

As I have ridden around Town in the past several days I have noticed a couple of things. First, the political signs have disappeared. And second, I see so many houses flying the American flag.

2020 has been a challenging year in many ways. But from the quick disappearance of signs, I sense that most of us want to move on and get back to work. And the American flags are evidence that in Copake what divides us from time to time, is far less important than what we cherish in common.

Indeed we need to come together because we have plenty of work to do here in Copake. First, together, we need to confront the challenge of a pandemic which is not going away. The numbers of COVID-19 cases has continued to jump as many as 14 in a day. We are warned by the Columbia County Department of Health and Chairman Murell that the increase in cases is coming not just from facilities like nursing homes, but through community spread. The cases are affecting people of all ages, from age two and up. The total number of deaths, which was at 37 for so long, is now 43.

We must meet this challenge with discipline and personal responsibility.

As you know Copake faces another challenge. Everyone knows that Hecate Energy wants to construct a utility scale solar plant in Craryville. The amount of civic engagement around this issue has been impressive. Later tonight we will discuss other efforts that the Town is making to address climate change but we think that the thoughtful, unified response by Copake citizens will make it more likely that we can successfully challenge this mammoth industrial installation.

Speaking of a unified response, I would like to speak for a moment about your Town Board. We were down one member in 2020. If you look at our political affiliations we were a four member board evenly split. But this Board was not split. For the past 10 months we have talked to each other, more important we listened to each other. Virtually every decision we made was unanimous. Not because we did not each have strong views, but because we worked to reach consensus. A lot has been thrown at this team- Terry, Stosh and Richard. I am personally very grateful for their good will and hard work.

And now, in January we will be joined by a fifth member. As of today there are no official results from the election, but Copake was very fortunate to have two candidates each of whom had an impressive resume demonstrating their commitment to Copake. I thank both Jeffrey Judd and Andy Fisher for stepping up to run. We will welcome one of you in January, but even with a full board, we will continue to work together, listening to each other and seeking consensus.

We will close our meeting with a moment of silence for those who lost their lives to Covid 19- and, having just celebrated Veterans Day, in memory of those who gave the full measure of devotion.