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They came to listen

"No more trucks!" is what they heard

State Department of Transportation representatives listened at last Thursday evening's public meeting regarding Route 372

By Tony Basile

About 150 people gathered in the G.C.S. High School auditorium Thursday evening, November 16, as state Department of Transportation (D.O.T.) representatives unveiled the state's plans to enhance the transportation corridor connecting the villages of Greenwich, Cambridge and Salem. They said that they came to listen to the public, and that no decisions have been made.

What they heard in response was a series of objections to the first phase of the project, the replacement of the Route 372 bridge in Greenwich, based not solely on the invasiveness of the project, but upon the anticipated increase in heavy truck traffic the new bridge would bring to the main streets of both Greenwich and Cambridge.

Route 372 is the base of the triangle of state highways connecting the three villages, and its use is restricted to trucks requiring a clearance of 11 feet or less because of the Battenkill Railroad bridge crossing over the Greenwich end of the highway. The remainder of the highway, as it snakes between Greenwich and Cambridge, is a dangerous road by anyone's standards, and its use is avoided by many area drivers, especially at night and in the winter. The D.O.T. representatives avoided discussing the state's plans for the rest of the highway, but they tacitly admitted there are plans in existence to straighten out some of the curves.

While the notion of increasing the safety of the motoring public was presented as a compelling reason for the project, it was apparent that opening the highway to heavy truck traffic was the underlying purpose of the first phase. D.O.T. estimates an increase of about 50 trucks per day once the project is completed. All of this increase,

however, is likely to come in the form of heavy truck traffic, since only trucks requiring a clearance in excess of 11 feet avoid the highway now.

The prospect of 50 heavy trucks per day rumbling through the main streets of Cambridge and Greenwich was cause for concern among the residents and business owners in both villages.

Four plans proposed

Four proposed plans were presented, three of which were highly invasive, involving the destruction of the existing arch bridge over the Battenkill and the loss of several homes as well as Schiedam Hall.

The fourth plan, which was presented in two versions, the enhanced version having pedestrian and bicycle paths, would leave the arch bridge, Schiedam Hall and most existing buildings. It would contain a street level railroad crossing, however, which is its principal downside. It also requires a long span bridge over the top of Mill Hollow, which in addition to being somewhat displeasing to the eye, would also effectively block out the sun from the green space D.O.T. proposes to put beneath it.

Since most of the problems with all the plans involved the railroad, some suggested that the Battenkill Railroad be ended on the Easton side of the river. A railroad spokesman in the audience explained the shortcoming of that idea, saying that the hundreds of tons of payload the railroad handles for Hollingsworth and Vose in Clarks Mills would then have to be moved through the village by truck.

The D.O.T. representatives said that they would take all comments and suggestions under advisement, and they promised to hold several more public meetings before a decision is made.

Georgi Museum's Festival of Trees

The annual Festival of Trees opens this weekend at the Georgi Museum in Shushan. The gaily decorated trees will be on display weekends from November 25 to December 10, from 1 to 4 p.m.

The highlight of the festival will be on Saturday and Sunday, December 9 and 10. The concluding events for those days will be musical entertainment, food concession and local artisans' works, held in the remodeled community meeting rooms. Hours will be from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Most of the trees on display at the festival will be auctioned in a silent auction. Bids on a tree may be placed during the festival. The highest bidder for a tree will be able to take the tree home at the conclusion of the festival.

The museum is located on Adams Street in Shushan.

WEATHER

We enjoyed some sunny weather, bright moonlight, and starry skies this week. There were showers, however, on Tuesday evening, and it looks like the rest of the week will be cold and challenging.

Temperatures and conditions for the week past follow:

Date	Conditions	High	Low
November			
15	Chill, windy, sunny, rain 0.01"	45	30
16	Sunny	42	34
17	Clouds and sun	43	38
18	Sun and clouds	37	25
19	Sunny	38	27
20	Some sun, clouds, showers	36	20

Museum decked out for Christmas

The Old Fort House Museum in Fort Edward will open its Customs of Christmas Past exhibit on Sunday, December 3, from 1 to 4 p.m.

Tour the Old Fort House and the other historic buildings decked out for the holidays. Refreshments will be served.

Historical Society to hold dual celebration open house

A dual celebration will take place at the Washington County Historical Society on Saturday, December 9, between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. The Historical Society, located in the Wing-Northup House, Fort Edward, will observe its sixtieth anniversary as an organization and it will have its annual Holiday Open House. The theme for the day will be "The 1940s Revisited."

The Wing-Northup House will be decorated in a festive 1940s patriotic style. A special Christmas tree will be hung with ornaments dedicated to World War II veterans with the names of various members from the different branches of the Armed Services on them. All proceeds from these ornaments will be donated to the World War II Memorial under construction in Washington, D.C.

Doors will open at eleven, and events will commence at 11:30 when the color guard of the Hudson Falls American Legion Post 574 will march into the Wing-Northup House. Sarah Adamson of Hudson Falls will sing a cappella rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner," followed by a ballad from the musical "1776" and "America the Beautiful."

Music from the Big Band era will be played during the day as entertainment. There will be several speakers scheduled throughout the day. Mary Buffum Hamlin of Shushan will discuss her role as a nurse during World War II; local historian and World War II veteran Richard Wilson will chronicle his service in the Pacific Theater during the war; Audrey Wagner of Cambridge will relate her experiences as a "Rosie the Riveter" at Grumman Aircraft; and Salem historian Al Cormier will discuss the home front in Salem during the war.

At one o'clock, the James R. Cronk-hite Award, presented annually by the Washington County Historical Society for outstanding scholarship and dedication to the promotion and preservation of Washington County history, will be conferred. This year's recipient will be Doris McEachron, former Argyle Town and Village Historian and former Historian of Washington County.

The open house is free and open to the public. Free food and refreshments will be served throughout the day.

A bridge built by a teenager

~ A part of our history ~

The time was spring of 1834 when Andrew Jackson was President. The place was Union Village, a thriving little New York community, population 1000, many years later to be named Greenwich. The village was one long straggling street from the lower end of Schiedam through the present Main Street to Washington Square and thence up Salem Street to the village limits, a distance about one mile. A few other streets had been hopelessly laid out. At the head of Washington Square was the village bank, in a wing of the present Daniello house. Also on Church Street were a few homes and the Bottskill Baptist Church. There were no houses within the village north of the Mowry mansion, now Evergreen Bank on Main Street. John Street and Hill Street did not exist. Washington Street had but recently been opened and had a few houses at its west end. Leading out of the village to the north and west were: The Fordway (now Academy Street), the road to Fort Miller (now upper Main Street), and the Stage Road to Argyle (now Cottage Street).

Crossing the Batten Kill was a rickety wooden bridge several feet lower than the level of the present Greenwich Village Bridge on Bridge Street. There was a short, steep pitch down onto the bridge at either end. The spring freshet of that year was a veritable flood such as comes but once in a generation. The gentle Batten Kill became a raging torrent and carried away the rickety bridge. The loss of the bridge was a major catastrophe for the people of Union Village for the chief industries, the Mowry cotton mill and the furnace of Walden Eddy, were on the Easton side of the river. There were at that time no other bridges over the Batten Kill within four miles and the fordway at the Cement Mountain quarry was unusable at times of high water. The village was effectively cut in two, with most of the homes and business places on the Greenwich side and the principal places of employment as well as a large farming population on the Easton side.

The folks of the village were greatly distressed. Their whole economy was thrown out of joint and brought nearly to a standstill. The officials of the two towns started planning for a new bridge but it would be over a year before it would be available. The village trustees were considering building a scow to be used as a ferry but that seemed inadequate and, anyway, they did not get forward with the project.

George H. Corliss was the son of Dr. Hiram Corliss, whose home was, at that time, a building on lower Main Street. George was born in Easton and had grown up in Union Village. He was seventeen years old and had completed, at age 14, such education as the village could provide. Pending arrangements for further education, he was working in the Mowry store and cotton mill. He approached the town authorities with a plan for a temporary bridge which he offered to build with a bit of financial backing from the two towns. The town officials laughed at him. But the boy was not easily discouraged. He circulated a subscription paper in the hope of raising enough money to finance his temporary bridge. Henry Holmes, the boy's employer and manager of the cotton mill, started the subscription with fifteen dollars, and 55 others subscribed from twenty-five cents to two dollars. A little over fifty dollars was promised and nearly all of it was paid. The original subscription paper is in the library of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

Armed with this meager capital but with high hopes, courage and confidence, this seventeen-year-old boy set to work. Much of the labor and some of the materials were contributed. The bridge was quickly built "for foot passengers and teams" and served its purpose well (and could have served much longer). The vital link was restored and life and commerce resumed its normal course in Union Village.

The seventeen-year-old bridge builder completed his formal education at Castleton (Vermont) Seminary. After a few years as a merchant in Union Village he became a draftsman in a machinery shop in Providence, Rhode Island. He invented the first automatic steam engine governor, was soon a partner, and eventually became chief owner of the largest steam-engine works in America. He was granted sixty patents, and was showered with medals and honors in many countries. One of his accomplishments was the construction of the largest steam engine ever made, up to that time, for use at the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876. (The engine powered all of the machinery at the United States Centennial exposition.) He gave generously of his great wealth to many worthy causes and of himself to public service. He had imagination and the skill and courage to translate it into deeds. Above all, he had integrity and this he acquired from staunch parents in the village at the foot of the hills: Union Village.

The permanent bridge which replaced the bridge carried away by the 1834 freshet was a covered, wooden bridge. As the level of the original bridge had been too low, the replacing bridge was too high with a short, steep pitch up onto it at either end. This bridge was replaced, probably soon after the Civil War, by a steel truss bridge. The floor level was that of the present-day bridge. It had taken two bridges and nearly one hundred years to learn that steep pitches, up or down, at the bridge approaches was uneconomical. The steel bridge with plank flooring soon became a rickety, rattling affair, for it had not been designed to carry the weight of modern vehicular traffic. Condemned as unsafe, it was replaced in 1917 by the present concrete and steel bridge. In year 2000, the state's Department of Transportation is considering replacement of the 1917 Greenwich Village Bridge.

Note: The bulk of this story is as it was written by longtime Greenwich historian Islay V. H. Gill. The story was first published in the March 8, 1958, *Greenwich Journal*. Mr. Gill reported, "The main source of this bit of local history is an address by Dr. Samuel J. Beard, emeritus professor of engineering at Brown University, delivered before the Washington County Historical Society last July (1957) at Burton Hall in Easton."

Happy Thanksgiving to All

Thursday, November 23



Pennington honored on departure

Hayes to serve another four years



Washington County Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension Madeline Pennington is presented with a plaque and a corsage as she is thanked for her services to the county.

By Tony Basile

Madeline Pennington, who has served Washington County as Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension since March of 1995, was honored by the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting Friday morning. She is leaving Washington county to accept a position in St. Lawrence county.

Pennington has been instrumental in developing many programs such as Regional Fruit, Food Stamp & Nutrition, AIDER, Ag and Farmland Protection, Agricultural Economic Development, and Family & Farm Ag Impact Tours.

The board thanked her for her friendship and service to Washington county and wished her great success in her new endeavors.



Kevin Hayes

With the term of the County Administrator expiring on November 30, upon the recommendation of the Officers and Personnel Committee, the Board of Supervisors unanimously re-appointed Kevin Hayes of Argyle to a four year term expiring in November 2004.

County tax and cost of trash stickers to increase

Following several futile attempts by some supervisors to fund the 2001 budget increase from the 2000 fund balance and to void the previously passed 50 cent trash sticker increase, the board

passed the 2001 budget with the provision that any increase will be raised by taxes.

In previous years, tax increases have been avoided by using excess monies in the county's fund balance, which fund balance has been increasing over the past few years. County Administrator Kevin Hayes, however, cautioned the board that beginning this year the fund balance may see an annual decrease over the next several years in the face of added expenses like the jail.

The county uses the fund balance to avoid borrowing to finance the day-to-day operations of the county while awaiting the receipt of tax revenues and reimbursements from the state and federal governments, and to fund anticipated expenditures. Washington county needs a minimum of eight million dollars annually to operate, four million of which is paid directly to the school districts. While most of the money due to the county eventually arrives, the county can experience losses on tax sales of real property.

The 50 cent increase on dump stickers is projected to generate about \$400,000. Based on the theory that renters create trash but do not pay property taxes, many supervisors felt that it would be more equitable to increase user fees than to burden property owners. Others, however, believed that landlords routinely pass on tax increases to their tenants and that the fee increase will result in more trash either finding its way to burn barrels or being dumped on the side of the road. They also felt that more items will come to the transfer stations as free recyclables that now are coming in as paid trash. These same supervisors said that many taxpayers are already at their financial limits and that they preferred to see the budget trimmed rather than to have a tax increase in any form.

County seeks three people to serve on planning board

The Washington County Planning Board is currently seeking county residents to fill three vacant positions on the County Planning Board.

The board meets on the second Monday of the month and consists of eleven members, each serving seven year terms.

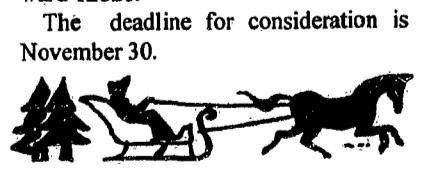
Main duties of the County Planning Board include reviewing and making recommendations back to communities which refer planning and zoning matters to the county board, agricultural district reviews, and such other county-wide or intermunicipal issues as may arise.

Those residents interested in land use planning and development who wish to be considered for a position on the board should contact their town supervisor.

Coats for Kids

"Coats for Kids" distribution is being handled from the County Building B-178 at 383 Broadway, Fort Edward, for residents of Washington County.

Hours are 8-3:30 p.m. daily. Closed holidays and from 12 to 1 daily. You do not need to call for an appointment to select a coat.



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