

Editorial and Meeting notes. (Skip the Editorial if you just want the notes!)  
Editorial, Kay Abraham:

Below is my transcription of the Meeting last night. But let me add some information to give you a context for some of the action. At the last meeting Jerry Smith had asked the Board to release the Draft of the Police Policy Manual but was voted down, 2 to 2. A tie vote results in the motion not being passed. Contrary to the Board's denial of the motion Jerry provided the GDO and Arthur Schiff the PDF file of the draft, which we published on our websites (GDO 'democratsforgermantown.org' and Arthur's "germantowntimes.com"). We were concerned, as Jerry was, that the vote on the Police Manual would come without any meaningful discussion or input from the public. And, since the reason for the revision of the Manual was the fact that there had been some complaints about police conduct there was a demonstrated need for public input. In spite of the fact that the Safety committee had worked on the revised draft in an open way and that the final Draft had been put forth by the Columbia County Sheriff's Office (and was eligible to be FOILED) it was decided by Joan Snyder and Grace Ann Lamberta that the contents should not be made public. Without a scheduled meeting for discussion about the draft we feared it would be voted on without any way for the public to comment.

Jerry was informed that he had transgressed the rules of the Board by his action and he apologized at the beginning of this meeting. However, the rumor mill had already begun with the idea that with the release of the draft "the life & safety" of our police officers had been put in jeopardy. Letters and accusations flew, outraged that our officers would be endangered. However, if one reads the manual it is hard to find just what would cause any problems for any officer. Some of those who are most vocal in their condemnation have not read the manual, but have relied on the characterization by a few individuals who stoked the fires of indignation. Our concern was about the issues of Police Conduct and the Chain of Command and training for awareness of constitutional rights, but those who are angry are focused on their belief that all things police related should be kept secret. This whole area could benefit from some good discussions to explore the real issues but there is no structure for this to happen. At last night's meeting there was a group who spent much of the meeting muttering and making insults just audible enough to be heard, however not one of them stood up and spoke about their opinions in public. The issue of the Police Manual has not been resolved and I can't tell you if there will be an opportunity to talk about it before it is voted on. It may be back to the drawing board with a committee pledged to secrecy and blank sheets of paper. Stay tuned.

### **My notes on the Town Board Meeting of April 21, 2008:**

**The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM. All Board members present.**

**The minutes** of the March Town Board meeting were approved.

**Jerry Smith makes a statement, saying he made a grave mistake in releasing the Draft of the Police Policy Manual to the public after that meeting. He apologizes to the Town Board members and the residents of Germantown for his actions.**

**A motion was made to pay the month's audited bills.** Motion passed.

**Recognitions:** Five individuals were presented with plaques expressing appreciation for the services to the town over the years. Anthony Cidras for his service on the Town Board and subsequently as a Town Employee, Thomas Colwell, for his years of service as Municipal Judge, Officer Eli Fieser, who recently "talked down" a potential jumper on the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, Peter Lasher, and Jack Thomas, Coach of the successful Germantown Basketball team.

**Reality Check:** a presentation by a group of High School students who travel around with a dramatic anti-smoking program under the auspices of the Campaign for Tobacco free Kids, funded by \$\$ from N Y State's share of money the U S courts ordered tobacco companies to compensate the state. The program focuses on the ways to combat teen-age smoking, particularly against marketing techniques that tobacco companies use to target and ensnare teenage smokers. The companies have agreed to stop this kind of marketing but continually push what's allowable, and have turned to magazines geared to young audiences and to movies. The students distributed materials designed to encourage protests to the American Motion Pictures Association about the 75% of PG rated movies made that feature and promote smoking.

**Catskill Mayor** speaks and asks Board to consider cooperating with Catskill to name a very small currently un-named island after an old time sturgeon fisherman named Dougie Bush who used the island extensively. The demarcation (separating Greene from Columbia Counties) runs through the middle of the island necessitating his need for agreement from Germantown. He was referred to the History Department to do a little research, but the Board had no initial objection. This small island is right off the shore from the Anchorage. Audience members mention Germantown sturgeon fisherman, the late Everett Nack, whose son Steve Nack is still operating the fishery.

**Communications from the Town Clerk to the Town Board:**

**Letter from Joanna Tipple of the Reformed Church announcing that lunch will be served the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month.**

**Letter from Robert Barberi asking that the Board not adopt the Comprehensive Plan on the basis that it is unconstitutional at the state and national levels, and that there wasn't enough input from residents.**

**Letter from Albert W. who congratulated Grace Ann Lamberta for her letter to the Register-Star regarding her antipathy for the Comprehensive Plan.**

**Letter from Mike Lawson. Accusing Jerry Smith of acting criminally and jeopardizing the life & safety of the local police by distributing the Draft of the Police Manual. Wants the**

**Board to scrap the manual and start over and keep it a secret. Attacks Jerry Smith for “acting for personal gain”.**

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

**Highway Department;** Rich Jennings reports: The docks are in place at Cheviot and the Anchorage. Participated in the clean-up last week and transported 1,000 of litter collected along the roadsides. Thanks to all those who helped in clean-up, the Sportsmen’s Club, the Cub Scouts and Dave Black’s Plumbing. New road guard put up on South Road.

**Sewer Department.** George Sharpe, Jr. absent, Joan Snyder gives report: No complaints received, usage 53,000 gallons per day. Both generators recently were checked for maintenance, New Ultra-Violet lights are needed (part of the processing of sewerage). Portable metal shelter for UV lights working well.

**Parks Commission:** Mike George reports: The Little League fields are now cleaned up and ready for use. Maintenance on the Beach house is complete. Any scrap metal has been salvaged, mowing in parks to begin. Park trails have been cleared. Windows and doors replacements for the Youth Activities Building have been bid and selection was made for recommendation to the Board. \$\$ is in the budget for this project. The old windows & doors cannot be re-used or recycled but will be included in as salvage and will be transported away by the salvage company. New doors & windows should result in a 10% decrease in fuel usage. Recommended purchase of new grilles for the Parks. The Cub Scouts (pack 115) are funding two of them and two more are covered by the funding package for the Dales Bridge Park. He presented initial drawings & estimates for the layout for the pavilion for Dales Bridge Park. Parks Commission meeting May 15<sup>th</sup>. Asks for an increase in fees for advertising signs at fields to \$200.00. Motion made and passed. Wants to begin purchasing replacement equipment and would like to have a set amount to spend so they can take advantage of sales, promotions, etc. Roy tells him that he can spend amounts under \$500.00 (within budget lines) without having to go to bidding process.

**Police Department:** Commissioner Rekow: reports that in the month of March the police officers worked 140.5 hours, (119.0 of which are paid, the balance volunteered) and booked the following activities: 1 auto accident, personal injury; 1 assist to other agencies; 1 house alarm; 2 fire assists and 5 warrants served or transports to court.

**Economic Development:** Roy Brown says committee has met with various building owners and potential clients to try to encourage new businesses in village. Ongoing efforts.

**Hazard Mitigation Committee** Jerry Smith says his report and all the research they had done is on his now-crashed computer. Will get it together for next meeting. Promises that a full report will be complete by mid-summer. (Town has a flyer produced by the Columbia County Department of Health that lists items that would be essential in the event of an evacuation. It has recommendations of how to gather all the things you need in a prioritized shopping list over a span of several weeks to reduce the impact of having to get everything at once. This can be picked up at Town Hall.)

**Rezoning Committee:** Joel Craig reports: They have met twice since the last Board meeting. They have been looking for specific problems in the current zoning laws. They have put forth a draft RFP seeking professional services to assist them in their work. Joel says there will be no movement to seek a building moratorium for large subdivisions or developments until they have access to the professional input.

**Town Junk Law:** Roy Brown reports that this issue has been turned over to the Economic Development Committee and they are studying the possibilities.

**Police Policy Manual:** Roy Brown reports that they will take no action on this issue as a few investigations are going on about it. Perhaps at the next meeting.

**400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** Board passed a resolution making Germantown an official participant in the NY State “Explore NY 400” program. Germantown will be eligible to gain state funding for approved events, infrastructure, publicity in connection with the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of first exploration of the Hudson region.

**Code of Ethics** Town counsel, Jason Shaw, is reviewing the revision.

**Art in Germantown:** Joel Craig and Jerry Smith are exploring how to encourage exhibitions or events featuring the many artists, craftspeople and performers who live in Germantown. They hope to bring this idea into the planning by the Economic Development Committee and also the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary efforts. Joel makes note that **Eliza Watson**, a local student, won first prize in a drawing contest sponsored by the NY Senate Education Committee and her artwork is featured on the front page of the report.

**Jerry Smith** asks the Board members to request that all correspondence received in Town Hall be shared with all Board members. Motion made and passed.

**Supervisor’s Report:** In February he met with the Reformed Church leaders and discussed the feasibility of the establishment of an assisted living facility in connection with the Palatine Manor. He and Rich Jennings plus 3 members of the Reformed Church visited the Good Shepherd facility in Saratoga to see a prototype. He hopes to visit other sites in an exploratory effort. The Economic Development Committee may be involved. Motion of support for continuing the effort asked for and passed.

**Municipal Parking area** and the memorial to **Martha Lorenz Van Allen** continuing. Roy chose an engraved wooden sign for designation. There will be a wooden bench also. Motion for approval passed.

**Public Meeting on Saturday April 26<sup>th</sup> from 9AM to Noon. Informational meeting held on the topic of property assessments.** Representative from the NY State “Office of Real Property” will be there plus County & local assessment officers. Explains the process and regulations.

**Sidewalks:** Contract signed!! Work will begin. Additional funding from the TEP (Transportation Enhancement Plan) being sought for additional sidewalk improvements.

**Roy Brown, Joel Craig and Bruce Bohnsack attended a session hosted by Pace University about the procedures for the Comprehensive Plan. After discussion about Germantown’s progress the recommendation was to pass the new zoning law and the Comprehensive Plan simultaneously.**

**Public Comments:**

**Ellen Epstein** asks if the Sidewalk is designed to extend as far as the Library? Answer: yes.

**Mark Scherzer** speaks He says that contrary to what had been said at the last meeting a “draft” of a document can be FOILED. He had put in a FOIL request some time ago but had not received an answer yet. Asks what opportunities will the public have to speak to the issue of the contents of the draft since it has been put on hold. He brings up the issues he wrote about in a recent letter to the Board members. [See website for the content of his letter to the Board.]. Roy Brown says they will not discuss the Police Manual because he is waiting for the lawyer’s review. Roy says he just received Mark’s letter and has not yet reviewed it.

**Arthur Schiff** cites police manual language from other localities that are similar to Germantown’s Draft and yet is posted on their websites to make them available to the public without any fear that the information is too sensitive for the public to know about. Joan Snyder says the Police Manual should remain private and not be available to the public. Arthur asks why the Board did not choose among themselves to select the chair for the previous Board meeting, as provided by law. Joan Snyder responds with words from Germantown’s local code that say the Supervisor can choose who will be the chair in his absence.

**Ms. Allen** speaks. Says she likes the Town’s website and asks for there to be a listing of Germantown owned businesses so she could better support local businesses.

**Kay Abraham** speaks about the controversy over the Police Manual. She believes the worry about the contents of the manual being damaging to the police officers is unwarranted since nothing that isn’t common knowledge is in it. She expresses her belief that the tumult over what happened would have been avoided if there had been a workshop meeting scheduled to discuss the draft so that the public could have an opportunity to contribute to the deliberations. As it was, the only way one could make any comments prior to the vote was to read the draft on the Democrats’ website. Pleads with the Board once again that they make discussion sessions a regular feature. [See GDO website for exact words]

**Martin Overington** speaks re this next Saturday’s Riversweep—the clean-up of the Hudson shore—will commence at 9:00 AM starting from Anchorage and from Chevoit going north & south to meet at the center. As in the past the Town will transport all the junk collected in their trucks for disposal. Clean-up is great community fun and all helpers are welcomed.

**Betty Ahrens** asked if public could come in and view bills to be paid. Answer, No.  
**Meeting adjourned.**

**Corrections, comments welcomed.**  
**KAY 537-5404**