

Town of Albion
Town Board 2008 Year-end Report

The election of 2007 brought a new philosophy of leadership to the Town of Albion. Proactive, highly involved, dedicated to following state guidelines and the new rules and regulations of Office of the State Comptroller, this board took on the responsibility of governance of the town in a much more thorough manner than in the past. Some elected officials, accustomed to “doing their own thing” in the absence of direction from the board, are resentful of the change and have even worked to revert back to the “let-it-go” attitude of the past. In the meantime, as this board has worked its way through its first budget cycle and is in the process of developing job descriptions in conformance with General Municipal Law, Executive Officers Law, and the Orleans County Personnel Department, we are in the process of establishing standards of expectation and performance for each department. While the Board has no control over the activities (namely, the hours of work, responsiveness to public demands, and the like) of other elected officials, we have endeavored to set a high standard of job performance in the hopes to encouraging others to do the same. This has not been met with enthusiasm by all concerned, but the board has continued to model what it expects of all town employees and public officials. We hope the following list of accomplishments allows you, the public, know how involved the board has been.

No elected officials received raises this year. Until a measure of job performance is established, against which performance can be evaluated, there probably will be no raises for elected officials. As one former board member said, “They knew what the salary was when they ran.” As we examine the workload and pay of officials throughout Orleans County, we will be in a position to make an informed decision on pay. In the meantime, you need to know that between the two returning board members and the three (one of whom has left) new board members, we have brought almost \$1.5 million in new money to the Town of Albion. We may make substantial reductions in expenditures in the next budget cycle, some the result of cutbacks in state aid and others because of adjustments because of the research we are doing. Until we take measures to reduce the tax burden on our citizens by running a more efficient operation, we cannot expect to reduce the loss of population. However, development and population growth will result when we improve and streamline government while continuing to improve our infrastructure.

In addition to conducting the normal affairs of the town, in 2008 the Albion Town Board began this year with no transition provided by the previous administration and with a number of situations that required a great deal of attention and effort. Some of those were:

1. On January 1, 2008, the Supervisor’s office (now the board office) was empty except for a desk, chair, two broken file cabinets, a rubber band, a partial pad of sticky notes, and considerable litter. We now have an equipped office, with fax (on loan), internet connection with Board e-mail addresses, and book cases (on loan). The office supplies purchased cost about \$350.
2. The completion of Water Improvement Areas 7 A,B,C, and D and Water District 5 extension 1 was held up for 6 months as we battled our way through

- bureaucratic red tape to make them happen. Three of us drove to Albany to lobby for their approval. Fortunately, we were successful.
3. A cord wedged in the metal back door provided power for roof-edge/ soffit defrosters was removed, and the devices were hard-wired when we added the new security lighting.
 4. The board passed resolutions which said the taxpayers would no longer:
 - A. pay for alcoholic beverages consumed while officials and employees are on town business, and
 - B. pay for coffee, cream and sugar for employees and officials in the town building.
 5. The sewer tax bill to the Village of Albion had not been paid for a year and a half and the Town did not inform the Village of two private users who had hooked into that system. There is a procedure in place now for hooking into sanitary sewer, and we are on a regular payment program.
 6. The fire contract had not been settled and had been a contentious situation for many years. We have agreed upon a formula for determining the town's liability for fire protection services.
 7. The Town had not sent a copy of its union contract to the Public Employees Relationship Board since 1999. That situation has been remedied.
 8. Americans With Disabilities Act compliance is complete, except for signage, which will be installed in January.
 9. The Town has never had an Internal Audit. One was completed in March (the Town Clerk was completed in May). Issues raised and addressed as a result of that audit include:
 - A. Addressing 9 years worth of unidentified and unclaimed bail, resulting in a one-time revenue of \$21,000 to the Town;
 - B. The Albion Town Clerk defines her role in the vouchering (bill paying) process more narrowly than the norm. Therefore, the board was obliged to bring in an auditor to validate claims submitted for payment each month.
 - C. Payment of bills is now in compliance with the Comptroller's requirements, and it follows our purchasing policy.
 10. The Town had its first single audit. The former Supervisor had received notice of the requirement in July, August, and November of 2007 but did not inform the incoming board of the requirement. Therefore, the current board had to work hard and fast to be in compliance with the audit requirement. The audit is already scheduled for 2009. An action plan was implemented and all the recommendations have been followed. The only issue left to address is the recording of water receivables.
 11. The town was faced with responsibility for the ½ the cost of painting of the interior of the Water Tower in Barre, which supplies water to most of the water districts in the Town of Albion. A budget provision is now in place for addressing future needs.
 12. The Town of Albion thought it owned the Union Burial Society for more than 70 years. Purchase of land adjacent to the cemetery required an update of the abstract. That revealed "clouds on title," which means, in effect, the title was not

as good as it should have been. Those issues have been addressed; the title is clear. The two parcels have been joined into one.

13. The former code enforcement officer retired. The town hired two part-time, temporary code enforcement officers to handle the routine inspections, catch up open permits, prepare for the adoption of Article 1203 (which should have been adopted by January 2007), and to develop a more reasonable fee schedule. The appointments were temporary because the board needed to determine our code enforcement needs, which we have done with the help of state officials. We expect all their charges to be complete in January, and we are on budget. We are currently preparing to hire a part-time permanent code enforcement officer from the Civil Service list. In so doing, we have restructured the job description so that it is in compliance with the County Civil Service description.

In an effort to provide better and more efficient service to the people of our town, the Town Board did a number of proactive things.

1. Wind energy legislation was adopted in cooperation with the Albion Central School District
2. Updated Code of Ethics, Rules of Conduct, and Progressive Discipline policies have been adopted as local laws.
3. We applied for and received a Records Management grant in the amount of \$5,800 for court records. The work involved will be carried out in 2009.
4. We applied for and received over \$900,000 in Rural Development grants and low-interest loans for Water Improvement Areas 7 A, B, C, D, and Water District 5 ext. 1. (In 2007, we received a \$400,000 Small Cities grant for Water District 5 ext. 1.)
5. Those bids for two water districts were awarded at our December 29 meeting and the districts should be completed by the end of 2009.
6. We received a Justice Court Assistance grant in the amount of \$28,800 for the construction of a new driveway for our highway trucks and security lighting improvements.
7. We created parking for law enforcement and a separate entrance along the west side of the building for admittance of prisoners and arraignees, thereby reducing their exposure to the general public. The door by which they enter has been alarmed for further security.
8. We received a Justice Court Assistance grant in the amount of \$10,000 for building upgrades for safety and security. The project is under way.
9. We rearranged the offices, putting the Justice Court in the largest office, the Supervisor in the smallest, Code Enforcement in the former Supervisor's office, and a conference room in the former Justice Office.
10. The building faces much more heavy use, so we have the building cleaned more frequently.
11. The shop drains were in a state of dangerous disrepair. They have been rebuilt.
12. The roof began leaking in October 2007. That has been repaired.
13. A water supply pipe in the men's room froze every winter. The causing factor has been addressed.

14. Exhaust fans, circulating fans and CO2 sensors have been installed in the highway garage, eliminating the fumes in the garage and offices on the west side of the building and improving air quality in those areas, which has been problematic and even dangerous for many years.
15. We had a prevailing wage audit and implemented the procedure necessary for compliance with prevailing wage requirements.
16. We changed payroll providers to save \$1,000 a year.
17. We researched the work hours and pay of the Justice Court Clerk. 8 of 10 Orleans County towns participated in the study, and Judge Marky (who serves directly under Judge Sperazza) offered valuable input. As a result, appropriate adjustments are being made to the Justice Court Clerk's workload and salary.
18. A physical asset inventory (the first complete one in twelve years) is in process and should be complete by year's end. It is the first exhaustive inventory in the town's history, and it is a new Comptroller's requirement. That inventory will be used to adjust our insurance coverage appropriately.
19. The town has contracted with a third party to process the co-pay reimbursement claims of employees. This eliminates the wait employees had for their reimbursement checks, and it further protects their privacy. The cost is \$1,200 per year, a new expense.