 2003 IA proved Margaret Mead was very wise as our grass roots organization followed her advice and did indeed change our small corner of the world.

Our next membership meeting will be held this coming September. This will be a most important meeting, as the election will be looming just ahead of us. Jerry Thompson’s article on the November election is a must read for those who want to keep informed. I hope to see you all at that meeting. In the meantime, the road clean-up is this month (see dates to the left) and it would be lovely to see you then.

Betty Rooney
Acting President

Tourists' First Impressions

by Herb Eschbach

One morning, about 18 years ago, while I was stopped at the traffic light in Amenia, I noticed Charlie Toombs kneeling on the pavers at Fountain Square tending to the plants that he cared so much for. A day or so later I stopped to chat with Charlie, and somehow during the conversation Charlie apparently “volunteered” me to be his assistant. And so began a “volunteer” career maintaining the flower beds at Fountain Square. The tranquility that I imagined would be part of a quaint Veterans Memorial Park was blurred by the continuous rumbling noise of vehicles; in all shapes, colors, sizes, velocities, and sounds. I was stunned by the volume of vehicles that pass through our “pleasing to the eye” hamlet. Where are they coming from? Where are they going? Then it dawned on me: why aren't they stopping to get a soda, coffee, lunch, souvenirs, etc.? How do we get them to stop and shop? It should be easy; they're going right through the center of the hamlet!

From that realization came the Town's Community Enhancement Committee and the challenge of how to improve the community's economic development. As one committee member observed, all

too honestly, what would a tourist find appealing enough to entice the vehicle occupants to stop and shop.



John Clark, a community planner with the Dutchess County Department of Planning, expressed one simple answer... slow them down and they might then stop. But rather than placing more speed signs, rumble strips or radar (an unfriendly tactic while trying to impress people about your community!), a much more appealing concept might be considered... visual appeal accompanied by psychological calming. The result: traffic “calming” as John put it. As “visual appeal, psychological calming and traffic calm-

ing” occur, it might entice occupants to consider stopping for a “break” to get a soda, have lunch or dinner, look inside an antique store or check out real estate. After all, “this community has a warm, receptive feel — let's check it out.”

So, what creates the initial engaging visual appeal? Things that are eye-catching: neatness, landscaping, color, home/building care, etc. Of these, vibrant, warm colors seem to make the greatest visual impression. We find these in our home gardens and in flower barrels placed along the streets. Let's call it “curb appeal.” And when most of our homes and businesses along our hamlet traffic corridors display their horticulture expertise, we present our individual pride and the soul of the community; the inviting gesture of “Welcome to our town.”

When each of us creates a small, low maintenance but engaging visual flower garden, we establish the beginnings of community enhancement and tourism appeal. As someone once wrote, “...gardens make the emotional transition from the public highway, roads, and streets to the private inner sanctum of your home or business.”

Wassaic Trail to Train

by Janet Reagan

In a somewhat controversial move, the Amenia Town Board voted to hire WSP/Sells as the designer of the rail trail from the Wassaic Train Station to the hamlet of Wassaic. At present, Sells is working with Mike Hagerty and Supervisor Euvrard, with very limited input from the Rail-Trail Committee, to develop a task list, timetable and costs.

The Rail Trail Committee had unanimously recommended another firm, and there is continued concern about the cost. At the March 10th Town Board meeting, Tonia Shoumatoff (Rail Trail Committee Chair) raised concerns

about paying Sells by the month instead of by the task. Three proposals were introduced by Sells at a recent meeting of the Rail Trail Committee and Mike Hagerty: the cheapest was for \$700,000. This proposal envisions going through the wetland. Members of the committee expressed concerns about the high price and that the necessary permits might not be forthcoming from the DEC. They are also skeptical that more grants can be obtained to come up with the extra \$100,000 over the original project budget.

Currently, the project grant is for

\$480,000, and the town must match it with \$120,000. Supervisor Euvrard put only \$15,000 in the 2011 budget, so this is an expense that will have to be dealt with in subsequent budgets. The Rail Trail Committee has worked very hard on this project, which is important for future economic development in Wassaic. More importantly, the rail trail extension will provide the residents of the hamlet with access to the trail for walking or biking. Hopefully, a way can be found to build the trail connection to the train station within the fiscal parameters of the existing grant and in a timely manner.

NOVEMBER IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

by Jerry Thompson

It's only April, but 2011 is a town election year. It's not too early to begin thinking about candidates for office. The supervisor's position and two seats on the Town Board, currently occupied by Norman Cayea and Vicki Doyle, will be on the ballot.

For the last year or two, political matters in the town have been pretty quiet. No new controversial developments have been proposed, and no dramatic progress has been made on the ones underway. Our depressed national economy and the difficulty of borrowing the sums of money needed for large developments account for this slowdown.

The biggest political controversy has been about the new Town Hall (formerly the Amenia Elementary School). And here, disagreement has been not so much over whether the Town Offices' move into the building is a good idea – most think it is – but rather over how that move needed to be managed. And how much it will cost.

The details – and the ultimate costs – of this move will continue to unfold, and they will require constant monitoring. We need to have people in charge of this project who understand what a move like this involves, and who are not only able but also willing to do the hard work needed to keep a project this large under control and make it a benefit to the town, rather than an expensive liability.

Darlene Riemer has done an excellent job so far, but she has been seriously overworked. It would be great if we could identify and elect two board members who are able and willing to help her manage this project. Darlene is a professional, and we may not be able to find a second (and a third) one to join her on the board. But any citizen can – with hard work – learn all that is involved in managing a building of such size and complexity. And any citizen can – again, with hard work – make the phone calls, write the emails, do the research, solicit and study the bids, and do the negotiations required to make this new venture work as well as it can.

As the economy recovers, Big Development is likely to heat up again, as it has after collapsing in each of the three decades I have lived in Amenia. We have some excellent smaller projects under way now on Main Street. These will upgrade existing buildings while at the same time adding new, attractive businesses to the downtown. This kind of development adds to our town's vitality in the best possible way: without bulldozing and paving over acres of our scenic heritage, still the biggest asset Amenia has.

As new projects appear, we will need an informed, capable, and hard-working Town Board majority to shepherd Amenia through what promises to be another round of growth. We have an excellent Comprehensive Plan in place to help with that shepherding; what we need is a Board that understands, respects, and is willing to do the work required to apply that plan. Let's dedicate ourselves to finding some capable, dedicated, hard-working candidates to join the board in November.

Town Board Activities

by Charlotte Murphy

By the time the New Year began, the Town of Amenia had officially moved in and was conducting business as usual in the new Town Hall, formerly the Amenia Elementary School. An open house and tour of the new facilities took place on January 4th before the Town Board Re-organization meeting. Most of the building is in use—if you haven't visited yet, please do. The Board – and particularly Victoria Perotti and Darlene Riemer – worked very hard to make this move possible.

Since the Gymnasium was ready for use, the Farmer's Market moved in on the second Saturday of the month through May, and Zumba classes are held every Wednesday evening. Darlene will prepare a Scope of Work for readying the Auditorium for use. A theatre group has already expressed interest, and this may generate

some revenue for the Town. A NYSER-DA grant has been awarded for energy efficient projects, but the Board hopes it can direct this grant to air conditioning for the building. Phone system problems prompted the decision to change from Cablevision to Verizon. The Town will advertise for bids for a generator. The emergency lighting in the building had to be replaced to bring the building up to code, which was an unexpected expense, as was the more recent emergency when snow had to be removed from the roof. Deputy Supervisor Perotti dealt with both those emergencies, as well as making decisions during the recent flooding in Wassaic which led to the decision to declare a State of Emergency.

The Ethics Board completed its task of re-writing the old Town Ethics Law and after

a meeting with the Town Board, which resulted in a few minor revisions, the Ethics Board presented the new Code to the Town; it has been accepted and there will be a public hearing on April 21. The Board also considered at its March 17th meeting passing a resolution supporting a property tax cap. The issue was discussed at length by our Assemblyman, Marc Molinaro, who has some reservations about the repercussions of this movement but did support a 2% tax cap. In the meantime, the Board of Supervisors sent down a negative support resolution which the Amenia Town Board voted "no" on, which by default supported a 2% cap tax.

Meetings are scheduled for the second and third Thursdays of each month at 7:00 PM. Why don't you plan on attending?

WED, APRIL 27 & FRI, APRIL 29
**ImagineAmenia Adopt-A-Highway
Clean-up Days** • 4 pm
Volunteers Needed!
Call Judy Velletri at 845-373-9850

THURS. & FRI. APRIL 28 & 29
**Arbor Day at Indian Rock School
House** • 10 am-12 noon

SATURDAY, MAY 14
Amenia Farmers' Market • 10-2
inside Amenia Town Hall

SATURDAY, MAY 14
**Indian Rock Schoolhouse Bake Sale
at Freshtown** • 10am-2pm

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

FRIDAY, MAY 20
Amenia Farmers' Market begins
weekly outdoor schedule from 3 to 7pm
in Amenia Town Hall's Parking Lot.
The United Presbyterian Church
(located next to the Farmer's Market)
will also begin their weekly **Amenia
Crafts Market** from 3-7pm.

SATURDAY, JUNE 11
Annual Strawberry Fair • 10-3
United Presbyterian Church, Amenia

SATURDAY, JULY 9
**15th Annual Hidden Gardens of
Amenia Tour** • 10-4

SUNDAY, JULY 17
Pancake Breakfast at Indian Rock
9am-11am

SUNDAY, JULY 31
**Annual Meeting & Ice Cream Social
at Indian Rock** • 1-3pm

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17
**10th Anniversary Schoolhouse
Picnic, Community Day & Lions
Walkathon** • 10am-3pm
Theme: A Salute to Local Farmers

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25
Annual Call To Peace Festival

For more information:

www.IndianRockSchoolhouse.org
www.AmeniaGardens.com
www.AmeniaFarmersMarket.com

Amenia Crafts Market - call Helen Cook
at 845-373-9075



We are delighted to welcome two new businesses to Amenia. Both happen to be located in the red brick building across from the Amenia Library, which used to house the Amenia Day Nursery. **BACK IN THE KITCHEN** (owned by Peggy McEnroe), on the ground floor, has been getting rave reviews as the perfect place for breakfast and lunch. **PASTA DI CASA**, located upstairs, makes fresh, homemade pastas and sauces. Be sure to stop by to support these two new food businesses if you haven't already!

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