

Notes on the Town Board meeting June 16th 2008:

Dear Friends,

This was a very long board meeting, filled with many issues. My handwritten notes covered 13 pages. I am providing you as much as I can--I try not to summarize any topic but rather to give you as much of the wording as spoken but I seldom have any actual quotes because I have to keep on scribbling as fast as I can. I want to remind you that the entire

report will be posted on our website, www.democratsforgermantown.org within a few days. I hope that you read the whole report so you get the tenor of what goes on, and of course, the public statements and questions are at the very end! As a teaser I will say there was some news about the Central Market store, a group of upset parents, unhappy with a recent decision about Camp Palatine and also news from the Town engineering firm about the coming sidewalks. Read on! This past meeting was adjourned at 10 PM. Here goes:

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 Pm by Supervisor Brown. all members were present.

The **minutes** of the preceeding meeting were approved. The Audited bills were approved for payment.

There were two letters read to the board members and to the public by Town Clerk, Charlene Diehl

A short letter from a law firm with a long name ---couldn't get what it was about.

Peter Davies & Mark Scherzer: Letter praising and thanking the Germantown fire department for its prompt efforts to save their barn. It was partially destroyed and the poultry within it were killed but the structure was saved because of the quick response and is in the process of being rebuilt.

Town Department Reports.

Anthony Cidras made the reports for three Departments:

Highway: First pass of mowing has been completed. this past few days they have been doing patching and restoring the crumbled edges of roads throughout the area.

50 ft of rusted pipeline has been replaced by plastic pipes.

Sewer: Pump Station #2 preventive maintenance work. No residential complaints.

Conducting annual calibration of flow meters. Engineers & Attorney are addressing the issue of excess water flow.

They are looking into the legal right to check residences and business to find sources.

More on this at the next meeting.

Maintenance: Lake is ready for use, buoys, ramps, dock. Halloween trail is cleaned & ready. Summer supplies have been ordered. They need 20 new tables--ten to be paid from Park Commission, ten to be paid for by Town. Painting of benches, etc. is being done. The Little League building was broken into again and some vandalization occurred.

Convversation among Anthony & Board members about how to controll dogs who damage the baseball bases and defecate in the ball fields.

Police Department Report by Roger Rekow: Roger reports that there were 189 hours of service provided by the police force with the following incidents:

2 Auto accidents, 2 assist motorists 1 auto lockout, 1 electronic alarm response, 1 open container, 1 domestic property, 2 serving papers, 2 assist EMS/Fire, 1 Civil order of Protection.

Roger acknowledged Kay Abraham's request to meet with the Police commissioners, will get together soon.

Committee Reports:

Park Commission: Michael George reports: They hope to construct a new building at the Ball Fields that will be more secure.

They had three bids for the basketball set up: Total cost \$2,100.00, split equally among the Park Commission, the Town Budget and

some other budget line that I couldn't pick up. They have received donations of balls, nets and other equipment. There will be a full court marked out and also a half court.

The full court will be regulation height; the half court will be set slightly lower for the use of younger players. Michael reported that the county had had a small cut in funding from the State, but that it is being absorbed for this year but may reduce funding to the town next year as it cycles down to municipalities. Motion to approve funding passed unanimously.

Economic Development: Roy Brown reports in the absence of Corrine Curry They are having a meeting on June 19th at 7 PM and are looking for the participation of any interested business or individual. Says he has some news that will come later in the meeting.

Hazard Mitigation: Jerry Smith says they have their penultimate draft and the committee is meeting on July 8th to finalize it and recommend its version to the Town board. It will require a Public Hearing which will occur on July 17th at 7PM Details will be on the website.

Rezoning committee: Joel Craig reports: They are still working on issues of roads, streets & driveways, comparing the various existing rules, laws with those of other communities in order to come up with a uniform approach. They want to establish Highway Standards that will be separate from the Zoning Laws for administration. They have a meeting set for next Monday (June 23) at 7 PM . They have sent out their RFPs for a Zoning consultant . Joel makes it clear that the Committee itself is doing the actual work developing the new Zoning recommendations but they need an experienced consultant to review their product to make sure it is all done correctly. They are seeking input from the Highway Department and the Planning board. Grace Ann speaks: She is terribly concerned about the economic conditions and questions the notion of spending \$20,000.00 on a Consultant. Lists other priorities. Thinks they should hold back until they see where the economy is going. Joel disagrees. "It doesn't get cheaper if you delay." The funding has been budgeted. Other departments are not asked to do with 30-year old equipment. Roy Brown speaks, says they attended the Pace University training on Land Use issues and was told that a time of economic stagnation was the best time to go ahead with comprehensive rezoning. Joel asks Grace Ann for her help in finding a grant that would cover the expense. Grace Ann speaks to the Video camera and asks for people to call her and lobby against paying the Consultant.

Keep Farming: No report from Chuck Abraham--that committee has not been meeting, having presented their findings to the Town Supervisors. The next step will be initiated by the elected officials.

Roy says he will contact the Supervisors of Livingston & Clermont to schedule a meeting.

Junk Law: Bruce Bohnsack reports: This is closely connected with the efforts of the Economic Development Committee's work. He gathered some sample Junk Ordinances from New York State materials. He will turn them over to the rezoning committee. any new "junk law" will require a public hearing before it is adopted. Joan Snyder asked about the several "private dumps" that are currently allowed. Roy says the Attorney will have to look into it.

Police Police Manual:

ROY Brown reports that he has received some comments and all will be sent to the Safety Committee for review when they go over the Draft. The committee will report to the Board.

300/400 anniversaries: Jerry Smith reports: Nadine Rumke, a ninth generation Palatine settler will be the Co-Chair of the Committee. 400th anniversary: Many ideas have floated up that will be fun and educational and "put Germantown on the map!" They are seeking grants from the State, as is the School administration. They will try to coordinate so that the replica of the Half Moon, Hudson's ship, will connect with boaters of all sizes when it comes near Germantown. Tara Sullivan, director of the 400 Celebration will attend their next meeting and will bring the samples of the official logo and the event's official flag. 300th Anniversary: They have a steering Committee for this: They want to update the known history with research and "oral histories" from old-time residents. They want every single organization to come up with an idea of what they would do to add to commemorate the event. They will apply for grants to cover the costs of any celebration. Will set up a "Palatine Oktoberfest" big bash for the whole community to celebrate. It was said (Joel? Roy?) that the Hudson River Greenway foundation had a grant for municipalities to improve access of waterfront space, but the deadline was the end of the month(!). It was suggested that the Town get an application ready for the following year's round of funding.

Code of Ethics: Jason Shaw has new policy and is reviewing it .

Sidewalk: Ray Darling, Representative of the Town's Engineering firm reports: He is the project manager for the building of the sidewalks. Funding for project as approved by the DOT reimburses the town for 80% of the cost; the town pays for the remaining 20%. Surveying will commence this summer with a target date of summer '09 as completion of phase #1 .Another DOT grant is being applied for for Phase #2. Ray Darling says they are looking for an alternative to asphalt surfacing for the walking trail, since it is rather high priced, being petroleum-based. Joel Craig speaks: says it's interesting that we can spend for this but some are unwilling to fund a consultant for the REzoning Committee.

Computer Purchase for Town Hall: Roy reports that they have identified a reasonably priced laptop to replace the old desk top computer. (\$603.34) The old computer will be reformatted and given to the Highway Department to replace their even older one. Motion to approve spending: approved.

Robert Breury Teacher at HS has been sending pupils to attend meetings. Asks for permission to do it again next year. Also suggests "internships" to attend committee meetings, Town Meetings. Board enthusiastically approves.

Otto Leuschel--Introduced himself to the Town Board and the public. He has just signed the contract to purchase the Central Market building. [cheers & applause from the audience!] Roy greeted him, saying they had not included this announcement iunder the Economic development Committee's report to keep up the suspense. Mr Leuschel has had 17 years of experience in store management, primarily with Whole Foods markets. He said he feels welcomed by the Town. Plans to have market open 7 days a week and is looking to the community "to tell him what they want". If all goes according to plan they should be closing in September and opening in October. Another round of applause.

Bruce Bohnsack speaks about his proposal to set up a video camera at Lasher Park that would focus on the Hudson River & the views beyond and also include a bit of the Park area. They want ot have a continuing view to broadcast on the GTEL website. It will refresh every few minutes. Anyone can look it up and see conditions at the River front. He needs permission to use the Town tower to mount the camers up high. Roy says this ties into the waterfront revitalization for the town. They need a sign advising the public of the presence of the camera. Asks if Town Website can establish a link to the vue-cam. Yes. Board approves. Bruce comments on the large wooden sign for the municipal Parking Lot, dark green background with deeply incised ivory letters in a classic font. He says they (GTEL) have ordered a sign with the same colors. Very nice sign. [The sign was set up in front of the dais and everyone thought it was very good.]

Bruce Bohnack speaks about the video taping service the Town is using for its Community broadcasts. Previously the Town had a video camera but the quality of the picture and the audio was very poor, so much that many complained they couldn't tell what was going on. Germantown Telephone put in one of its own technicians and camera to provide better video. Public reaction has been very positive. However, they have provided this service free for about 6 months and Bruce asks the town to take over the monthly cost. Joan Snyder says that the poor & elderly can't afford cable in today's economy--doesn't want the town to pay for the better service and would go back to the prior method. "The difference is like night and day", says Joel and believes the town should cover the cost .Bruce says that GTEL is considering establishing a "lifeline" level of basic service that would include the broadcast of Town Meetings. Bruce says the franchise fee that GTEL pays the town should cover the cost, however the town has put that revenue source into the general fund. Jerry Smith says that the video broadcast of the meetings was.."an essential part of democracy in action" and urged the continuation

of the present service through the end of the year and deal with the issue at the time of developing next year's budget. Issue was tabled until next meeting in July.

New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency and

Competitiveness. Jerry Smith had prepared a summary for the Board members of many of the recommendations from the State of ways towns could address the pressing fiscal pressures by consolidating services and functions, even of consolidating towns.

Many of the suggestions didn't seem very appropriate for Germantown but some should be looked into. For example, having assessments done for all communities at the County level. Roy said that the County Board of Supervisors was looking at this partly because of a shortage in finding qualified assessors. Also, it would provide more uniformity in assessments. [The BoS has taken no action on this--it was just discussed.]

There was a recommendation that certain offices could be appointed not elected. Also, a recommendation that Town Justice offices could be consolidated within an area. Jerry says that there are many suggestions that need to be looked into for economic benefit to the town. Savings could be found in the Highway Department, Police Department and Justice, but the true impact is still unknown. Joel says that it needs to be an on-going discussion and analysis. The Association of Towns is against it as eroding the concept of Home Rule. [Thorny issues!] Jerry asks that this issue "be kept on the front burner".

Suozzi Report: Jerry says it is a daunting document, 112 pages of legalese and jargon.

Much is directed towards School Board budgets and recommends a cap on School budgets. There is the concept of "circuit breakers" that would kick in based on income levels. Nothing he could find about changing basis of school funding from property taxes to income taxes. There is much debate about this and a lot of information and dis-information. Only thing Town can do at this point is to keep watching for developments and to try to assess the impact on Germantown of the various versions that come up.

Jerry wants Roy Brown, as a member of the County Board of Supervisors to reflect the thinking of Germantown Town Board and its residents.

Pace University's request for resolution: Pace conducts training sessions for Town Board, Planning Board & ZBA members in order for them to do their work and has asked towns to pass resolutions expressing their desire to see the training sessions continued. Resolution passed.

Camp Palatine: Roy interrupts agenda to accommodate young people who had come about a specific issue. A small group came forward and spoke about their dismay that Camp Palatine program had been changed to limit participation to those only up through 12 years of age. Prior to this youngsters up to 14 and to 15 (service as counselors) could attend. Apparently the decision to lower the age limit had not been communicated to the children or their parents and many found themselves thwarted in their plans to attend this summer. Parents in the audience challenged the decision from the floor--They spoke from the audience, and I did not get any names. They didn't like the decision, how it was made, the lack of communication and the fact that there is no other program set up for that age level. Apparently, there had been some discipline problems last year within the older age bracket. There had been complaints from parents of younger children about a lack of behavior control. Austin had reported this.

Joan Snyder said they (The Park Commission, I believe) had looked at programs running in other towns (Red Hook, Tivoli & Rhinebeck) and found that they had a limit of 12 years of age. So it was decided to set it up that way for this year. Unfortunately, it was not widely known until some of the older children who wanted to return to the Camp made their applications and found out that they had been excluded because of their age. There were complaints that the good kids were suffering because of the bad behavior of a small group of kids. Roy Brown took responsibility for the decision, apologized for the lack of communication but said it was done out of concern for the younger children. He said they were open to ideas about how to set up something for the teenagers. Joel Craig and Michael George both spoke in favor of trying to do something for this group and they will discuss it. Joel says he didn't find out about it until he saw a petition circulated by a group of young people. He feels it's bad for this age group to have nothing to do and that they need some activity. Jerry says he shares Joel's position and that an effort should be made to design an appropriate activity for these older children. Asks if there are any parents out there who might have feasible ideas about activities/ Joan said they had been responding to the complaints about quite young children being intimidated by the older teenagers, and the need to have them separated.. Also the Counselors were not old enough to enforce any discipline. Roy says that the Town will try to come up with something for these children. After a lengthy back & Forth as the discussion ended the group left the meeting.

Supervisor's Report:

Roy Brown reports on the actions of the **County Board of Supervisors**. They had passed 29 Resolutions at their June 11th meeting, covering employment appointments, budget transfers, selling certain equipment, setting up a pool of typists for the Supervisors, approving a plan of the sheriff's department to institute work-release programs for Towns to avail themselves of. (Can Germantown use such help?)

The BoS is working on the efforts to purchase a new location for the Social Services Department. Controversy over the location away from many clients, without transportation solutions. This has to be worked out. A complete list of Board of Supervisors actions will be available from the Town clerk.

Roy lists some meetings & events of note (the details will be put up on the Town's website, www.germantownny.org) Fourth of July: Celebration on Saturday, June 28th.

Park open at noon, charge for entering after 3 PM, Fireworks at 9:45.

July 24th 7 PM Forum about Development policies, Zoning. Experts discuss the process with the latest requirements, standards.

The new **Parking Lot sign** will go up when the Memorial sign is delivered. Roy notes new handicapped parking zone in front of Post Office. New lines will be marked in Municipal Lot

Michael George speaks, thanks Town for the use by the Cub Scouts of the Halloween trailer, which was used for the Memorial Day Parade. As a result of conversations with Cub Scouts about Memorial Day's meanings they will have a fund-raiser on July 19th at the parking area of the Activities Building--a car wash to raise funds for compiling a "care" package for troops abroad in Afghanistan with small items that soldiers find useful. COME ONE COME ALL WITH YOUR DIRTY CAR!!

Public Comments: Arthur Schiff asks about the process for incorporating public input into the Police Manual. Roy says the safety Committee will read all comments and determine what would be added or modified when they turn their recommendations to the Town Board.

Larry Osgood cites information he found regarding the condition of the Bridge over the Roe Jan on Rt 9G. It has a low safety rating--among other bridges in Columbia County. Roy says that the repair are scheduled for late summer, early fall.

Kay Abraham speaks, Asks that perhaps a speed restriction would help conditions on Bridge--folks tend to speed going down hill there. She makes plea for continuation of higher quality Video coverage for the Town meetings. Asks about costs--it's about \$100.00 for each monthly meeting right now. Urges Town to continue service to the public. Cites Germantown's problem with communicating with residents, no local paper, etc. Says it's only now that residents can actually find out what is happening at Town Board meetings. The lack of communication was cited as a problem for Germantown and the better video coverage has helped and is well worth the cost. We send money on the signs and improving the sidewalks and make other efforts to make the town function better and this is a very good thing to do.

Joan Snyder makes plea for viewers to urge town to save money by canceling the allotment for the Consultant for the Rezoning Committee. Gives phone #, asks for calls.

Kay Abraham speaks again saying that money for the Consultant is well worth the cost. It has already been paid for in the budget and is a small amount to spend for the benefit to the Committee which is working very hard. We haven't cut any other department's budget line. Says she is not surprised that Grace Ann wants to cut it because she has been opposed to the Comprehensive Plan from the get-go. Grace Ann says she's not opposed to the Plan.. "Grace Ann, you campaigned against it!", says Kay. Roy asks for calm. It's important to Germantown's future to do the Rezoning properly, says KAY.

Michael George asks for help from Parents to figure out what can be done for the kids over 12 years.

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 PM

Additions and corrections welcomed. Please excuse typos--spellcheck is out.

Kay Abraham 537-5404

Addition: Joel kindly reminded me that he also discussed the grant application to the State for \$\$ to help restore/repair the Parsonage building. He took a tour and found it in severe disrepair, with crumbling sills and weakened floors as well as peeling paint.

The building needs to be made safer and sounder. The grant \$\$ should make some first steps possible. This structure is on the National Registry of Historic Buildings (from D. Montague.)

KAY