



Town Garage Opens

On January 16, town residents celebrated the new Town Garage at a party in the garage hosted by the Town Board and the Highway Department. Attendees enjoyed pizza and donuts, while appreciating the new garage, finished under budget and ahead of schedule.

Town Supervisor Art Bassin credits Highway Supervisor Jim MacArthur, above, and his team, for their ongoing work on the construction of the garage, "which saved us between \$50,000 and \$75,000," Bassin estimates.

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Review Your Property Taxes Now

To make sure your assessed values are accurate, you can review your property inventory card on file with the town assessor so any corrections can be made before the deadline of March 1. The property inventory card describes your property – the acres and type of land you have, and the type and size of the external "improvements" you have – like houses, barns, garages, pools, sheds, etc. The most common reason for an inaccurate assessment is that your property inventory card is not current. For example, it might say that you have a garage on the property, but you took it down 10 years ago. To review your property inventory card, make an appointment with Ken Leggett, assessor, or Mary Boice, assessor's clerk (329-6512, ext. 4).

Next, make sure you receive any exemptions you qualify for. If you're a veteran, or you're a senior or are disabled or you earn less than \$37,400, or if your land is used for agriculture, you may qualify for a reduction in your assessed values through an exemption. Ken or Mary can help you find out if you qualify for these exemptions and, if you do, how to apply.

Need a Ride? Here are Three Possible Avenues

Adrienne Citrin, president of Neighbors Helping Neighbors, reports that as residents of Columbia County, we have three possible transportation options when we're unable to drive.

1. Healthcare Consortium Medical Transportation Service: C.A.R.T.S. at 822-8020. Operates 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. This program provides non-emergency medical transportation to Columbia County residents who lack any other means of getting to a medical appointment.
2. Public van transportation: Coxsackie Transport at 731-8242. Van operates on Wednesdays and costs \$1 each way. Call Jim, the driver, on his cell at 821-4760 or at home at 851-2150.
3. R.I.D.E. at 822-8222 matches people age 55 and older with volunteers to provide transportation to medical appointments.

Drunk Driving Law Imposes New Penalties

By the Honorable Robert B. Wilcox, Ancram Town Justice



Ancram Angel of 2010
At the Ancram Angels Gala held last December at Town Hall, the Angels honored Jane Moore as Angel of the Year. She was cited for her many contributions to Ancram, such as her contribution of her professional painting skills to supervise the painting of Town Hall last spring with mainly volunteer labor.

At the gala, the Angels raised more than \$2,000 for the Community Rescue Squad, which received the money last month.

On October 11, 2009, Leandra Rosado, age 11, was killed in an accident in New York City while riding in a car driven by Carmen Huertas, a family friend. Within a year, this tragedy produced two stunning results. First, Ms. Huertas was convicted of second-degree manslaughter and DWI (driving while intoxicated) and sentenced to 4 to 12 years in prison. Second, Leandra's Law took effect August 2010 in New York State to protect children from riding with intoxicated drivers. The law significantly increases the penalty for DWI with a child in the car and imposes Ignition Interlock Device (IID) requirements on many DWI convictions.

Here's a brief overview of the law: It is now a class E felony to drive intoxicated (defined as a blood alcohol content level of 0.08% or greater) or impaired by drugs with a passenger age 15 or younger. Conviction will result in fines of over \$1,000, supervised probation, and possibly even jail time. In short, conviction will result in a significantly greater punishment. Plus, the law expands the use of Ignition Interlock Devices (IID) in New York for **all** alcohol-related misdemeanor or felony DWI offenses.

The IID prevents any driver from starting or driving a car after drinking because the driver must blow into an alcohol-reading device for the ignition to start. A blood alcohol level of 0.045% (half the legal limit) will prevent the car from starting. All cars owned by the offender and any others they may drive must be equipped with this device, which is both embarrassing and expensive. Installation costs about \$100 and the monthly charge ranges from \$80 to \$115. Thus, the offender may pay \$700 to \$800 per vehicle plus the fines and surcharges resulting from the conviction.

Drivers should think twice before getting behind the wheel of a car while impaired, especially with children on board. For more detailed information, you can go to these websites: Dept. of Motor Vehicles (www.nydmv.com) or NYS Office of Probation (www.dpca.state.ny.us).

Please, drink reasonably and don't drive after you've been drinking.

Looking Back and Planning Ahead

Looking back on 2010, we were able to get a lot of things done. Here's a summary:

- Adopted the Comprehensive Plan and set up the Zoning Revisions Committee.
- Painted Town Hall (with mainly volunteer labor)
- Installed solar panels on the Town Hall.
- Had an outside firm of professionals review the 2008 revaluation process and resulting property valuations, and verified that the process was consistent with NYS guidelines and the resulting property values were equitable.
- Passed six laws: veterans property tax exemptions, term extensions for the highway superintendent and the town clerk, telecommunications tower, dog licensing, and ethics.
- Set up the Conservation Advisory Council and the Financial Advisory Council.
- Switched to a more cost effective health insurance policy.
- Expanded community communications with email updates, and published five community newsletters, which are mailed only to people we don't reach by email.
- Built a new garage at the existing site.

Here's a quick look at what we'll work on in 2011:

- Build a new playground at Town Hall.
- Convert the milk factory building into a salt shed.
- Evaluate highway equipment needs and develop an equipment replacement plan.
- Put all Town laws on the Internet.
- Develop an employee manual for Town employees.
- Develop a Town policies and procedures manual.
- Complete and adopt zoning revisions consistent with the new Comprehensive Plan.
- Complete and adopt Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan.
- Develop an emergency preparedness plan.
- Get a cell tower and improve cell service.
- Adopt a wind turbine law.
- Hold a community clean-up day.
- Review and revise town fees.
- Develop ways to enforce town zoning and the New York State Building & Fire Code.

by Town Supervisor Art Bassin



Date Set for Build Out Of New Playground
Ancram Youth Commission President Ruth Wittlinger hopes many town residents will come help install the new Ancram playground equipment at Town Hall on **Saturday, April 30.**

"We'll start at 8 a.m.," she says, "and be finished by around 5 p.m. We hope many will come help out – even for just a few hours."

"We'll be working with professionals from the company where we bought the playground equipment," Ruth explains, "so you don't have to be a builder or carpenter to help out."

To volunteer, please call Colleen Lutz, 329-2166, or send her an email at lutzc@fairpoint.net.

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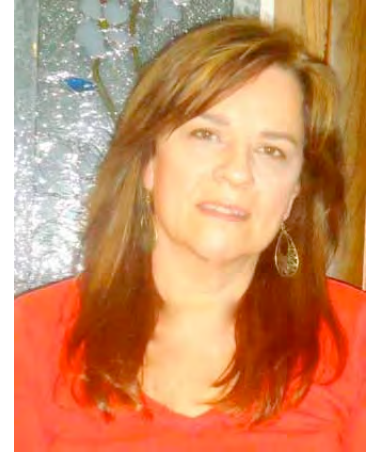
Mark Your Calendar:
Ancram Community Days
Moves to September
Planning has already started
for this year's Ancram
Community Days, scheduled
for the weekend of Saturday,
Sept. 17, and Sunday, Sept. 18.

The Ancram Fire Company
will provide lunch as well as
their award-winning chicken
BBQ. The Ancramdale
Presbyterian Church will offer
breakfast.

Ancram Angels Lynne Perrella
and Melissa Sorman plan a
display of collections from
town residents of every age
inside Simon's General Store.

Councilman Jim Miller heads
Community Days efforts;
contact him at 329-1474.

Debbie Taft Retires from
Ancramdale Post Office
From May 2005 to January
2011, Postmaster Debbie Taft
served our community with
more than stamps and a smile.
Debbie was co-founder and
later president of Neighbors
Helping Neighbors, and, given
her day job, she often heard
first of people in need and
worked with Neighbors to
find help for them quickly. She
and her husband Stan will
move to North Carolina in
July after her daughters
graduate from high school.
Debbie and Stan are currently
helping behind the scenes for
the musical "Brigadoon" at
Stissing Mountain High
School; Debbie's daughter
Bobbie appears as Fiona.
Performances are scheduled
for March 18 to 20. (Tickets
are available at the school.)



(Photo of Debbie by her daughter Kelsie)
New address after July:
Debbie and Stan Taft, 102
East Canvasback Drive, Bell's
Island, Currituck, NC 27929.

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.



In Our Next Newsletter: Information about the Town's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan