

Town of Ridgeway

2020: Year in Review

A year that will forever be seared in our memories.

The year when everything changed, when all of our routines, rituals, traditions and customs were upended and transformed.

Unsettling news of a virus from China gathered force and exploded into our lives on March 13th. “**Lockdown**” Businesses closed. Schools closed. St. Patrick’s Day Parades cancelled. Sports events cancelled.

On our screens every day, we saw images of swamped hospitals, overwhelmed morgues, exhausted medical staff swaddled in PPE. In May, Medina couple Martha and Bill Ames passed away of Covid, two days apart, at The Villages Health Center in Albion.

As the months went by, our seasonal rituals – 4H Fair, Summer Recreation programs, Parades, Festivals, Shows – all fell by the wayside.

We learned about “flattening the curve” and transmission rates. We came to appreciate first responders and frontline workers. We adapted to wearing masks, social distancing, Zoom meetings, virtual appointments, online learning, Insta-cart groceries. It was heartening but distressing to see lines of cars in line awaiting food distributions at the County Fairgrounds and at area schools.

In the fall, we were warned about the “fall surge”, “micro clusters” and “super spreader” events. Our Thanksgivings and Christmas gatherings were quiet.

As of December 30, 2020, there were 1,342 cases confirmed in Orleans County, and 64 deaths.

Adaptation

At the Town of Ridgeway, staff revised procedures to protect employees and contractors while still continuing to offer public service. Complying with executive orders was a challenge. Providing cleaning and protective supplies was an unanticipated and not inexpensive budget strain, but the staff, not unlike the residents of the Town of Ridgeway, proved adaptable and resilient and soon, the new procedures became the norm. Budget uncertainty continued due to a marked decrease in sales tax revenues.

Surprisingly, the local real estate market was very active. Properties sold quickly and at high prices. In many cases, buyers were from outside the area.

Local restaurants, bars and small businesses were hard hit by the pandemic. Supply chain issues caused shortages of cleaning supplies, building supplies and appliances. As the months went by

businesses adapted, offering delivery when possible. Restaurants adapted to offering take-out service and outdoor dining.

The opening of navigation season on the Canal was delayed from May 15 until the week of July 4 as construction and repair activities were delayed by Covid.

The Canal Village Farmer's Market opened in June and again offered an array of fresh produce.

Discussion of the logistics of re-opening schools consumed much of the summer. Determined to provide in person teaching, the Medina Central School District plan involved smaller classes and accommodations for social distancing. Pre-K through Grade 6 classes resumed. Grade 7-12 students attend on alternate days and also participate in remote learning.

Not to be daunted by Covid, the Parade of Lights Committee re-adjusted the traditional Thanksgiving weekend activities so that families could still participate safely. The gala Parade was reversed, with spectators driving by the floats instead.

Awards

Mary Woodruff, Ridgeway Town Councilwoman, was awarded the Orleans Hub Outstanding Citizen award for her indefatigable work on the Hometown Banners project. The project, which began in 2019 with 38 banners, has garnered loyal support and an additional 69 banners were added in 2020, including one Civil War veteran, Henry Waters. This successful project will continue, an additional 43 will be added in 2021.

Bridges

Marshall Road Bridge closed on April 6, 2020 for a six-month long rehabilitation project.

People

The death of Raymond "Jack" Punch occurred January, 2020. Jack served as Town of Ridgeway Supervisor in 1987.

Constance Lyster, former Town of Ridgeway clerk, passed away March 20, 2020.

The community was stunned and saddened by the senseless death of a 20 year old Cheyenne Farewell at a Halloween party in Lockport on Fri. October 16. Six others were injured by gunshots fired.

Ridgeway Fire Dept.

The following slate of officers were installed on Jan. 25, 2020:

Chief: Patrick Kelly, *Deputy Chief:* Jason Bessel, *First Asst. Chief:* Kristin McAdoo

Harriet Petrie was selected as Auxiliary Member of the Year.

Walk

A peaceful “Walk for Peace and Inclusion” was held on June 11 in support of the “Black Lives Matter” movement. Community members urged a reassessment of perceptions and prejudices.

Weather

January was the ninth warmest January on record, and March the seventh warmest March. February and June were above average. April and May were below average and just by one or two degrees. A spell of colder weather in May caused concern for fruit farmers.

In July, the National Weather Service Office in Buffalo confirmed what everybody felt: that July was hot, the hottest month in WNY’s recorded weather history in fact, with an average daily temperature of 77.8. The month was persistently warm, July 10th marked the ninth straight day of 90 degree temperatures. A blistering 98 degrees was recorded at Buffalo Airport on July 9. A new splash pad at Pine Street Park brought some relief. Continuing the extreme weather trend, central Orleans County experienced a localized deluge on the afternoon on July 27, when 5-7 inches of rain overwhelmed drainage systems and caused localized flooding and many saturated basements.

November was particularly mercurial, with temperatures in the 70’s on Nov. 10 and light snow showers on the 17th. December 25th was seasonally white.

Wishing our residents peace and good health.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cooper

Historian

