

Town Cleanup Day: Saturday, May 14

From 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., you can bring your "junk" that is not accepted at the dump to the Ancram Town Garage, 32 Maple Lane, Ancramdale, including furniture, equipment, large and small appliances, TVs, computer screens, metal of any kind.

DO NOT bring paint and paint cans, oil and oil drums, tires, hazardous wastes, brush, household garbage, or batteries.

If you are not sure about bringing something in, or have any questions, contact Art Bassin (329-0921 or abassin@aol.com).

If you want to volunteer to help at the garage on Cleanup Day, or serve refreshments and coffee, contact Jim MacArthur (329-6190 or jmac-ancramhwy@hotmail.com).

Also, watch for news about an April roadside cleanup.

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"We are profitable," says Marnie MacLean, Thompson Finch co-owner, "but only because we lease, rather than own, the land we farm."

How to Support Farming in Ancram

Most of us reading this sentence right now are overwhelmingly supportive of farming, farms, and farmers in our town. Research shows that 95 percent of Ancram residents highly value the role agriculture plays in our community.

So, how does that support translate into action? What can each of us do to support farming? In this and future town newsletters, we'll talk with farmers and residents and share opinions about how we can work together to help farms succeed.

A lot of the heavy lifting has already been done for us. In November 2008, a special committee was formed to create an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan for our town. The committee chair is Town Supervisor Art Bassin, and members include: Sue Bassin, Barry Chase (Vice Chair), Larry Lampman, Marnie MacLean, Jerry Peele, and Dennis Sigler. Harold Miller served on the committee until his death in December 2009, when his son, Town Councilman Jim Miller, joined the group. The committee has finished the plan, then held two public hearings to discuss the plan; in April, the town board will vote on it.(Continued on page 2)

How to support farming,
continued...



"No one is making more land," Jim Miller quotes his father Harold, who said this was why he worked on the Ag & Farmland Protection Plan.

The plan notes that one of the obvious reasons agriculture plays a valued role in town is that it's the major land use—62 percent of all acreage—and it adds positively to our economy and quality of life. It helps keep *everyone's* property taxes lower because open spaces, like farmland, generate more tax revenue than the value of the services they require. Simply put, "Cows don't go to school."

The plan examines how to make farming more profitable. Only 20 percent of Ancram farmers said they were profitable in 2009, and 40 percent were just breaking even.

Marnie MacLean notes that

leasing, not owning the land, helps her farm make a profit. Barry Chase sees a shift away from dairy farming in our area and an increase in smaller vegetable farming. "Dairy farming doesn't work here," he says, "We have the high cost of feed and the low cost of milk working against us." Barry works with the Columbia County Land Conservancy to match people who want to farm with people who have land that can be farmed.

Going forward, Ancram will have an Agricultural Advisory Council to implement the various programs and initiatives recommended by the plan. One early initiative being considered is to create a farmer's market at the Simon's General Store in Ancram. You will soon receive a questionnaire asking if you want to sell—or, if you want to buy, if so, what would you buy?

Barry points out that our plan is only the second to be completed in Columbia County and will serve as a model for other towns. [See your May/June newsletter for more on farms.]



Photo courtesy of Central Hudson

Ice Storm Created Beauty as Well as Destruction

At midnight Sunday, March 6, Highway Superintendent Jim MacArthur and his team—Taffy Blass, Avery Heath, Brian Ingles, and Tom Miller—began clearing roads at the start of a long 19-hour work day. In fact, it was a long, exhausting work week, filled with clearing debris and fixing washed-out roads.

When most of the rest of us woke up Monday a.m., we faced a world with no electricity or phone, but the view out of any window was breath-taking as well as heart-breaking in some cases—when beautiful old trees were damaged beyond survival.

Our Highway Department appreciates all the help they received. Volunteers Terry Boyles and Paul Waldorf each used backhoes to clear roads. Four members each of the Chatham and Claverack highway departments also helped us out.

Lessons Learned: 2011 Ice Storm

When power, phones, and internet go out for days, and ice and downed trees make driving impossible for most of us, we need a way to make sure everyone is okay. Normally, family, neighbors, and friends look out for each other. But in areas of town where the nearest family member or neighbor may be a mile away, we need an organized way to check in on each other when natural disasters strike and normal communications aren't available.

There are two parts to a potential remedy for this. First, we need a list of people who want to be "checked on," and second, we need a list of people willing to do the "checking."

When we have both lists, we will match them up, and ask volunteers to check in on people in areas close to where they live. Our Fire and Highway departments will continue to respond in emergencies, and where roads are closed and an ambulance or fire truck needs to get through for a medical emergency or a fire. If you want to be checked in on, or are willing to volunteer to check in on neighbors, please fill out the form below and bring it or mail it back to me at Town Hall: Art Bassin, Ancram Town Hall, 1416 County Route 7, Ancram, NY 12502, or email me the information at abassin@aol.com.

by Town Supervisor Art Bassin



Last Ethics Workshop On Monday, April 11

The Ancram Ethics Board's workshops explain the new town ethics law to town employees, volunteers, and vendors. The last workshop will be 6:30 p.m. Monday, April 11, at Town Hall. Some 98 percent of our law comes from county, state, and federal regulations; our law can't be "easier," but it can be stricter in some situations.

"We need to observe open meeting laws," says Jack Lindsey, chair, Ethics Board, "And we need to recuse ourselves if a matter comes before us where we might benefit financially—or our involvement may appear improper." He notes "an abundance of caution" is a good rule of thumb.

Checking In: Emergency Preparedness Information

Please check one:

I want to volunteer to check on neighbors

I would like to be checked on in emergencies, and I have the following medical needs:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Email address: _____

Do you have a: (circle one answer for each question)

Generator? Yes No

Four-wheel drive automobile? Yes No

Phone that works without electricity? Yes No

Return this form to: Art Bassin, Ancram Town Hall, 1416 County Route 7, Ancram, NY 12502, or email the information to Art at abassin@aol.com.

Sydney Cleveland Earns Spot at District 4H Event



In March, Sydney Cleveland, daughter of Monica and Brandon Cleveland, gave a 4H presentation on the topic of milk and how it gets from the farm to your breakfast table. The judges liked what Sydney had to say—she now heads for the 4H district competition.

Grant Helps Residents Get Free Prescriptions

At the March Town Board meeting, Lynda Scheer noted that a special grant helps some Ancram residents with the cost of prescriptions. Residents qualify on several factors; she gave an example that a family of four with income of \$67,050 could receive free medical prescriptions.

Lynda (Gallatin town supervisor) serves as a program coordinator for the New York Connects Program, which connects people to resources, such as home health care.

For more information, see Town Clerk Monica Cleveland, who has a folder Lynda left with details. Contact her (518-828-2273 or Lynda@columbiahealthnet.org).

Youth Commission Hosts Easter Egg Hunt Apr. 17

Starting at 1 p.m. on Sunday, April 17, at Town Hall, Ancram kids can search for more than 1,000 hidden eggs, “including a few Golden Eggs that contain a grand prize left by the Easter Bunny,” reports Ruth Wittlinger, chair, Ancram Youth Commission, “Plus, we’ll have prizes for all.”

Playground Build Out

Join the Youth Commission on Saturday, April 30, from 8 a.m. on to build the new playground at Town Hall.

Ancram Town News Communications Committee:

Madeleine Israel, chair, plus Sue Bassin, Nancy Bryant, B. Docktor, Mary Murfitt, and Jane Shannon, editor + layout. B. Docktor, photography.



Mike Citrin captured the beauty of the March 6 storm at sunset