

Bee Editorial

Seven months, 43,000 parcels, zero dollars — do the math

A total of \$375,000 was cut from the Town of Amherst Assessment Department for 2007, which cancelled the total assessment program that for the past seven years warranted an annual grant of \$211,000 from New York State.

Now, Assessor Harry Williams is estimating it will cost \$400,000 to \$500,000 to bring the town to the level needed to rejoin the 100 percent assessment program. Note: that is without the \$211,000.

So much for the cost savings Supervisor Satish Mohan wanted.

Mohan does not know more about assessments than the town assessor's office. Now the town is facing a rapidly approaching deadline that seems to be unattainable.

It appears the supervisor cut from a program without knowing the consequences, because if he did, the reassessment of properties would

have begun on Jan. 1. Now, at the beginning of April, the town has 43,000 parcels that need reassessing. The last thing the town needs is for assessments to be done in haste, because taxpayers may be more likely to challenge them.

Williams couldn't have been more clear during the 2007 budget process that Mohan's proposal to cancel the 100 percent assessment program meant problems for the town, and on many levels — for veterans, STAR exemption recipients and school taxes.

Mohan has yet to propose any changes to the assessor's department or to save any money, which were his reasons for removing funding.

He thinks he can find a consultant to do the project for \$211,000 in less than eight months. Reports show that GAR Associates, the long-time consultant to the town was charging \$20

per parcel. Mohan needs to find someone willing to assess 43,000 parcels at \$5 each.

If Mohan can't fix this problem, he will have a lot of explaining and apologizing to do. He promised residents cost savings and a revamped assessor's department. Well, his back is against a wall and he needs a cheap — but skilled — consultant to get him out of the situation he has created.

On Monday, he called out the Town Board members for not supporting a resolution to save \$700,000 a year on retiree health care costs, saying they would have to answer to taxpayers.

Well, Supervisor Mohan, take a look at what you plan to do with the assessments, and can you say honestly that you can fix this problem? There are 43,000 property owners that will be waiting to see the results, so the plan better be something of genius.

Spindle items



JESSICA FINCH

Associate Editor

• **BIRTHDAY RECAP** — I was very touched by the many birthday wishes on Monday from town residents, co-workers and my family and friends.

I had a wonderful pre-birthday celebration while in Saratoga Springs with West

awards are listed on page seven this week.

I was also surprised with many "gifts" when I arrived to work on Monday morning. Clarence editor Kimberly Karcher and interim East Aurora editor Jill Schmelzer had wrapped many of my office supplies in gift paper. They chose a very bright "happy holidays" paper with Christmas trees and stockings. I had an extra laugh about it because on the drive home Sunday with Breann we were searching through radio stations and came across a popular Christmas carol. We had to stop on the station to hear the promo and sure enough, 102.7 in Rochester is all Christmas music, all the time.

My birthday had a downside as from 7 p.m. to midnight I sat in town hall as the Town Board once again proved that members have some major changes to make in their meeting process. After the first hour, when the high school students left, I was clearly the youngest person in

the meeting, but many others, in the audience and at the front of the room, proved that maturity is not related to age. With just a few minutes to spare, the board adjourned and I approached the town officials with post-meeting questions, looking at the clock as my birthday came to an end. I went home exhausted, and found my roommate, Tammy, had left a present on the kitchen table. It's funny how a day can come full circle. Thanks again everyone, for what was a memorable birthday.

• **TWENTY YEARS** — In March, the Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service celebrated its 20th anniversary. For two decades, Western New York's blind and print-handicapped people have benefited from the service, an award winning non-profit radio station where volunteers broadcast daily readings of newspapers, including The Amherst Bee, as well as magazines and books.

On March 19, 1987 the NFRRS began

broadcasting its readings. Today, a staff of 300 volunteers broadcasts 24 hours a day from the studio at 1199 Harlem Road, Cheektowaga. In all, more than 160,000 hours of readings have been aired.

For information, call 821-5555. Contributions can be sent to P.O. Box, Buffalo, N.Y. 14225.

• **CHANCE TO WIN** — How charming is your mom? This Mother's Day, Rembrandt Charms wants you to answer that question by telling the story of your mother's life — using up to 10 Rembrandt charms to illustrate your account.

One winner will receive the complete bracelet of his or her design in sterling silver. Runners-up receive a sterling silver bracelet with one charm from their story. The winning entry will be posted on the Rembrandt Charms Web site after Mother's Day. The contest runs through May 11. For more information, a complete list of rules and to enter, visit www.rembrandtcharms.com/mom.

Seneca editor Breann Howell for the New York Press Association Conference. We took in the many restaurants, bars, coffee shops and other places that the quaint town has to offer, when we weren't attending seminars and award ceremonies. The Bee Newspapers'

Out of the Past

125 Years Ago April 6, 1882

Quite a ripple of excitement has been caused in our village, and numerous old stories revived, in regard to the building which D. Wehrle is tearing down preparatory to building a new one. During the forepart of the week, workmen engaged in the excavating under the building discovered a number of human bones. This, taken in connection with the fact that the building was formerly used as a hotel for about fifty years, and that suspicions of foul play were aroused, and some persons known to have mysteriously disappeared, have naturally caused many inquiries.

The wheat fields are rapidly putting on their green coats.

An exchange says the total number of cows in Erie County is 41,200.

"A traveler asked a saloon keeper if there were any cases of sunstroke in the town. 'No, sir,' he replied, 'if a man gets drunk here he says he is drunk and never calls it by any other name.'"

"A half loaf is better than a whole loafer."

100 Years Ago April 4, 1907

C.C. Summers has been appointed to succeed L.L. Grove as superintendent of the Williamsville Railroad Co.

Managers of Bell Telephone said that a complaint has again been made that people take their receivers and listen while others are talking on the same line. This must be stopped. Anyone found guilty is liable to have his phone removed. Telephone users are also reminded that the hour from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. on Sundays is used for dinner and there is no operator on the switchboard.

75 Years Ago April 7, 1932

Reorganization of the Village Board took place Monday evening. Highlights of the session included reductions in the annual salary of the village clerk, from \$2,200 to \$2,100; the superintendent of public works, from \$1,800 to \$1,650; the janitor, from \$1,200 to \$1,100; and the stenographer, from \$18 per week to \$15 per week.

Brigadier General William F. Schohl, our distinguished townsman, is expected to return this morning from New York, where further honors have been conferred upon him. Last Saturday evening, the commander's cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta was bestowed upon him by the Polish government in recognition of his work in behalf of a betterment of relations between this country and the Republic of Poland, both during the World War and since that time.

Bee Editorial: "Municipalities all over the country are now looking for ways to increase their revenues. It is suggested that considerable money

would find its way into local government coffers by the adoption of ordinances which would require solicitors and peddlers to pay fees for licenses. Over the course of a year, this should mean quite a few hundred dollars, if proper attention is given to the matter."

50 Years Ago April 4, 1957

The Snyder Fire Dept. has continued its leadership by taking delivery this week of a 75-foot aerial ladder truck. It is the first such truck in the Town of Amherst and cost \$35,000.

Juveniles are blamed by Amherst Police for breaking into the Smart-Form Corset Shop, 5550 Main St. sometime last Thursday night. Money totaling about \$20 was taken, including \$8 in rolled pennies.

25 Years Ago March 31, 1982

Vandals caused several hundred dollars in damage to the Williamsville Cemetery last week, knocking over an estimated 20 tombstones.

On loan to the Clearfield branch library is a Commodore VIC 20 computer, as part of a public service from a local Computerland store. It is the only branch in the Buffalo and Erie County System to offer a computer for patrons' use.