

## Monthly Updates – from the Mayor – November 2020

Since the minutes from our regular monthly Board meeting are not formally approved and posted on the Village website until the following month, it seems that our residents might be more fully informed of Village affairs by having regular updates posted on our website sooner, rather than later. To that end, it has been decided to provide our readers with some monthly updates, and if there are any concerns or a need for more information, please call (315-673-3112) or email the Village Office (clerk@villageofmarcellus.com).

**Resolution - NYSMEC Participation** – a motion was made to approve resolutions authorizing Village of Marcellus participation in the New York School and Municipal Energy Consortium (NYSMEC) for purchase of electricity and natural gas, and another motion to authorize the Mayor to sign the billing schedule and agreement with the New York School and Municipal Energy Consortium (NYSMEC) for purchase of electricity and natural gas.

**Resolution – MRB/FEMA Grant** – a motion was made to approve a resolution authorizing Village of Marcellus participation in a FEMA//BRIC application, WHEREAS the Village was chosen to participate in a FEMA project that will address flooding issues in the Highland/Meadow Street areas and is now completing the Federal application for such, be it resolved that the Village will commit 25% of the project's cost if awarded, and that the Village supports the grant application and matching funds since this is a high priority.

**Employee Drug Testing** – a motion was made to approve a contract with Lakeshore Employee Testing Services, to perform drug and alcohol testing for commercial drivers who are employed in the Village Highway Department at a cost of \$55.00 per employee and authorize the Mayor to sign said contract.

**Annual Maintenance Permit with NYSDOT** – a motion was made to authorize the DPW Superintendent (and/or his designee) to complete and sign the appropriate forms in order to acquire the annual maintenance permit with the NYSDOT.

**Request to Adjust Utility Charges** – we have received a request from the property owner at 4 East Main Street, asking that the Board consider adjusting the Village utility charges for several of the previous quarters. The outstanding utility bills for the property dated back to the ownership change in April 2019, when the account was paid off during the real estate transaction. While the property was not in use and under renovation for several years, at some time the previous owner had the water disconnected. This was not communicated to the village, as it should have been, when the property changed hands at the closing. The current owner has been charged incorrectly for sewer rent since July of 2019, and therefore there is a need to credit back the sewer charges since the property has not been not connected by water or sewer since being acquired – no water has gone in or out during this time period. Refuse charges should stay, however. Because of these circumstances as well as the property owner being unaware of the outstanding bills and of the penalties that have accrued, a motion was made that the Board adjust the bill to reflect the time period since the property changed hands – from 5/1/19 to the present, plus half of the penalties that were accrued – this would total \$600.00 in sewer charges plus \$23.50 in penalties, for a total invoice of \$623.50.

**Budget Modifications** – a motion was made to approve budget modifications requested by the Village Treasurer transferring revenues and appropriations in the Sewer Fund.

**Announcement – Christmas Tree Lighting** – we would announce that the annual Marcellus Tree Lighting Ceremony will not take place this year in the Village, at the Point because of the Covid-19 pandemic. A Christmas Tree has been donated however and installed at the Point as usual, with much help from Town and Village workers, but no gathering is planned. Having a tree at the Point is a tradition dating back to the first

community tree installed in 1916 and while there will be no celebration this year, the Board feels that this tradition should continue, in time for the Thanksgiving Day holiday, decorated again this year by Village employees.

**Change December Board Meeting** – a motion was made to change the December Agenda Workshop from December 25, 2020 to December 18, 2020 and the regular Board meeting from December 28, 2020 to December 21, 2020, because of the Christmas holiday. Is there a second?

**Announce Village Meetings for December 2020** – the Village Clerk has printed copies of future meeting dates for the Village for the benefit of residents. The Village Office will be closed on November 26th and 27th for the Thanksgiving Day holidays. Again, the Village Tree Lighting Ceremony will not take place and we would also announce that a town-wide vote will be held for approval of the proposed new Town Hall on December 8, 2020 from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM at the Marcellus Fire Department 4242 Slate Hill Road, Marcellus NY 13108 and all registered voters are eligible to vote. Absentee ballots may be requested by calling the Town Clerk at 315-673-3269 Ext. 1 or emailing clerk@marcellusny.com. As with the national elections, Covid-19 is a valid reason for requesting an absentee ballot. You must request your ballot by 12/1/2020 and ballots must be received by the Town Clerk or posted marked by 12/8/2020 to be valid. Finally, the December meeting of the Village Board will be changed from the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month, December 28<sup>th</sup>, to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month, December 21<sup>st</sup> because of holiday preparations and the Village Office will be closed on Friday, December 25<sup>th</sup> for the Christmas holiday and the Village Office will be closed on Friday, January 1<sup>st</sup> for the New Years' Holiday.

#### **Updates – Mayor and Board**

**Reminder – No Parking – November 1<sup>st</sup> to April 1<sup>st</sup>** – the public should be aware of the fact that as of November 1, 2020, there is no parking allowed on any street in the Village of Marcellus from 2 a.m. to 7 a.m. so that the Highway Department can plow snow. This no parking ban will remain in effect until April 1, 2021. If ticketed by Village Police, the fee will be \$35.00. We urge residents to use the Village parking lots for any overnight parking situations.

**Leaf and Brush Pickup** – brush pickup ended on October 5<sup>th</sup> and if any residents have missed the deadline, they are welcome to utilize the Village composting site behind the Village Hall. Leaf pickup extended from October 13<sup>th</sup> to November 16<sup>th</sup>. After November 17th, residents may collect leaves into large brown paper leaf bags and place the bags at the curb for pickup, weather permitting – please note that only these leaf bags will be picked up after November 17th. Residents may also drop off brush and leaves anytime at the Village compost site, located next to the Highway Department garage. Please remember to keep leaves in the Village right of way, between the sidewalk and the road, and out of the street where they might end up clogging the catch basins and lead to flooding. With snowstorms that may occur, any leaves that are still in the Village right-of-way, between the sidewalk and the road, will remain there until the snow melts and the DPW has an opportunity to remove them. That might not be until the spring of 2021. Residents are welcome to bag their leaves and bring the bags to the compost site at the rear of the Village Hall.

**Other DPW Work** – in recent weeks, the DPW has been very diligent in picking up leaves, long beyond the cut-off period. We have received some very nice compliments from residents for their efforts and we appreciate the response. With the coming of the winter snows, some of the memorial benches and pedestrian signs have been removed until spring by the department. The Department employees have also put up and decorated the Village Christmas Tree at the Point, ready for lighting just before Thanksgiving. The new Christmas decorations have been put up as well. The Board would like to thank members of the DPW for all of their efforts as we prepare for the winter months, knowing how especially dedicated they are with the removal of snow and ice.

**Health Care Costs** – continue to rise, but not as much as in previous years, and both the Village and its employees will be required to pay, on average, an increase of about 0% for health coverage and 0% for dental coverage, beginning in January 2021. Coverage is similar to last year, with little increase in premiums, but some increase in deductibles.

**Pension Costs** – for next year have been projected by the Village Treasurer to be within the allotted budget amounts. At this time, there appears to be no increase in pension costs for next year.

**Compost Project** – continues to be very successful and please remember that composting continues all year round even though the demand obviously lulls through the fall and winter. Some residents might want to secure compost this fall, since it can be stored outside, without cover, through the fall and winter for its intended use next spring.

**Planning Board** – the Board has not met in November but its members have discussed several items by email, including the Main Street Facade Grant Project and other projects in the Village including new businesses that have opened.

**School's Open** – we continue to ask residents to please watch for school children walking and remember that there are pedestrian crossings on Main Street, as well as 20 mph speed limits in school zones and a 25 mph speed limit on First Street, a route that is heavily traveled by schoolchildren. Please slow down. Tickets will be issued for speeders.

**Police** – within the past month, there have been several thefts from cars parked in the Village and Marcellus Park. The Chief continues to warn residents that cars should always be locked, even in ones driveway, and anything in the car's interior that might attract the attention of a thief should not be visible. If thieves view something in a car is worthwhile taking, they will and have smashed car windows. So, please lock your car doors. In addition, the Chief continues to encourage residents to call the Police Department if they have any concerns about solicitors or contractors they may employ. The Police Department would be happy to do background checks so as to alleviate these concerns. Also, if there are any snowbirds that would like to have their properties checked while they are out of town, please notify the Police Department.

**SRO Program** – Marcellus Central School District continues to win top honors from Utica National Insurance Group for its efforts to keep students, staff and visitors safe. The district has consistently earned the insurance company's highest, titanium-level "School Safety Excellence Award" by meeting specific criteria to enhance its overall safety in such areas as bullying prevention programs and playground safety.

**Grease Traps** – as the holiday season approaches, our Treatment Plant Operators continue to urge our residents to become more aware of the problems with grease in our sewer system. Grease will stick to household and sewer pipes, and over time, grease buildup can block pipes and cause sewage backups. Home garbage disposals do not keep grease out of the plumbing system – they only shred solid material into smaller pieces. The operators urge you to scrape grease and food scraps from cooking surfaces into a container and put in the trash or compost them. Do not put grease, fats or oils of any type down your drain or garbage disposal. Do use baskets or strainers in sink drains to catch food scraps and other solids and then empty them in the trash for disposal. During the holidays, there always seems to be an increase of calls from residents who have had sewer backups, and these have been attributable, for the most part, to grease buildup and blockage

**Main Street Façade Grants** – in the spring, Onondaga County approved 13 commercial projects and 1 public project under the County Main Street Façade Grant program, in a plan that awarded almost \$300,000 in

funding for Marcellus businesses. Several projects have been completed and property owners have already been reimbursed, including a repaving of the Village parking lots, remarkable renovations of 17 North Street, 19 South Street, 14-18 West Main, 3 North Street, 60 East Main, and most recently a very attractive renovation of 20-22 West Main. Other projects have been delayed because of material shortages and contractor scheduling but we expect them to be completed within the next several months.

**WWTP Upgrades** – with two years of construction of a very costly project having been completed, sewer users in the Village, Town and School District can be assured that a modern, fully operational water pollution control plant will serve their needs well into the 21st century. Funding for the project can only come from sewer rate increases, and the recent increase has brought the average annual rate up to about \$540.00 – a quarterly increase of about \$25.00, or an annual increase of about \$100.00. This is an average estimate, since sewer rates are based on water usage in the Village. For Village users, those rates have been reflected in the most recent utility bills. For Town sewer users the increase will be rather significant, given that outside users pay an additional 25% over that of the average Village sewer user. Beginning In January 2020, an average town sewer user began to pay approximately \$677.00 annually, an annual increase of about \$128.00, beginning in 2020.

**Blower Noise** – We have also had a sustained complaint by a neighbor about the noise generated by the plant blowers at the WWTP. We re continuing to investigate and try to determine what else can be done to alleviate this noise.

**Christmas Decoration Project** – on behalf of our Board and our residents, we once again express much gratitude and thanks to former Trustee Bob Wilson for organizing and leading the Village Christmas Decoration Project. Bob’s last Village function, before he passed away last year, was contacting a number of businesses, organizations and individuals in the community, asking for donations to help fund the purchase of 30 new Christmas decorations with LED lights. While some were major gifts from businesses and individuals, there were also a number of smaller gifts, and we wish to express many thanks to everyone who was so generous to the Village and to Bob’s appeal. Installed on the telephone poles by our DPW department last week, we invite you to take notice of them when you are Main, North and South Streets. We are sure that you will agree they provide much community pride and create a mood that makes people feel good about how our Village looks. As many often realized, if you wanted a job done and done well, give it to Bob Wilson. Bob was so very instrumental throughout his long civic involvement with the community. The Village and all of Marcellus are much poorer with his absence.

**Green Gateway Project** – is one that we hope will result in an environmentally positive gateway entrance to our Village – at the site of the former woolen mill on North Street. Printed copies of a project summary are provided for the benefit of residents and are available in the Village office, as well as on the Village website (click on <http://villageofmarcellus.com> and then on News, then Village News. While the coronavirus has recently interrupted and delayed our plans for the Village and the students at MCS to continue working on the site, it is hoped that conditions will soon improve so that the project will begin anew in the months ahead.

**Village Taxes** – most have been paid, while the amount of unpaid taxes at present, including penalties, totaling about \$10,000 from 11 property owners, a figure significantly smaller than in previous years. The Village will eventually be reimbursed by the County for these tax evaders, but must wait a year before that reimbursement happens. In the meantime, the responsible taxpayers in the Village will continue, as they have in the past, to be responsible for the irresponsible. Property owners were able to continue to pay unpaid taxes to the Village until October 31, 2020, but they now been turned over to the County for reimbursement.

**New Business in the Village** – another business is now open on the site of the former North Street Diner called Dusty’s Diner, and we welcome Dusty and his business to the Village and encourage our residents to patronize the business.

**Other** – we would like to thank the Christoff family of Schuyler Road for their very generous donation of this year’s community Christmas Tree. Like last year’s donation, this large and perfectly shaped tree was installed by Village and Town workers and decorated with new LED lights. We thank all who helped to brighten the point again this year.