

Assessor

All exemption renewals were sent out in early December. All renewals and new applications are due by March 1st. They can be mailed in or dropped off in the Town Hall.

All forms can be found on the Assessors page of the Town website.

The recent postcard that was mailed was to inform the public of the increase in the Income limits for the Low Income exemptions and to announce the Firefighter and ambulance worker exemption.

These low income exemptions are not new and should NOT BE CONFUSED WITH THE STAR EXEMPTION!

Please note the Assessor Office open hours have changed for the month of February. The office will be open to the public on Mondays and Wednesdays from 5-7pm for the month of February and will go back to regular open hours March 1st.

Building Department

No report

Business & Economic Development

No report

Outreach & Marketing

We are creating a new version of the tourism brochure to add new businesses. This will be distributed starting in May. We are also working on updating the business directory to an online version for the new website with links to all the businesses websites. We will do an insert in the May 1st newsletter with a shortened version of the updated business directory and direct people moving forward to the website version for updates. We will also do a food access brochure in the insert highlighting all the places people can shop for food here in New Lebanon.

CAC, Climate Smart & Environmental Management

CAC:

Water Source Protection Plan: Our public outreach continues -- Donald and Tyler and other CAC members are giving a presentation and update to residents on Water Source Protection for a NL Library event on February 10 from 1:00 – 2:00 pm. Joining the CAC are MJ Julien from NYRWA to talk about the DWSP2 and Martin Zartarian and Braden Savage from NYSDOH to address water testing. We are continuing to test in the spring and are moving forward with the next phase of the plan which is to work

with County DOH on public water systems and possibly share test results, and to focus on the 100 year flood plain and analysis.

MJ Julien of the New York Rural Water Association has updated the plan and submitted more on Implementation that DEC requested. She spoke about the next phase of implementation of the and notes that the aquifer was the biggest issue and suggests we do ditch mapping to understand the impact of storm runoff. She also noted that 4 of the 6 mobile home parks in New Lebanon are in the flood plain and asked if the water had been tested at any of them. In the spring when testing renews we will approach residents of the Shaker Meadows Mobile Home Park about testing their water. MJ recommended that the study be updated every 3 – 5 years.

Water Testing: Over 70 wells have been tested. The only area to date where there have been multiple issues with bacterial contamination are in the central business district. So far one PCB water test was completed on the down gradient slope of the Brown field - and it was negative. The CAC also looked for issues of chemical contamination from the Car Wash on Rte 20 just West of the 20-22 intersection and found nothing to be concerned about so far. This will require more investigation.

Regenerate New York: CAC is hosting a presentation with the DEC Forester for the Regenerate project at the NL Library on March 16. Regenerate New York offers grants of up to \$50,000 from the DEC to landowners to help alleviate invasive species. Other CAC and CSCs in the county have been invited to the meeting.

Other Boards and Committees and the CAC

Planning Board and Conservation Concerns: Amlaw Pit LLC would like to buy 84+ acres from the property of Sherman Development. The assumption is that the property will be used for gravel mining. The question is whether there are environmental issues associated with this? Is this where the uncapped dump is with PFAS contamination and is everyone involved aware of this?

CSC and CAC

Hazard Mitigation Plan: CAC and CAC will work together on updating the Hazard Mitigation Plan and it should be done by September.

CSC:

The Columbia County Hazard Mitigation Planning process has started and CSC Chair, Steve Powers attended the kick off meeting. New Lebanon will be expected to participate in the process which will enable the town to avail of FEMA funds in the future after any devastating events. A survey has been created by the consultants contracted by the county and we will distribute it via email, social media and hardcopies around town. Residents will have the opportunity to weigh in on potential hotspots in town that may need assessment. The County expects the reports to be completed by the end of this year. It then has to be submitted to NYS for approval and then FEMA. The CSC will work with the CAC and all of those concerned officials in town who have an interest in the plan.

This month we expect to hear back from Partners for Climate Action Hudson Valley regarding the grant to complete the installation of heat pumps in Town Hall and from the DEC regarding our application for Silver status in the CSC program.

The CSC has qualified for a free energy audit of the Town Garage which we hope will be done later this month. Any suggested energy upgrades found in the audit will be covered by grant money that the CSC has achieved through NYSERDA's Clean Energy Communities program. These upgrades will save town residents substantially in the annual energy costs to heat the garage.

Plans are being made for another Earth Day roadside cleanup in town as well as a Spring Bike Tune up day in May. Details TBA!

The CSC has had a successful start to our residential composting at the county highway department recycling center behind the Berkshire Bank parking lot (enter from Rt 5a.) New Lebanon residents can now bring all food scraps including meat, bones, and dairy, to the New Lebanon recycling center -Wednesdays and Saturdays from 8:30am to 11:00am. Look for the white bucket labeled food scraps. Only food. No coffee filters, napkins, plastics, or recyclable plastic bags. ONLY FOOD SCRAPS. (Vegetable peels, plate scrapings, spoiled food from the fridge)

Over 300lbs of plastic have been recycled since we started the program last year. Please continue to bring your CLEAN plastic bags and film to the box in Town Hall.

EMC:

No report

Fire, Law Enforcement & Emergency

No report

Highway

No report

Historian & LVHS

Historian:

Since my last report I have:

- Responded to email inquiries about
 - o property in town,
 - o genealogical research,
 - o the qualifications for submitting a building for the national and state registry of historic places, and
 - o marriage records.
- The NSDAR Historic Preservation Committee sent an email to me and Erminia Rasmussen of the NLCC that our grant application for help in funding a portion of the Cypress Hill Cemetery project has been moved to the second round of review. Awardees will be notified in April 2023.
- Wrote two articles for Grow the Valley.
- Reviewed the historian's webpage on the town's new website.

Participated in a zoom meeting for the Columbia County historians' ColumbiaCountyNY250 committee.

Future activities:

Participate in a meeting on February 16, 2023 of the CCNY250 education sub-committee.

Present a program on the Cypress Hill Cemetery project to the Canaan Senior Citizens group on February 28, 2023

LVHS:

No report

Justice Court

No report

Library

No report

Buildings, Parks & Recreation

Buildings:

No report

Parks:

No report

Recreation Commission:

The Recreation Commission will next meet in March.

We have no activities planned for February.

We've had a few conversations this month about possible dates for MITP and the Picnic.

We have a new committee member who will hopefully be approved at this month's town board meeting. It's Kim Favre, she bought Kendall House and plans to move in full-time this spring. She wants to get involved and knows a bunch of local music acts, looking forward to having her help with MITP.

Monthly walks will resume in March, we'll start planning the next Newcomers events and select dates for the rest of the year's events. We'll work with Sharon to update the Recreation Section of the new town webpage to make it current.

Seniors

The most recent Senior Scoop from the office of the Aging is available online as well as some paper copies are in the Town Hall.

The emergency HEAP program is underway, see your fuel provider and call the Office of Aging if you need more help.

Plans are underway for the Senior of the Year for Columbia County with the State program to be held in May 2024 at the EGG, this is the first in person program since COVID.

It is wonderful to have both Susan and Craig from the Town Board joining the New Lebanon Senior group, I hope they enjoy the group, and the group knows they are there if anyone has a concern.

Watch the Eastwick Press for announcements of the activities of the group and the new Town Web site.

Sarah met with the Lebanon Valley Community Corporation and together they are developing some ideas of how to help the Seniors in New Lebanon.

Traffic Safety

The Town Board will be discussing a resolution suggested by the county Traffic Safety Council to be sent to the State Highway department asking for a safety study on the section of Rt 20 by the racetrack to see what if any more safety devices are appropriate.

Spring is coming and with that more residents will be out walking again, we ask that pedestrians always walk facing traffic, bike riders with the traffic and motorists to watch out for them and give them space. If you are walking at dawn or dusk be sure to wear something reflective and have a flashlight.

Volunteers

No report

Quality of Life

No report

Zoning Re-write Committee Update

No report

Community Center/Free Store Update

Free Store:

Since we opened our doors at the new location on December 20th, the Free Store has been a vital resource for our community. As the organizer, I'm there for the full 8 hours

each week - 5 on Wednesdays and 3 on Sundays. It took me a few weeks to realize I should start tracking how many people we serve.

From January 14-31, over just 6 days, we welcomed 66 customers. This count does not include the hours that the Community Center is open as I am not there during those times but I know it is being utilized. Our patrons come from all walks of life - women, men, young, old, families - but they share a common refrain: "Thank you for being here. With costs so high everywhere, this store is a lifeline."

In only our first month in the new space, it's clear the Free Store meets a critical need. I'm proud we can provide this service and look forward to supporting many more in the weeks and months ahead. – Submitted by Alissa Ross, free store organizer

Community Center:

The community center coordinator started a sign in sheet on 2/3 and will report to the TB for the usage for the full month of February at our March meeting and every month moving forward.

We had evening hours on a Saturday due to a LVPA rental during the day and we had the most attendees so far, over 30 people, using the rec. center! We are going to move the Saturday hours from daytime hours to evening hours. Starting 2/17 the hours on Saturdays will be 5pm – 9pm. This seems to be a time more people can attend and also will not conflict with LVPA rentals as much. New posters and press releases will be going out this week to advertise the change in hours. A sign has also been ordered from Columbia County sign shop to hang where the old LVPA sign was advertising that the Town Community Center and Free Store is at that location. We didn't put the hours on the sign as they may change over time as we figure out what the best used times are for the community, however we are working on a sandwich board sign or some other sign that can advertise the open hours. We are meeting with members of the LVPA at the end of February to discuss hours, signage and more.

Shaker Preservation Committee

The SPC requests that the Board take up preservation of Mount Lebanon at its upcoming meeting.

To that end, our committee report has two parts, both of which we approved by vote at our meeting at Town Hall on 1/31/24.

The first part is our *Goals for Preserving Mount Lebanon* memorandum, which is attached. The second part is our proposed action plan, which is here:

The SPC recommends that the Town extend by 12 months the "Moratorium on Demolition of Structures on Properties Potentially Having Historic Significance in the Town of New Lebanon."

The ZRC and SPC believe that accomplishing historic preservation on Mount Lebanon requires improving design standards and permitting expanded uses. We recommend that the Town Board direct our committees to form a working group that would draft legislation that has the following objectives and is consistent with the Goals for Preserving Mount Lebanon memorandum from January 2024:

- Establish a Mount Lebanon Historic Zone, including boundaries, focused on the historic Shaker lands along Darrow Rd*
- Require property owners to meet sensible and practical design standards, including making reasonable efforts to preserve the historic buildings and landscape*
- Offer property owners expanded uses to generate the income necessary to meet these standards and make these efforts*
- Charge the Planning Board with administering the above*

Approved by unanimous vote of the Shaker Preservation Committee on Wednesday, January 31, 2024

Goals for Preserving Mount Lebanon

The Importance: The Shaker buildings and their surroundings along Darrow Road on Mount Lebanon constitute a unique historical treasure for the Town of New Lebanon. In 1965, this local treasure, a Historic District known as the Mount Lebanon Shaker Society, was recognized as a National Historic Landmark. Then it earned a place on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and on the New York State Register of Historic Places in 1980. These are the official lists of our Nation's and our State's historic places worthy of preservation. The Shaker buildings and their cultural landscape provide a matchless insight into the Shaker way of organizing their community into "Families." Mount Lebanon has the remnants of five families: the North Family, the Church Family, the Center Family, the Second Family, and the South Family.

The Urgency: New Lebanon is still in the fortunate position to boast of this important legacy. But many of the buildings of the five Shaker Families have been barely maintained, and most of the owners of the properties are now under immediate financial duress. The cost of maintaining older structures like these Shaker buildings is an extremely expensive endeavor. Coupled with other factors, such as the COVID 19 crisis and its aftermath, we have reached a time when one or more of the owners may be forced to sell the whole or parts of their property, potentially resulting in sprawling residential development under the current zoning law for the area.

Our Goals: Our goals are consistent with the Town of New Lebanon's Comprehensive Plan. It emphasizes fostering our rural character, scenic beauty, natural resources, and cultural and historic heritage. Moreover, it specifies that we shall, "Preserve, make accessible, and if

appropriate adaptively reuse historic resources, properties, and structures within the Town, in particular those associated with the Town’s Shaker heritage.”

Therefore, we encourage the Town of New Lebanon, with community input and support, to improve its zoning laws, to create other appropriate regulations, and to undertake other appropriate efforts that reflect the following nine goals:

- (1) Protect, preserve, and rehabilitate the Shaker buildings and architecture.
- (2) Protect, preserve, and rehabilitate the Shaker cultural landscape, including the family clusters, ruins, fences, hitching posts, stone paths and walls, and other character-defining features.
- (3) Protect and preserve the undeveloped lands, including the fields and woods, while understanding that achieving these goals may entail accepting limited and respectful development.
- (4) Put the Shaker buildings and land to use in ways that are consistent with certain Shaker values that have enduring appeal, including simplicity, quality, community, hospitality, equality, and innovation.
- (5) Keep the Shaker buildings, landscape, and lands reasonably accessible by the public.
- (6) Share the history we've been fortunate to inherit with our own community and visitors.
- (7) Avoid chemical pollution and minimize excess noise and light pollution.
- (8) Maintain easy access through Darrow Road to nearby residential roads.
- (9) Revisit these goals over time to ensure each one is appropriate and to consider adding new ones.

County Update

No report