

Niskayuna Town News



Spring 2004

Supervisor Says:

It's become apparent to me that our Town's various boards that deal with the planning and development of our community do not get the respect and recognition they deserve. Recently, a new residential development project was brought before the Town's Planning Board. Associated with this project is an issue that is controversial. The Board has taken an initial position that is consistent with good planning practice and the Town's zoning and sub-division regulations. Some residents have disagreed with the Planning Board's preliminary position – which is their right – and have questioned its authority. Some have suggested that perhaps the Board is too powerful and does not represent the residents. Some have even suggested that perhaps the Planning Board members should be elected.

Many people who complain about the actions of the Planning Board indicated they moved to Niskayuna because of the beauty and residential character of our community, and they are concerned that the Board might destroy the character of the town. The irony is that the Planning Board is the group who, through the years, has been largely responsible for the development of our town.

Members of the Planning Board serve as virtual volunteers (they receive an \$800 stipend annually). Some members—there are seven in total—have served for many years, others are fairly new. Their job is to follow the zoning ordinance of the Town, sub-division regulations and the Town's Comprehensive Plan in making decisions on various projects. A member is assigned the duties of project leader when applications come to the Planning Department. These projects can vary in size from small, two-lot subdivisions to very large projects, such as the new Mohawk Commons mall project. Residents see the members only at Monday night Planning Board meetings, but what they do not see is the numerous meetings that are held with engineers, developers, and town staff. The project leader might also meet with the Town's Conservation Advisory Council, another volunteer board that reviews project for issues relating to environmental issues. There can also be additional meetings with and/or input from other groups such as the Architectural Review Committee or the Tree Committee.

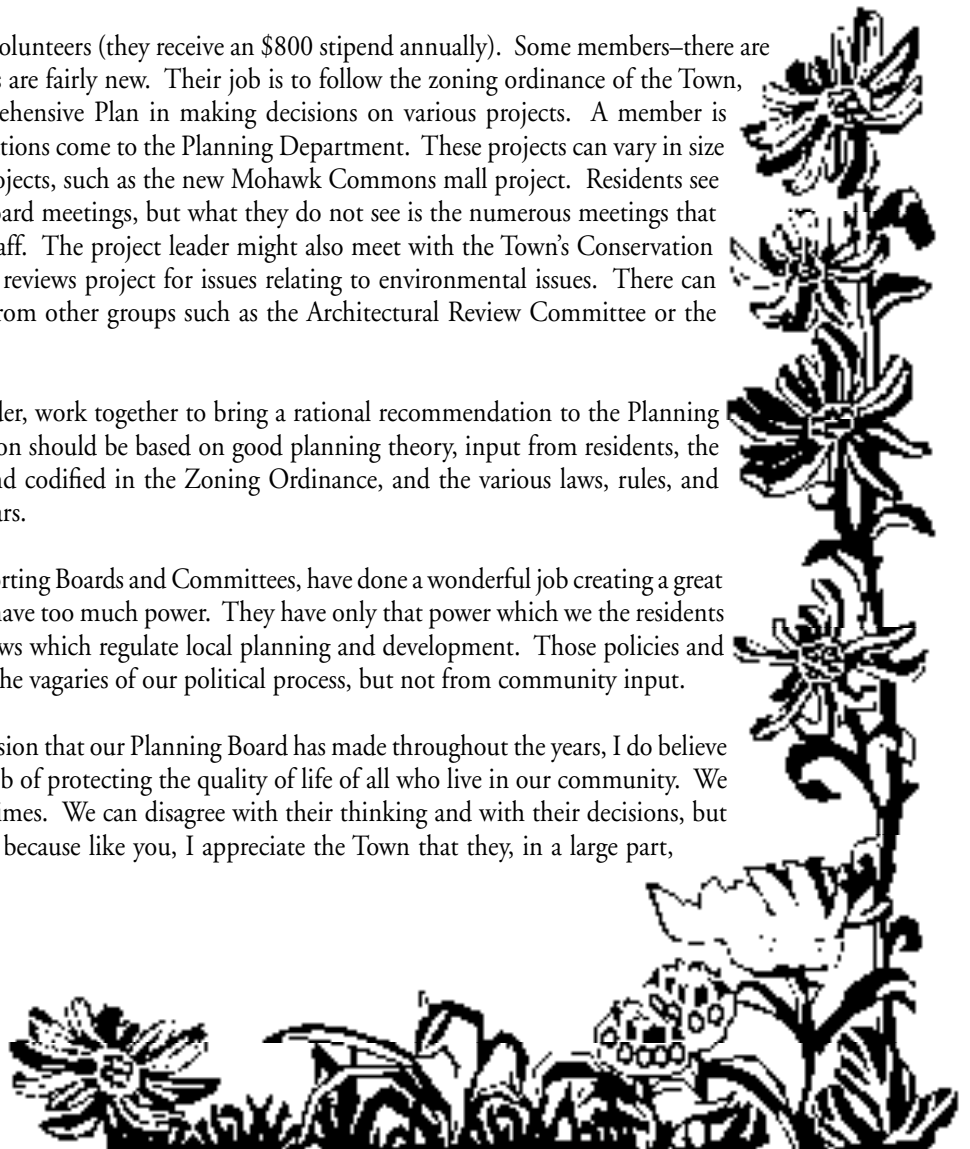
All of these boards, facilitated by the project leader, work together to bring a rational recommendation to the Planning Board on any given project. The recommendation should be based on good planning theory, input from residents, the policy established by the elected Town Board and codified in the Zoning Ordinance, and the various laws, rules, and regulations, which have been created over the years.

The Planning Board, along with the various supporting Boards and Committees, have done a wonderful job creating a great place to live and raise our families. They do not have too much power. They have only that power which we the residents give them through our own policies, and state laws which regulate local planning and development. Those policies and laws intentionally isolate Planning Boards from the vagaries of our political process, but not from community input.

Although I might not have agreed with every decision that our Planning Board has made throughout the years, I do believe in the aggregate, they have done a magnificent job of protecting the quality of life of all who live in our community. We can provide them with input, and should at all times. We can disagree with their thinking and with their decisions, but we can and should thank them for their efforts, because like you, I appreciate the Town that they, in a large part, have created.

Sincerely:
Luke J. Smith


Supervisor



YOUR TOWN COMMITTEES AT WORK

Planning Committee,

William Chapman, Chair:

- The Town Master Plan Committee has completed its work on an update of the Town Comprehensive Plan 2003. A Public hearing will be held for plan adoption. Copies are available at Town Hall for your review, and a draft is available on the Town's web site at www.niskayuna.org
- The Town is reviewing a draft ordinance for a proposed Office Technology Zone for the Northwest corner of Niskayuna near Balltown and Aqueduct Roads. Public hearings will be held on the proposed zone.
- Mohawk Commons is nearing completion. Barnes and Noble, PetSmart, Eastern Mountain Sports, EBGames, Cingular Wireless, Ruby Tuesday and AT&T Wireless are now open. Old Navy, Empire Vision, Bellini's Restaurant, Stone Cold Creamery and Supercuts will be opening in the near future.

Technology Committee,

Diane O'Donnell, Chair:

- Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite radio equipment will be installed in the town highway, water and sewer, and police department vehicles. The radios will provide improved communication within and between departments. Vehicles can be tracked and located providing additional safety and efficient use of equipment.
- The Town web site is currently being upgraded to provide more information and better communication to town residents. Subscription services will be offered in the coming months to allow automatic notification via e-mail of town advisories, events and items of interest.

Finance Committee,

Luke Smith Chair:

- The Finance Committee is working cooperatively with Grand Blvd. Fire District and our State Legislators on Home Rule Legislation to allow the district to bill Medicaid and insurance companies for ambulance service. This could result in \$300,000 to \$400,000 in revenue for the district.
- Completing bonding and purchase of various public works equipment such as trucks and heavy excavation vehicles.
- Several meetings have occurred with other municipalities regarding shared services and consolidation of services.
- Preliminary discussions have begun regarding the



successor agreement to the sales tax distribution formula, which expires in November. This is very important, as it could have a significant impact on our property taxes if the County reduces our share of sales tax. I am confident our representatives on the County Legislature will not let that happen

Police Committee,

Richard Holt, Chair:

- Two new police officers were recently hired and are now in training. They were hired using grant funds that will pay a portion of their salaries for the next three years.
- The Police Department is looking into other grant opportunities related to homeland security funds.
- The Town is still awaiting an arbitrator's decision regarding our contract with our police officers.

Recreation Committee,

Liz Orzel Kasper, Chair

- Working on development of Dog Park. Major issue is where it should be located.
- We are interviewing for town pool manager. Dick Ferencik has retired after many years of successful management of pool facilities.
- Evaluating operation and management of Skate Park. Committee is looking at the hours of operation and supervision in the park.
- Committee is meeting with representatives from soccer, baseball, Pop Warner and girls' softball to review their goals and plans for the town's facilities.
- Revisiting parkland fees for new developments.

Special Districts,

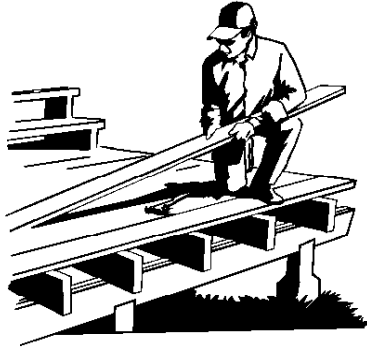
Luke Smith, Chair:

- Work is continuing on new storm water regulations program which deals with drainage issues in our community.
- Plans are being developed for Capital Projects regarding infrastructure problems with our sanitary sewer system.
- Stanford/Fillmore area sewer project is in the final stages of design, and construction should begin in the early fall. We are also working on a grant to assist low- to moderate-income residents with costs associated with hook up of the new system.
- The new sludge dehydration facility should be up and operating in about a month. This will reduce our sludge disposal by about 80%.

Building Department:

April 4-10 is Building Safety Week. You can help to keep your family and friends out of harm's way by doing the following:

- Make sure that you have working smoke detectors on every floor of your home, in every bedroom, and in every hallway.
- Install at least one carbon monoxide detector on the lowest floor level of your house that has a bedroom.
- Keep windows and doors unblocked, so that emergency personnel can get in and you can get out.
- Know your evacuation routes at home, at work, and in the places you play and learn.
- A swimming pool in the yard can be very dangerous for children. Never leave small children alone in or near the pool, even for a moment. After children have finished swimming, secure the pool so they can't get back into it.
- As required by New York State's building codes, a fence, barrier or enclosure must be built around pools greater than 24" and less than 48" in height. Enclosures must be 48" above the ground measured on the side of the enclosure that faces away from the pool. A building permit is needed for a swimming pool, even if it is a temporary, portable unit that you put up and take down each year. This includes above- and in-ground pools, some hot tubs, spas, and fixed-in-place wading pools.
- Before you build or make any home improvements, ask the building department about required permits and inspections to keep your residence safe.



Visit our web site at www.niskayuna.org/Public_Documents/NiskayunaNY_Building/index.

Police Department:

The Niskayuna Police Department is pleased to announce its participation in "Project Childsafe." The nationwide program promotes safe firearms handling and storage practices. Your police department has obtained, through the program, free gun locking devices (firearm safety kits), which are available upon

request. Please contact the office of the Chief of Police at 386-4585 for a free firearm safety kit or for more information on the project.

Assessor's Office:

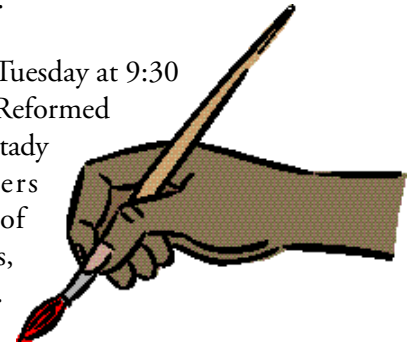
The 2004 tentative assessment roll will be filed in Town Hall on Friday, April 30, 2004. The new assessment roll will be open for inspection in the Assessor's Office, beginning April 30, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Time permitting, the Assessor will make appointments with anyone wishing to speak with her on any assessment or exemption issues during the course of the business week. Hours will also be available on a weekday evening and a weekend day for those property owners who cannot make an appointment during business hours. The night and weekend hours will be published in the Daily Gazette's legal notice section on Friday, April 30. Please call the Assessor's Office at 386-4550 if you have any questions.

Niskayuna Brush and Palette Group:

As has become the custom, the Niskayuna Brush and Palette Group will exhibit their artwork in the Board Room at Town Hall in the month of May. This year the reception for their annual show will be held on Thursday, May 6, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The Group meets each Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. in the Niskayuna Reformed Church on Troy/Schenectady Road, where members work in the medium of their choice (i.e. pastels, watercolors, oil, etc.). Membership is open to all who wish to develop their painting skills. For more information call 271-7785 or 381-6442.

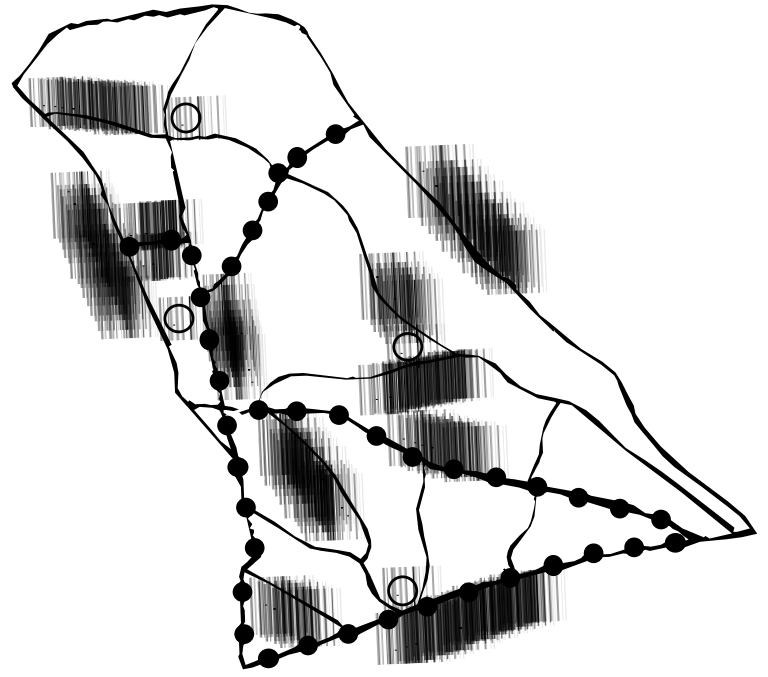


Engineering Department:

Drainage Do's and Don'ts - Every year the Town receives complaints about drainage and flooding. Some of these reported problems are the Town's responsibility, some are the resident's, some are a combined responsibility and some are simply complaints about the natural environment in poorly drained areas. The Town can rectify some of the problems. However, the most effective solutions frequently require combined public and private efforts. You can help if you consider that:

- Any action reducing the rate of runoff from your property is a good thing. Trees, shrubs, longer grass and depressions in your landscape all serve to slow the rate of runoff.

- If you have grass clippings, brush, newspapers, athletic equipment, etc. on your property that obstruct drainage systems, please take corrective action to help keep drainage systems free of debris. Once “closed drainage systems” such as catch basins and drainpipes get clogged up it is difficult and expensive to clean them out.
- If you have areas on your property where dirt is eroding during rainstorms, try to establish grass to stabilize these areas. If you have streams that have been piped on your property, consider opening them back up.
- Don't improve your lot without considering the “big picture” implications. Bear in mind that gutters with downspouts piped into drainage systems or other improvements that are geared at conveying water away from your lot as quickly as possible, ultimately create problems for someone else further downstream or downhill.
- In general, do not try to improve natural stream corridors. If you have a stream on your property, don't pipe it, don't fill it in, don't straighten it out, don't clear brush and plant grass right down to the edge of the stream. The streams and the floodplain areas adjacent to streams are necessary to store water during major rain events.



Zone 1 - Monday Zone 2 - Tuesday Zone 3 - Wednesday Zone 4 - Thursday
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Highway Department:

Weekly Yard Waste Pickup - From April 5 – May 14 (weather permitting), our highway truck will start circulating the Town to pick up yard waste. Please leave cans, bags or barrels (maximum capacity: cans and barrels 32 gals; bags 40 lbs.) at the curb and the trucks will pick them up when in your area. Branches and brush not to exceed 3 feet in diameter and 3 feet in length **must be bundled and tied** (no wire). Please do not include garbage, rocks, sod, dirt or metal in your yard waste. Biodegradable yard waste bags are no longer sold at Town Hall, but may be purchased at any hardware or grocery store. Please do not use plastic bags. They will not be picked up. Also, please remove the empty containers from the curb after the waste has been taken away.

Scheduled zone pickup

Scheduled zone pickup will begin on Monday, May 17. All barrels/containers (except bags) must be labeled with a “Yard Waste” sticker. Stickers are available at the Town Clerk's Office, Recreation Department, the Transfer Station or Highway Department.

Please contact the Highway Department at 785-9753 to inquire about the paving schedule.

Obstructions within the Highway Right of Way

The Town Highway Department will conduct another survey of all the Town's highways. Last year's survey found at least 230 town property owners were in violation of Section 319 of the NYS Highway Law, which prohibits any and all obstruction in the right of way including, but not limited to, basket ball hoops, rocks, posts, and bushes and trees over 18 inches high. Obstructions impede work in the right of way and pose a danger to employees and equipment.

Any resident in violation who does not remove such obstruction will be notified by the Highway Department to do so immediately. Failure to cooperate after being notified by the Highway Department could result in the expenses incurred in its removal being charged back to you.

Water and Sewer Department:

Fire Hydrant Clear Zones

Residents are asked to help maintain, at minimum, a 5-foot radius clear zone around all fire hydrants. The area is needed to efficiently access and operate a hydrant during an emergency, and for yearly inspection and maintenance to ensure quality water service. Any trees, bushes, other obstructions or flowers that you don't want disturbed, located within 5 feet of any hydrant, should be removed.

Hydrant Flushing – Web Posting

We plan to post the hydrant-flushing schedule on the Town's web page this spring.

New Water Usage Read Card:

The Water District has recently purchased an automated card reader that will greatly enhance the efficiency of billing our 7,600 accounts semi-annually. It will also allow the Town to return to processing an actual semi-annual winter reading that has been based on an estimate over the past several years. Receiving an actual reading each cycle will help detect leaks earlier, which will save money for both the residents and the Town. The additional history resulting from the winter reading will also result in more accurate estimations, when necessary, which will minimize the potential for both over- and under-charges. The success of this program relies on your cooperation in completing easy to follow instructions that will be included with the read card you will receive this June. Please do your part to help keep down the cost of our water.



Tax Department:

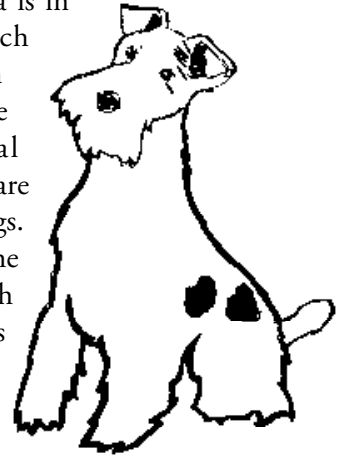
Second notices were sent on March 15th to all residents whose taxes are unpaid. Residents who will be selling their homes in the coming months are requested to notify the Tax Office at 386-4540, so that the names of the new owners can be printed on the School Tax and Water Rent bills to be issued in the fall.

Supervisor Luke Smith has requested a one-month extension from the County for the month of April. The penalty will be 3.75% and the collection will close on April 30, 2004. Marion Rhodes, Receiver of Taxes, wishes residents to be aware that they can place tax payments after hours in the "Town Mail Only" lock box to the right of Town Hall front door.

Water Rent payments will be collected next month and the Tax Office will process them on the day they are received. We will be unable to hold post-dated checks.

Dogs

Elsewhere in this newsletter, it has been mentioned that a Dog Park in Niskayuna is in its development stage, which gives many dog owners reason to celebrate. However, the Town has received several complaints that dog owners are not cleaning up after their dogs. The Bike Path, parks, and some neighborhoods are littered with dog waste because their owners do not clean up after them. The Town will be enhancing enforcement, specifically targeting dog owners who do not obey the leash law and who do not clean up after their pets.



Tree Planting Program

The Town of Niskayuna is currently accepting requests for street trees to be planted in the fall of 2004. Approximately eighty trees, including several varieties of Maple, Ash, and Oak, to name a few, will be planted. The locations for all plantings will be within your frontage of the Town's right-of-way adjacent to the street (typically 30 feet in from centerline). Trees will be delivered on a first come, first served basis. As a recipient, your only responsibility will be to saturate the ground with water once a week during the dry season. If you wish to participate, please call the highway Department (785-9753) to have your name included on the list.



Recreation Department #372-2519

Activities for Children include:

Soccer
Lacrosse
Babysitting course
Family Fun Ruana
Roller Skating
Flower Gardening in Recycled Containers
Bowling

Activities for Adults include:

Flower Gardening in Recycled containers
Tai Chi
Basketball
Defensive Driving (55 or older)
Chess Club
Exercise
Table Tennis

Spring Parade & Meet the Bunny

Who: Children 6 years and younger
When: **Friday, April 9, 2004 (Note: Incorrect Day listed in 2004 Spring Flyer. Correct Day is Friday).**

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Where: Niskayuna Town Hall

Bring your stuffed bunny or other animal dressed in their spring finery! Children can have their pictures taken with the Bunny. A small bag of candy will be given to each child.

Note: Middle school students are needed for bunnies.

Call the Recreation Office at 372-2519 by April 7 if you are interested.

Family Fun Run:

Who: Everyone – all ages are welcome!

When: Saturday, May 22 (Niska-Day) 8:30 a.m.

Where: Van Antwerp Middle School/Dexter Ave. side

Registration: 8:00 a.m./on site/no fee/ribbons for all.

Bowling at Bowlers Club

Who: Grades 2 - 5

When: Wed., March 24 - May 5 (No 4/14) 6 sessions

Where: Bowlers Club, Rt. 7, Latham

Time: After school until 4:30 p.m.

Cost: \$36

Children will be transported from school to Bowlers Club.

Parents should pick up children by 4:30 p.m.

Lacrosse

Who: 1st – 3rd Grade

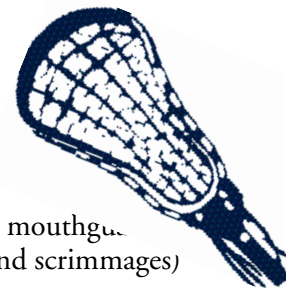
When: Sat., April 24 – May 15

Where: Craig School Fields

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Player provides stick, goggles and mouthguard.

Cost: \$30 (includes instruction and scrimmages)



Driving Range:

The Niskayuna Driving Range will open for the season in mid-April. Located on River Road near the entrance to the Recycling Station, just east of Blatnick Park, the Driving Range offers golfers an inexpensive and delightful way to practice and improve their driving skills.

Driving Range Punch

Cards: Buy 9 small buckets of balls, get the 10th free. You can hold your child's Birthday Party at the Driving Range.

Niskayuna Skate Park

located in Blatnick Park on River Road, will open in early May, weather permitting, for use by skateboards and rollerblades only. **No Bicycles.** Users will be required to wear helmets and elbow and knee pads and follow all posted rules at all times. Skate Park rules will be strictly enforced. Children under 11 years old **must** be accompanied by an adult when using this facility. Daily and seasonal permits are no longer necessary. Admission is free. This supervised park will be open Thursday through Sunday 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Please note that the Skate Park will be open only when conditions are safe. If in doubt, please check with the Recreation Department at 372-2519.

Pool ID Cards:

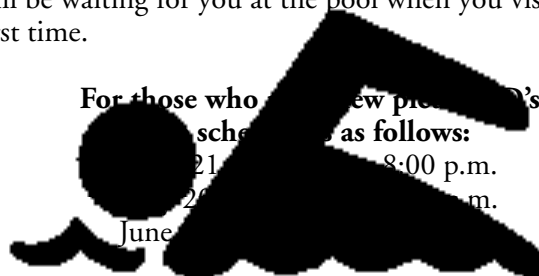
If you have a 2002 or 2003 town-issued ID card, we want to make it easier for you to purchase daily or seasonal town pool passes this year. We can make you a 2004 version using the data we stored in the computer photo system. Beginning in early March, we will mail registration material for you to complete and send to us. Your finished cards will be waiting for you at the pool when you visit for the first time.

For those who need new passes, the schedule is as follows:

April 21 - 8:00 p.m.

June 20 - 8:00 p.m.

June 20 - 8:00 p.m.



Senior News

Niskayuna seniors 60 years or older meet each Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. at the Niskayuna Community Center, 2682 Aqueduct Road. Activities include line dancing, crafts, water colors, bridge, scrabble, bowling and trips. Most activities are free, and transportation is available. Bocce Ball has become a major activity. This winter we added an indoor Bocce court .

The Community Center bus has seen expanded use for many senior short trips. Trips to area malls are offered to seniors one Friday each month. Reservations are required. Come and join us. Don't miss out on the fun. (See box for special events.)

AARP 55 Alive Defensive Driving Class

will be held in May. The cost is \$10.00 per person, and the date will be announced later.

Youth Employment

Niskayuna youth interested in employment ranging from babysitting, to yard work, to part-time jobs in area businesses are encouraged to call the Niskayuna Youth Employment Service at 372-2519 or visit Betty Ferencik in the media center at the Niskayuna High School. Similarly, if you have a job to be filled, call the Youth Employment Service for names of available workers. In



addition, the Recreation Department needs youth and adults to work in a variety of part-time spring and summer jobs as referees, counselors, lifeguards, and specialists.

Senior Special Events for Spring 2004

Listed below are some of the special events being offered for your entertainment this spring:

April 14: "The Honeymooners" at Villa Borghese in Wappingers Falls.

May 8: Trip to Stanley Performing Arts Center for John Davidson concert and luncheon. \$60 per person.

May 25: 19th Anniversary Celebration at Niskayuna Senior Center.

June 14: Trip to Mohegan Sun for show starring Vicki Lawrence and "Mama". \$25 in tokens to use for lunch and casino included.

Jul. & Aug.: Trips to SPAC for ballet and orchestra. Details will be available in April.

Sept. 11: 3rd Annual Senior Barbecue at Niskayuna Community Center Park. Includes food, music and Bocce tournaments.

Please call the Recreation Department at



Niskayuna Library Gardeners

We, the Niskayuna Library Gardeners, while anxiously awaiting the blooms of the many spring bulbs we planted last fall, extend an invitation to anyone who enjoys gardening to join us. You will find us at the library Thursday mornings, 9:30 a.m., starting May 6. Bring your gloves and gardening tools. We will welcome you and tell you about us. For further information call Maria at 377-1018.

We now have a storage shed and ask that you please consider a donation of that garden tool you no longer use. Any implement to help us plant, weed, prune, rake, water or sweep up would be appreciated.

TOWN OF NISKAYUNA

One Niskayuna Circle
Niskayuna, New York 12309-4381

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Supervisor

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