

State of the Town of Ossian 2024

1. As we look forward to the new year, 2025, I would like to look back on the accomplishments achieved by the Town of Ossian during 2024. Needless to say, progress only happens as a result of hard work and dedication for which I would like to thank all our town officials, employees and volunteers.

2. **Town Board**

The Town of Ossian continues to receive a best or least fiscally stressed score from the NYS Comptroller's Office. This fiscal "best" score reflects the Town of Ossian as having healthy fund balances and being debt free.

2024 saw several improvements to town facilities, thanks to Federal ARPA funding. Funds could only be spent on single, non-recurring expenses. Improvements included propane-powered backup generators for the Highway Garage and Town Hall, a new steel roof, a new propane heating system and upgrades to the computer and phone systems, all at the Town Hall.

The town also received 20 thousand dollars from Livingston County for a project that promotes recreation and tourism. With help from CC Environment and Planning and others an informational kiosk, with a map and interactive digital display will be located next to the Town Hall. The kiosk will be available to everyone and will promote outdoor recreation and agritourism opportunities and their locations.

3. **Highway Department**

Highway Superintendent, Keith Young, and crew have had a busy and productive year.

With 8½ miles of town road oil and stoned, 2 miles which were paved for the first time, leaving only about ½ mile of gravel road that is maintained year-round.

All seasonal roads were graveled and graded. 34 miles of town and county roadsides were mowed 4 times.

Also, ditching, changing driveway pipes, cutting shoulders and brush rounded out the schedule.

To help keep the Highway Department running smoothly, the Town purchased a 2024 John Deere loader and a 2024 ¾ ton pickup.

4. **Town Clerk/Tax Collector**

Town Clerk, John VanHeusen, and his deputy, Natalie Welch, have been busy making the Clerk's Office run smoothly and more efficiently. Purging all non-essential records gained tremendous capacity in the file room. Organizing the Local Law file cabinet and computer files has helped to improve operation. Natalie has been a big help to John improving his computer skills.

John and Natalie will continue the never-ending task of streamlining the clerk's office to keep up with the constant demands of NYS.

5. **Town Historian**

Town Historian, Rhea Walker's, regular duties include creating the Ossian Historical Newsletter, attending meetings with the Livingston County Historians' Association and speaking at various functions. In 2024 Rhea spoke at the Shepard Memorial Library in Dansville and introduced the Ossian Giant to children at the Ossian summer recreation program.

6. Code Enforcement-Quinn Golden

RE End year report from the Building and Codes Zoning Enforcement Department

This year started in June for me as that is the month I officially began my duties as the Code Enforcement officer. We had to catch up a great deal regarding permitting, filing, and sorting existing violations.

Thanks to the Town Clerk, John assumed the duties of catching up most of the back due filing. I am very grateful for his help and support. He is terrific to work with.

We issued 27 total building permits for the year. Permits included Solid Fuel burning devices, Camper Roofs, Decks, Pole barns, Additions. One new single family home and one EV Charging Station.

One of the department's goals was to form a working relationship with the two campgrounds in town. Regular meetings and inspections resulted in several permits for proper camper covers and decks. Five unsafe structures in two campgrounds were identified, three have been repaired, one removed and one pending action during the 2025 opening season.

We still have 4 open violations that have been open for a year or more. We are working with the property owners as best we can and improvements are being made to all properties except one. While the solutions are excruciatingly slow, they are ongoing and with decent communication from the property owners. In my opinion legal actions will not facilitate improvement with these violations and could actually hamper the objective. With the property owners making some progress, the court will likely not impose additional rulings. If we are not successful in court I fear the property owner will not continue to cooperate as we will have played our last card. We have had a few violations that opened under my watch, and they were successfully closed in a timely manner. It is far easier to have success when projects are not left over from the previous officer. We will likely be seeking legal remedy with one property on Frost Road.

The MS Works permit system was no longer working upon my arrival, it is very old and has not been supported by Microsoft for a decade or more. I was pleased to restart and complete the installation of the iWorq permit management system. It involved quite a lot of training and past records to be input. It is nearly complete as we are now using it for all Code Enforcement tasks. Though still we find items to be tweaked, such software implementations are a process and not an event. The supplier is extremely responsive and fixes or adds anything that we want or need as soon as it is requested.

Currently I am still updating the system with 2024 permits we issued previous to its installation. A spreadsheet of permits prior to 2024 have been uploaded from the old Microsoft Works system, so all of our history is preserved.

An additional challenge was to accomplish the required annual continuing education hours that I am required to complete. Since I did not begin to perform my duties until mid year, I missed the spring conferences and training events that would have made it easy to earn my CEU's. But I accomplished the task with individual classes and programs. Next year will be easier as I will have 12 months to complete them.

In all I feel we have had a successful year. We have improved the internal processes and established a solid working relationship with our customers. I am sincerely looking forward to 2025!

7. Zoning Board of Appeals

ZBA chairman, Tom DePuy, reports a quiet year. Only one special use permit was issued for a cell tower to be constructed on Wagner Road. This cell tower should improve cell service for Ossian residents.

8. Town Justice – Don Wilson

OSSIAN TOWN COURT-----YEAR IN REVIEW-----2024

1. In September I met with the Ossian Town Board seeking their interest and input regarding a potential Court application for a JCAP grant. These Justice Court Assistance Program grants are worth up to \$30,000.00 and are available to Courts seeking to improve various aspects of their Court environment.
 - I spoke specifically about security issues and also the possibility of replacing some of the furniture that serves both the Court and Town meetings. Other ideas are very welcome.
 - Any application for the JCAP grants pertaining to security must be preceded by a Security Audit that once completed is submitted to the State for review.
 - Because the deadline for JCAP applications was very close and with little time to get a Security Audit completed before the application deadline, it was decided to proceed with the Security Audit process but wait until next Fall to apply for the actual JCAP grant.
 - The security audit was completed in late September. I was told at that time that once Ossian's security audit was completed and submitted to the State there was no way of predicting when the audit would be reviewed by the State
 - To date I have not heard from the State regarding the results of Ossian's Security audit.
2. For the second year in a row, I am aware of only one ticket written by a DEC Officer during deer season. This is very different than just a few years ago when you could count on several different Officers writing multiple tickets each during hunting season.
3. I completed my required yearly Judicial training. Twelve credit hours of continuing education must be completed each year. There are also a minimum of 6 tests that must be passed. I am always glad when these requirements are in the rear view mirror.

9. Assessor

Assessor Holly Smalt reports duties and responsibilities of her office continue to be completed in a timely manner.

Field review of new construction, open permits, verifying sales and keeping office files up to date continues on a monthly basis. The tentative tax roll was filed with the Town Clerk on May 1st. Grievance Day was June 10, 2024, and the final assessment roll was filed with the Town Clerk on July 1st. Assessor Smalt has also fulfilled all requirements for continued education and training credits for 2024.

10. Livingston County Seniorama & Teen Recognition

The 29th annual Livingston County Teen Recognition event was held April 24, 2024 at the Willow Creek Event Venue in Lakeville, NY. Five teens from the Town of Ossian were honored at this event. They were Corey Beman, Kaitlyn Lee, Grace Rechichi and Tyler VanAuken.

Edward & Jennie Derrenbacher represented the Town of Ossian at the 43rd annual Livingston County Seniorama ceremony. This event was also held at Willow Creek Venue on May 4, 2024

A special thank you to Heather Pero and Roxanne Morsch for representing the Town of Ossian at the Livingston County Youth Board and the Livingston County Office for the Aging.

Goals for 2025 are simply for everyone to continue working together, making the Town of Ossian a great place to live.

Sincerely,
Dwight Knapp
Supervisor
Town of Ossian