

Assessor

Exemptions –

All exemption renewals have been sent to owners and are due back no later than March 1, 2024

2023 Legislation required a notice of Low-income senior exemption availability mailed to all residential parcels on Jan 30 of each year. This is in addition to the same information that is printed on the back of the tax bills in September and again on the January Town and County Bills. Last year, this notice was very confusing to residents, especially if they were already getting the exemption. Assessors across the State were inundated with calls and applications from people that were far from qualified.

Those notices must be mailed again this year. Instead of the Legislations suggested wording for these post cards, we have made them much more informative. They will alert residents to 3 separate exemptions, Low-income Seniors/Disabled and Firefighter/Ambulance worker. They will include the website information to learn more or download forms and applications.

Chatham school district added the Firefighters exemption and also changed the income limits for the low-income exemptions to match the Town and County.
Around the Office –

Assessor is processing exemptions, reviewing and processing sales. Assessor clerk is reviewing permits and finishing field work.

It is also that time of year to work with and review the States information that's goes into determining the next equalization rate. The residential trend in Sales given to us by the STATE is 5% over last year.

Building Department

No report

Business & Economic Development

No report

Outreach & Marketing

No report

CAC, Climate Smart & Environmental Management

CAC:

CAC Budget: There is still about \$20,000 in the budget for water testing, and \$4,000 for other projects.

Water Source Protection Plan: Donald and Peg tested 10 additional wells in November bringing the total of wells tested in 2023 in all the geologic substrates to about 74. Some of those tested were retests. They were accompanied by 3 employees from the DOH, and MJ from the New York State Rural Water Association. The DOH paid for all of the tests except one PCB test. Because New Lebanon is one of only a handful of small communities testing our water, the DOH will publish an article about New Lebanon in their Winter "In the Field" newsletter.

Library Event: The CAC is planning a public education event at the Town library on February 10 from 1:00 – 3:00 pm on water source protection and well health.

Implementation CEA creation: The CAC is presenting an overview of creating a CEA (critical environmental area) for our aquifers so we can gauge the Town Board's interest in our further developing this.

Wastewater Feasibility Study Joint Committee with BEDC: The town has rec'd funding approval for part of the study. When we applied for the grant to do the feasibility study it was suggested to the Town explore both a municipal water system and a wastewater treatment system. This fits into the Town's NRCP goals.

Conservation and Climate Welcome Packet: One of the goals for the Town from the Natural Resource Conservation Plan is to assist the different town boards and share conservation information. Bob Gilson, and the CAC and CSC, are working on a brochure or packet for the Town's Welcome Packet highlighting the good work we are doing. Along with many current residents who are supportive of our work, we know those moving here will be excited to see our efforts and focus on protecting the environment and reducing greenhouse emissions.

Open Space Inventory: We are planning our work on this update, if needed, of the OSI. We are working on a list of specific properties that need protection. There is chance that the Darrow School may close, and we are exploring ways to protect their portion of the Shaker Swamp. We are checking with the CLC to see if they can be helpful.

Regenerate NY – Dealing with Invasive species: The CAC and NL resident Melba Kurman are working with Tyler Levy, Forester, Division of Lands & Forests, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation on a presentation on March 16, 2024 at the NL Library. The purpose of this grant program for private property owners is to support the regeneration of forests so they may continue to deliver vital services such as mitigating climate change, protecting air and water quality, and supporting the economy. We are inviting about a dozen other local CACs from our region for this presentation.

CAC hours for 2023: Water testing and T4T upkeep only between 3 people = 149 hours

CSC:

The CSC submitted the final docs for Silver designation on Jan 5. If accepted, we will be notified around Feb 23. Achieving Silver will also get us 1400 points in NYSERDA's Clean Energy Communities (CEC) partner program. The CEC program has recently been revised to allow towns to get more points for other actions already performed including the solar panels. So, after achieving Silver we will have enough points to get a \$175,000 grant for energy upgrades on the town buildings. And, if we use that grant money strategically, we can put ourselves in line for the next level which is a \$250,000 grant. **Thanks to Michelle Parks, Alejandra Limon and Marc Anthonisen for their help getting us to Silver!**

We are still awaiting news on the LVPA water tank grant funding as well as the grant for the 6 additional heat pumps at Town Hall.

Deb Gordon will be leaving the CSC now that her term on the Town Board is over. We thank her and all the outgoing Town Board members for their support over the last 3 years!

EMC:

No report

Fire, Law Enforcement, Emergency

No report

Highway

No report

Historian & LVHS

Historian:

No report

LVHS:

No report

Justice Court

No report

Library

- Saturday, February 10th at 1:00 PM: Representatives from the CAC will hold an information session at the Library about water testing in town, and how residents can access free testing of their own wells.

- Winter is a great time to visit local museums and other places of interest in the area. Thanks to the Columbia County Libraries Association and grant funding from the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation, Columbia County residents can access free passes through the library. All you need is a library card, and passes can be requested online even when the library building is closed. Anyone interested can visit us online, call or stop in for more information.

Buildings, Parks & Recreation

Buildings:

No report

Parks:

No report

Recreation Commission:

The rec commission didn't meet this month. The rink has been set up, we're hoping that the next few very cold nights will finally freeze it up for skating.

We recently discussed that the Newcomer events have been successful in getting new people involved with each other and with the town and think it would be good to have more of them. Perhaps starting with quarterly, and eventually expanding to monthly.

For each planned event, we mail invitations to the people who have bought homes since the previous event, announce the event with numerous posted flyers, town clerk emails, town facebook posts, Grow the Valley's monthly newsletter, as well as a group email to previous attendees.

The current budget is for two events at approximately \$150 per event.

We'll begin to meet again in March.

Seniors

The next meeting of the Advisory council for the Office of the Aging will be 1/17. At that time new programs will be announced and hopefully the senior survey will be accepted and be ready for the next step.

Anyone who is 65 and older and needs help paying fuel costs can contact the Office of the Aging for assistance in applying for the HEAP and weatherization programs in the County.

You can find out what kinds of programs and assistance are available in Columbia County on the web at Columbia County Office of the Aging and or pamphlets that are available in the Town Hall. Assistance is available for many things we need to age in our homes safely.

New Lebanon Seniors enjoyed a Holiday Party at the Wood Life farm and market

on Old Rt 20 in December. They gave holiday cards to the Veterans and residents of local nursing homes and sent 300 cards to service personnel overseas to Iraqi via Gary Flaherty and the Columbia County Veterans program. They gave a donation to the Holiday gift drive in town and donated money towards holiday meals for veterans in Columbia County.

For January, February, and March we will be meeting on the third Friday of the month only at 1pm in the Community Center on Rt. 20. We will be serving soups and sandwiches in Jan. and Feb. and then have a St. Patrick's Day dinner on 3/15 at the Cherry Plain Square restaurant.

Traffic Safety

Work on County 5 south has started to build the road to the new emergency tower.

Work has been completed on Rt 9 south with new bridges and drainage ditches.

I have seen increased police presence on Rt 20 by the elementary school for traffic speeding reduction.

Projects for 2024 will be presented at the Traffic Safety meeting on 1/25.

Volunteers

No report

Quality of Life

No report

Zoning Re-write Committee Update

The committee, as requested by the board, submitted comments in regard to the testimony provided by Mr. Coon. After due consideration of that testimony, the committee continues to urge the Town Board to adopt Introductory LL # 8 of 2023 with a minor change made for clarity.

The committee plans to work on the below listed items during 2024, with the understanding that unless otherwise directed by the Town Board, it will not submit any zoning proposals for adoption in the current calendar year. When any of these items are sufficiently developed, we will so notify the board via this committee report so that the board may, if it wishes, review these proposals.

2024 Workplan

Self Storage

Telecommunications

Chapter 101 - Special Events, as requested

Ridge lines, hilltops

Breeding Kennel, Dog Boarding

Review Use Table - General Commercial, proposed Central Commercial; review levels of approval for all uses

Renewable energy - wind turbines, storage batteries

Historic Preservation district per policy established by Shaker Preservation committee/Town Board

The committee looks forward to working with Steve Powers in his new capacity, Elizabeth Kroboth and Tyler Fogg.

County Update

No report