

Assessor

Exemptions –

- March 1 was the deadline for new or renewal exemptions.
- There were changes to the income limits and the calculation process this year. We cannot tell you how many new taxpayers qualified because we are still processing and reviewing.
- Postcards explaining the Low Income Senior and Disabled exemptions were mailed around the end of January. We took the opportunity to include information regarding the Fire Fighter and ambulance worker exemption.
- There is a common misconception regarding the Low Income senior exemption that needs to be cleared up. Most people confuse the Low Income Seniors Exemption with the STAR program. This is incorrect, it is important that people know the difference.
- STAR is a STATE funded exemption or credit, it is administered “mostly” by the STATE. It is either found as an exemption on your SCHOOL taxes or as a credit check from the State around school tax time. It is NEVER found on your January Town/county tax bill. There are 2 levels of STAR. Basic and enhanced. There is nothing out there called “SENIOR STAR”. Enhanced STAR is a step up from basic STAR and you must be 65 yrs old and the income limit is in the \$90,000-\$100,000 range.
- LOW INCOME Senior exemption is funded by all other taxpayers. It is administered by the Assessor. It is based on a sliding scale depending on your income. The amount of reduction is between 5% and 50%. It will come off of all of your taxes, Town, County and School. Most Towns, Schools and the County have increased the income limit to \$42,399. NEW LEBANON School District has not.
- Information about all of our exemptions is always available on our website.

2024 Reassessment

- The valuation portion of the Reassessment has been completed. Notices have been sent. If taxpayers disagree with the new assessment, there are processes in place for review. Those processes are spelled out on the reverse side of the notice and on the website.
- An email also was sent explaining the same.
- Had we not completed the reassessment, our “level of assessment” would have been down to 75%. This means that even though the assessments would not have changed, the full market value would have gone up significantly. Instead, we came up in Assessments to be at 100%.
- The state has reviewed our new assessments and we are a little on the low side but we should be able to get an equalization rate of 100%. But most importantly, the values have been reset using the latest market.
- Assessments at or near 100% are much easier to understand and are far more transparent.
- Do not forget, as the total taxable value for the town increases, the tax rate goes down.

Building Department

No report

Business & Economic Development

We voted to recommend to the Town Board that it direct us to conduct a survey of local business owners and managers for the purpose (among others) of helping Board members make informed decisions on questions of local business and economic development. We propose a survey that's both quantitative and qualitative. It would start with a small number of multiple choice questions, and then we would follow up in person with more open-ended questions. It would reflect a SWOT approach, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that local businesses face, with a particular focus on factors connected to the Town itself. It would also focus on topics like hiring, housing, marketing, infrastructure, taxes, regulations, and other topics the Town Board may suggest. Finally, at Board member Craig Skerkis's suggestion, we voted to ask the Town Board to authorize up to \$500 for us to print the survey and distribute it via mail.

Outreach & Marketing

The new tourism brochure is almost ready to go to print. The new version will be distributed by Berkshire Brochures starting April 15th. The committee decided (due to budgetary constraints as printing of the brochure was more than budgeted for due to the increased demand of needing 15,000 for 2 years instead of the 10,000 we did last time) to only do 1 mailer in the newsletter this year (instead of the 2 budgeted for) and include it in the May 1st newsletter with an updated business directory and encouraging people to access the current version that is regularly updated on the town website.

CAC, Climate Smart & Environmental Management

CAC:

M. Theresa Julian Source Water Protection Specialist from the NY Rural Water Association (NYRWA) has been updating the DWSP2. There is still no information on the status of acceptance of the Plan by DEC. We are adding further information on an inventory of roads affecting the aquifer and Emergency Planning. One of our next steps is to look at Public Water systems in town which is the larger focus of the DWSP2. We are also scheduling more water testing for residents starting in April.

The CAC's February 10th presentation on the DWSP2, as part of the Public Education mandate, was held at the New Lebanon Library. Approximately 40 residents attended the meeting and many subsequently signed up for testing. Guest speakers included M. Therese Julian from NYRWA, Martin Zartarian and Braden Savage from the NYSDOH, and our own CAC members Tyler Fogg and Donald Lamonaca. A video was created from the event and it has been posted on the Town website.

The CAC postponed the Regenerate NY program on Invasive Plant Removal at the New Lebanon Library scheduled for March 16th. This will be offered again likely late fall or early winter. We have one town resident, Melba Kurman, who is trying to get this grant and go through the process and she will be very helpful for other residents in the future who want to pursue this. This is a reimbursable grant where the landowner pays for the work and then applies to the State to get reimbursed.

Hazard Mitigation Plan: The New Lebanon CSC & CAC will work together to assist Columbia County in a draft plan

CSC:

The CSC was informed that we did not get the grant from Partners for Climate Action Hudson Valley for the additional heat pumps in Town Hall. However, we feel confident that we will qualify for Silver in the CSC program and that will give us enough points in NYSERDA's Clean Energy Communities (CEC) program to entitle us for a \$175,000 grant that will cover the heat pumps in Town Hall and more energy upgrades in the garage.

New Lebanon residents have purchased enough electric vehicles (6) for us to qualify for a \$5000 grant in NYSERDA's CEC program. We have submitted the documentation.

The Columbia County Hazard Mitigation Plan team has delegated tasks to each town to complete for a projected Sept 2024 deadline. The CSC has been working with stakeholders in town to identify vulnerable sites that may need protection in the event of serious weather events.

The CSC is planning our 3rd Earth Day Roadside Cleanup on April 20. Details will be posted on the Facebook page and in flyers around town.

We will also be operating a Spring Bike Tune up day at the Shatford Pavilion on May 18. Free bikes will be offered.

The CSC reminds residents that plastic bag and film recycling is available via the box in the entry to Town Hall. Please make sure the plastic is clean and dry.

The draft Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CARP) prepared by Cornell Cooperative Extension has been completed and circulated for review among stakeholders. We should be getting the final report in April.

EMC:

1. County heat smart program reached goal and is winding down
2. County climate smart doing greenhouse gas inventory with emphasis on land use changes to lead to a grant to develop county climate action plan
3. City of Hudson investigating joining a community choice aggregation plan
4. Village of Kinderhook using grant for solar panels for town garage
5. Germantown received a 240k community forest grant town to acquire 23 acres adjacent to town park to expand trail network

Fire, Law Enforcement & Emergency

Fire Calls and Activities -February 2024

•	2/12/2024	Drill	14 people	28hr
•	2/13/2024	Mutual Aid	3people	2.03hr
•	2/13/2024	Mutual Aid	3 people	.36hr
•	2/19/2024	Drill	9 people	18hr
•	2/21/2024	pole on fire	6 people	.30hr
•	2/26/2024	Fire police	3 peole	6.42hr
•	2/26/2024	Brush fire	5 people	6hr
•	2/27/2024	Drill	6 people	9hr
•	2/20/2023	Drill	2 people	4hrs

Totals 49 people 70.11hr

- Pole on fire – 1
- brush Fire-1
- Mutual Aid-2
- Fire police-1

5 alarms

- Drills – 4

Highway

No report

Historian & LVHS

Historian:

Since the last board meeting:

- Created a PowerPoint presentation on the Cypress Hill Restoration Project;
- Presented the Cypress. Hill Restoration Project program to the Canaan Senior Citizens

February 17, 2024;

- Answered inquires on genealogy searches (genealogy research is not part of a town historian's job description according to New York State Regulations. However, for inquiries, I respond with links to on-line genealogical sites);
- Confirmed an April meeting with Glenn Fisher

LVHS:

No report

Justice Court

No report

Library

No report

Buildings, Parks & Recreation

Buildings:

No report

Parks:

The playground design committee held its first meeting on March 4th and discussed a lot of great ideas. Moving forward they will meet on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 6:30pm at the town hall. The public is welcome to attend or view the meeting on town hall streams. Our next meeting is Tuesday, March 19th at 6:30pm at the town hall. We discussed a preliminary timeline of a recommendation being presented to the Town Board by early Fall, having the engineer design bid specs based on the design approved by the Town Board, going out to bid during the winter, and starting construction/installation in late winter/early Spring of 2025 to hopefully have an operational new playground by early Summer of 2025.

Recreation Commission:

The first 2024 meeting of the recreation department will be on March 19th.

The only thing to report from February is that we have two new committee members, Kim Farve and Joanne Amlaw (assuming she's approved in the upcoming March Town Board meeting) so we will finally have a full committee.

Seniors

No report

Traffic Safety

No report

Volunteers

No report

Quality of Life

Although we did not have a quorum at our last meeting (3 members attended with a full membership of 6, so we needed 4 to officially vote on things), the consensus of the 3 members at the meeting was to ask the Town Board to schedule 2 special public input

sessions, one for the pharmacy project and one on housing. These are 2 large projects the town is putting energy towards and we think it would be good to update the public on what has been done so far, where we are at, where we could go, and get input from the public as to their thoughts, ideas, etc. We would like the pharmacy to come help present on the pharmacy project and Chris Brown as the County housing coordinator to come help present on housing issues, possible solutions, etc.

Zoning Re-write Committee Update

The Zoning Rewrite Committee is holding its 2024 meetings on a quarterly basis (April 22, July 22, September 21) although committee members are actively working on a number of items on the ZRC 2024 book of work.

-- members are reviewing the draft updated telecommunications code prepared by the attorney retained by the Town. Other Town government stakeholders have been engaged to identify any areas of the draft that may need to be adapted to specific town circumstances, e.g., the vesting of review authority with the Planning Board, rather than the Town Board as is presented in the draft.

-- three ZRC members are working with three members of the Shaker Preservation Committee to draft proposed legislation to preserve and protect Shaker resources on Mt. Lebanon. The working group had its first meeting Monday, March 4 and has several meetings scheduled for the coming weeks.

-- members are soon to review the use table with an eye toward assuring that the level of approval for current uses are appropriate and determining the need for additional uses. This effort should lay the groundwork for determining appropriate uses in the new Central Commercial District and we look forward to working with other stakeholders in that regard.

-- members stand ready to work with the Quality of Life Committee to determine the need, if any, to adapt zoning to accommodate (no pun intended) expanded housing options in the town.

-- a member is working on code to protect ridge lines.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Salem, Chair

Community Center/Free Store Update

Free Store:

The Free Store's numbers continue to climb. February had a great turnout. For the days I am physically in the store and keeping track (Wednesdays and Sundays) we had 142 customers. That's just for 8 days, or 32 hours, open. Like last month, this number does not include the people that shop on Community Center days.

We continue to grow by both word of mouth and weekly Town Facebook posts. As a future shout out, Tistrya and I were interviewed about the Store for the Chatham Press due out in April so that's exciting and will surely give us yet another boost. Our sections and categories grow each week with every new bag of donations. We've had newcomers become regulars and those regulars become our friends. And in that sense, having this coupled with the Community Center couldn't be more perfect.

I'm looking forward to our continued success into the coming months and beyond.

Alissa Ross, Free Store Lady

Community Center:

There were 110 attendees using the community center in the month of February. A girl scout troop came and had fun playing in the community center and making their craft. There has been increased attendance on Saturdays with switching to evening hours. Ping pong is a big hit at the center. Adults that come with their children are also using the games and engaging with the activities. We are collaborating with the NL Jr/Sr High food club to bring a free community meal to the center in April and June, dates to be announced shortly.

Shaker Preservation Committee

No report

County Update

No report