



Supervisor

Virginia Stern's

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Newsletter

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It is my pleasure to be able to produce and mail this newsletter at my own personal expense, with complimentary printing supplied by fellow citizen, former Councilman Mel Eiger. No public monies are involved and, of course, I take complete responsibility for the content.

PROTECTING STANFORD'S FUTURE

As you can imagine, bridging the gap between Supervisors is hardly seamless. Nor is transitioning to a new Town Board undemanding. Yet, with determination, we have managed to see to it that a renewed Master Plan Committee has come into being. The Master Plan Committee is authorized to study and update the Town's 1980 Master Plan so that there will be an official and relevant plan describing the town's citizens' vision of how Stanford will develop.

This freshly minted committee consists of some veterans from previous committees and some new volunteers. With Carol Hanlon as Chair, the committee members are Tom Angell, Gary Lovett, Stephen Gotovich, Spencer Hall, Conrad Levenson, John Royall, Jan Weido and Sten Wilson.

This new Master Plan Committee will produce a revised plan that will address the issues that are important in shaping the future growth of our community. Representing a wide array of skills and experience, the committee will set a blueprint for ensuring the quality of life which makes Stanford the hometown we all delight in.

These themes which will create the official vision for our town are:

- Ensuring the beautiful, rural quality of the town
- Planning for moderate-priced housing so that Stanford remains a vibrant, heterogeneous community which welcomes young families and provides for our older residents who want to remain in the community where they have lived for many years but may need to "down-size" into smaller living quarters
- Formulating a plan to preserve our natural resources - the preserves, lakes, creeks, streams, aquifers, forests, wildlife
- Mapping out an agenda for commercial growth to ensure a solid tax base for our town with the necessary guidelines and regulations to make certain that any commercial growth is in keeping with the rural, small-town values that our residents hold dear
- Making sure of a sustained agricultural future by protecting open spaces, soils, farms and the 4H and Grange youth programs.

Meetings of the Master Plan Committee are held on the first and third Tuesdays of the month at 7:30pm at Town Hall. Everyone is invited to attend what will be a public and transparent process of defining the future that all residents of Stanford will share. Meeting minutes are on the Town's website (townofstanford.org) as well as on the Stanford Democratic Party website (stanford4all.org).

YOUR TOWN WEBSITE

Stanford's town website (www.townofstanford.org) is in the process of being refurbished and updated. As information is added, the site continues to become more reflective of the unique character and quality of our Stanford community.

Jason Woodcock, who grew up in Stanford (and who is the father of a brand-new baby girl - Congratulations to all the Woodcock family!) is the town's IT (translated as Information Technology) consultant. He has embarked on transforming the website into one that is appealing and user-friendly.

In addition to front-page public notices and urgent information, the website will provide an almost virtual own Clerk's office with downloadable official forms and applications. You will be able to gain updated contact information for all of your elected officials and government departments, making it a cinch to communicate with each and every one. Both current and archived agendas and minutes will be available for committee and board meetings. While the agendas and minutes for the Master Plan Committee will be on the town website, there will also be a special link to the Master Plan Committee's website, which will have full and expanded information on their research and discussions. The Recreation Department will post current activities and sign-up dates as well as announcements of upcoming events. In addition, there will be links to local and county resources, including our own Stanford Free Library.

I am personally looking forward to having the audio of Town Board meetings added along with postings of the Clerk's minutes, giving each of you a chance to lend a critical ear to the Town Board's proceedings and citizen comments. But also bear in mind that your Town Board meetings are aired on Cablevision, Channel 21 twice every week, Wednesdays at 9am and Thursdays at 12 Midnight. DVD's of the meetings are also available for lending at the Stanford Free Library. And all meetings are video streamed on the Stanford Democratic Party website, stanford4all.org. So there are many ways and opportunities for you to keep informed about what your Town Board is doing and how they are conducting business. As the website continues to evolve, please feel free to contact me with your comments, suggestions and/or questions by email at supervisor@townofstanford.org or by phone 845-868-1310. Better yet, my office door at Town Hall is always open and welcoming.

THE NEW HIGHWAY GARAGE:

The Highway Garage Committee has been firming up the plans for the building itself and deciding where it will be placed. They have planned to include all energy saving aspects including appropriate insulation, radiant heat, ceiling fans to direct heat back down to the workspaces, positioning for the best passive solar heat and solar ready wiring so that solar panels can be installed when affordable. Also the committee has thoroughly considered the environmental issues of floodplains and drainage.

Building a new highway garage is a big project, but there are significant reasons to think about it now. For years the current building has been wasting taxpayer money in excess heating costs due to heat loss through actual holes in the siding, gaps in the windows and lack of insulation. Also, because the current structure cannot house all of the equipment, there have been the costs in lessened equipment life and increased maintenance for those pieces stored outside and exposed to the elements. In addition, the current building is an uncomfortable and often unhealthy workplace with little heat and practically no drainage.

On May 26, the Town Board had a special meeting with the Highway Committee and the town's Auditor to discuss various funding possibilities for this project. It is the Auditor's considered opinion that half of the cost of the new garage can be paid for out of town reserves with the other half being covered by a Bond Anticipation Note. This recommendation was made with the assurance that the town would still have a sufficient reserve to cover any unexpected costs or to meet any crisis that could arise.

In this current difficult economic downturn, constructions costs and competitive bidding are favorable for building projects. And, along with this, interest rates for any needed bonding are also lower and quite competitive at the moment.

As soon as the financing proposal is clear, the Highway Committee will schedule a second public hearing to discuss all of the details of the plan, to listen to any opinions from residents and to answer all questions. The date of the public hearing will be well publicized.

STANFORD'S BUDGET

The fiscal crisis that has touched down for Federal, State and County governments reaches municipalities like Stanford as well.

Stanford, unlike many of our surrounding towns, has a fairly healthy reserve that will be able to protect us and enable us to keep our town taxes low if there are unexpected expenses. As I mentioned when talking about the proposed new Highway Garage, the town will be able to fund half of the cost from our reserves, lessening the amount that should, for wise fiscal planning, be bonded.

But it is still vital that the town be run as carefully and wisely as possible. There is still no final word on whether the County will shove onto the backs of the municipalities the unfunded mandate of covering elections costs - an expense that has historically been the responsibility of the County. (My opinion is that the County simply wants to shift the responsibility and make the towns be seen as "the bad guys" putting the burden on the taxpayers) And none of us can know for sure yet of how the National or State economy will be affecting all towns with increased obligations in providing good government for their residents.

I have introduced the process of finding a grant consultant who will be on the constant lookout for possible sources of funding for the important projects needed by the town and for protecting and maintaining our precious rural environment. And I have had NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority) come and complete an energy audit of the Town Hall. The report will specifically inform us what steps can be taken to increase both energy efficiency - and thus save money - and where there is state or federal funding to help pay for any changes. I am also looking into all the communication systems throughout Town Hall to ensure that the town has the best equipment to run at the least cost possible.

I can assure you that I never let a day pass without examining how and why the town spends what it does. As Supervisor, I have been constantly monitoring all departments to ensure that budgets are on target.

As Supervisor, I am the Chief Fiscal Officer of the town, and will begin working on the budget for 2011 this coming Fall. The budget discussion meetings are with the entire Town Board and are open to the public.

SUPERVISOR'S SATURDAYS AT TOWN HALL

It's been a busy six months since my inauguration as your Supervisor. Hardly a day goes by that several citizens have not stopped by, either to share a concern or to toss in a suggestion or two. And rarely does a week pass without my attending several meetings that serve as my continuing education: Supervisors and Mayors Association, Wappinger Creek Watershed Intermunicipal Council, Northern Dutchess Alliance, meetings on municipal budgeting, intermunicipal shared services, land use and the increasing concern for providing for our older residents.

Beyond my regular weekday beat at Town Hall, I wanted to update you on a promise I made prior to my taking office - that I would be in Town Hall one Saturday morning a month, to be available to residents who might not be able to come in during the week.

The Supervisor's Saturdays series was kicked off early in February when I had a "Q & A" with residents who had not had such an opportunity before.

In March, along with my being available for personal exchanges, a representative of the Sheriff's Department spoke to citizens about the then recent break-ins that were occurring in Stanford and surrounding towns. He advised people on what was fact, cleared up rumors about the criminal activity and told us what the Sheriff's Department and the State Police were doing about it. He had some timely tips about what householders could and should do to protect themselves such as locking house entrances and even cars parked in driveways. The Sergeant encouraged us all to watch out for anything suspicious happening to our neighbor's property or just in our neighborhoods. He also advised us to share with neighbors when we are away and to invite them to do the same. Neighborliness is, after all, one of the strongest defenses against crime.

April's meeting brought volunteers from the Stanford Fire Company and Rescue Squad who shared accounts of the many ways in which they protect all of us by their ongoing training and their prompt responses to life-threatening fires and accidents. There was also printed material on preventing and handling various types of fires and accidents in our homes. The volunteers also displayed one of the fire trucks and a rescue vehicle which, in addition to being both impressive and informative for adults, allowed for youngsters to climb and explore. The volunteers who are always so willing to give of their time for their community and who came on this Saturday morning were Cathy and Mike Dillinger, Dennis Gilhooly, Pete Lyon, Dan McCarthy, Sue Sangillo, and Bob and Sharon Stramm. A great thanks to all of them!

The most recent Supervisor's Saturday, in May, gave us an opportunity to hear our State Assemblyman Marcus Molinaro's plans to push for a Constitutional Convention as a means of dealing with the dysfunctional legislative system that continues to stymie the state government in Albany. Assemblyman Molinaro is advocating an amended State Constitution created fairly and without partisan and special interest control - truly "by the people, for the people". The need for change is urgent.

A SUMMER CELEBRATION OF STANFORD

In talking with many residents over the years that I have been on the Town Board and now Supervisor, I have thought that the rich and colorful history of our town should be highlighted and celebrated by us all.

I have asked Kathy Spiers, the President of the Stanford Historical Society, to partner with me to throw a kind of a town party - Stanford History Day - which will occur on 17 July this summer. Everyone is invited.

We will be having 3 different Civil War re-enactment groups. The 150th New York will be pitching tents the night before on the soon-to-be Library property. All are welcome to come and watch them get settled for the night and to talk to them. On Saturday, they will hold two demonstrations of marching and firing, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The 77th New York Balladeers will perform old songs of the period, have a children's kazoo fest and may even direct a Cakewalk, a kind of very old-fashioned musical chairs. The Zouaves, with their colorful, almost Middle Eastern looking uniform will also perform on Saturday.

In addition to these groups, there will be a performer who portrays Harriet Tubman. Did you know that Stanford had several houses that were part of the Underground Railroad?

There will be a presentation on Stanford's Attlebury Schoolhouse, one of the few remaining intact one-room schoolhouses in the county still standing on its original site.

Information on all kinds of Stanford history will be available - the history of the Fire Company, the myriad rail lines that passed through and serviced both town residents and Stanford commerce from the 1860's to the late 1930's. You will find out about the history of the Stanford Grange, the various kinds of mills, factories and commercial stores that have been part of the town over the years, and the trends in farming. There will be notated maps of Stanford's very early cemeteries so you can explore them yourselves, and maps of the location of the Underground Railroad houses.

There will be a presentation of original poems written by Stanford residents on any aspect of Stanford's history of their choosing. Everyone - young or old - is invited to submit a poem - of any length - on any topic. All poems will be read, and every poet will receive a special thank you gift. Children will be able to participate in old-fashioned games and musket drills.

Stanford History Day will be a great way to celebrate our town and the truly wonderful community Stanford is. So - come, have fun, meet your neighbors, eat some early American pastries, be reminded that Stanford residents fought and gave their lives in the Civil War and played an important role in shaping the agriculture and commerce upon which our town, our county, our state and, in fact, our country were built.

Soon there will be a banner across the street announcing Stanford History Day, notices with information about the poetry invitation and lots of pamphlets around town with the schedule of events and activities so you can plan your day.

If you would like to volunteer to help out, or if you have any questions, just call me in Town Hall, 868-1310.

SEE YOU ON July 17th !!!