**COLTON NEWLETTER**

**January 2017**

Authorized payment of bills: General Fund $143,103.89; Highway Fund $10,205.67; Colton Light District $952.39; South Colton Light District $893.46; Sewer District # 1 $9,909.14 and Water District # 1 $1,389.60

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

No one had anything to offer.

**ASSESSOR’S REPORT** Ms. Miller reported:

* Tax Freeze/Credit checks have been arriving daily. I have had a few calls regarding the receipt of the NYS checks. These checks are valid and belong to the property owner who is in receipt of it.
* Office Hours – Due to a medical leave, Deanna has not been in the office during the month of December and at this time I am unsure the exact date of her return. I ask that if a property owner calls with a question or concern to leave a message with a brief description of the concern. I will return the call as soon as possible. Stating your concern in the message helps me to be prepared when I return the call.
* Stumpage – Stumpage report for 2016 was received. Amount received for Town, Hwy & Chargebacks was $1356.59. County received $2409.90 and School $1704.82.
* Tax rates were received 01/03/2016. Reviewed Town, Hwy and Chargebacks only in towns that are at 100% equalization rate or close to and discovered Colton’ Town, Hwy and Chargebacks rate is one of the lowest in the county.
* Star Renewal Applications will be mailed Friday Morning. Due to unforeseen delays, I am a couple of weeks later than I planned. Every year I am asked if documentation is really necessary***. If you received a renewal application the answer is YES***! It is absolutely necessary. NYS requires this documentation and if audited I must provide a copy of the documents. Also, documentation allows me to review and determine if a homeowner may qualify for the Sr. Low Income exemption. The only way I would be able to determine this is by reviewing the documents and compare to the sliding scale fee provided by the town and county. The best option is a copy of the **2015 income tax return**. This year, I have included with the application, a worksheet for those who do not file income tax. The best documentation is the 1099’s receive for income. This is the same every year and I ask that you plan ahead for this. **If you do not file NYS income tax** you may not be placed on the annual automatic renewal program (Income Verification Program). If you have completed the IVP and have received automatic renewals in the past it does not mean you will automatically be approved for this year. If you receive a renewal application, you must complete it and return it to me. You may want to complete a new IVP form if status has changed in your household. STAR renewals must be received by 03/01/2017.
* A reminder that if you are calling about your taxes the assessment office is not able to help. If you are calling to grieve your assessment, please be aware it must be done through the grievance process. I will not accept grievance forms until after tentative roll has been filed. The reason for this is that values may change up to the date of March 1, 2017. Informal complaints are held during the month of May and followed by formal grievance the fourth (4th) Tuesday in May. Remember, when a property owner grieves their assessment, it is owner’s responsibility to provide proof of the complaint at an informal hearing and/or to the Board of Assessment Review.
* I have reviewed sales for 2016 roll year and the beginning of the 2017 roll year. In most cases the sale price of the property was higher than the assessed value of the property

**REMINDER: For those considering joining properties in the Town of Colton please read the following:**

The combining of any properties in the Town of Colton requires a deed defining properties as one lot under one description.

Real Property Tax Law states:

*For tax map and assessment administration purposes, the term "lot," which is synonymous with "land parcel," means a contiguous land area under a single fee ownership as far as may be practicable, used or intended for use as a single piece (9 NYCRR 189.1(h),(i)). ALSO, the determination of what constitutes a parcel is made on the basis of an individual deed description. In common parlance the expression "one deed, one parcel”……* ***it has been opined by some in the assessment community,(including the Town of Colton’s Assessment Administration) that multiple and separately deeded properties under the same ownership******must be combined and described as a single property in one deed to be considered as a single parcel for assessment administration purposes.***

**ASSESSOR’S REPORT**continued

State Board (9 NYCRR 189). *Subject to those rules and applicable provisions of law, it is the duty of the assessor to determine what is a parcel for purposes of real property taxation.*

The reason for having lots contiguous and described as one on a single deed is not only an effort to enable the assessment office to be consistent when placing value on this type of property but also to assist the Code Enforcement Office and Zoning/Planning Committee in carrying out the codes and regulations of the Town of Colton. If a property owner was to combine properties strictly to avoid taxes, and is allowed to combine numerous lots for taxation purposes, with separate deeds and separate description, it becomes very difficult for our Code and Planning offices to follow the individually deeded lots within the “single assessed lot”. For example, four parcels, joined into one parcel for assessment purposes and with separate descriptions, does not mean it is then considered a single parcel when attempting to make improvements to the property. Each lot still has individual meets and bounds. As you can imagine, this can become a very large issue when placing well, septic, houses or smaller improvements on each individual lot. One still must follow the code for each lot as if separate when joined by deed, with separate descriptions. The property owner and code enforcement officer would now have to consider 13 different meets and bounds. If the property is joined as one, in one deed with one description, there would be 4 meets and bounds to consider.

This practice is not an in place to make hardship for the property owner but an effort to bring The Town of Colton’s assessment, code enforcement and zoning/planning committee to an updated and equitable system for determining value, eligibility and equitability.

**TOURISM/BEAUTIFICATION REPORT** Mrs. McWilliams reported: **2017 Winterfest Weekend / Jan. 26-29**

Posters are now up around town and in nearby communities plus the preliminary schedule of activities being organized by the town, Colton-Pierrepont Central School (CPCS), and many others has been posted on the town website—http://www.townofcolton.com/winterfest.html. The schedule will be updated following the next planning meeting scheduled by Grace Hawley for January 11 at 6pm in the Town Hall. The festival kicks off on Thursday, January 26 with the CPCS Class of 2020 hosting the ever-popular spaghetti dinner from 4-7pm in the school cafeteria. At 5pm during the dinner the town’s Citizen of the Year will be presented. As in previous years a number of Winterfest activities support the Local Neighborhood Center serving Colton, Pierrepont, and Parishville including the following.

* Raffle of a quilt created and donated by Patty Blickwedehl is already underway. The beautiful 4x4 foot ‘Icy Logs, Warm Hearth’ quilt features a blue, white, and red Log Cabin design. It is on display in the Colton Town Hall where tickets can be purchased. Tickets are only $5 each and only 100 tickets will be sold. The winning ticket will be drawn on Monday, January 30.
* Themed baskets are being created for the Silent Auction being held throughout the festival at CPCS to raise funds for the Neighborhood Center. Committee plans to have at least ten baskets ready by the spaghetti dinner. At least three of them will be specifically themed for Valentine’s Day. Anyone wishing to contribute a basket for the Silent Auction should contact Scott Muller (315-244-9956).
* During the festival the proceeds from a number of activities also will benefit the Neighborhood Center—Clothing Giveaway at CPCS, Vintage Snow Sled Show at Mahogany Ridge, and Frying Pan Toss at AmVets.

Also in the Town Hall other raffles are underway leading up to Winterfest. A 3x3 foot barn quilt inspired by the raffle quilt and painted by Kirke Perry is being raffled to support town tourism and beautification activities. And tickets for a mountain bike, trolling motor, tree stand, and maple syrup can be purchased to support town recreation activities. Inquiries about the Winterfest schedule or assistance can be directed to Grace Hawley (315-262-2439) or Scott Muller.

**2017 Colton Riverside Performances**

In late December the town received notice from the St. Lawrence County Arts Council that we were successful again in our grant application for the summer music series which features groups based in or with members from communities along the Raquette River.  The application submitted by the Tourism & Beautification Committee on October 1st included contracts with the performers and service providers who will be notified soon about our plans to implement the summer series as submitted.  The grant amount is $1085 which is what the town requested. The more than $2000 balance needed to cover performer fees, publicity, and other related expenses will be raised again through barn quilt raffles and other fund raising.

**Next Monthly Meeting – Monday, January 9 (4-5:30pm)**

Next week the committee will focus on Winterfest and wintertime projects underway.

**DPW REPORT** Mr. Richards reported:

*Transfer* Our recycling rates from e-waste takes a long time to arrive at our office. We just finished up Sept, Oct, and Nov months with Sept. and Oct. holding steady at 25% recycling rates. November dipped down to 21%. Each year our recycling rate drops in the winter time. This indicates that our seasonal residents our better recyclers? Let's go year rounders!!!

*Waste Water & Water* Waste water treatment plant operating fine for the time being . Looking forward to being on the other end of the in-house updates to prolong our plant's life. I am impressed by our crew's ability to keep our plant running so well. Sending another crew member, Chad to water operation class for his license in February.

*Building and Grounds* Currently our DPW crew completed the install on two UV disinfection units both at the Community Center and the Recreation Center. DOH completed an install inspection and all but one small change and a water sample test to pass for total Coli, we will be in business. Concurrently to our drinking water sources in South Colton, with a new floor, triple sink, air racks, signage and fridge in place, we are close to becoming an approved kitchen for limited food sales for concession. This will be an asset to public events at Swift Field.

**SAFETY REPORT** Mr. Richards reported:

Just had a safety meeting with one highway crew member and highway supt. on visibility and safety with backing up with the small plow truck. A visual obstruction will be eliminated for the sander to be less impaired visually.. Striving for the safest practice every day routine is always prudent. Just conducted an extremely productive meeting with three State DOT engineers, the school supt., highway supt., Planning Board Chair, Town Supervisor in regards to a better crosswalk system in front of the school.

**CODE ENFORCEMENT REPORT** Mr. Richards reported:

Preparing the Planning Board for two permit applications to be processed and determined on the 24th of January. First one is a facial enhancement salon for a home occupancy, the second is the Conditional Use Permit Application for the Dollar General. Both of these proposed sites will be located in the Colton Hamlet Zone.

Mr. Robert asked how progress was coming on the light pole request on Gulf Rd. Mr. Richards replied he put the request in Nov. 10 and it is scheduled when they replace the lights with LED lights.

Ms. Miller asked what happened in the boardroom that caused the lights not to work. Mr. Richards replied water had seeped in before the new roof was put on. The water rotted the back of the electrical panel causing the problem. An electrician came and performed a temporary repair. In the meantime RFP’s for permanent repair will be acquired.

**PLANNING/ZONING REPORT** Mr. Fuhr reported:

The Planning Board has been working on another list of conditions to send to Bohler Engineers. He also reminded people of the public hearing January 24th regarding the Dollar General.

**TOWN CLERK’S REPORT** Ms. Arquiett reported:

* St. Lawrence County 3 year Snow & Ice Agreement
* Lead Agency Resolution
* A reminder, we are set up to accept credit/debit cards for tax payments on site and online through the Town of Colton website. A fee is charged to the cardholder, dollar amount over $150 is 2.65 %.
* On a personal note, the Community Christmas Dinner was a success at the New Fire Station. It’s larger and brighter, allowing for more visiting among the guests. We hope we are allowed to use the facility next year. A huge thank you to all the volunteers, donators and attendees.

**HIGHWAY REPORT** Mr. Bulger spoke with Mr. Hawley and he requested to advertise guide rail purchase/installation for the Riehl Road. A quote has been presented from F & R Unlimited for “used” guide rail.

**NEW BUSINESS**

* Complete Streets - Mr. Robert asked about a 4’ wide walking path along Gulf Rd. Mr. Bulger stated Mr. Hawley will be working on Gulf Road this summer.
* Audits - Mr. Robert to speak with Mrs. Hawley to set dates for the audits.
* Fish Stocking - Mr. Robert said he has had several meetings with organizations to get fish to restock walleye and bass locally. The project will take some time, it needs DEC approval, water testing etc