



Town of Sweden *Snapshots*

Volume 14, Issue 3

Fall 2015

A message from the supervisor's office

Two large projects are being reviewed by different boards at the Town of Sweden. *Senior's Choice at Heritage Square* on Redman Road is before the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals. *Frances Apartments* on Owens Road is before the Planning Board and the Town Board.

Senior's Choice at Heritage Square is proposed as two four-story buildings connected with a one-story common area. The building would be divided on the ground level with a courtyard; two second-story roof decks would allow outdoor sitting areas.

The project is designed for seniors—those who are able to live independently and those who need some assistance. To that end, the

plan calls for 90 apartments: 57 for independent living seniors; 33 for assisted living seniors. The average projected monthly rent, which would include services (meals, housekeeping, health, wellness and recreational services) would be \$3,000.

The Zoning Board of Appeals held a public hearing regarding the project's variance request on August 20. The applicant is seeking relief from the 36 feet height limit (the proposed roof line is almost 43 feet). The ZBA did not make a decision on August 20 and will reconvene in the near future.

Meanwhile, the developer has applied to the Planning Board for subdivision and site plan approval. A public hearing was held on September 14. The Planning Board review continues but no final approvals can be granted until the ZBA completes its process.

Over on the other side of Town, *Frances Apartments* has applied for the rezoning of less than seven acres of land just north of Lowe's on Owens Road. The developer has also submitted subdivision and site plan applications to the Planning Board.

Frances Apartments has taken its name from Frances Barrier Williams who was the first African-American to graduate from the Brockport Normal School.



Supervisor **Rob Carges** (right) and Planning Board Chairman **Craig McAllister**.

The proposed zoning change is from I-1 Heavy Industrial to B-1 Retail Commercial. The Town Board has called a public hearing regarding the zoning change for October 13 at 7 pm.

The apartment complex would be for families of moderate income with a special set aside for developmentally disabled

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2015 general election information for voters

The 2015 General Election will be held on Tuesday, November 3. There are five Town of Sweden elected offices on the ballot: Supervisor (two-year term); 2 Councilpersons (four-year terms); Receiver of Taxes and Assessments (four-year term) and Highway Superintendent (four-year term).

Town of Sweden voting districts are as follows:

- Districts 2, 3, 4, 9 & 11 Sweden Town Hall
18 State Street
- District 1, 5 & 6 Sweden Senior Center
133 State Street
- Districts 7, 8, 10 & 12 Community Center
4927 Lake Road

All three voting locations are handicap accessible. Polls will be open from 6 am to 9 pm.

What if you are not physically able to vote on November 3? Absentee ballot applications are available from the Monroe County Board of Elections by calling 753-1550, here at the Sweden Town Hall or at www.monroecounty.gov. Applications must be postmarked prior to seven days before the election in order to receive an absentee ballot.

Are you interested in working as an election inspector? Inspectors receive training by the Monroe County Board of Elections, they are then scheduled by an election coordinator, either Republican or Democrat depending on party affiliation. The current rate of pay is \$10/hour; training time is also paid. If interested, please contact the Town Clerk's office at 637-2144.

Karen M. Sweeting, Town Clerk

12th Annual Sweden/Clarkson Halloween Fun

The Sweden/Clarkson Recreation Department's annual Community Halloween Party will be held on Thursday, October 29 from 6 pm to 8 pm at the Community Center, 4927 Lake Road. The free event is open to families with children in grades four and under.

The two haunted houses (one exclusively for toddlers) are always big hits. Other activities include a costume contest at 7:15 pm, games, face painting, temporary tattoos, crafts and refreshments (apple cider and donuts).

This structured event is a great way to help your children enjoy Halloween in a safe environment. Older children are welcome to attend with families, but the activities (haunted house, games and candy gathering) are restricted to age appropriate children.

The Sweden/Clarkson Recreation Halloween Party is sponsored by Brockport Wegmans. Attendance is usually between 300 and 400 residents. For more information, call the recreation department at 431-0090.

How to make sure your fireplace or wood stove is safe

With natural gas and propane prices continuing to rise, you'll likely be looking to the old fireplace this winter to help cut your home-heating bills. But before you fire up your fireplace or wood burning stove this season please take some basic precautions.

First make sure your chimneys are cleaned by getting a certified chimney sweep to remove soot and debris at least once a year at the beginning of the winter season. In addition to cleaning, a chimney sweep should inspect the chimney structure for cracks, loose bricks and missing mortar. Chimney liners should also be checked for cracking or deterioration. A cap fitted with wire-mesh sides covers the top of the chimney and keeps rain, birds, squirrels and debris from entering. Replace or repair a cap that's missing or damaged.

Before lighting a fire, make sure your flue or damper is open for proper ventilation or you could end up filling up your house with unwanted smoke. When burning, choose dense wood such as oak, maple or ash that's been split and

stored in a high and dry place for at least six months. Green wood and resinous softwoods like pine produce more creosote, a flammable by-product of combustion that can build up in the chimney and cause a chimney fire. While burning make sure protective glass doors and/or screens are in place to prevent sparks or embers from igniting nearby combustibles.

Residents should remember to have working smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors in the house. After the fire, remember to empty hot embers or ashes into a covered metal container until cold before disposing. Do not place ashes in plastic garbage containers or paper bags and do not put them up against your home or any other structure. Eleven fires have occurred so far in 2015 in Monroe County due to improperly discarded ashes. If you have any questions, please call the Sweden building department at 637-8684.

Michael Vergari, Fire Marshal

Meet your Zoning Board

The Town of Sweden's Zoning Board of Appeals has five members who are appointed to five-year terms. The ZBA reviews requests for variances—either use or area. Members must be well-versed in the Sweden Town Code and the NYS regulations for granting variances. They meet as needed—whenever a property applies for relief from the zoning code.

The Zoning Board is an independent branch of Town Government. Although appointed by the Town Board, they operate independently in their authority.

Chairwoman Mary Ann Thorpe was appointed in 2006. She is a retired music teacher and former mayor of the Village of Brockport.

Peter Sharpe has been a member since 2005. He is a CTE High School teacher at Monroe BOCES II and serves on the BOCES Special Education Advisory Committee. Peter has been very involved in local youth sports in the community.

Pauline Johnson is the longest serving member originally appointed in the late 80s. She took a couple of breaks, one while living in Clarkson, the other while working for the Town. She is retired from the Brockport School District and currently works as a legal secretary.



Pictured left to right are ZBA members **Pauline Johnson, Mary Ann Thorpe, Kevin M. Johnson** and **Peter Sharpe**. Missing from photo: **Frank Fisher**.

Kevin Johnson is the newest member appointed in 2013. He just retired from St. John Fisher where he was a graphic artist. He and his wife enjoy a growing brood of grandchildren.

Frank Fisher became a member of the board in 1994. He works in the construction trade industry bringing that practical knowledge with him to the post.

Phyllis Brudz serves as the clerk to the zoning board providing coordination between the planning, zoning and building departments.

2016 Sweden Town Budget preview—under the state tax cap and lower taxes for homeowners

As this newsletter goes to press, the Sweden Town Board has completed the tentative 2016 Town Budget which is well under the New York State Tax Cap and will result in slightly lower tax bills for homeowners.

The 2015 Sweden Town Budget exceeded the state tax cap by over \$70,000. The overage was attributable primarily to the projected loss of \$70,000 in court fines. The Village of Brockport opened a new duplicate court system in 2015, leading to the loss of revenues for the Town of Sweden.

The Sweden Town Board could not lower court costs to match the loss in revenues—State law would not allow the Town to eliminate one judge position until January 1, 2016. The Town Board had previously (2014) eliminated one full-time court clerk position (with full benefits) in order to help mitigate the effects of the village's action.

The result is that since the Town took the full financial hit in 2015, we are able, despite an even lower tax cap for 2016, to stay within the cap.

Residents should understand that the New York State Two Percent Tax Cap is a misnomer. For 2016, the NYS Tax Cap is .73% - less than one percent.

The Town of Sweden exceeded the tax cap in 2015 due to very unusual circumstances (how often do new court systems start-up in NYS each year? The answer is almost never—in fact many court systems are consolidating as a cost savings measure). As the tax cap enters its fifth year and reaches a new low (.73%), more of our neighboring municipalities will have a hard time staying within the cap. The Town of Sweden is in a solid financial position because we responsibly accounted for the loss of court fines in 2015.

We plan to publish a special budget edition of the *Snapshots* in October with a full-presentation of the 2016 budget. Although the 2016 tentative is complete, there are more steps—adoption of a preliminary budget (probably October 13) and a public hearing, before the Town Board adopts a final 2016 Budget. Please take the time to read the budget newsletter when it comes out and attend our budget public hearing tentatively scheduled for October 27. You will be pleased with the work we have done.

Rob Carges, Supervisor

Town of Sweden

Supervisor's message

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clients of Lifetime Assistance, and for others with disabilities.

The plan calls for 56 units within seven residential two-story buildings. There would be a mix of one, two and three bedroom apartments. A 2,800 square foot community building would include offices and community activity space. The Planning Board accepted the project for review on September 14 and will hold its public hearing on October 26.

These two projects are the largest to come before the

Town in quite some time and require review, not only by the previously mentioned boards, but also by the Town Conservation Board, Town Engineer and several Monroe County agencies, including, but not limited to County Planning, Pure Waters, Water Authority, Department of Health, the NYS Department of Conservation and the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Please consider attending one of the public hearings or board meetings (town, planning or zoning) to learn more about the projects. We will put updates in this newsletter but more timely information can be gained by attending a meeting or calling the Planning/Building/Zoning Department at 637-8684.

Rob Carges, Supervisor

Assessments—the tool by which taxes are distributed

Is market value the best way to determine what a property's fair share of local taxes is? Maybe, maybe not. But market value is what the New York State Legislature has determined is the best way. The New York State Office of Real Property Services is empowered to make sure that assessors all across the state are valuing properties at market value using guidelines and rules they set.

Market value can be very subjective—it depends on the motivation of both buyer and seller. If the seller is in a hurry to relocate, he/she may take less for the house than if there was not an immediate need to move. A buyer may be willing to pay more for a certain property than five other buyers are because there's one certain feature that he/she has been seeking.

The same is true with other things we buy, if you think about it. Gasoline prices vary greatly across our community. As I'm writing this, I Googled Gas Buddy and found gasoline prices of \$2.11, \$2.15, \$2.29, \$2.32, \$2.45 and \$2.49 per gallon in and around Brockport. What is the market value of a gallon of gasoline, today?

Even real estate professionals will disagree about market values. Have five appraisers look at the same property and you'll likely end up with five different values.

So recognizing that market value is an inexact science and that the State has created exemptions to alter the taxable market value of many types of properties, what do we do to make sure that assessed property values are as fair as possible?

Assessors follow the rules and guidelines set by the State. We ignore anecdotal stories and emotional feelings about the value of a property and use computer software and cold, hard facts (square footage, number of bedrooms, bathrooms, acreage, age, etc.) to generate a value.

Our assessment protocol includes using sales-ratio studies, real estate market analyses, mass appraisal results, coefficients of dispersion, price related differentials and multiple regression. We use documented information to validate adjustments to the values. And then we have a system of checks and balances to make sure that we're as close to a fair market value as possible.

Checks and balances include oversight and review by the NYS Office of Real Property Service. The State determines if a municipality has met its obligation of being at 100% of market value. I am proud to say that the Town of Sweden has always been deemed at 100% during my tenure. Another check and balance is the use of an outside contractor to review a portion of my work. For many years now, the Town of Sweden has received an Excellence in Equity award from New York State for "efforts to provide property owners with fair and equitable assessments."

Property owners are often not happy with their assessments—not because they don't want their property to have the highest market value—but because they don't want to pay the higher taxes associated with a higher market value. None of us does.

So what can we do? Here in the Sweden assessor's office, we will continue to follow all the rules and regulations regarding assessments set by the State. I will continue to attend the mandated assessor training and use a third party consultant to serve as a check and balance. I will keep Sweden's roll at 100% and continue to earn NYS's Excellence in Equity award.

Property owners should document conditions they feel change the market value of their property and then provide my office with that documentation. Finally, if New

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2015 High Street Cemetery project complete



The Town of Sweden became responsible for the care of High Street Cemetery in the Village of Brockport in 2005. Many residents probably don't realize that the historic cemetery is still active. The Town has performed five interments since 2005. Most of the Town's work is grass cutting and the trimming of landscaping; and cleaning up after littering or vandalism.

This summer, the Town decided to replace the decaying cemetery sign and to undertake the repair of some of the many fallen or damaged grave markers.

Councilperson Don Roberts chaired the project and the 2015 work was completed in early September. "We were able to repair the foundations of two dozen headstones," Roberts said. "In some cases, it isn't just aesthetics, it's the safety of our groundskeepers and visitors to the cemetery—to make sure no one is injured by falling stones. Also, cutting grass at cemeteries is labor-intensive enough—getting some of the fallen stones up off the ground helps our crew do a better job."

The Town plans to undertake more headstone repairs over the next several years. The Town set up a trust fund for High Street Cemetery—anyone wishing to make a donation to be used for improvements is welcome to do so. Call the Finance Director at 637-7588 for information.



Photos: Top left, Councilperson **Don Roberts** meets with **Larry Rath** of Genesee Valley Foundations to discuss the repair of broken tombstones in the historic High Street cemetery. Far left: the old sign made of pressure treated lumber was badly weathered. Left: the new sign made of cedar by Buildings and Grounds Crew Member **Roger Evans**. The Town cares for five cemeteries in the Town of Sweden and Village of Brockport.

Assessments—the tool by which taxes are distributed

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York State residents feel that market value is not the best way to assess for property taxes, then they should lobby their legislators to effect a change.

Tony Eaffaldano, Assessor

Note from the Supervisor:

New York State recognizes that there is tremendous pressure from individual property owners and political action groups to lower assessments. To shield assessors

from undue pressure and influence, the State mandates 6-year appointments for assessors. In addition, Town Boards, including the Supervisor, are prohibited from trying to influence assessment decisions or the methodology used by the assessor. Town Board members are also prohibited from exerting influence on the Board of Assessment Review. Not allowing political pressure to enter assessment decisions is another way that NYS attempts to make the assessment process fair.

Rob Carges, Supervisor

Appreciating the monarch butterflies among us

The beautiful orange and black monarch butterfly is the most recognizable and famous among the multitude of North American butterflies. In most ways the monarch is just like other butterflies. They go through four stages during one life cycle—egg, larvae (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis) and the adult butterfly. They taste with their feet, smell with their antennae and drink sweet nectar from flowers via their proboscis.

Monarchs reign supreme among butterflies because of their one-of-a-kind, amazing, long distance fall migration. How can a tiny butterfly weighing less than 1/2 a gram accomplish such a feat? The monarch butterfly not only goes through four stages during one life cycle, it also goes through four generations in one year.

The first three generations only live as butterflies for two to six weeks and die after mating. Only the late summer, fourth generation participates in the long migration. They live 7 to 12 times longer than the first three generations and are not able to mate until the following spring.

Monarchs west of the Rocky Mountains migrate to the coast of California, those east of the Rockies journey to a cool damp forest in the mountains of Michoacan, Mexico. Some of these delicate, graceful insects coming from Canada travel as far as 3,000 miles.

They arrive at the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve (well-maintained and protected until 2011) in Mexico each year in late October to make their home in oyamel trees, whose needle-like leaves are ideal for the monarch's hooked legs to cling onto.

The monarchs will spend the next five months clustering together and covering the tree trunks and branches in a blanket of orange and black. The individual clusters are made up of thousands of monarchs and in many instances, the weight of the butterfly clusters is enough to cause tree branches to bend or break. Their clustering habit allows them to conserve heat and survive the cool nighttime temperature common to a high-altitude region.

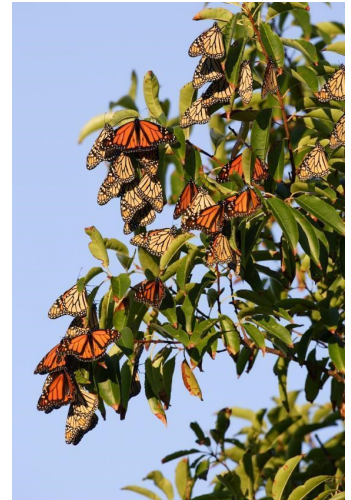
In spring, after the mating frenzy, the survivors will begin the trip back north. They fly almost without stopping, since time is limited for this fourth generation. They too, like the previous three generations, now only have a two to six week life span. They continue their journey north at a speed up to 30 mph, averaging 12 mph, 80 miles per day and flying at heights up to two miles.

While some of the hardier monarchs may complete the migration north to lay their eggs, it is believed that returning monarchs lay their eggs in the southern United States. If correct, this second generation also migrates and completes the migration home to lay their eggs in the north. Each female can lay up to 600 eggs, each placed on an individual milkweed leaf.

The amazing monarch butterfly migration has occurred for approximately 20,000 years. But danger looms in the

monarch's future.

Nearly a billion monarchs have vanished since 1990. Primarily due to herbicides used by farmers and homeowners that kill, among others the one plant, milkweed, that monarchs need for survival. Milkweed serves as a home, nursery and sole food source for the caterpillars. It is also believed that GMO corn and soy grown massively in the Midwest migration path has a toxic effect on the monarchs.



On August 25, 2015, Mexican scientists and American conservationists announced that 49 acres of a haven where the butterflies hibernate over winter (Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve—2014-2015) has been degraded by deforestation from illegal logging with an additional three acres lost to drought, pests, lightning and landslides. Illegal logging has greatly threatened their essential winter habitat. It was announced that migration was down 59% in one year.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife in conjunction with the National Wildlife Federation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation are feverously urging people to grow milkweed across the country in the hopes of saving as many monarchs as possible. The plan is to make the plant widely available at nurseries and encourage consumers to incorporate the attractive plant into their landscape.

Welcoming monarchs to backyards, schoolyards, parks and wildlife areas across America by planting milkweed and nectar plant gardens and greatly limiting the use of toxic chemicals might help the monarchs recover and continue their migrations for centuries to come.

Kathy Harter, Chair

Environmental Conservation Board

Private pitching instruction

Do your boys want to get serious about becoming quality pitchers in the years to come? We have the answer for you. Recreation Assistant Joe Kincaid will teach your son in a one-on-one setting to understand the whole pitching process. We will learn mechanics, technique, posture, footwork, thought process, pitch selection, etc. If you want your son to be a force on the mound, this is the way to go!. Offered in the SCCC gym by appointment only. Price is \$20/hour. Call 431-0090 for information.



Pictured are: Recreation Leader **Jill Wisnowski**, Supervisor **Rob Carges**, **Liz and Fritz Rowsick**, **Dan VanValkenburg**, **Jacob**, **Joshua** and **Moriah Greenman**.

Family/friends donate to honor Matthew Greenman

When Matthew Greenman of Brockport passed away unexpectedly in February, his family asked for memorials to be made to the Sweden/Clarkson Community Center's youth baseball program.

Mr. Greenman greatly enjoyed coaching youth baseball, particularly through the Town's program. After consulting with the recreation staff, Matthew Greenman's mother Liz Rowsick and Sweden Supervisor Rob Carges decided that a pitching machine would be a fitting use for the funds donated in Mr. Greenman's memory.

The Casey 2 Softball/Baseball Machine was ordered in August. "It will be a great asset for the coaches and players in our baseball and softball programs," Carges said. "We appreciate the Greenman/Rowsick family's generosity. Even more, we appreciate the energy and enthusiasm Matt brought to our baseball program as a volunteer coach."

Mr. Greenman was predeceased by his father Clinton Greenman. In addition to his mother and step-father Fritz Rowsick, he is survived by his children Jacob, Joshua and Moriah Greenman; siblings Ronald (Dawn) Greenman, David (Patricia) VanValkenburg, John (Jennifer) Greenman, Donna (Garth) Howard, Daniel (Jennifer) VanValkenburg, Mark Rowsick; nieces, nephews and the children's mother, Melisa Greenman.

Mr. Greenman was a man of faith who loved to spend time outside camping, biking and playing disc golf. A sports fan, he cheered on Tony Stewart, the Buffalo Bills and the New York Yankees.

Fall brush pick-up scheduled October 26-30

The Sweden Highway Department will conduct the annual fall brush pick-up Monday, October 26 through Friday, October 30. All brush must be placed at the roadside by 7 am on October 27 and no sooner than October 24. Brush must be no longer than six feet and placed parallel to the road. This is a brush only pick-up. Please use caution when placing brush near storm drains.

Residents may also drop brush off at the highway garage during normal business hours. In addition, a highway truck can be made available for large volumes of brush throughout the year. The truck is parked overnight at the residence and homeowners are responsible for loading the brush.

Leaf vacuuming will soon begin in subdivisions and will continue as weather permits. For additional information about either of these services, please call the highway department at 637-3369.

Town Hall holiday schedule

The Town Hall is open 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday except for the following holidays:

Monday, October 12	Columbus Day
Tuesday, November 11	Veteran's Day
Thurs & Fri, November 27&28	Thanksgiving
Thurs & Fri, December 25&26	Christmas
Thursday, January 1, 2015	New Year

Town of Sweden Department Phone Numbers:

Assessment	637-8683
Building/Planning	637-8684
Clerk	637-2144
Court	637-1070
Dog Control	637-4260
Finance/Supervisor	637-7588
Highway/Cemetery	637-3369
Recreation Center	431-0090
Senior Center	637-8161
Tax Receiver	637-2145

Snapshots: Send ideas, comments and suggestions to Leisa Strabel at the Sweden Town Hall, 18 State Street, Brockport, NY 14420. Phone: 637-7588; Fax: 431-0039; email: leisas@townofsweden.org

Late summer projects—all around the town



The Sweden highway crew replaces drainage pipe under Sweden Lane in August.



The Town's historically designated and architecturally significant mausoleum at Lakeview Cemetery underwent slate roof repairs this summer.



Undergrowth and brush was cleared at the Sweden Town Park on Redman Road to develop an area for a dog park. Sweden will have the fourth municipal dog park in Monroe County. The county is a partner in the project. Look for the dog park to be open later this fall.

Both the highway department and the buildings and grounds department are highly visible in the summer—on various roads, intersections and of all the Town facilities from cemeteries to the park; from the Town Hall to The Center to the Community Center. Thank you to all our employees who help keep our infrastructure functioning and well-maintained. It won't be long before snow & ice operations keep our crews busy!



Whittier Road was “trued and levelled” in September in preparation for a repaving project in 2016 or 2017. About 220 tons of asphalt was spread with the town's motor grader.



Roger Evans, from the Buildings and Grounds Department spread new mulch at The Center.