

8.14.2020

Dear Pine Plains,

In government, good deeds are sometimes construed with political ploys. And even if they are, sometimes the good deed is just worth setting aside differences of opinion. This week, Pine Plains was the destination of the annual Seniors Picnic for our northern Dutchess area, a drive-through event at the high school. Maybe it's the pandemic we are in, but more than ever, it was so meaningful to me to work elbow-to-elbow with Didi Barret, Marcus Molinaro, Gregg Pulver and Sue Serino, handing out lunches and conversing with people in their cars. The camaraderie was supportive and joyful. I have Sandwich Shoulder from placing lunch boxes from Moose on the Loose into the back seats of cars. Worth it to see people out, get to talk with them, and to make sure they were doing well. We distributed approximately 316 lunches.

Well, we have our work cut out for us in bringing high-speed Broadband to every citizen of Pine Plains. The Committee will be reviewing errors in census block reporting, in order to make a case for Pine Plains not being "served" totally by internet. (See last week's newsletter!) The funding has dried up in the pandemic, along with funding for just about everything. There is no grant season this year, which is the only way small towns like ours can pay for big projects. But much work is beginning to be done at the congressional level on this egregious problem, and so the next step for us is to ask people to write to their senators and congressfolk and keep putting pressure on them to recognize the fallacies in the way this was studied, and send more funding to the FCC so that at the town level we can bring high-speed internet to everyone. And yes, all this takes time even more than money. This week we spoke with G-Tel out of Germantown, who schooled us in the history of broadband in Columbia County, and how their new buildout was accomplished. My homework is to call the County Executive's office and discuss a county-wide push.

In the meantime, the County Mayors and Supervisors along with Central Hudson, NYSEG and our Emergency Services took Optimum to task for their poor customer service in a long meeting on Tuesday afternoon. They had no system for reporting outages to municipal leaders, and their entire system went down in the August 4th storm, with restoration still not complete. This means there was no way for municipalities to report to Central Hudson, for example. Perhaps you experienced the same frustration trying to get through on the internet or phone. Hopefully we will see a plan coming from them soon to prevent this kind of breakdown.

We also had our first Police Reform meeting this week, with discussion about procedure and review of policing policies from every town with its own department. They were very excited to learn of our pursuit of a "driving lesson with a Cop" program here in town. More on this as it develops. I also participate in a bi-monthly call with Pattern for Progress which studies municipalities and how they do the impossible with little money. This has been a real anchor during these times, as have the weekly calls with the County Executive, for both practical support and moral support.

Vehicle and traffic court will resume for the first time since the shut-down on August 19th at 3pm.

This week's thank you go once again to Jen Chase and Michael Cooper for their incredible work bringing a safe day camp to townskids in a pandemic. This took monumental effort. The unfortunate closing of the beach due to, according to the Department of Health, goose feces from the winter having accumulated down at the bottom of the area out in deeper water, was not for lack of effort to keep the beach clean. Fairly drastic measures are allowed by the DEC in terms of controlling the geese, and the Town Board will be discussing this among other things at the meeting next week on the 20th.

I want also to mention Mike Manning who has been helping us with the road study issue, to reduce speeds on some town roads. He has been diligently researching the current situation at the State as well as our history with this. We hope to bring a resolution to the State soon.

We are still looking into the Hometown Heroes flag project, which got waylaid by the pandemic. We will get this going in earnest in September. If you have someone you'd like to sponsor, please call Alice at 518-398-8600 for information on how we are handling this. Remember, we will need a good photo of the hero in uniform, and the hero must have gone into the service from Pine Plains. Cost will depend on the ultimate vendor for the job.

The agenda for next week's Town Board Meeting includes a report on creating trails northeast of town through farmland there, new ideas for the recycling center, and a report on the new plan for the Old Library. Despite the monumental disaster that has been the pandemic, Pine Plains has kept moving forward with optimism and hard work. Hope is nothing without elbow grease.

Keep your elbows in, Pine Plains!

Darrah Cloud