

The Town of Ballston's first annual State of the Town address was held by the Town Supervisor on Thursday evening, January 28, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall on Charlton Road.

PRESENT:   Tim Szczepaniak     Supervisor  
              Bill Goslin        Councilman  
              John Antoski       Councilman  
              Kelly Stewart       Councilwoman  
              Chuck Curtiss      Councilman  
              Carol Gumienny     Clerk

ABSENT:     James Walsh         Counsel

Supervisor Szczepaniak called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Supervisor Szczepaniak stated the purpose of the meeting is to let residents know what is going on in the Town. He will be available in his office on a daily basis in the late afternoon into early evening should you need to speak or see him. The Board members and Town Clerk were introduced.

### **TOWN FINANCES**

Supervisor Szczepaniak stated currently Ballston is one of two towns in the county that does not have a town tax or highway tax. The audit for 2012 is complete. The auditors have been at Town Hall and the books for 2013 have been reconstructed and we are waiting for a final report. 2014 and 2015 will be a much easier process due to such precise and accurate record keeping from our bookkeeper, Joann Bouchard. By June, all finance records will be audited and we will have a good financial picture. Currently, we have a fund balance of \$1.1 million. The Board will be tasked with what to do with the funding. There is also a balance of \$443,000 in the Trust and Agency Fund. One area that needs improvement on is the Water Fund. We continue to lose revenue in this area based on many variables; therefore, we had to increase water rates last year to help with lost revenue. A water consolidation was also done to help manage the administrative duties of the water funds.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

An Economic Development Vision Committee was formed and consists of 30 members. Supervisor Szczepaniak encourages people to join. The enhancement of the Route 50 corridor consists of:

- Integrating business growth with the agricultural sector.
- Establishment of a heritage corridor that may include an agricultural/town museum and heritage site and agriculture market hub along with neighborhood business, while preserving and enhancing the agricultural brand for the Town. The new casino is coming. We want people to stop and shop in our Town.
- Establishment of Town Center hub – Lakehill Road/Route 50 intersection that would include mixed used retail/residential and neighborhood business.
- Possible historic “market street” district along the Kingsley Road/Lakehill Road south to Blue Barns Road.
- Possible traffic circle at Route 50 and Lakehill Road. This is classified as a failed intersection where traffic is a problem. Supervisor Szczepaniak and a few Economic Development Committee members spoke to Congressman Tonko about possible revenue streams for future road projects.
- Addressing streets and roads that provide alternate access to neighborhoods and local businesses in a more regional study that includes Glenville and south. Supervisor Szczepaniak stresses the importance of having good relationships with supervisors of neighboring Towns.
- Market the area to varied business segments: B&Bs, independent restaurants, unique shops and grocery. These establishments will arrive with the addition of water and sewer infrastructure.
- Attention is needed to the comprehensive plan and zoning to ensure the ability to establish such business types.

**SEWER AND WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN:**

- Adapts to the eventual extension along the Route 50 corridor and beyond, with particular attention to the land – use controls within the agriculture district.
- Long term goal: the removal of Ballston Lake from the State’s list classifying it as an impaired water body.

**AGRICULTURE EDUCATION:**

- Inclusion of bio-technology, more specifically green bio-technology. This would promote healthy living in our Town and help us trend toward non-GMO and organic foods. These steps that are taken will support our town’s desire to have a next generation of farms and other agricultural business professionals.

**PARKS AND TRAILS:**

- Working with the County and State to fund and build sidewalks that would provide safe passages to schools and increase access to fitness trails (Ballston Lake trail would likely be extended south to Blue Barns Road, past Fireman’s Grove.)
- Work with neighboring towns and county on the interconnections of on/off road trails and signage.
- Develop park lands for passive/active enjoyment and fitness along with “village greens” within the business district.
- It was announced we have a new park. The Hawkwood property was acquired in December. It is a 246 acre preserve. A Parks & Rec Committee has been formed and the Board will be adding the appointments at the February meeting.
- Active recreation. School administrators and others are looking for field space. The Parks and Rec Committee will look at options for active recreation and for a potential location.

**NEW BUSINESS POTENTIAL:**

- CVS is looking for a new location. A possibility is where the Old Homestead Restaurant was located on the corner of Route 50 and Lakehill Road. CVS wants to give a sum of money to the firehouse for funding to do various things. Recently, the Board of Fire Commissioners voted in favor 3-1 to have a referendum. CVS has to let the tenant know by Monday if the CVS will be pursued.
- USA Gas Station is currently in the Planning Board process to build across the street at the corner.
- New medical complex (part of the Schenectady-Saratoga Gastroenterology) across from the post office. There is currently a 35,000 sq. ft. sketch plan for an additional medical building.
- North on Route 50 there will be a fire apparatus maintenance vendor. It is a shovel ready site. The company will hire between 20 and 25 people.
- The expansion of Stewarts on the northern end of town will start in the spring. A complete redesign is expected.
- The owner of Augies expressed an interest in building a liquor store on the property where his restaurant burned down.
- Walmart will be breaking ground in April 2016.

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:**

- A committee has been formed and consists of a diverse group of people.
- The Emergency Plan update is in draft form.
- A supervisor has a lot of responsibility during an emergency. He and some of the Town Board members will have to take training classes to be certified. Drills will be planned and interfaced at the county level.
- There are grant funding opportunities.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

- No Town Tax or Highway Tax
- 2016 Budget is under the tax cap
- Town financials are the best they have been in several years.
- Farmland Protection Plan was adopted
- Two sets of flashing speed limit radar signs have been purchased to help reduce the speed of drivers.
- Requested and received additional speed patrols from the sheriff’s department.

- Supported the creation of a Ballston Lake Watershed Protection Committee
- Adjusted water usage rate
- Water district consolidation which improved administration tasks.
- The Town is fortunate to have two water sources – the Saratoga County Water Authority and the Town of Glenville.
- Ballston Lake sewer project
- Improved process regarding funding owed to the Town for engineering fees. Thanks to our bookkeeper, Joann, we have recouped several thousands of dollars.

Town Board has a duty and obligation to work as a team for the Town. The success of teamwork is best stated by Henry Ford:

*“Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success”*

Supervisor Szczepaniak opens the floor to questions and/or comments.

A town resident inquired about future police protection. Councilman Goslin stated at the 2020 census the Town’s population will be at least 10,000. The town will be required to provide police protection at this level. The sheriff and his deputies are committed to helping the Town. There are a couple of options: we could create our own Town police force; we can rent a sheriff at a cost of approximately \$200,000; or we can find resources from a neighboring Town, possibly contracting services. It could be a combination. It’s a good idea now to start small and work our way up.

Pete Herman, chairman of the Ballston Lake Improvement Association, applauds the Board for the sewer project around the lake.

A resident asked if the Town heard of leasing farms for community solar fields? Councilman Goslin has been approached about this recently, and he feels it would be beneficial to the Town. It will reduce the cost of electricity to residents and businesses. A solar field would have to be put in an appropriate place and possibly sheltered with trees to avoid opposition. Green energy concept is beneficial. It is a win and cost savings for all. We currently have solar legislation; however, the zoning should be reviewed again for instances such as solar farms.

Supervisor Szczepaniak thanked everyone for coming. The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Gumienny

