



OUR TOWN

SERVING THE VILLAGES OF BALTIC, HANOVER AND VERSAILLES
IN THE BEAUTIFUL SHETUCKET RIVER VALLEY

VOLUME XVIII
ISSUE II
FEBRUARY 2008

INFORMATION * NEWS * OPINIONS

FROM THE DESK OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN Cathy Osten

As I sit here today reviewing the last two months I appreciate ever more just how wonderful this Town is. I have enjoyed receiving support from all different groups of residents. I can tell you that it is the cherished volunteers and dedicated employees that allow the town to work smoothly and efficiently.

The Town's Senior Coordinator Marie Davis has retired we honored her on the 17 of December with a Proclamation thanking her for her service.

The Town faces serious challenges over the next year and the solutions will not be easily found. In order to meet these challenges I have met with many of the town boards and commissions. I have also met with some of our local businesses to see where we as a Town can grow with them.

The first meeting of departments, boards, and commission chairs was held in January. The Town will be moving forward in a steady way with a clear eye and

active participation.

I plan on hosting Coffee with Cathy Chats at the Town Hall in order to provide me an opportunity to meet with you and discuss your concerns and address your issues. I look forward to seeing you there.

I hope you have enjoyed the holidays and are ready to join us in our progressive forward moving agenda.

Cathy, First Selectman

OUR TOWN

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL VETERANS: POST 85 LOOKING FOR ENROLLEES

I am one of four veterans in the Town of Sprague soliciting veterans from our town and surrounding towns to help reorganize Post 85. We would like to see it back to the post it was 25 to 30 years ago. Four veterans, Doug Patrick of Baltic, Will Zinavage of Hanover, Joe Osowski from Pautipaug Hill and I, Tom Coletti of Plain Hill, started meeting in September to discuss ways to get veterans interested in Post 85 again. Our primary duty is to maintain the American Legion Charter that was authorized to area veterans just after World War I. If we fail in our task, the charter will be revoked and the Post will cease to exist. In order to maintain that charter we need approximately 40 to 45 active members on the Post 85 roll to accomplish our primary goal. We presently have 26 members on our roll and some 20 other AL members who live in the area but are not affiliated with our post. We are asking them to transfer to Post 85 and all the other veterans in the area that are not presently AL members to consider joining us. We have had three Post meetings

to date and were able to solicit only one new member. We have the support from the AL District and Department of CT Commanders. The Commanders have pledged financial as well as moral support to us but we still have been unable to get more interest from the local veterans in town and the surrounding area. We have published three newsletters to veterans listed on our roll as well as those listed on the tax exempt list available in the Town of Sprague tax records in order to solicit new members. We are now able to utilize the 'Our Town' Newsletter due to the gracious invitation from Select Woman Cathy Osten. We have not filled any of the required Post 85 officer positions and will not do so until we have enough members to satisfy the AL requirements to maintain our charter. All the positions in the Post are available. Nominations and elections will be held at later meetings so everyone in the Post can participate. Tell your friends and relatives just returning from the Service to consider joining our ranks. We are here to welcome them back and listen to their experiences. All veterans have had different experiences and have been in different

places at different times, but we all have a common bond— we have been there — and if you are a veteran than you understand what that means. Please come and join our ranks. We will continue to post updates in 'Our Town' monthly to keep you informed of our progress in this matter. Thank you in advance for your support.

~ Tom Coletti, AL Post 85 Member and USAF Veteran 1968-72

Eligibility requirements for the American Legion membership require of a copy of your DD 214 Form, service in the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard during 9/20/90 to the present; 12/20/89 to 1/1/90; 8/24/82 to 7/31/84; 2/28/61 to 5/7/75; 6/25/50 to 1/31/55; 12/7/41 to 12/31/46; 4/6/17 to 11/11/18. Merchant Marine Veterans are eligible for WW II service. A small membership fee is also required.

CHARTER COMMISSION TO MEET

The Commission will continue further study and information for Sprague's Charter. Meeting dates and times for 2008 are posted on the Town Web site as well as at Town Hall. The Commission will meet Feb. 5 at 7:30 a.m.; Feb. 12, 19 and 26 at 7 p.m. For more information, contact Joe Osowski.

**2008
SPORTSMEN LICENSES**

Hunting and fishing licenses for the 2008 season are available at the Town Clerk's Office.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call (860) 822-3000 ext. 220.

Claire B. Glaude, Town Clerk

REPUBLICAN TOWN COMMITTEE ~ MICHAEL W. SMITH

DEMOCRATIC TOWN COMMITTEE ~ KORD JABLONSKI

Happy New Year to all the folks I have not yet had a chance to wish this to, I hope the New Year is turning out to be a good one for all of you and your resolutions are still intact.

The RTC held its caucus recently and endorsed 25 members, keeping four spots open for the purpose of allowing additional opportunity for individuals who may not have seen the legal notice of the caucus and may still be interested in joining. If you are interested in becoming part of the Republican Town Committee contact me at (860) 822-8148 or asmith7258@aol.com.

We also held our monthly meeting after the caucus and while we discussed many issues there was one that resonated with all those present, that one issue was the additional funding for the grant writer.

As you may recall this particular line item was reduced at a town budget not once but twice. However a petition had been circulated and signed by enough individuals (89) to have it reconsidered by the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance. My question would be, where were these 89 individuals when the initial vote for this line item was voted on and why should the will of the people who gave up their time to attend five town hearings in regard to our town budget be circumvented?

Is this the kind of government we can look forward to? If you don't like the way a particular vote went, when the process took place, then wait for the dead of winter when no one is paying attention, circulate a petition and overturn a decision made by the people of the town? We would be better served to wait for our town's next budget process and let the town's residents decide the issue then.

OUR TOWN STAFF

Sprague ~ Our Town is a free monthly publication of the Town of Sprague, serving the communities of Baltic, Hanover and Versailles. Primarily funded by the Town, support is also provided by paid advertisements. Opinions expressed in Sprague ~ Our Town are not necessarily those of town officials or the community at large, but solely reflect those of the writer.

Submissions may be edited for clarity and format as necessary. Libelous or obscene materials are not permitted.

Editor: Amy Lynn Reifsnnyder

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Production Staff: Jeannette Bastien; Al Hoffman, Cecile Gagnon, Rita Grenier, Al Grenier, Barbara Robitaille, John Ellis, Joe Osowski, Richard Waterman, Ruth, Dennison Allen, and whoever else wanders through the room the day we collate.

Feel free to volunteer! Good storytellers welcome. Information: (860) 456-1082.

Hello Sprague,

I would like to thank all of those who participated in the recent Democratic Town Committee Caucus and welcome both our new and returning members. I most excited about the prospect for progress in Sprague in the coming years. Many thanks to our Secretary, Claire Glaude, for as usual, keeping all of our filings and paperwork straight with the State. Claire has been indispensable in her service to the DTC and our recent caucus served as yet another important reminder of the value of her skills.

Subsequent to our primary, a few folks have come forward and expressed interest in joining the DTC. No worries if you missed the caucus but would like to become a part of our organization. Simply contact me, or any member of the group, and we can let you know how to go about joining.

The DTC will be hosting the first in a series of informal get-togethers that we're billing as "Coffee with Cathy". The party at large would like to be sure that all townspeople have an opportunity to meet and interact with Cathy and other Democratic leaders and we realize that weekday evenings are not always the most agreeable with a busy schedule. Join us at Town Hall on the following times for light refreshments, coffee, and of course, Cathy: Feb. 23, 4 to 6 pm and Feb.29, 7 to 9 a.m.

Finally, I would like to remind all registered Democrats and Republicans to participate in the upcoming Presidential Primary Elections to be held Feb. 5. Both Democratic and Republican parties will be holding their primaries on Feb. 5 and your participation is a very important part of the process. Polls will be open at the Baltic Firehouse from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

As always, we welcome your continued feedback. Please don't hesitate to contact me, or any member of the DTC.

PLANNING AND ZONING ~RICHARD WATERMAN

The Commission holds its regular monthly meetings on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the courtroom on the second floor of Town Hall. The agenda is posted on the bulletin board in the town clerk's office on the Monday immediately preceding the meeting. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend. Members of the Commission are Shawn Bittman, Kord Jablonski, Joe Osowski, Paul Piezzo, Arthur Spielman, Jr., Gerald Stefon, and Richard Waterman. Alternate members are Kathleen Boushee, Mick Collins, and Christian Mueller. The Commission employs a part-time planner and consultant,

Tom Seidel of the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, and a zoning enforcement officer, Joe Smith. An audiotape, as well as written minutes of the Commission meetings, is available at the Town Hall. Additional is available at: www.ctsprague.org

Lincoln Series Continues

Patrick Rowley continues to lead the Sprague Public Library's Adult Book Discussion. Mr. Rowley returns to Baltic on Tuesday, Feb. 26, at 7 p.m. to discuss Doris Kearns Goodwin's Pulitzer Prize Winning biography on Abraham Lincoln, *A Team of Rivals; the Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*. Copies of the book are available now at the library. Refreshments will be served. To register for this discussion, or for more information, call (860) 822-3012

**Little League
Sign-up
Feb. 9
Franklin
Elementary School
7 p.m.**
And
Feb. 2 and Feb. 16
Helen Baldwin Elementary
School, Canterbury
7 p.m.
*Bring birth certificate and
proof of residence.*



HEALTH SCREENING SCHEDULE

VNA East of Mansfield Center offers the following screenings.

Blood Pressure Screening:

Wednesday, Feb. 6, Andover Old Fire Department, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.; Willington Senior Center, 1 to 2 p.m.; Thursday, Feb. 7, Florence Lord Marlborough, 11 a.m. to noon; Tuesday, Feb. 12, Hebron Senior Center, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.; Marlborough Senior Center, 1 to 2 p.m.; **Wednesday, Feb. 13,** Chaplin Senior Center, 9 to 10 a.m.; **Sprague Town Hall, noon to 1 p.m.;** Tuesday, Feb. 19, Lebanon Fire Safety Complex, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.; Wednesday, Feb. 20, Scotland Town Hall, 12:30 to 1 p.m.; Ashford Senior Center, 1:30 to 3 p.m.; Thursday, Feb. 21, Columbia Beckish Senior Center, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.; Marlborough Town Hall, 2 to 3 p.m.; Tuesday, Feb. 26, Franklin Senior Center, 10:30 to 11:30

Adult Health Screening:

Includes blood pressure, cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, blood glucose, earwax, and foot care. Blood pressure screening is free; other services have a nominal charge. Call (860) 456-7288 for appointments, costs, and information on other services. Clinics will be held Thursday, Feb. 7 and 21, Hebron Senior Center, 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Tuesday, Feb. 26, Franklin Town Hall, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.; **Sprague Senior Center, noon to 2:30 p.m.**

OUR TOWN

LETTERS

Again, why do we have an annual budget process?

After five months and five tries to pass the town budget last year, I bet you thought it was all over until this year, right? Well, if you bet money on it you'd lose.

On Jan. 9, selectmen voted 2-1 to accept a resident petition asking the boards of selectmen and finance to "restore \$22,500 to line item 6060."

What is "item 6060"? This is the grant-writer position that, after three separate votes over four town meetings last year, residents voted by a 2-1 margin to essentially reduce to a part-time position.

As selectman, I opposed this petition because its language asked us to do something that was unclear on several points: (1) what the petitioners actually wanted to do, (2) if a petition legally requires selectmen to change a town-approved budget, and (3) if a need exists to spend more money than townspeople approved for grant-writing.

I requested a written legal opinion before acting, to clarify both the language and the legal authority of town leaders to change an approved budget by petition. But First Selectman Osten couldn't wait for written clarification.

(1) Ms. Osten interpreted this petition as a call to exceed spending on the 2007/2008 budget, passed only last September. The petition didn't actually say that. In fact, the language was so vague that one could interpret it as asking leaders to restore funds to the 2008/2009 budget now in progress.

(2) She said selectmen "had an obligation" to do what petitioners said. This is not true. If indeed the petition meant to reverse an approved budget, a legal procedure must be followed. To add new money to an approved budget, selectmen must define a special need or emergency. Petitioners can't obligate selectmen to make this decision.

(3) There was no consideration or evaluation made at this meeting of a critical "need". Funds that voters approved for grant-writing were intended to last through the fiscal year, but had run out because since September the grant-writer was encouraged to work on a full-time basis with only part-time resources. Now the money is gone. This was a management decision by the First Selectman, not an emergency.

Because the amount exceeds \$20,000, residents must approve additional funds at a town meeting. So, for the fourth time, residents are expected to come out and vote on this one line item. Are you happy about that? See you at the meeting.

Kevin Generous, Selectman , Baltic

Selectmen Move to Reverse Town Budget Decision

Welcome to the new Sprague, where we now make budget decisions by petition. Let's say new First Selectman does not like the town vote last September to reduce the grant writer's salary, and to fund only a part-time position. What to do? First, tell the grant writer to continue working as if on full-time. Pretty soon we'll run out of money to pay the salary, and declare it's a town emergency. Then get friends on the Democrat Town Committee to circulate a petition urging the Board of Selectman to take action to restore funds for a full time position.

Sound far-fetched? Cathy Osten and Buddy Meadows did just that at the Jan. 9 Board of Selectman meeting.

Apparently they felt they could not ignore all the people who signed this petition — never mind how all the people who turned out for multiple votes on the budget might feel. Whether or not you think we need a full time grant writer, the process used to reverse the town vote makes a mockery of the legal budget process.

There were five budget votes in the summer, and three votes addressing the grant writer issue. It seemed pretty clear what those who cared enough to come out and vote wanted. There is a process for passing a budget, and this is not it. If the grant writer is so vital, perhaps a fiscal management decision should have been made earlier to preserve the funds available in the budget passed by town voters, so the grant writer could continue working for the town but at fewer hours per week.

Look for yet another town meeting on this issue--it seems five votes are not enough.

Diane Generous, Baltic

LETTERS

To the Editor:

I have forgotten how little the average member of town is able to keep up with what goes on in town. I had gone to a meeting listed in the Our Town only to find it was postponed. I should have used the Web site.

We hear much of despair about the country leadership, the economy, those who are homeless and etc. I would like to share with you some thoughts from Charles Dickens' The Tale of Two Cities. It begins:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had every thing before us, we had nothing before us....

We have seen a retreat form the standers of excellence in many phases of our lives. These are some of the standers we have forgotten: Obedience to law, Respect for others, Mastery of self, Joy in service.

The Town of Sprague is in the best of times and also in the worst of times. The town needs each of you to take an active part in government.

Contact the selectman or the chairman of boards and commissions to see how you can help, Attend as many meeting as you can to see what is going on. You will know this year why the taxes are as they are presented.

May you find joy and peace this month and don't forget Valentine's Day.

Dennison Allen, Versailles

CALENDAR PAGE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Please note:

Deadline for submissions is the 15th of each month. The writer's name, address and a contact phone number must be included with each submission.

Opinion letters will be published with the writer's name and town. Please limit word count to less than 400.

**Paid ads may be purchased at a rate of :
Quarter Page, \$21; Half Page, \$70; Full Page, \$100. One month free for 11 months pre-paid.**

Submissions may be e-mailed to OurTown-News@gmail.com, or mailed to Town Hall, P.O. Box 677, Baltic, CT 06330.

I can be reached by telephone at (860) 456-1082.

Thanks again for sharing your news and events with Our Town.

Amy Lynn Reifsnyder