

October 2005 Newsletter

VILLAGE OF LANSING Incorporated 1974

2405 North Triphammer Road * Ithaca, NY 14850 * 257-0424 * (FAX) 257-3230

Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

Web Page Address: vlansing.org.

COMMENTS FROM THE MAYOR

Fall is here and we are busy trying to finish all the road repairs, trail repairs, etc. before winter arrives. It has been an active summer with a number of roads in the Village repaved and shoulders improved. There will also be some minor paving of North Triphammer Road to get us through the winter in the areas that haven't been reconstructed. The other rite of Fall is the brush pickup. This year, the Town of Lansing crew will be helping out very much as they do during the spring pickup. The dates of the pickup and the guidelines appear later in the newsletter and I hope you will take advantage of this opportunity.

The reconstruction of North Triphammer Road is making excellent progress. The Suit Kote Corporation is the prime contractor for the project with the drainage and underground work being carried out by their subcontractor the DeVincentis Corporation. Both organizations

have worked very closely with the Village to minimize disruption to traffic flow. Unfortunately we will not be able to complete the reconstruction project during this construction season. Moving the utilities from the right of way suffered a delayed start until late winter and then proceeded in a serial fashion further delaying the project. Had NYSEG begun their work during the late fall and winter as originally anticipated the reconstruction project would have been completed during this construction season with its excellent weather.

As you have noticed, the section from Oakcrest Road to Brook Drive has been paved and the sidewalk will be installed this season. In addition, the north ramp off the bridge to Pyramid Drive will be finished this construction season. If the weather holds, the portion of the project south of the bridge will also be finished. This will leave the section from Pyramid Drive to Oakcrest Road to be finished during the coming construction

season along with the installation of street lighting, the remaining sidewalks, and the finish landscaping and tree plantings.

I have been very pleased with responsiveness of the contractors in keeping traffic flowing through our vital commercial section of the Village and with the patience of the drivers who use this busy corridor every day. Thank you.

The construction of the Kline Road Bypass Sewer Line in the Village of Cayuga Heights is now complete and sewage is flowing through the bypass to the Ithaca Area Waste Water Treatment Plant. As a result the Village of Lansing will have adequate sewer service for the foreseeable future with no restrictions in the number of connections available. The Village financed this construction project and will recover the Bond Act portion, about half the cost of the project, after the Town of Lansing has completed their process of setting up a sewer district. We will of course continue our aggressive pursuit of identifying and repairing leakage into our sewer collector system to limit the load on the sewage treatment plants.

The next step in the process for providing regional sewer service will be the construction of the transmission main from the Town of Lansing to the Cayuga Heights Waste Water Treatment Plant. That transmission main will necessarily pass through the Village and could provide sewer service to areas of the Village currently without sewer service. There are three possible routes through the Village for this line that have been considered to date. A forced main from the intersection of Route 34 and Cayuga Heights Road in the right of way along Cayuga Heights Road to Cedar Lane and then by gravity through an upgraded line along the current path of the existing Village sewer line to the plant. The second route would be a gravity system following the path of the abandoned Ithaca Auburn Shortline Railroad right of way through a unique natural area and crossing two streams. Because of the uniqueness of this area, the environmental impact of the construction and maintenance of the line would be very significant. The third route would be along the eastern side of Route 34 in the state right of way. Both the Route 34 path and the Cayuga Heights Road path would require a pump station because of the topography. Because all of these routes have problems, the Board of Trustees and I would like to get the maximum input possible from Village residents especially those immediately adjacent to any of the routes. As a result, we plan to devote our Board meeting on November 7th to this important matter. Property owners along the possible routes will also receive a letter inviting them to this meeting. The meeting will include as much technical information about the routes as will be available at the time. We hope to decide on a preferred route by the end of November.

Enjoy the great early fall weather that we have been having of late and I look forward to a mild winter.

Donald Hartill

Mayor

ASSESSMENT DEPARTMENT

The Tompkins County Assessment Department has just finished finalizing the 2005 Assessment Rolls and is in the process of reviewing

sales that will be factored into next year 2006 assessments. All areas in Lansing are in the review stage now. A combination of statistical analysis and mass adjustments or trending will be applied to some areas. Other areas showing major changes in assessment levels will be reviewed on a parcel-by-parcel approach as time and resources permit.

As a reminder, all new homeowners must apply for the "STAR" (School Tax Assessment Relief) Exemption by March 1st, 2006 to be eligible for the 2006 school taxes.

The Assessment Department also encourages property owners to use our computer data base on the web at www.Tompkins-Co.org/assessment, and/or visit our facilities at 128 E. Buffalo St. Please note that the web information is very limited and more extended analysis and information can be found using our facility programs.

Gary Bortz

Lansing Real Property Appraiser

NORTHEAST SENIORS UNIT

We issue a welcome to the citizens of the Village of Lansing, over the age of 60 to become members of the Northeast Seniors Unit and share some time together in fellowship. We are non-denominational and are open to all.

We meet on the second Monday of the month at St. Catherine of Siena Parish Hall at 302 St. Catherine Circle from 12 noon to 2 PM for 10 months of the year.

Our program includes a dish to pass, as well as a catered holiday luncheon in December and a free chicken barbecue in June, followed by a program or presentation of interest. We have speakers presenting items of interest to seniors, travel videos and an occasional Bingo game. Our dish-to-pass luncheons are always good, delicious and varied.

Our yearly dues are minimal: \$5.00 for individual and \$7.00 per couple.

It is a nice group and we will be delighted to have you join us.

Just come to the meeting and we will sign you up. For further information call Al at 257-0271.

Al DiGiacomo
Treasurer

PLANNING BOARD NEWS

During the months since the last Village newsletter, the Planning Board has continued to process requests for both commercial and residential development within the Village.

After many months of review and public discussion, Lansing Trails II (Lansing Heights) received final subdivision approval to develop 32+ acres into 97 building lots for townhouses and single family homes. Construction has started on this major development.

The Board also reviewed two other subdivisions. The Kajac property (3.5 acres) at 10 Cherry Rd. was approved to be divided into two lots, one with an existing residential building. Final approval of the Spitsberg Subdivision is still pending.

There have also been several Special Permits that have received approval. Integrated Acquisition & Development received approval to construct a 7100 sf addition to the existing medical building at 22 Arrowwood Dr. in the Parkview Health Care Campus. The addition will provide office space for additional medical staff.

A second permit was also approved to reconfigure the area at 10 Brentwood Dr. to increase the parking spaces from 239 to 320 spaces. The Moldflow building at 2953 North Triphammer Road received a permit to construct a walkway between its parking area and the adjacent parking area to the north at 2359 North Triphammer Road. The proposed walkway will provide safe access for employees at 2359 North Triphammer Road who utilize the Moldflow parking area.

There are two special permits applications that are currently under review. The Colonial Veterinary Hospital is planning a major expansion increasing its building space from 3,830 sf to 18,255 sf. The addition is needed for additional office space and the possibility of future 24 hour emergency care. Squeaky Clean Car Wash is requesting permission to construct an addition of 2800 sf to its present building to accommodate four self-service car-wash bays. Conditional approval has been received.

The Planning Board has received names for two Greenway Trails. The trails in Lansing Tails II are to be designated as Hart's Walk while the trail connecting Wakefield Dr. and Wood Thrush Hollow Rd. is to be designated as Wood Thrush Hollow Walk. Residents may suggest other names for these trails by calling or e-mailing the Village Clerk. The Planning Board will make its recommendation to the Board of Trustees at the November 14th meeting.

The Planning Board submitted two reports to the Board of Trustees during this reporting period. "The Municipal Tree Program " report provides for the inspection, protection and replacement of trees on municipal land. This report was adopted by the Board of Trustees and is available on the Village web site. A report estimating the increase in public lands that may accrue as a result of recent subdivision approvals and the rebuilding of North Triphammer Road was provided in order to inform the Mayor & Trustees of the potential increase in the Village's infrastructure. (See chart below this article.)

The Planning Board meets at 7:30 PM on the second Monday and the last Tuesday of the month and the public is welcome to attend.

Ned Hickey

Planning Board Chairman

VILLAGE OF LANSING PLANT SWAP

The Village of Lansing office has a new planter that was constructed earlier this summer, but it is devoid of plants at the moment. Some of us in the Village government thought it would be fun to try a plant swap as a way to acquire some flowering plants for the new planter, as well as a way to share some of the bounty of our own gardens with each other. If enough people are interested, we might consider making this an annual event.

First, we would be interested in bulbs such as tulips, crocus, lilies and daffodils, if they are available. Then, we would like some perennial plants such as Russian sage, daisies, lavender, chrysanthemums, creeping phlox, salvia, sedum, cranesbill or anything else that has nice flowers and would be a good addition to our planters. We would like to start with a small number of bulbs and perennials and perhaps a shrub or two, and then fill in next spring with annuals, to see how things go.

Meanwhile, the swap will take place on the lawn in front of the Village Office at 2405 N. Triphammer Road on Saturday, October 22nd from 10 AM to 12 noon. Please bring your plants in containers, make some swaps and take home anything you brought with you that does not get claimed. In case of rain, we will have the swap on Sunday the 23rd from 12 noon to 2 PM.

Lynn Leopold

Trustee

PROPANE CYLINDER DISPOSAL

Residents may put used propane cylinders in the scrap metal bin at the Public Drop Off area at the Tompkins County Recycling and Solid Waste Center on 122 Commercial Avenue

(<http://www.tompkins-co.org/solidwaste/main.html>)

<<http://www.tompkins-co.org/solidwaste/main.html>>

Larry Fresinski

Deputy Mayor

A NEW FACE AT THE VILLAGE OF LANSING

The Village hired a new employee on April 4th of 2005. Previous Highway Superintendent Dennis Reinhart resigned to begin his retirement. His replacement is John Courtney.

Before joining the Village staff, John was a Highway Superintendent for over ten years. He is married and has two children ages 7 and 13.

John enjoys his job and the variety of tasks expected of him and the residents he has come to meet. Any concerns or comments, either positive or negative, as well as suggestions, may be made by contacting him at 257-6280 and leaving a message.

Carol Willard

Clerk, part-time

NOTARY SERVICES

Notary public services are available free of charge to Village residents at the Village Office. Residents are asked to telephone the Village Office at 257-0424 to arrange a time for this service.

Carol Willard

Clerk, part-time

VILLAGE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

Fall Brush Pick-Up

The Public Works Dept. will be providing a fall brush and limb pick-up the week of October 24th.

Residents are asked to leave all materials near the roadside by 7:00 AM *Monday* morning. To assist the work crews, all limbs and brush (up to five inches in diameter) should be piled with the cut ends facing the same direction. The limbs should be no longer than 5 or 6 feet in length. Also, the piles should not be tied but should be left loose. It also helps if thorny materials are separated from the rest.

Each household is limited to approximately one pick-up size load. Excessive amount will not be picked up and will become the responsibility of the homeowner to see they are removed. Leaves and trash bags will not be picked up.

Christmas Tree Pick-Up

Christmas trees will be picked up the week of January 9th. All Christmas trees must be near the roadside by 7:00 AM Monday morning as the Highway Department makes the *last* pick-up collection around the Village streets and roads.

John Courtney

Supt. of Public Works

FINDING INFORMATION REGARDING THE VILLAGE

Since all our Trustee, Planning, and Zoning Board minutes are indexed on the Village web site

www.vlansing.org, entering words that describe your topic

of interest will quickly find the body of text any where on the site that match. Further, we have a draft copy of the Zoning Law indexed as well. Doing your

search is as simple as going to the web site www.vlansing.org with

your favorite web browser and typing in the box at the top of the page and press Search the Village Web Site.

WHAT'S NEW ON THE VILLAGE WEB SITE

* North Triphammer Road traffic status information may be obtained by clicking the link near the top of the page: TRIPHAMMER ROAD MESSAGES.

* A link to the new LansingStar electronic newsletter is provided.

* Read how to obtain the TompkinsRx Prescription Drug Card.

Further, anyone may receive infrequent updates in their Email to what is happening in the

Village by sending an empty Email message to

vlansing-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. And, it's just as easy to get immediately off the list by sending an empty message to

vlansing-unsubscribe@yahooroups.com

Larry Fresinski

Deputy Mayor

FREE ON-LINE NEWSLETTER

The Lansing Star began regular on-line publishing in July, with new issues coming out every Friday. The Star's beat is the Village and Town of Lansing, with articles about local government, news, sports, schools, business and entertainment around town.

The Star, which is entirely supported by advertising, is owned and operated by Karen and Dan Veaner, a Lansing family. Advertisements are reasonably priced and focused at the local audience. People moving here find the Star on the Internet and learn about the town and the merchants who do business here. The Veaners' aim is to make the Star Lansing's "on-line main street". They plan to follow in the footsteps of Matthew and Aline Shulman who published the Lansing Community News from 1996-2000. Matthew wrote a guest editorial for the Star's first issue.

One benefit to an on-line news source is the ability to read about what is happening while travelling. People who move away because of job changes, retirement or college can easily stay in touch. There is an immediacy to the on-line paper with instant polls, road construction news, Lansing weather and emergency information such as school closings. Old articles are immediately available in an archive, and there are many features including an "E-mail Your Representatives" page with forms to e-mail all Lansing reps from Mayor Hartill to President Bush.

Have you logged on to Lansing Star today? It's easy to set up your user name and password so you can immediately begin reading the Lansing Star. Read it every week for free at www.LansingStar.com.

Dan Veaner
Editor

WE ALL LIVEDOWNSTREAM:PROTECTING OUR LOCAL STREAMS & CAYUGA LAKE

Watershed protection is on the agendas of many municipal and community organizations these days, and no wonder. We have so many fine water resources here in the Ithaca area, particularly, Cayuga Lake--our own back yard, or front yard as the case may be. In the Village of Lansing, there are numerous seasonal and year-round streams that bisect our village on their way to the lake. Most of them arise from land right here within our boundaries, while a few have headwaters slightly out of the Village. We have the opportunity to provide protection for those waterways, especially since they run through residential and commercial areas, where they often are compromised by runoff from land use activities, runoff that can carry pollutants, such as automotive byproducts, pet wastes, lawn chemicals, soil and trash. What we do next to our streams can determine whether or not the streams will end up carrying more than water down to the lake. The Village of Lansing is relatively close to Cayuga Lake and water originating in the Village has a very short residence time before it flows into the lake. There is little time for pollutants and silt to settle out. Our Village, along with several other municipalities in the county, are working to meet the new state and federal requirements to control and reduce storm water that enters the lake, a task that stretches our financial resources. Everything we can do individually can add up to larger protections and will help our Village in the long run. The Lake is the source of drinking water for a large population in Tompkins County, to say nothing of its value as a tourism and recreation magnet. We can be responsible business and homeowners by taking care of our streams, no matter how small they are, or whether they run all year or just intermittently. Here are some suggestions for protecting the stream banks and areas near streams to keep the water quality as clean as possible.

1. Having vegetation next to a stream can help prevent runoff and silt from entering the stream, particularly during a storm event. Many residents saw large amounts of soil leave their properties this last April, when a heavy local rainstorm dumped more water than the already-saturated soil could absorb. The resulting heavy flow in our local streams caused a great deal of damage and carried an enormous amount of debris to the lake. Planting shrubs, such as small willows and dogwoods, next to a stream can help keep the soil in place. Clearing away trees along stream banks removes the natural buffer and root structure that can help keep soil in place. (Anything planted will have to be protected from deer until it is established.) Another strategy is to terrace land that slopes down to the stream, thus lessening the water's erosional power as it flows across the terraces. Make sure they are planted with water absorbing materials. In all cases, woody vegetation and its root systems provide a buffer that is superior to ground covers and other low plants whose roots are shallow.
2. Cleaning up after pets helps prevent pathogens and other unpleasant materials from entering waterways. Even if you don't live directly next to a stream, remember that the runoff from your property will, at some point, enter the flow of storm water and will eventually end up in the lake.
3. If you feed your lawn and/or use weed control chemicals, follow the manufacturer's directions carefully and apply only what is needed. Over-application of chemicals and fertilizers promotes weed growth in the lake and in the long run is not good for your lawn. If you have a lawn near a stream, try to leave in a natural buffer area of vegetation between the lawn and the stream. A lawn that goes all the way to the edge of a stream invites trouble for water quality.
4. Keep the rain gutters on your house free of leaves and other debris and see that the water exiting the downspouts flows out over an area that will not erode, such as gravel or small stones, before flowing into planted areas. The stones will reduce the water's ability to erode.
5. If you wash your car at home, be sure to use non-toxic, non-phosphate, biodegradable cleaners, or better yet, take your car to a car wash, where dirty water is captured and recycled before being released to the environment. If you wash it at home, place the car where the water can be absorbed to reduce runoff and to divert pollutants.
6. Areas along streams that have already experienced severe cutting from water flow may need some engineered solutions, such as rip-rap, or gabion cages or other man-made materials to stem the force of the water and stop it from cutting further into the bank.
7. Create a rain garden, if you have adequate space for one. It can hold wetland plants and be designed to capture the runoff from your roof and driveway areas, which are impermeable surfaces that cannot absorb water. A rain garden can filter out both sediment and chemicals and allow water to seep slowly out to the surrounding area. Check with Cooperative Extension or a local landscaper for advice on how to build a rain garden.

These suggestions can have a very positive payoff in protecting not only our local streams and the creatures that live in them, but ultimately our precious Cayuga Lake. Remember that no matter where you live, it is probably downstream from somewhere else.

Local resources where you can find more information on stream and lakeside protection:

* Cayuga Lake Watershed Network: www.cayugalake.org. The Network is in the process of developing an online Watershed Pledge program for residents of TompkinsCounty. Stay tuned for more information on this soon-to-be-released program. Their website has good information about water quality and links to other sources of information.

* Cooperative Extension of TompkinsCounty: 272-2292. A good source of information about gardening, landscaping, protecting water quality. www.cce.cornell.edu/~Tompkins/ The website has many excellent links to other local water-related resources.

*TompkinsCounty Soil and Water Conservation District: 257-2340. www.tcsxcd.org. SWCD provides technical assistance to residents, businesses and municipalities about how to reduce runoff and stormwater damage. See the [Conservation BufferNewsletter](#) on their website for great information on waterway protection.

Lynn Leopold
Trustee

LANSING RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The Town of Lansing offers programs throughout the year which are available to all residents in the Village at the same cost as those residing in the Town of Lansing.

Some adult programs being offered this fall include men's basketball, women's basketball, women's volleyball, co-ed volleyball, yoga, cardio step class, and adult fitness swim.

For more information on these programs, as well as additional programs for youth, please call the Recreation Office at 533-7388. All forms are also available at the Parks and Recreation Office or on-line at www.recreation.lansing.ny.us.

Patrick Tyrell

LansingParks & Recreation

LANSING SEWERS

Information regarding sewer within the Village of Lansing will be discussed at the Board of Trustees meeting scheduled for November

7th. Additional information can be obtained on the Lansing Star web site at www.LansingStar.com or on the Town of Lansing web site at www.lansingtown.com and looking under committees.

Carol Willard

Clerk, part-time

LANSING OLDER ADULT PROGRAM (LOAP)

Senior CropWalk:

The Lansing seniors are participating in the walk for world hunger. The Senior Lansing CropWalk is scheduled for Monday, October 24th at 9:30 AM at Woodsedge Apartments. We will walk the grounds of Woodsedge and surrounding roads. The funds raised benefit Church World Service Programs and the Lansing Food Pantry on a local level. If you are interested in participating, please join us on Monday, October 24th.

Helping Hands Program:

This is a new project that is sponsored by the Outreach Committee of the Lansing United Methodist Church. The program is designed to assist seniors with small household repair projects. If you are in need of lawn care, ramps, or small interior jobs, please call the Lansing United Methodist Church at 533-4070 to leave your name and what the project entails and we will let you know if this is something the Helping Hands Program provides.

FoodNet Senior Meal Program:

Those who are interested in partaking of the meal meet Monday - Friday at noon at Woodsedge Apartments. If you would like a warm, nutritious meal and the pleasure of meeting local seniors, you may call Cathy Traver, Site Manager, at 279-9146. You will need to make a meal reservation a day in advance. Join the group for food and conversation.

The Lansing Senior Van:

The van is available to transport Lansing seniors to doctor appointments, grocery shopping, banking etc. If you have transportation needs, please call Bea Davis, LOAP Bus Dispatcher, at 533-4710 to arrange a ride.

There are many programs and services provided by the Lansing Older Adult Program. If you have questions or concerns, please call the Office at Woodsedge at 533-4792 for further details.

Marilyn Paradise

LOAP Program Coordinator

OFFICE OF AGING

Beginning in January 2006, you will be able to get help paying for your prescription drugs through Medicare's new benefit. Medicare drug coverage will be provided through private companies.

- You must have Medicare part A and/or B to qualify
- The Medicare drug benefit will pay a portion of outpatient prescription drug costs
- This new benefit is *voluntary* and *optional*
- In addition to your Part B premium, you will have to pay a monthly premium for Medicare drug coverage. The currently estimated national average is \$29.83 per month (\$357.96) in 2006

If you choose to enroll in a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan, be sure to check that the particular plan includes drugs that you need, and that the pharmacy you intend to use is included in the plan.

If you already have prescription drug coverage, you will need to determine if what you have is *at least as good* as the Standard Medicare Plan benefit. If your current coverage is at least as good, you may choose to not enroll in a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan during the initial enrollment plan (November 15, 2005 – May 15, 2006) without incurring a penalty later. However, if you do not enroll in a plan when you first become eligible, and you don't have coverage that is at least as good, then should you decide to enroll later, you will have to pay a higher premium – 1% for each month that you did not have coverage at least as good.

For more information about Medicare's new Prescription Drug Plan, please plan to attend one of the following presentations:

- October 19
10 AM to 12 noon
Lifelong, 119 W. Court St.
- October 24
10 AM to 10:45 AM
Tompkins County Office for Aging Senior Fair at Titus Towers

You may call Lifelong at 273-1511 for more information or to speak with a trained health insurance counselor or call the Tompkins County Office for the Aging at 274-5482.

Trina Schickel

STREET TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

The Street Tree Planting Program seeks to encourage the planting of shade trees along Village streets. The Village offers to reimburse homeowners 75% of the cost of a tree, up to a maximum of \$75 per tree. To qualify, please follow these procedures:

- Make application to enter the tree planting program before the tree is purchased. Applications may be picked up at the Village Office or by calling the Village Office (257-0424) and requesting an application be mailed to you.
- The location must be mutually agreed upon by the property owner and a representative of the Village before planting.
- Reimbursement shall take place upon presentation of a receipt from a recognized nursery and approval of the planted tree by a Village representative.
- Any one property owner will be eligible for reimbursement of up to two trees in any year.
- Applicants will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Carol Willard
Clerk, part-time

YMCA

YMCA of Ithaca and Tompkins County Makes Major Improvements

The Ithaca YMCA is a family-oriented organization that has made many improvements in facility and programming to meet the needs of members and program participants.

Effective September 2005, the YMCA is offering various youth programs for toddlers through teens including gym & swim, creative dance, karate, jump rope team, power kids, and yoga. In addition, there is an increased offering of aquatic exercise, safety, and swim lessons for all ages, including morning lessons for home-schooled children and preschoolers.

The Y facility has refurbished the pool area with new lighting, decking and paint. A new roof, parking lot, as well as major cleaning, has made the facility more appealing. The Y continues to upgrade fitness equipment with a wide variety of cardiovascular and weight-training equipment. Individuals age 13 and up are able to enjoy full facility usage and members are given two training orientation sessions before beginning personal workouts.

The YMCA is a fun family center, with facilities for childcare, indoor play structure, birthday parties, racketball, family swims, basketball, arts & crafts, and team workouts. For more information, please call the Y at 257-0101.

Frank Towner
Associate Executive Director

LANSING COMMUNITY LIBRARY CENTER (LCLC)

The Lansing Community Library Center (LCLC) has announced a major renovation project which will add handicap access (an elevator) to the lower level of the building, a children's room, a new circulation area, offices, a community room and a boardroom. It will also move the main entrance of the library to the back of the building. In order to make this possible, the Friends of LCLC have quietly been raising money (\$300,000) from area businesses via a capital campaign. The community part of the capital campaign (\$50,000) began on Sunday, September 4th. Ground breaking for the project is scheduled for November with a targeted completion of June 2006. Once this major renovation project is completed, the library would like to focus on adding more programming. Donations to the capital campaign can be sent to Lansing Community Library Center; Attn: Capital Campaign; PO Box 289; Lansing NY 14882.

A reminder is that the library is open when the flag is out. The hours of operation are as follows:

- ◆ Monday 2-6
- ◆ Tuesday 10-2
- ◆ Wednesday 3-9
- ◆ Thursday 6-9
- ◆ Friday Children's story hour for 2-3 year olds at 10 AM, story hour for over 3 year olds at 10:30 AM
- ◆ Saturday 9-1

For more information, call the library at 533-4939 or browse the web site at Lansinglibrary.org.

Bobbi Wasenko

LCLC

**REPORT OF COUNTY
BOARD OF
REPRESENTATIVE**

As I write, the Tompkins County Legislature is deep in budget deliberations for our 2006 budget, well aware that all of us are feeling the effects of several years of major local tax increases. Although the County accounts for only about one quarter of this, we take seriously the need to scrutinize how our share of tax dollars are used.

Tompkins County reacted earlier than many counties to the increases in state-imposed large unfunded mandates (Medicaid, pension costs) plus the increasing costs of health insurance, first reflecting this increase in our tax rates three years ago (2003). We also cut staff in some areas (e.g., Public Health, Assessment, Library, Planning, Information Technology Services) – more than we really should have. We chose not to try to raise the sales tax or deplete our reserves, as some comparable counties have done. A second year of double-digit tax rate increases followed, but by last year (i.e., the 2005 budget) we were able to level off increases, restore a few positions, and lead an upstate effort to PushBack against Albany’s Medicaid mandates. We did not get the state takeover of Medicaid that we wanted, or a cap on Medicaid costs, but Albany did enact a cap on the annual growth in the counties’ share of Medicaid costs, which will help us in our 2006 budget.

I’m pleased that in spite of all this, because of our low debt level and not depleting our reserves, we have kept our good bond rating, and kept virtually all the services that residents depend on. And last year we finally were able to boost funding for road maintenance and plan a capital program to begin to catch up on deferred maintenance.

For 2006, the Legislature asked our County Administrator to propose a tentative budget with no increase in the tax levy. He has done that, but achieved it by automatically denying funding to any new initiatives or increases in staff – and by omitting permanent funding in several important areas where, as he noted, the Legislature must make policy decisions first.

So, this year we have some major topics to deal with: (1) funding for the Tompkins County Public Library (because the level of funding has not kept up with the increased use), (2) support for a criminal justice data base (which allows village and city police and courts -- and the county sheriff if he so chooses -- to quickly share relevant information), (3) possible creation of a fuel reserve fund (to deal countywide with increases in the cost of gasoline, diesel, and natural gas, rather than trying to guess how much each department will need), and (4) permanent funding for the Probation Department’s Justice Center program (often called “ATI” [alternatives to incarceration]), since Day Reporting and its life-skills classes combined with the new specialized Drug Courts and Integrated Domestic Violence Court are really helping persons in the criminal-justice system change their lives and be able to “rejoin society” as productive members. Moreover, new data are available indicating that, since 2000, our average daily jail population (local inmates plus board-outs) has been declining relative to the rest of non-metropolitan NYS. We can’t explain this decrease by attributing it to any one of the “alternatives” programs, but believe it is likely due to the synergy among them.

When the State legislature finally enacted legislation to comply with HAVA (the federal “Help America Vote Act”), it required consolidation (e.g., control of election machines) at the county level, and gave counties the choice of charging back the costs to the city, towns, and villages or assuming the costs. To help keep his budget recommendation at the “0%” tax-levy increase our County Administrator’s proposed budget (dated September 2) recommended full charge backs. However, at our last legislative meeting (September 6), we acted on this one item ahead of our other budget deliberations, since it will affect other local municipal budgets. Although at present we do charge back certain costs, we voted to assume full costs of the new state-required consolidation at the county level, phasing this in over five years. In 2006 we will charge back no more than our municipalities spent in 2004, and we will decrease that amount by 20% a year thereafter.

I hope this was not too much budget information! Since the county has responsibility for so many general safety and welfare programs, it seems important to update you on some of the details. As always, I welcome your input, questions, and ideas on county issues. I feel privileged to represent the Villages of Lansing and Cayuga Heights on the County Legislature.

Dooley Kiefer

District 10
257-7453

LEARNING WEB’S YOUTH PROGRAMS

Attention parents of middle and high school students! Is your child looking to do something fun, meaningful and different this fall? Consider The Learning Web’s Volunteer Community Service Project (VCSP,) or Career Exploration Program. Funded by the Joint Youth Commission of Tompkins County, the VCSP offers middle-school-aged youth from the Town of Ithaca, Village of Cayuga

Heights and the Village of Lansing the opportunity to do volunteer projects that benefit their community. The Learning Web's Career Exploration Program offers Tompkins County youth ages 11-21 opportunities to gain hands-on experience in their career fields of interest.

This fall, the VCSP will be offered to DeWitt students and will meet once a week after school at DeWitt from the second week in October until winter break. Examples of past service projects for the VCSP include: playing with animals at the SPCA, creating a Public Service Announcement for the radio, leading games for the Fall Creek After School Carnival, baking and serving cookies at Loaves and Fishes, painting a porch at The Red Cross Homeless Shelter, clearing trails for The Finger Lakes Land Trust, holiday decorating at Oak Hill Manor, and more.

The Learning Web's Career

Exploration Program includes job tours, job shadowing, and paid and unpaid apprenticeships under the one-to-one guidance of adult mentors. Through this program, youth gain practical work skills and experience, learn about adult roles and responsibilities, and clarify their goals for future careers and schooling. Apprentices generally meet with their work-site mentors after school, approximately 3-10 hours a week. Youth undertake apprenticeships, tours and job shadowing in areas such as veterinary medicine, computer programming, engineering, cosmetology, auto repair, law, plant science, child care, and more.

Interested youth and parents should contact Sue at The Learning Web at 275-0122 or via email: sue@learning-web.org for more information.

Sue Schwartz

Youth Works Coordinator