

State of the Town of Ossian 2020

As we end 2020 I would like to thank all town officials, employees and volunteers for their efforts and accomplishments during a year that was like nothing we have ever experienced.

1. Town Board

After 2½ years and countless hours of work, the Ossian Town Board, on December 8, 2020, adopted an updated Zoning Law and Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Ossian. Included in the new zoning law are regulations to address solar, wind and battery storage facilities, something all municipalities will have to be concerned with.

The Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for the Zoning Law and guides future development in the Town of Ossian. Credit for this work goes to the Zoning Update Committee, comprised of twelve Ossian residents, the Livingston County Planning Department, CC Environment & Planning and the Town's Attorney, Louis Colella and his staff.

The Ossian Town Board adopted a tax-cap compliant budget for 2021, while maintaining healthy fund balances going into the new year.

For the sixth year in a row the Town of Ossian is going into 2021 debt free.

2. Highway Department

With all the challenges of 2020, the Ossian Highway Department has been able to stay healthy and productive. In November Highway Superintendent, Shaun Metcalfe, accepted a position with the Livingston County Highway Department and the Ossian Town Board welcomed Keith Young as the acting Highway Superintendent for the Town of Ossian.

Our highway department completed their CHIPs projects, along with oiling & stoning six miles of road, early in the year. This enabled our town to receive the full amount of CHIPs money from New York State. Had the work not been completed in a timely manner, we could have received, as some towns did, a 20% COVID-related deduction.

The highway department is set to go with the 2021 CHIPs projects, as tiling, graveling and wedging of roads has been completed in advance.

Along with keeping Ossian's roads well maintained our Highway Department was able to earn over \$51,000 working for the Livingston County Highway Department.

Another major accomplishment was the doubling in size of our salt and sand storage building. This was made possible by a 50/50 cost sharing grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Now all salt & sand is stored under cover.

3. Town Clerk/Tax Collector

Steve Rauber continues to perform his duties in a timely and efficient manner. 2020 tax collections went very well and, as usual, collections balanced to the penny with the county. There were 110 dogs licensed in the town, which is a consistent number. Once COVID is over, stop in and have a cup of coffee with Steve!

4. Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement Officer, Bob Bourgoine, had a very busy 2020. He issued approximately 38 permits for various projects, did 3 fire inspections, issued 3 stop work orders, and performed many building inspections. Bob also completed a week long code school. He also was a member of the Town of Ossian's Zoning Update Committee.

5. Town Justice – Judge Wilson

Two major issues dominated the year 2020 in all courts across New York State.

1. Bail Reform – This reduced the number of offences that qualify for bail. Most misdemeanors and felony offenses now only require an appearance ticket.
2. The second issue is COVID related. Starting on March 13, 2020 and ending on August 1, 2020 all court business was conducted virtually. Since August 1, 2020 courtroom capacity, mask-wearing, and social distancing are the norm, with another shutdown a possibility.

Judge Wilson now holds court on the 1st Thursday of the month at 5:30PM, rather than the 2nd Thursday. This is a change he considers beneficial to his court.

6. Historian

Rhea Walker reports that requests for information and activities were much less in 2020 due to the pandemic. Activities conducted by the historian included publishing newsletters for the Ossian Historical Society, participating in a historical marker photo campaign and involvement with the Livingston County Teen Recognition Program.

Rhea is looking forward, as all of us are, to a more normal 2021, and being able to provide programs and functions and share our history with town residents and others.

7. Assessor

The Office of Assessor was affected, like so many others, by the pandemic. However, Holley continues to perform her duties very efficiently. Critical duties performed by the assessor include processing exemptions, property transfers, escrows and address changes, which must meet deadlines for timely filing of tentative and final tax rolls with the Town Clerk, all of which Holley has completed.

8. Livingston County Seniorama & Teen Recognition

As Heather Pero, Town of Ossian's representative to the Livingston County Youth Board and Roxanne Morsch, Town of Ossian's representative to the Livingston County Office for the Aging report, 2020 activities were disrupted by COVID. Both the Teen Recognition Banquet and Seniorama Ceremony were cancelled. However, five Ossian teens: Sawyer Barron, Augustus Swyers, Michael Thomas, Savannah Tucker and Kylie Young were nominated for recognition. Don & Janeen Wilson were nominated as Ossian's Senior Citizens of the Year.

9. Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Board

Chairman, Tom DePuy, reports that the Zoning Board of Appeals had five public hearings in 2020. Of those five, three were approved and two were denied. Three hearings were avoided due to people complying with Ossian's zoning codes after either receiving a letter from the Code Enforcement Officer or seeing the Code Enforcement Officer in person.

Deanne Knapp resigned her position on the board, and Jeff Wilson was appointed to replace her.

10. Ossian Ag & Farmland Advisory Committee

There was no activity from this committee due to the pandemic.

Goals for the Town of Ossian in 2021 are:

Stay Healthy! Stay Strong! And a return to our normal way of life!

Sincerely,
Dwight Knapp
Supervisor
Town of Ossian