



TOWN OF BERGEN NEWSLETTER

December 2022, January and February 2023



Michele M. Smith, Editor

TOWN NEWS ... FROM THE DESK OF TOWN SUPERVISOR *Ernest Haywood*

Our WIBA#1 water project is nearing completion with most properties within the district connected to water if the owner so chooses. Restoration work is on-going and will continue into the spring. We are scheduled to close on the permanent financing in mid-December, just prior to the December 22 interim financing payment. WIBA1 property owners will see the full EDU charge of \$642.58, including a \$20 water repair reserve charge, on the January 2023 town and county tax bill.

A federal single fiscal audit is a requirement of the water project and we have engaged Menzel, Metzger and Barr and Co. to conduct the audit. The audit will take place over the next several months.

The 2023 Bergen Town budget was adopted on October 25. The tax rate will be \$2.2929 per thousand of assessed valuation, down a nickel from the 2022 rate of \$2.3449 per thousand. Some of the highlights of the budget include: increased funding for the library and the fire district, funds for additional cemetery stone repairs, repairs to the highway garage, and increases in the highway equipment and road repair lines.

Our budget continues to feel the pressure from the reduction in sales tax revenue shared by Genesee County. I have advocated continuously for the county to provide more revenue as they reduced sales tax revenue over \$200,000 this year alone. I addressed the full legislature requesting an increase this month and, I presented a resolution at the last Genesee Association of Municipalities (GAM) in November to appoint a sales tax/revenue sharing committee for the purposes of discussing the concerns, alternatives and recommendations for further sharing of County resources with the towns and villages of Genesee County. The resolution passed unanimously and the committee will report back to GAM and the full Genesee County Legislature on a regular basis and provide a final recommendation by July 1, 2023.

Two of our fall maintenance projects have been completed. Chandler Bow has finished painting the exterior of historian building. It looks great and will help protect the structure from weather and decay. Genesee Valley Cemetery Services has finished repairing and stabilizing dangerous stones at the East Bergen Cemetery.

We have two vacancies on our Zoning Board of Appeals. This board meets as needed to hear applications for variances. Members must be residents of the Town of Bergen. If you are interested, please give me a call at the Town Hall, 494-1121 or submit a letter of interest to me at 10 Hunter Street, PO Box 249, Bergen, NY 14416.

Included in this newsletter is some information regarding help with your energy bill. With energy prices at historic highs and the beginning of the heating season upon us, we want to be sure our residents know of available resources. There is also some helpful information on our website at www.bergenny.org.

Best wishes for a happy holiday season!
Ernie Haywood, Supervisor



**FROM THE ASSESSOR'S OFFICE:
What you need to know about STAR
or "School Tax Relief"**

The School Tax Relief (STAR) program offers property tax relief to eligible New York State homeowners.

If you are eligible and enrolled in the STAR program, you'll receive your benefit each year in one of two ways, based on when you took ownership of your primary residence:

Ownership after March 1st, 2015:

- **STAR credit check.** If you are registered for the STAR credit, the Tax Department will send you a STAR check in the mail each year. You can use the check to pay a portion of your school taxes. You can receive the STAR credit if you own your home and it's your primary residence **and** the combined income of the owners and the owners' spouses is \$500,000 or less.

Ownership on or before March 1st, 2015:

- **STAR exemption: a reduction on your school tax bill.** If you've been receiving the STAR exemption since 2015, you can continue to receive it for the same primary residence. As long as you remain eligible, you'll see a reduction on your school tax bill for the amount of your STAR exemption. **Note:** The STAR *exemption* is no longer available to new homeowners.

For more information on both programs, or to sign up for the Star Credit visit:

NYS STAR resource center: [STAR resource https://www.tax.ny.gov/star/enter \(ny.gov\)](https://www.tax.ny.gov/star/enter (ny.gov))

Finding help with home heating this winter



There are a variety of programs to help homeowners with heating bills this winter. Here is some general information and contacts for some of the programs:

- HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program) assists households that pay a high proportion of household income for heat. HEAP also has emergency aid, equipment repair aid and furnace cleaning aid. There is a sliding scale of help based on income. Call 1-800-342-3009.
- ERAP (Emergency Rental Assistance Program) for rent and utility arrears. Call 1-844-NY1RENT
- Rochester Gas and Electric has project SHARE (heating fund grant). Call 1-800-743-2110.
- NYS Department of Public Service can help residents find assistance with paying for utilities, weatherization, energy efficiency and services for older adults. Call 1-800-342-3377 or visit www.dps.ny.gov/winter

Happy Holidays!! During your holiday rush of activities don't forget to enjoy the many holiday books, music and movies available at your Library! We have cookbooks for meals on the go as well as baking cookbooks for the perfect Christmas cookie! Stop by when the children are on vacation for boredom buster books and craft books to inspire their imaginations. Don't forget your audio books for the long car rides to Grandma's house! Search our website at www.byron-bergenpubliclibrary.org and check out Library happenings as well as our on-line catalog and like us on Facebook and Twitter too!

The Holiday Library hours will be:

Friday December 23rd 10am-6pm

Saturday December 24th - Closed

Merry Christmas!

Tuesday Dec. 27th 10am-1pm and 2pm-7pm

Wednesday Dec. 28th -10am-1pm and 2pm-7pm

Thursday Dec. 29th 10am-1pm and 2pm-7pm

Friday Dec. 30st – 10am- 3pm

Saturday December 31st-10am-1pm

Happy New Year!



The Library is more than just books- we have many family games and puzzles to lend- Stop in and take out a new game to try during your holiday gatherings. All you need is a Library card!

Holiday Happenings-

Movie night – fun for the whole family! Bring your family and friends and enjoy the movie Elf and some pizza and popcorn on December 22nd at 5pm! Registration by Wednesday De. 21st is appreciated.

Join us on December 28th at 2:30pm for Cookie Decorating with Spoonful of Sugar Sweets. Cost is \$15 per person- Bring your creativity and have some fun learning new decorating techniques with Trish. Recommended for school age children and up- Adults welcome. Registration and payment are required by Dec. 23rd and space is limited.

Family Game Day at the Library – Thursday Dec. 29th at 5pm. Join us for pizza and board games learn a new game or bring one of yours to share! Register by Dec. 28th by calling 494-1120.

The library has Hot Spots to loan-through a Nioga Library System grant. There are 2 mobile Hot Spots available until the end of the year! You can check them out for 2-week at a time- no holds or renewals. All you need is a Library card!

Did you get a new Gadget for Christmas? Do you need help getting Library books, movies and music on you gadget? Set up an appointment any Wednesday during regular Library hours to get the help you need. There are more free materials for our patrons that have E-readers, smart phones, laptops and tablets using your Library card. Call 494-1120 or stop in.

Pre-school/Toddler story time will run Fridays at 10:30am starting on January 13th. Join us for a story, craft and a treat! This is recommended for ages 2-5 but younger children are welcome with their parents/guardian. Registration is appreciated.

Book Club meets the 2nd Thursday of every month at 6:30pm! Join us as we explore new and different books and meet new people! No registration required- call the library for more information.

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A Babysitting workshop will be offered on January 16^h from 10am-3pm. If you are interested, please stop in or call the Library at 494-1120 to sign up by January 12th - Cost is \$25. You must be at least 11 years old to be certified.

Make & Take Winter Fun January 26th from 5:00-7:00 pm. Join us for wintery craft and a snack – registration is appreciated by calling 494-1120. Fun for all ages!

February Break Happenings! Look upcoming activities during winter break– check us out on the web at www.Byron-BergenPublicLibrary.org.

Getting a new E-Reader for Christmas or have one now.....Check out our catalog for downloadable e-books free with a valid Nioga Library card. We have Digital movies- magazines-music- eBooks- and audio books through HOOPLA and OverDrive/Libby apps! All you have to do is go to the website www.byron-bergenpubliclibrary.org to download the app & sign up with your Library Card!



If you don't find what you are looking for at the Library, we can order it for you from the NIOGA Library System. The website is www.byron-bergenpubliclibrary.org and click on catalog to see if our system has the book you are looking for. You then can order online, call the Library at 494-1120 or stop in with your request.

The Library has copy /fax service for a small cost, Spectrum Internet on three computers, Wi-Fi and interlibrary loans from *any Library in the NIOGA Library system. You can follow us on Facebook. If you would like to get on our e-mail list – just call us or e-mail your information to byrbqn@nioqa.org . For more information on our services or programs, please call the Library at 494-1120.*

Happy Holiday Reading - Nancy Bailey, Library Manager

Saturday, December 10th

Santa's Workshop

9:00 am – 1:30 pm Gillam-Grant Community Center

9:30 am Pre-School and Kid Zone perform

10:00 am Glenn Colton's Christmas Show

10:45 am - 1:00 pm Santa Visits

9:00 am – 1:30 pm Kid's Secret Shop is Open! Secret shopping for kids only....bring your list

10:45am – 1:30pm Christmas Crafting for kids

11:30 am Cookie Decorating



From the desk of incoming County Legislator *Christian Yunker*



Winter has arrived and holiday season is upon us. Jail construction remains on time and on budget. The steel structure with all the intake, kitchen, offices, central control etc. is up and the roof is going on. The foundation, plumbing, electrical is all in for the 4 pods and we are approaching the timeframe for the pre cast cells to arrive and be stacked and placed together. These will arrive one by one on trucks and will be put in place in January. This 22-month construction project is still expected to be fully completed by January of 2024.

The County Managers office and the Legislature have put the final touches on the all-funds County budget of \$162,567,180, with a 2% tax levy increase. With the levy increase, the tax rate would actually fall from \$9.18 to \$8.45/ \$1000 because of the overall assessment increase. Despite the rate decrease, our overall spending increase of \$4.8 million is driven by many significant factors. The drivers of the increase include; \$4.1 million in debt service for the new \$70 million County jail that the State has required us to build, \$700K in NYS retirement cost increase, \$500K in increased commodity prices in fuel, oil, stone etc. for the highway department, \$300K in 8 new positions tied to the jail, \$250K 3 new positions in our understaffed Sheriff’s office. Not to mention, no end in sight for mandate relief from the State. Of our \$32 million local property tax levy, \$25 million of that pays for mandated services that we are required to provide. In response to these drivers and all this inflationary pressure, the County has utilized over \$2 million in fund balance, has an additional jail debt service reserve in addition to a phased in approach of the jail operation costs increases, and an aggressive effort to secure any sort of funding for our \$150 million water infrastructure project.

Speaking of water, progress continues on phase 2 of the water infrastructure project including many pump station improvements and water line upsizing. We should be completing Phase 2 projects by the end of 2022. Our work with our lobbyist group Carpi Clay has already paid dividends for us as we were awarded 2 grants for some water infrastructure upgrades at the City water plant in the amount of \$3.4 million combined. The most recent estimates show that phase 3 total costs will exceed \$150 million that includes closing of the 100-year-old Batavia City water plant.

Despite the challenges of the budget, the County continues to invest heavily into the roads, bridges and culverts throughout the County and all the Towns and Villages. In addition to the normal budgeted repairs and replacements, we have set aside an additional \$1 million dollars annually towards these efforts.

Another exciting announcement that we hope to make official very soon, pending final negotiations would be an award of contract for a Provider to supply broadband internet to every address in the County. This will be an over \$7 million investment from the County to do so. This has been a priority of the County for several years and are excited that we are very close to moving forward with construction. This will be a tremendous boost to all those rural addresses throughout the County that do not have access at the road for broadband internet.

Enjoy the Holidays! As always, feel free to contact us anytime with any questions or concerns you many have.

Saturday, December 3rd, 2022

6:00 PM

Bergen Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 38 South Lake Ave, Bergen, NY

Join us for an evening of Christmas music performed by members of the community.

Young and old are welcome to attend. Family friendly, bring all your little ones! Cookies, milk, and cocoa to follow.



Town Highway by *Mike Johnson*



Winter is upon us, and I would like to remind everyone that winter driving requires additional time, planning, preparation, and most importantly, at times, reduced speeds to allow for increased stopping distances.

Please be reminded that during a “normal” snow event, it will take plow trucks 2 ½ to 3 hours to complete one pass on all roads. As such, it is very possible that everyone will encounter less than pleasant driving conditions at times. Late evenings and early mornings, with very light traffic volumes, will receive lower levels of service. Every attempt will be made to maintain open and passable roadways, both for normal and emergency traffic. At times, lanes may narrow and accumulate snow. The Town is responsible for snow and ice removal on all Town and County roadways in Bergen as well as some State routes.

A new change this year you may see in surrounding towns is green and amber lighting on snow removal equipment. Please use extra caution when you see green and amber lighting or just amber lighting on hazard vehicles such as snow removal equipment. All motorists must use due care to avoid colliding with such snow removal equipment that is driving on the road, parked, stopped or standing on the shoulder displaying amber lighting or the new green and amber lighting combination. The Town of Bergen may be implementing the green/amber combo lighting in the future, but as of now we just have the amber lighting on all of our vehicles.

Please note, mailboxes, if damaged by our plows, will be repaired or replaced as per Town Board adopted limits, as soon as, weather/time permits. PLEASE, when installing or repairing your mailbox, remember that our trucks require a minimum 17 ½ feet from the center of the roadway. Also, take into account the excessive force of the exhausted snow as it strikes your mailbox assembly.

In addition, NYS statute states that the depositing of snow or other materials onto a highway is dangerous and illegal. DO NOT plow your snow across the roadway, and also be sure to clean up any snow that may have been accidentally placed in the roadway.

Normal highway department hours are 7:00am to 3:30pm Monday through Friday. However, you may leave a message 24 hours a day on our answering machine, and I will return your call as soon as possible. My door is always open, please don't hesitate to call me at 494-1362 if you have any questions.

In closing, the entire highway department would like to wish everyone a healthy and happy holiday season, and a safe winter.

Mike Johnson, Town Highway Superintendent

The Town of Bergen would like to congratulate and recognize one of our local businesses, **Craft Cannery** (Guglielmo Sauce), on their recent accomplishment. They placed 2nd out of 390 applicants in the “Grow NY” competition in November.

We have so much talent here in Bergen that goes unnoticed and possibly never recognized and we would like to thank **ALL** of our local businesses, large and small, for choosing to call Bergen their home.

We ask all of you, our residents, to remember to shop local when possible, and support our businesses, neighbors, friends and this entire community.

Please be safe, and we wish everyone a very healthy and happy holiday season.





Town & County Taxes

If you pay your own taxes, you will receive your tax bill shortly after January 1, 2022. If you should receive a tax bill that an escrow company or someone else is supposed to pay, please call me right away. Don't put it aside and assume that it will be paid. Also, if you have paid off your mortgage and did not receive a tax bill, you should call me. No matter what the situation is, you are responsible for your taxes and penalties, if it is not paid. If you are leaving town for the winter, please leave your "winter" address with me so late fees can be avoided. Credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express) are accepted for payment with a convenience fee. Please feel free to use the outside drop box for payments, they will be processed as soon as possible and a receipt will be mailed back to you.

Tax payments cannot be received before January 1, 2023 per the County Treasurers office, all payments will be stamped after that date. Taxes are due penalty free by January 31st, all taxes have to be paid to me by March 31st. After **March 31st**, the unpaid taxes are returned to the County Treasurer. If you are going to pay them to the County Treasurer by mail, you will need to call his office in Batavia at 344-2550, ext. 2214 as there will be additional penalties.



Dog License News:

I hate to "hound" you, but if your dog's license renewal is due or past due, please take care of it so we don't have to send you a reminder notice or eventually a court appearance ticket. All dogs, four months of age need to be licensed even those in apartments. Proof of a rabies vaccination and proof of neutering or spaying must be presented at the time of licensing. If you receive an appearance ticket, you will have to pay a fee of \$25.00 plus also pay for your dog's renewal. If there is a problem getting an appointment for a rabies vaccination, etc., please call me. I have an answering machine so you can call anytime day or night.

OFFICE CLOSINGS

- December 23rd & 26th – Christmas Holiday
- January 16, 2023 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- February 20, 2023 – Presidents Day

NEW OFFICE HOURS

- Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
8:00 - 12:00 & 1:00 - 5:00
- Friday
8:00 - 12:00 & 1:00 - 4:00
- Closed on Thursdays & Saturdays





Village Tree Lighting
Monday, December 5th
Caroling at 6:30 pm
Hickory Park at 7:00pm



ATTENTION SNOW BIRDS

If you are leaving town for the winter, please leave your winter address with the Town Clerk/Tax Collector to mail your Town & County Tax Bill to avoid any late fees. All Tax Bills are mailed on December 31st and are due by January 31st without penalty.

Michele Smith, Town Clerk/Tax Collector
494-1121 Ext. 21



HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE TOWN OF BERGEN



**TOWN of BERGEN
10 HUNTER STREET
BERGEN, NY 14416
bergenny.org**

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html or at any USDA office, or call (866)632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S.D.A., Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W. Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202)690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov"