

Town of Albion 2009 Newsletter

The board has concluded there are two reasons people complain: (1) They are truly dissatisfied and want something changed, or (2) They like to complain. We have also found that those who resist change (1) will lose something, be it income, identity or status, (2) have a friend or relative who will lose something because of the change, and/ or (3) hate change. The board that is in place right now in the Town of Albion reflects a community desire for change; this board replaces three incumbents in four positions. We are a politically diverse board, one that we feel accurately represents all the people of our community—two conservative/ Republicans, one moderate Republican, one Democrat, and one Independent. What we all have in common is our shared purpose of working for improving conditions in the Town of Albion. We reject waste, fraud and abuse; when we have the ability, we remedy it. There is no one on this board who is here to do favors for friends or relatives; we are all committed to fair and equal treatment under the law. We are all deeply committed to all the people in the Town. We have come together and brought a business approach to public service. While serving on a town board is a public service, we are now trying to run the town as we would run a for-profit business, attempting to incorporate accountability and fact-based decisions to all we do. The following is a summary of what we have done and are trying to do, including our ongoing research efforts.

1. We examined the justice courts in Orleans County and made some adjustments to the court clerk's salary. However, the town still needs to provide for a deputy justice court clerk. We hope to do so in the next budget cycle. We have the busiest court in Orleans County.
2. We completed a physical asset survey, the first in the history of the town.
3. We adjusted our insurance coverage to reflect that physical asset survey, correcting several errors in the process.
4. We learned that disability coverage was included in the 1999 union contract but the town had never purchased a policy. We now have coverage in place.
5. Water District 5 ext. 1 and Water Improvement Areas 7 A, B, C, D are complete.
6. Water District 9 is in process. If you are a resident of that district, you received a letter indicating that you need to come into the Town Clerk's office to sign the petition. If you are unable to go to the Town building, please leave a message for the supervisor at 589-7048 extension 14.
7. The Town has recognized that village residents are helping to pay for three governments: the Village, Gaines and Albion. Therefore, the Town has moved to a philosophy of support and cooperation. We have worked with the village to adopt a formula for paying for fire protection services from the village and have contracted for financial support of the Downtown Revitalization program. We believe we are interdependent, and restoring the core of the village will enhance the economic vitality of the entire area. If you would like a copy of the philosophy and practice of "Smartgrowth," please email supervisor@townofalbion.com.
8. The Town and Village are working to cooperate in other ways as well. For example, the Town is open to discussing how it can help support Village recreation efforts. We are working together to revisit and refresh the Comprehensive Plan, which dates back to 1996, with changes made to accommodate WalMart. We have an emergency sewer service agreement with the village to provide for service to our WalMart sewer in case of a power failure. (This saves the town the expense of purchasing equipment that duplicates equipment the village already owns.) We have an inter-municipal agreement to provide for Water District Operation in the event our highway department members allow their water certificates to expire again.

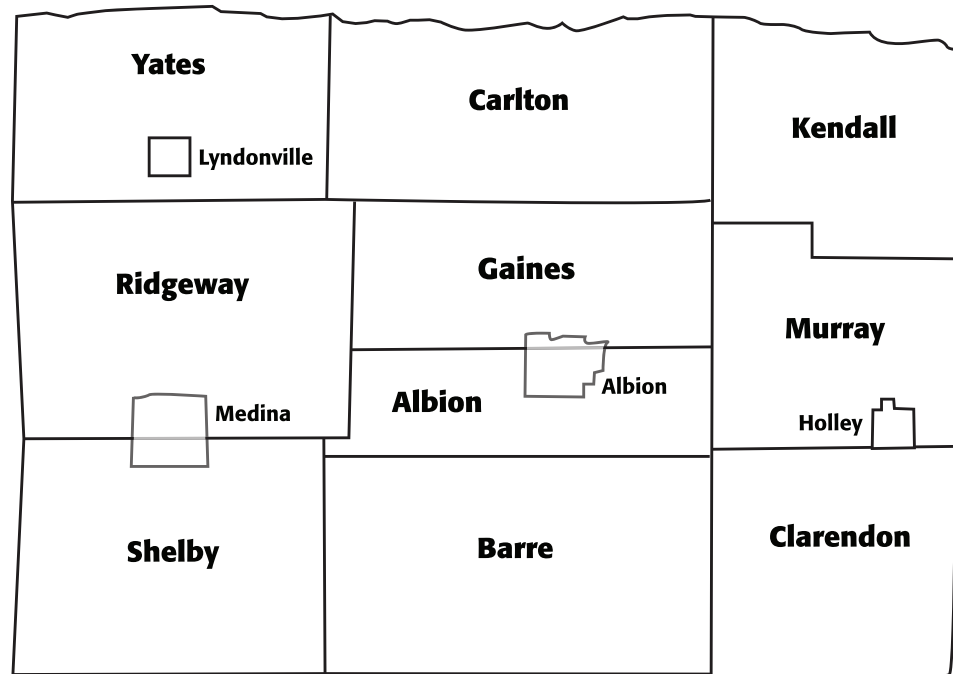
9. The Town building has addressed badly needed building maintenance issues, including improvements to the highway garage in 2008 and exterior and courtroom safety and security issues in 2009. Most of this was financed by court grants and unidentified bail revenues that had accumulated over 20 years.

10. We have adopted a progressive discipline policy, a purchasing policy, code of ethics, rules of conduct, a harassment policy, sanitary sewer hookup policy, key policy, and vehicle use policy. Drug testing requirements have been extended to those who use their personal vehicle in the performance of town business, and the highway department has been removed from a testing pool that led to the department going without drug/ alcohol tests for 18 months. We are now working on a cell phone policy.

11. We self-financed interim financing for our two water districts, saving the residents of those districts at least \$24,000.

12. We are exploring the consolidation of water districts, a project that we expect will lower the cost of managing the districts by simplifying the recordation of receipts and expenditures. In addition, we are costing-out the consolidation of all water district debt to facilitate payments. While debt service on individual parcels will remain the same, the savings on administration can translate to an account for future repairs and improvements. We will present a public meeting on the topic, and we will only proceed if the project translates to savings to the residents.

13. We compared our highway department with other highway departments in the county. Figures came from supervisors and highway superintendents. Information such as this demonstrates economy of scale and mandates opening discussions on cooperation.



Bringing about increased efficiency and accountability is the way to reduce taxes. As you can see, we are discovering and attempting to model best practices and to right-size government in the Town of Albion. In the process, there are those who will be angry because they are being held to a higher standard. However, for every one we anger, at least a thousand will rejoice. And where are you in this process:

Complaining because you really want change or complaining because you like to complain?

Town* Highway Labor Costs—2008

(2009 figures available late February) • There are no benefit costs included in this chart.

Town	Albion	Gaines	Ridgeway	Barre	Clarendon	Murray	Shelby	Yates
Cost per mile	\$4,984	\$4,459	\$2,688	\$2,937	\$3,402	\$3,854	\$3,796	\$2,652
Total miles of roads serviced	40.03	38.17	77.00	82.00	72.00	62.00	72.00	72.00
No. of full-time workers	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	4
2008 wage/hr	20.19	19.26	19.88	18.50	21.00	18.25/20.55	20.80	18.67
No. of part-time workers	1	2	1	0	0	2	2	2
2008 wage/hr	12.00	13.91	10.30	16.50		10.15	10.50	9.00
Highway superintendent salary**	\$46,170	\$37,700	\$52,000	\$53,680	\$50,560	\$49,500	\$55,625	\$51,285
Total wages paid***	\$199,494	\$170,183	\$207,000	\$240,838	\$244,960	\$238,926	\$273,347	\$190,909
Total worker wages paid**	\$153,324	\$132,483	\$155,000	\$187,158	\$194,400	\$189,426	\$217,722	\$139,084

*Carlton and Kendall did not provide data.

**Wages paid for mowing, plowing, sand, roadwork, cemeteries. Wages and salaries paid for water-district work are not included in the chart. Water district wages and salaries are in addition to the wages and salaries listed here.

***This column includes the wages paid to the highway superintendent for highway. It does not include salaries paid for water-district work.