

2015

The Year in Ridgeway

Weather

Weather extremes dominated the beginning and the end of the year with the first three months being relentlessly, wickedly cold. On January 6, a bitterly cold morning with the temperature at 14 degrees, a fire badly damaged the milking parlor at a dairy farm owned by Marcus Miller on Fruit Avenue. . Members of the Amish and Mennonite communities rallied to the site and began the construction of a replacement barn the next day.

The National Weather Service reported that February was the coldest on record. However, the Leonard Oakes Estate Winery took advantage of the single digit temperatures to harvest frozen Vidal grapes for their popular ice wine.

A dry April and May led to fears of drought which mercifully were unfounded. Thomas the Tank Engine returned in May for the 11th year. We enjoyed a well-earned weather respite on Mother's Day weekend, with sunshine and temperatures in the '80's.

Summer was pleasant, with the exception of a hot and humid Labor Day weekend. We were treated to a string of picture perfect days in September, with warm days and clear bright skies. A total supermoon lunar eclipse caused a dramatic "blood moon" on Sept. 27.

A colorful fall was followed by an amazingly mild November and December. Thanksgiving and Christmas were both "green". This was attributed to the moderating effects of El Nino. On Monday, December 14, a day to remember, we basked in warm air from the south as temperatures reached a high of 72 degrees. The Buffalo area made more "weather history" with the latest measurable snowfall ever. However, more seasonal temperatures and flurries issued in the New Year.

Dissolution

The hotly debated issue of the Proposed Dissolution of the Village of Medina was decided on January 20th when village residents turned out in large numbers to defeat the proposal by a 949 to 527 margin. Following the defeat, village and town leaders vowed to work together towards a greater

degree of cooperation to reduce the costs of government and services for the community.

In December, the Town of Shelby announced that it would contract with the Town of Ridgeway for Assessment Services as part of a service sharing initiative. Trisha Laszewski will provide Assessing Services for both towns from the Ridgeway Town Hall, effective Jan 1, 2016.

Business

In March, the Orleans County Planning Board supported a plan proposed by Rodelle Mammano and Sunshine Charters for a bed and breakfast on a 70-acre site on the southeast corner of Telegraph and Bates Road. The Board also supported William Sills plan for a 153 foot high “small wind energy conversion system” at 2693 Townline Road.

There were high hopes that Pride-Pak, a Canadian fresh-food and vegetable processing firm would expand into the former Bernzomatic facility, vacated by Worthington Cylinders in July 2014. The Ridgeway Town Board agreed to seek a \$750,000 grant from the state Office of Community Renewal to assist the company in the acquisition process. However, the company opted to build a new facility at the Medina Business Park on Maple Ridge Road.

In November, Helena Chemical, a specialty distributor of liquid fertilizers, processed plants and dry components, announced plans to move from their Albion site to a larger facility in Ridgeway. Their plans for a 75,000 sq. ft six building complex east of Medina on the Allis Rd. was a welcome addition for the Town of Ridgeway, as nearly all of the recent economic development has been in the Town of Shelby. The project is expected to cost \$4m.

Town Supervisor Napoli and County Legislator Lynne Johnson continued to advocate for improved Broadband Access for the area.

Two Ridgeway businesses were recognized at the Orleans Chamber of Commerce awards dinner in September: 810 Meadworks owned by Bryan and Larissa DeGraw was recognized as New Business of the Year. The popular meadery is located on West Center St.

Laura Gardner was awarded the Phoenix Design for her dress shop A Lily & A Sparrow. Laura purchased and completely renovated 438 Main St.

(formerly Baughn's Shoe Store). Her store was originally located at 510 Main St.

Changes & Moves

With 14 vendors offering locally grown and produced food, The Canal Village Farmer's Market located at the corner of West Avenue and West Center St. had a very successful first season. The market which was open from mid-July until the end of October proved to be very popular, with an average of 450 customers each Saturday morning.

Other changes included the closing of Apple Blossom Florist located at 530 Main St. Established in 1996 by Trudy Sworts, the business was originally known as Floristry by Trudy. Lisa Trippsnesee, the next owner, changed the name to Apple Blossom Florist. Mark Merithew owned the business since April 2013.

PaperBoys, located at 509 Main St. (formerly Radio Shack) announced in October that they were planning to transition to an online-only model. The five-year old business sold office supplies, shipping products and provided computer services.

Some sorely needed renovations to 128 East Center St. greatly improved the appearance of the buildings which formerly housed Bernie's Laundromat.

Dentist Dr. Peter Igoe moved his practice from 511 West Ave. to a new purpose built 3,325 sq. ft facility on Route 31. The building also includes space for a yoga studio.

Dr. Igoe's 511 West Ave. property was one of several local buildings acquired by the World Life Institute of Waterport. The Medina Language Center opened at the West Ave. location in November. Foreign language courses will be offered at the Center. ESL students will also be brought to Medina for "an immersive experience".

In December, The World Life Institute announced plans to purchase the Masonic Hall on West Center St. It will be the new site of their international headquarters, community and educational programs will also be offered.

Declining membership and increasing costs were the major factors that prompted the members of Medina's Masonic Lodge #336 to downsize.

Founded in 1854, the Masons now plan to look for another meeting place or merge with another lodge.

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Bridges

Funding for much needed repairs to the aging bridge infrastructure was provided by an \$8 million bond secured by the County in 2014. Several Town of Ridgeway structures were deemed deficient. In May, Keeler Construction was awarded a \$430,199 bid to replace two culverts on Knowlesville Road over the Oak Orchard Creek. Work on the projects began during the summer and were completed in November.

The State Dept. of Transportation closed the Marshall Road Bridge in July for repairs to the steel structure. Repairs took longer than anticipated but were completed by September.

Water Districts

Highlander Construction's bid of \$743,314.20 for the Water District #12 project was awarded in March. Ramshaw Road, Angling Road and Bates Road are included in this district. The Bates Road portion of the project involves boring under the Erie Canal. Town officials are currently planning for Water District #13.

Improvements

Bent's Opera House was approved for two grants. A State grant of \$70,000 will go towards includes building stabilization, facade improvements, asbestos abatement and interior renovations at the three-story building. The State also approved another \$150,000 for additional restoration work.

Hospital

Declining membership caused the Twig Association to close their gift-shop at Medina Memorial Hospital on January 31. For 40 years the Twig-run shop had been a major fundraiser for the group and the hospital, raising as much as \$20,000 a year. Hand-knit baby items were among the most popular items sold, especially the baby sweater which had the zipper down the back which became a cherished item. Rosenkrans Pharmacy contracted to take over the gift shop on Feb. 1, 2015.

In April, the Orleans Community Health Medina Memorial Hospital announced that it had received Critical Access Hospital designation from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. It is anticipated that this new designation will help improve the hospital's financial performance.

Tourism

In July, a joint project of the Medina Tourism Committee and the State Canal Corp. came to fruition with the installation of an interpretative panel on the north side of the Erie Canal by the Culvert. The panel explains the unique engineering structure that was designed to carry the road under the canal.

Elections

Three positions on the Town Board were up for election in November: Town Supervisor Brian Napoli, Town Council members Paul Blajszczak and Mary Woodruff.

The positions of Town Supervisor (Brian Napoli) and Town Justice (Joseph Kujawa) were unopposed.

Three candidates competed for the two Town Council seats. Republican Party candidates Mary Woodruff and Sarah Fisher received 706 and 656 votes respectively. Running under the independent "Badger Party", Blajszczak received 208 votes.

The retirement of County Sheriff Scott Hess sparked a lively county-wide contest between Democrat Don Organisciak, Republican Randy Bower and Independent Tom Drennan. Bower was elected with 3,951 votes.

People

Justice was finally served in the case of the death of Homer Marciniak in 2010 when the last of several defendants' pleaded guilty to committing a violent crime and racketeering.

Former Village and Town of Ridgeway Justice Larry Sanderson died January 5, 2015. Mr. Sanderson had been a member of the Ridgeway

Republican Committee for over 17 years. He served as Village Justice in Medina and the Town of Ridgeway for 20 years, retiring in November 2014.

Edsel Grinnell died on March 13, 2015. Keenly interested in local history, "Ed" served as the Village of Medina Historian from 1996-2000. A decade of research culminated in the publication of his book "Medina: Here's to Our Heritage" in 1996.

Robert "Bob" Waters passed away July 29, 2015. Former editor and publisher of the Medina (Daily) Journal-Register, Bob was devoted to promoting the area and preserving its history. In the 1970's he spearheaded the drive to save the Armory. He was one of the co-founders of the Shelridge Country Club and the driving force behind the Medina Sandstone Society.

Nancy Berger died Sept. 27, 2015. An educator and businesswoman, Nancy was also Past President of the Medina Historical Society and a member of the Orleans County Historical Society.

Good Health and Good Fortune to all in 2016

Catherine Cooper
Historian