

Town Supervisor's Message

May 2020

As we enter the summer months, this is a good time to look back at the last 5 months of 2020, and reflect on what our town has been able to accomplish in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Governor's PAUSE initiative, as well as look ahead at the challenges and opportunities that await us as a community. This pandemic has proven once again that Coeymans residents are fighters, with a survival spirit second to no one. I believe this pandemic has served only to strengthen our resolve and determination to make our town, our community, and our bond to each other as Coeymans residents even stronger and better than it was before the pandemic. There is no better time to measure a person's mettle than during a stressful period of time. And I can say without reservation that this level of resolve and determination remains steadfast in every member of our Town Board, as well as our other town elected officials, department heads, employees and Coeymans residents. I am proud to work together with such dedicated professionals within our town government, and proud to serve the residents of Coeymans.

In spite of the pandemic, Coeymans has remained open for business. We were able to improvise and adapt the way we normally did business, using technology and creativity, to continue to hold Town Board meetings, Planning/Zoning Board meetings, Public Hearings, and even Grievance Day in compliance with the Governor's Executive Order, since the state closed down on March 16, 2020. Several Local Laws were passed, site plan and subdivision applications were approved, building permits and certificates of completion were issued, and Coeymans residents and business owners relied on their town government with little or no disruption or inconvenience. This is a testament to our employees, who went above and beyond, setting aside personal fear and placing their duty and commitment to the town residents ahead of everything else.

In the past five months, the Town Board was able to accomplish many items on their To Do list, to include the following:

- Dramatically reduced the truck traffic along Main Street, Ravena, through a negotiated agreement with the leaders of the Port of Coeymans and Lafarge Holcim Cement to reroute truck traffic from the Lafarge Quarry down North Jarvis Road, to Route 396, to Route 144 and the Port of Coeymans;
- Combined our Planning and Zoning Boards into one board, gave the new board the ability to hire engineers and legal professionals to review complex applications at the applicant's expense, which streamlined the application approval process for local businesses and residents;
- Proposed a Solar Law, to protect property owners and our environment, and to assist our Planning Board as they receive new applications for future solar farms in Coeymans;

- Acquired the Kryzkowski properties in Coeymans Hollow from Albany County at no cost to the town, with a plan to clean up the parcels and get them back on the tax rolls;
- Hired a Town Grant Writer to assist the town in reviving our Main Street Business District, among other things;
- Began the long overdue update of the Town's Comprehensive Master Plan, with an April 2021 projected completion date;
- Negotiated with the Albany County Sheriff to place a Coeymans Substation in the Hamlet of Coeymans, which doubled public safety in the town while reducing annual costs by nearly \$300,000;
- Reorganized the Town's Beautification Department, saving the taxpayers \$76,000;
- Provided COVID-19 Testing to Coeymans residents at Town Hall through a joint effort with the Albany County Executive's Office; and
- Organized a Town wide Recycle Day for Coeymans residents to dispose of their unwanted demolition, debris, electronics, and recyclables at no cost to the residents or the Town of Coeymans.

Nevertheless, there is still much to do in Coeymans. As we anticipate less sales tax revenue in 2020 and 2021, my office is working diligently at cutting unnecessary costs and preparing next year's budget very conservatively, so as to avoid layoffs or a cut in services to the residents. And as our lives slowly return to normal and as the Governor's Pause initiative ends, we have volunteers working on pairing our Evenings on the Green Concert series at Riverfront Park this summer with a Farmer's Market. We also have plans to conduct Riverfest 2020 in September, with fireworks, attractions, crafts, rides, vendors and a parade. Of course all plans are subject to change and conditioned on the COVID-19 pandemic and the health and welfare of our residents. Rest assured, should we see a spike or a return of the virus, we will adjust our plans accordingly.

As we continue to navigate through these uncharted waters, I want to thank the Coeymans residents and business owners, for your patience, understanding, and resilience. These past 12 weeks have tested our resolve, and although none of us saw this coming, Coeymans performed as well as any community could have under the circumstances, and better than most.

God Bless all of you, please stay safe and healthy, and God Bless Coeymans.



George D. McHugh
Town Supervisor