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5/22/99

... budget and the accompanying tax levy, which business officials Lisa Failla, Betsy McKean

Mayor's Second Job Raises Questions

By John Emerson
MONTICELLO — Whether or not Monticello village trustees are changing the village's form of government without a referendum is open to debate, but there is no question that Mayor Gary Sommers has assumed the village manager's job — and his paycheck will prove it.

Monday night, trustees gave Sommers a \$12,000 raise for assuming the Village Manager's duties for more than a year. Deputy Mayor Monis Brafman directed the board's discussion of the issue because Sommers removed himself from both the debate and the podium during the debate.

The vote approving the raise was 3-1 with trustee Michael Levinson casting the lone dissenting vote.

"I don't think anyone can understand the frustration I have had in trying to get the right person to sit behind this [the village manager's] desk," said trustee David Rosenberg. "What may appear to be foot dragging is really not. [Sommers] has been doing an outstanding job as the manager, and I think the money is long overdue. I think to get this for \$12,000 a year is a bargain."

Sommers has been acting as the village's chief administrative officer since last year when he and two other board members fired former village manager Cheryl Shiber on June 1. Earlier this year on January 28, Middletown Alderman Jay Dwyer took over as village manager but resigned after less than a week on the job.

The village has gone through 10 managers in 12 years, if Dwyer is excluded from the count. The revolving door that seems to lead into the village manager's office and the comparatively low salary the village offers for the job has led to redefining the position as primarily an economic development officer rather than a village manager.

Currently, the village is advertising for an economic development officer at a salary of about \$25,000 per year, the same amount that is listed in the budget for the village manager's position. Whether the position is truly managerial in nature may be the determining factor in whether the village is changing its form of government.

Please See MAYOR, page 4A

... plan the tax rate districtwide.

"That support was certainly gratifying," admitted Interim District Superintendent Martin Handler, who is also the superintendent of BOCES. "I was very pleased with the results. We had voters throughout the district."

Voters also approved a \$40,000 (or lower) expenditure on a new bus, 669-224. The money comes from a Bus Reserve Fund and will go towards the purchase of an already-ordered school bus.

Handler said there are no more matters requiring a public vote in the near future. Now, the district — complete with a newly-elected, nine-member board — dives headlong into creating one school from an original three.

... centralized high school on a yet-to-be-determined site most likely near Lake Huntington.

RFPs for financial advisement will be forthcoming soon, too.

In addition, "the board's going to do some careful planning in how they're going to structure the educational program," said Handler.

Though he explained that no changes to the program (other than state mandates) would have to be made until a shifting of students occurred (like what would happen when the new school is built in 3-4 years), the board could decide to move students around as early as the 2000/2001 school year, which would necessitate programmatic changes.

Please See BUDGET, page 4A



SHARING THE BLESSINGS: Pastor Bob Paquet (left) and Pastor Steve Knutsen (right) are part of the team that provides the food The Blessing Food Pantry has to offer needy families.

'The Blessing' of Sullivan Churches Partner to Provide Food to

By Rob Potter
HANKINS — Thanks to three local pastors and some dedicated volunteers in their churches, needy families have another place to turn to get necessary nutritious food.

Since May, The Blessing Food Pantry has been open at the Hankins Assembly of God. The pantry is a member of the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York and has been approved for participation in the regional food bank's USDA government surplus food program.

The three men who have worked

diligently to create The Blessing and keep it going are Pastor Steve Knutsen, Pastor Bob Paquet and Rev. Keith Peters. Knutsen serves the Callicoon Parish — which includes the Methodist Churches in Callicoon, Hankins and Narrowsburg, while Paquet serves the Hankins Assembly of God and Peters ministers at Acts 1:8 in Cochection and Hope Ministries in Kenoza Lake.

Since opening only three months ago, The Blessing has provided over 10,000 lbs. of food to 240 needy households in the area.

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8/27/99

PARADE PLANNING: A committee consisting of members from five western Fire Departments – Callicoon, Hankins/Fremont Center, Hortonville, Long Eddy and County Volunteer Firefighters' Association Parade. The parade steps off at 2 p.m. on September 18 in Fremont Center. Pictured above from left and going clockwise are: George Blom (committee chairperson and member of Hankins/Fremont Center F.D.), George Blom (Hankins/Fremont Center F.D.), Larry Knack (committee treasurer and member of Hankins/Fremont Center F.D.), Dennis Bernitt (Hankins/Fremont Center), Bill Buckmaster, Jr. (Hortonville Fire Department), Conklin III (North Branch). Missing from photo are committee members Lara Bernitt (Secretary and member of Hankins/Fremont Center), Aaron Davis (Long Eddy F.D.), Mike Davis (Hankins/Fremont Center), Bill Flynn (North Branch), Howard Fuchs (vice chairman of parade and member of North Branch F.D.), Gary Kays (Hortonville), Brian Lewis (Hankins/Fremont Center), Mark Murphy (Callicoon F.D.), Jim Ryneason (Long Eddy), Doug Santoro (Callicoon F.D.), Jim Wainen (Long Eddy) and Alan Welton (North Branch).

Mayor . . .

Continued from front page

Under state law, a village manager is given broad authority to act on the village's behalf and is legally responsible for actions taken in many areas. The mayor and trustees may set policy, but it is the manager who is responsible for carrying those policies forward.

Now, with the formalized appointment of Sommers as temporary village manager and the apparent change in the duties, the village seems to be operating as a de facto mayor/council form of government. That form of government invests powers with the mayor as the chief executive officer. Such a change is subject to public referendum and must be approved by the voters, according to state law.

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