

Tonight I want to talk about infrastructure. But before I do, I need to talk about Copake's most precious asset: The Copake Memorial Clock.

In the past week we have had phone calls and visits to the Town Hall with worried residents asking one question: Are you going to move the Copake Clock? As in "are you going to move it away"? Get rid of it. Answer: Unequivocally, cross my heart, read my lips: NO.

Tonight I am announcing a Public Town Hall meeting to be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday April 9, 2022. At this meeting Columbia County DPW Commissioner Ray Jurkowski will be presenting the County's plans for the reconstruction of County Route 7A in the Copake Hamlet.

In 2018, Columbia County made a commitment the reconstruction project and Supervisor Jeff Nayer appointed a Road Advisory Committee. At that time the Committee was working with County Engineer Dean Knox. Construction was targeted for 2022. The cost of the project was budgeted at \$4.5 million to be paid for by Federal, State and County funds. Copake's only financial commitment was to add so called "amenities" such as streetlights and park benches. The project when complete will provide better drainage, increased accessibility to our hamlet businesses, safe sidewalks for pedestrians and safe intersections for motorists.

In 2020 the County hired an engineering firm. But also in 2020 everything was slowed down by the pandemic, and that continued in 2021. And also, very tragically, we lost Dean Knox which was a personal loss to all of us since he was a Copake native.

Commissioner Jurkowski started with Columbia County in January 2022 and he met with the Road Advisory Committee in February. I can tell you unequivocally that the current plan **does not move the clock at all**. What was discussed with the committee in February was whether the clock should be moved a few or up to 10 feet away from the curb to protect it from snowplows or a driver with a trailer who takes the turn too sharp. The committee agreed that moving the clock a very few yards is a possibility and that would be done by experts taking every precaution to safeguard our clock.

Actually, the one unfortunate result of the reconstruction project is that the actual construction is targeted for 2024, which is the Bicentennial of Copake. I was very disappointed to hear this, but I have become convinced that hoping for completion before 2024 is unrealistic. And so, I am suggesting tonight that we postpone the organization of a Bicentennial Committee. In April 2024 we will have a commemoration the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first Town Board meeting, but we will postpone the actual celebration – which will surely include a parade, until our streets are and sidewalks are paved and our downtown is beautiful.

The Hamlet project is a County project. But later on tonight I will propose some Town infrastructure projects and issues. Specifically, I will ask the Board to approve transfers from unallocated funds to Reserve funds. I will propose that we set aside funds to cover our share of the Hamlet reconstruction. We will also set aside funds for future road repairs and for highway equipment. All of this is meant to secure our financial future, assuring that we have funds for foreseeable or even unforeseen circumstances.

I am also going to ask the Board to consider three more immediate concerns: the repaving and possible expansion of the Municipal lot in the Hamlet, the paving of the Parking lot at the Park building, and finally, the construction of a storage building at the Highway Garage to store and protect our equipment.

We will talk about the merits of these projects in a few moments. But what I want to tell you is that we ended 2021 with a \$600,000 surplus. This surplus is attributable to increase in sales tax, building permits and mortgage tax receipts. So the Town can pay for all or virtually all of the projects we are considering using just that surplus.

Someone is bound to say that we should just put that money in a bank to save it for a rainy day. We have money in banks for a rainy day. If you look at the 2021 AUD you will see that Copake has very healthy reserves, which more than protect us from any unforeseen calamities.

Being fiscally responsible is not just keeping taxes flat. Being fiscally responsible is also investing in the Town and its infrastructure. As taxpayers you entrust us with your tax dollars. It is up to us to budget carefully and prudently, it is up to us to not waste your hard earned money. But it is also up to us to maintain our infrastructure and invest in the future of the Town. That is what we are doing. And if anyone tells you differently, you can tell them that we are not, and by the way, we are not moving the clock, either.