On Sunday, November 21 an article was published on the front page of the Democrat and Chronicle entitled “Citizen Access to Public Salaries Difficult.” In the article, Penfield was identified as a community looking to charge $9,000 to provide payroll information to the D&C. I thought it appropriate to share the rest of the story, as the story was awkwardly researched and incompletely reported. The Town did receive a freedom of information (FOI) request from the D&C asking for a significant amount of employee data dating back to 2005, some of which is personal information such as employee ID numbers and dates of birth. Also, some of the older payroll information is not available electronically, making the task a manual process. To respond to the D&C, the Personnel Office identified 4,694 documents that could be considered part of the FOI request. The documents would have to be separated, photocopied and information redacted. After that, the documents would have to be scanned for electronic delivery per the FOI request. We contacted the D&C to clarify the request and we also shared the scope of the task and associated costs to deliver information as requested, to which they replied they would get back to us with more details. Our Town Clerk’s Office followed up a week before the story ran to ask what they had decided about the request and its costs, and again the D&C said they would get back to us—which they did not. The next time the subject came up was when the story ran on November 21. Since then, the basic high level information requested by the D&C has been emailed to them at no cost to taxpayers, and we have protected the personal information of employees. The story was unfair and disingenuous. Penfield has been recognized by the D&C in the past for its transparency and open government. Additionally, all governmental salaries are public record; anyone wishing to see that information can do so online at no cost by visiting www.SeeThroughNY.org.

Another snow tip…the Sheriff’s Office receives many inquiries each winter regarding the acceptability of the practice of plowing snow across roadways onto neighboring lawns. While this may make the job easier for a plow operator, it often leaves snow and ice on the road, which is in direct violation of the law. Additionally, salt that may have been spread on the road surface can be removed in the process, causing the road surface to become slick and unsafe. The worst case scenario happens when a motorist suddenly comes upon an icy patch and loses control of the vehicle. Are you willing to accept responsibility for an accident that could have been prevented? Unless the plow operator can ensure that snow and ice are not deposited on the road, or the salt is not plowed up, the answer is no, plowing snow across a roadway onto a neighboring property is not an acceptable practice.

The Penfield Recreation Department will hold its annual Holiday Event on Saturday, December 4 at the Community Center from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. This year’s event will include an All-You-Can-Eat Pancake Dinner. Penfield families are invited to enjoy crafts and games, music by Mike Kornrich, and for those interested—pictures with Santa. Tickets may be purchased at the Penfield Recreation Office or by calling 340-8655. Tickets will also be available at the door. Proceeds from the dinner will benefit Penfield’s youth drama group, the Young Open and Honest Players. Tickets are only required for the Pancake Dinner, all other events are free to the public.

It is not too late to pick-up a few copies of the book “Memories of Penfield” for holiday gifts for family and friends. The book is an oral history of the first 200 years of this great community of Penfield, filled with personal anecdotes and photos. It is available for sale at the Recreation Office in the Community Center and the Town Clerk’s Office at the Town Hall. The price is $15 per book or two for $24.

I recently met with members of the Nature Conservancy to discuss the Thousand Acre Swamp Sanctuary as they prepare their 2011 public hike schedule. During 2010, 22 various hikes were held in the Swamp Sanctuary. Several thousands of visitors use this sanctuary each year. This area is truly a gem within our Town. If you have never visited the Thousand Acre Swamp, please consider an outing with your friends and family.

Until next week, be well and be safe!

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