



## TOWN OF BERGEN NEWSLETTER

December 2023, January and February 2024



Michele M. Smith, Editor

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

The Bergen Town Board adopted the 2024 Town Budget on November 14. We had delayed adoption until after the general election so that we would know the outcome of the Byron-Bergen Library Proposition. The proposition passed in the Town of Bergen, but failed in the Town of Byron. As a result of the vote, the town removed the \$74,999 that was in the town's proposed budget for the Library for 2024 and now the residents will see a separate Library tax of .55 cents per thousand of assessed value that will provide the Library \$116,088.00 of tax payer funding for 2024.

There were no other major changes in the Bergen budget. The tax levy increase by .5074 cents per thousand needed was the result of some diminishing sales tax revenue from the county, cost of living increases for employees and the effects of inflation on commodities and services the Town purchases.

We will probably learn the outcome of our grant application for restrooms at Robins Brook Park shortly after this newsletter goes to print. We made the application to the New York State's Consolidated Fund Application and Environmental Protection Agency in July.

I would like to recognize and thank several retiring public officials for their years of service and dedication to Bergen residents: Councilman Mark Anderson, Justice Joseph Nenni, Highway Superintendent Mike Johnson and Town Clerk Michele Smith. At the same time, I would like to congratulate and welcome the newly elected public officials who will take office January 1: Councilperson Mark Swanson, Justice Vincent Pulcini, Highway Superintendent Joel Pocock and Town Clerk Teresa Robinson.

Teresa will be resigning her position on the Town Board in order to take the Town Clerk's position. Anyone interested in being appointed to the Town Board as her replacement should submit a letter of interest to the Town Supervisor. In order to serve on the Town Board, you must be a citizen of the United States, 18 years of age and a resident of the Town of Bergen (including the village). The appointment will be through December 31, 2024 as candidates will stand for election for the position in November 2024.

Happy Holidays,

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 1<sup>st</sup>, 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 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))

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**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](http://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](http://www.byron-bergenpubliclibrary.org) and check out Library happenings as well as our on-line catalog and follow us on Facebook and Instagram!

**The Holiday Library hours will be:**

Friday December 22<sup>nd</sup> 10-6

Saturday December 23<sup>rd</sup> Closed

***Merry Christmas!***

Tuesday Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> 10am-1pm and 2pm-7pm

Wednesday Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> -10am-1pm and 2pm-7pm

Thursday Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> 10am-1pm and 2pm-7pm

Friday Dec. 29<sup>st</sup> – 10am- 0036pm

Saturday December 30<sup>st</sup>-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-**

**Community CPR** will be led by EPIC Training at the Library Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, from 1-5pm. For \$45 this extensive course will cover a variety of techniques and knowledge that will make you prepared for an array of emergency situations. Registration needed by December 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Baby Story Time** will have two last sessions this year, on Tuesday, Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> and on Saturday, Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> both at 10:30am. This is recommended for ages 2-5 but younger children are welcome with their parents/guardian. Registration is appreciated.

**Christmas Centerpieces with Leslie Hill** will be held at the Library two separate dates, Tuesday, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm and Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am. This Holiday Craft is sure to compliment your dining table or holiday buffet with traditional holiday colors of red, green, and white and the fresh scent of pine. Candle included. This also makes a beautiful gift for family and friends. Cost will be \$30.00 and you must sign up by Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> to join. Space is limited—so sign up ASAP!!

Please either stop into the Library, call us at 585-494-1120, or register on Leslie Hill's website here: <https://www.sosnflowers.com/product-page/holiday-centerpiece-workshop>

**Movie Night** – fun for the whole family! Bring your family and friends and enjoy the movie Arthur Christmas with some pizza and popcorn on December 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:00pm! Registration is appreciated call us at 585-494-1120.

**Game Day at the Library** – Thursday Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> at 3pm. Join us for board games and more! Learn a new game or bring one of yours to share! Registration appreciated. 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!

(continued)

*Happy Holiday Reading - Nancy Bailey, Library Manager*

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 585-494-1120 or stop in.

**Home School Book Club** will be held at the Library on the second Thursday of every month. Call us or stop into the Library for more information. We can order you each month's books on request!

**Pre-school/Toddler Story Time** will run Fridays at 10:30am starting on January 12th. 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.

**Baby Story Time** will begin again in January on Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup>, followed by Saturday 20<sup>th</sup>, and Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10:30am. Come sing-songs, rhyme, and enjoy a book or two. Geared toward ages 0-2 years, but older siblings also welcome to join! Registration is appreciated.

**Book Club** meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month at 3pm! Join us as we explore new and different books and meet new people! No registration required--call the library for more information.

**Winter Fun Craft Day** January 26<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 pm to 4pm. Join us for wintery crafts- registration is appreciated by calling 585-494-1120. Fun for all ages!

February Break Happenings! Look upcoming activities during winter break– check us out on the web at [www.Byron-BergenPublicLibrary.org](http://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](http://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](http://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 585-494-1120 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 [byrbgn@nioga.org](mailto:byrbgn@nioga.org) . For more information on our services or programs, please call the Library at 494-1120.

Happy Holiday Reading -

Nancy Bailey

Library Manager



From the desk County Legislator *Christian Yunker*



The Managers office and the Legislature has been very busy working on the 2024 Genesee County Budget. The Budget was built in an efficient and responsible manner while making key investments which that will help deliver better service to residents of the County. The Budget stays under the NYS tax cap, while covering the many expensive State mandates of which we no control over (makes of 92% of the property tax levied estimated at over \$32 million for 2024). The Managers office and Legislature decisions have been influenced by the County embarking on two of the largest capital infrastructure projects in its history with a new County jail carrying a price tag of \$70 million and phase 3 of the County wide water system with a current projected price tag of \$150 million.

The 2024 all funds budget totals over \$182.7 million which is \$13.9 million more than the 2023 adopted General fund budget. Major increases impacting this are \$5 million in phase 2 water construction costs, \$1.9 million in new hire and operating costs for the new jail and transition, \$1 million for the elimination of the eFMAP federal subsidy the State is keeping in Medicaid funding, 2 new contracts for \$600K with Ambulance service providers to have coverage requirements, necessary collective bargaining contract increases of over \$3 million for a highly dedicated and underpaid workforce, and significant inflationary pressures of everything else related to County purchases and investments.

The Legislature continues to make commitments to the Towns and Villages as well. The recommended budget includes its commitment to roads, bridges and culverts by an additional \$1 million in funding besides its normal investments. These costs and the associated increases fall entirely on the County and benefit those throughout the County. There was also a conscious decision to share \$1 million of revenues to help the Town, Villages and City to offset some of their increased costs as well. The message that we will share when able continues to hold true. This amounted to \$39,781 to the Town of Bergen and \$15,520 to the Village of Bergen. The County also decided to continue to forgo the election chargeback costs billed back to the Towns/Villages to the tune of over \$100K in 2024, provide grant writing services and invest in County wide ambulance service coverage among many other investments the County is trying to make to benefit all those throughout the County.

Despite all these costs increases and investments we were able to bring the tax rate down from \$8.45/1000 to \$8.08/1000 or 4.37% in the recommended budget. We believe this budget is responsible provides key investments for our future that benefits all the residents of the County. Enjoy the Winter months and as always, feel free to reach out to me anytime with questions or concerns.

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**Save the date!**

The Bergen community is invited to celebrate with Bergen Town Justice Joseph Nenni, as he steps away from the Town Court after 9 years of dedicated service. There will be an open house, at the Sage Pavilion (18 N Lake Avenue), **Wednesday, January, 17th, 2024 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.** Hors d'oeuvres and beverages (non-alcoholic) will be provided.

This event is free and open to the public.

Justice Swapceinski



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.

Joel Pocock, Town Highway Superintendent Elect

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As I sit here writing my final article for the town newsletter, I would like to take a minute to thank everyone that made my “Dream Job” an enjoyable one. With out the support of the people, the employees and especially my family this would have never been possible.

I would like to wish Joel & the rest of the crew well in the years to come.

Remember when you see the trucks coming give them extra room, they are trying to do “there” job safely so you can get to “your” job safely.

Stay Safe, Happy Holidays & God Bless

Mike Johnson- Retiring Highway Superintendent





**Town & County Taxes**

If you pay your own taxes, you will receive your tax bill shortly after January 1, 2024. 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, 2024 per the County Treasurers office, all payments will be stamped after that date. Taxes are due penalty free by January 31<sup>st</sup>, all taxes have to be paid to me by March 31<sup>st</sup>. After **March 31<sup>st</sup>**, 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 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Holiday
- January 15, 2024 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- February 19, 2024 – Presidents Day

**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



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As my last day as Town Clerk gets closer, I want to thank the residents for all your support over the last 17 years. I have enjoyed serving the community and helping any way I could. I will miss my conversations and friendships I have made over the years. I am leaving NYS to be near my family in Tennessee but will leave behind great memories and ready to enjoy my retirement. Please be patient with Teresa Robinson as your new Town Clerk as she learns the duties and process of the position.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Michele Smith - Retiring Town Clerk





**TOWN of BERGEN**  
**10 HUNTER STREET**  
**BERGEN, NY 14416**  
[bergenny.org](http://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](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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)"*