

February 22nd, 2010
Special Meeting/Workshop
Joint Town Board Meeting: Petersburg and Berlin Town Boards

A special meeting of the Petersburg Town Board was held on Monday, February 22nd, 2010 at 7:00PM at the Petersburg Town Hall, 65 Main Street, Petersburg, New York, to discuss potential merging of various programs between the two Towns.

Present: Petersburg Supervisor Peter Schaaphok
Berlin Supervisor Robert Jaeger
Petersburgh Councilman Richard Snyder
Petersburgh Councilman William Seel
Petersburgh Councilwoman Amy Manchester
Berlin Councilwoman Sheila Hewitt
Berlin Councilman Richard VonShilgen
Berlin Councilman Carl Greene
Petersburgh Town Clerk Callie Crisp

Press: Kieron Kramer- Eastwick Press

Guests: Fred Giroux, Heinz Noeding

The Town of Petersburg and the Town of Berlin currently have an agreement for use of the Transfer Station in Berlin. The success of this agreement has prompted the proposition of other shared programs between the Towns. The idea of this workshop is to discuss the option of further enhancing the affiliation between the Towns, and to discuss the benefits of potential mergers.

Youth Program

The first topic of conversation was the possibility of sharing youth programs between the Towns. This could provide many opportunities to extend the quality of the programs. Additional people may be attracted if the Towns combine, and the ability to share things such as transportation would be beneficial. The Town of Petersburg could provide ample space at the Veteran's Hall for both communities. Both Dyken Pond and Grafton Lakes State Park were introduced as viable options for the location of the swim program. However, some practicality needs to be worked out. The activities must be meticulously scheduled as to not conflict with summer programs run by Berlin Central School District. Also, the director of the shared program must be qualified through the Red Cross and be a certified lifeguard. The current directors of the programs may fit this criterion. Both will be contacted to determine eligibility and to verify their interest in participation. Petersburg Town Board member, William Seel, and Berlin Town Board member, Sheila Hewitt, were asked to initiate these contacts.

The conversation then turned towards funding. New York State now requires that in order to receive grants an educational basis must be part of any youth program. The Petersburg Youth Program has tied in with the Petersburg Library's activities and a continuation of this could possibly satisfy the state's requirements.

Stephentown did not reapply for a grant this year, and Rensselaer County does not want to lose the funding. As a result a representative from the County, Pierce Hoyt, has been in contact with Supervisor Schaaphok to see if Petersburg would be interested in this money. With the prospect of a combined youth program with Berlin this additional funding is probably assured. Mr. Hoyt has offered to travel here to speak on this issue. Currently Berlin has been allocated \$1,252 for regular funding and Petersburg \$1,486 for theirs. The extra money amounts to \$1,240.00 bringing the total county funds for the shared youth program to \$3,978. When this added to the towns' combined amount of \$17,000 raised by local taxes, the total available for the joint youth program is \$20,978. Another workshop between the Towns and a possible meeting with Mr. Hoyt will take place at a date to be determined.

Senior Group

Both Boards agreed that sharing the Senior programs could also provide advantages for the residents. The Veteran's Hall in Petersburg could be a practical place to convene, but first it must be determined if the Seniors of Berlin would be willing to travel. This will be suggested in the future, to determine interest in the union.

Code Enforcement Officer

The Town of Berlin has shared Code Enforcement in the past with the Town of Stephentown. The possibility of Berlin and Petersburg doing the same was considered. Code Enforcement Officer Doug Hull will be contacted to discuss this opportunity.

Public Address

Petersburgh resident Heinz Noeding was present to address the Petersburg Town Board in reference to the appearance of some of the properties in Petersburg. Noeding stated that the situation needed to be assessed in order to raise property values in the Town of Petersburg. Noeding felt that the Town should be enforcing houses in violation, and this would set a higher standard for property maintenance. The Boards informed him that while some houses may be in violation, enforcement of the NYS Property Maintenance code is impractical in a rural area given the large number of properties in town that technically are in violation. Even if the Town of Petersburg had the enforcement personnel and funding to address the situation, such a move could be highly unpopular with the majority of the town's residents.

Noeding also suggested that Petersburg should be actively working towards economic growth. He proposed the idea of a wind farm, which would provide jobs for residents and bring more general activity to the Town. The Boards responded that presumably current residents would not be interested in this development, and instead would rather see Petersburg and Berlin remain rural. Among the town's great attributes are its beautiful view sheds and windmills along the Taconic crest would certainly diminish this asset. They cited the cell towers as an example, which were a topic of heated debate with the residents before installation commenced. Noeding was then advised to talk with the Code Enforcement Officer concerning the properties he had mentioned.

The second workshop between the Towns of Petersburg and Berlin regarding the shared youth programs will be announced after correspondences are made. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.