

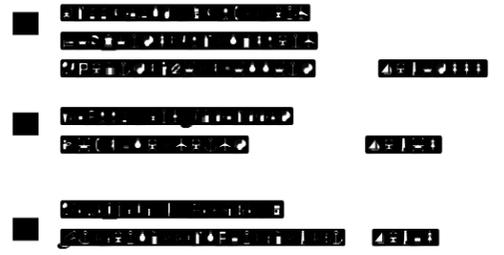
LANSGING COMMUNITY NEWS



Serving the Town and Village of Lansing, Cayuga Heights, King Ferry & Genoa

"Not quite paradise, but a nice place to live."

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\$7.77 Million So. Lansing Sewer Info Meeting Set For February 25th

By Matthew Shulman

Lansing residents interested in the possible development of a public sewer system will gather in the high school cafeteria on February 25th at 7:00 pm to hear the South Lansing Sewer District Committee's proposal. Lansingites will also have the opportunity to ask questions and give their opinions about project phasing, capital costs, hookup fees and maintenance costs.

This meeting is scheduled to last for approximately one and one-half hours, but

will be extended if the need for more information or the desire to provide public input is requested by those who attend.

The Committee was established last spring by the Lansing Town Board and was authorized to: (1) investigate the feasibility of a sewer project, (2) inform Lansing residents about their findings, and (3) make recommendations to the Town Board.

This will be the committee's second in-
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FINDING THE MONEY - Jeff Clark (businessman), Kevin Kaufman (Bolton Point director), Larry Tvaroha (Town Board), Dave Herrick (Town Engineer) and Larry Sharpsteen (Planning Board) are among more than a dozen participants in twice-monthly early morning meetings at the Community Center who discuss technical and funding options to bring sewage treatment to the Town of Lansing.

Town Board Members Chide County DSS; Request Inquiry & Election of Commissioner

With veiled references to a particularly delicate situation involving the safety of town residents, the five members of the Lansing Town Board issued an open letter last Friday expressing their frustration with the County Department of Social Services and suggesting that the County Charter be amended to permit the direct election of the Commissioner of Social Services.

The letter (see page 2) criticized past DSS policies and expressed a continuing concern not only that the county, "has paid certain property taxes for decades" to homeowners who receive DSS benefits, but also that mortgages or liens have not been placed on all such properties to protect taxpayers' interests.

The letter maintains that the Town Board's inquiries to DSS about this issue last summer remain unanswered. "It should not be so difficult to get any kind of response from the Department," it said.

Drawing on the recent County Charter Review Committee findings and current debate about converting the Sheriff and County Clerk from elective to appointed positions, the letter further expressed frustration with DSS Commissioner Mary Pat Dolan by arguing that the office of Commissioner be converted to an elected position.

Following the Saturday receipt of the Board members' letter, the Lansing Community News tried to reach Commissioner Dolan, Lansing County Board Representatives Thomas Todd and Dooley Kiefer and County Board Chair Barbara Mink. Dolan and Kiefer could not be contacted.

Rep. Todd sees the letter as a "broad

policy complaint to the way DSS is operating." His comments suggest a desire to see the Commissioner be more forthcoming on procedural issues that are not linked to confidentiality, which he says must be respected.

As far as appointed versus elective county offices is concerned, "My position was pretty plainly stated in my (Lansing) editorial a few weeks ago," said Todd. "I believe the Clerk and Sheriff should be elected positions. I'm not commenting on the (DSS) Commissioner at this time."

After receiving a copy of the open letter, County Board Chair Barbara Mink faxed us her response on Sunday (see page 7).

She "corrected" the Board members, saying that the County has secured mortgages or liens on all homes where the DSS has made property tax payments, except two. In these two instances, said Mink, the homeowners receive SSI payments and federal law prevents the county from taking title.

A revamping of DSS "should probably be done anyway," said Mink because of changes in welfare legislation enacted this year by New York State.

Mink recalled that the Commissioner of Social services was an elected position at the time that each town had an individual assessor and that the decision to make it an appointed position had not been lightly made by the predecessor County Board.

"The issue at stake here is the well-being of the residents of the municipalities we represent," concluded Mink. "I hope we can work together to find some meaningful answers."

Lansing Drop-In Center Creates A Social Setting For Parents & Kids

Though an average of 19 youngsters romp at the old Grange Hall next to the Town Hall whenever the Lansing Drop-In Center is in session, many parents feel that the program benefits them as much as it does their children.

The Drop-In Center was launched in the early 1980's by the Lansing Family Forum to provide a playgroup for preschool children and to provide a place for parents with young children to meet in a social setting.

In 1996, sixty-nine families brought 92 children to the Drop-In Center -- occasionally as many as 30 on a given day!

Operated by director Diane Booth and aide Abby Hatfield, 18 month to 5 year old children may be dropped throughout the school year on Wednesday and Friday mornings from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. (From December through March it's also open on Monday's to help kids and their moms avoid advanced cases of "cabin fever.") Younger children can come too, but the parent must remain to supervise their play.

Though Diane and Abby are paid staff, the Drop-In Center relies on parents volunteering their time on a rotating schedule. On the average, parents help out once a month to maintain the high adult-to-child ratio that makes the Drop-In Center such a pleasant experience for the kids.

There's no enrollment or attendance requirement, explained Booth. Parents can come and go as they please, though many stay far longer than they intended because of the warm social contacts with other adults.

"We moved to Lansing seven years ago, but I had to work," explained Lansingville Road mom Shelley Comisi. "It wasn't until



READING TIME is a very personal experience at the Drop-In Center. Some jump up and call out names (or vocalize animal sounds); others read quietly on the couch and some little ones just curl up in a corner to catch some zzzzzzz's.

I came to the Drop-In Center with my son Daniel, now 5, that I felt part of the Lansing community."

"Since I don't have other family in Lansing, it's a safe place to leave Daniel," she went on. As an only child living in a rural area, Daniel's not only made friends with future classmates, but has learned to listen, play with others and become part of a group.

"We moved here a month before my eldest was born," said Terri Cheatham, of Searles Road, who's brought her three children to the Drop-In Center for the last seven

years. "This became my original social network in Lansing," Cheatham recollected. "It's where I first learned about community affairs, what's going on in the schools, the best places to shop."

Her three youngsters didn't suffer either. "The Drop-In Center was extremely important for their social skill," she said. "My oldest went to school with confidence, thanks to the friends they'd met here."

A typical Drop-In morning has open play, quiet time on a special "circle rug" (that's getting old enough to be classed as a historic fixture - hint, hint to potential donors), healthy

snack time, crafts, puzzles, reading and group games.

There's no "charge" for sending kids to the Center, though a dollar an hour (up to \$5 per family/day maximum) donation is requested which pays for the children's snacks. Direct financial support comes from the Town of Lansing's Recreation Department, the United Way of Tompkins County and the New York State Division for Youth. Additional support has come from Borg-Warner and The Cat's Pajamas who donated the Little Tykes Playground and new toys, respectively.

Over the past year, the Drop-In Center has had several special events. Cynthia (Sam) Foley and Susan White have been guest storytellers; Lansing firefighter Phil Miller brought a fire truck and Deputy Sheriff Jeff Norm brought a police car; Lisa Fenwick provided a morning of *Kindermusik*; and the Drop-In Center co-sponsored parenting classes with the Lansing Elementary School. For more information, contact Diane Booth at 533-7011 or the Lansing Recreation Dept. at 533-7388.

See you all at Lansing Days!

Drop-In Center
Parenting Skills Workshop
9:30-11:30 am
at the
Lansing Community Center
Feb. 7, 14, 28, Mar. 7, 14, 21, Apr. 4, 11
FREE, SNACKS, CHILD CARE
Call Nancy George Molnar (533-4183)
or sign up at the Drop-In Center

Space Donated By Lansing Community News

AIDS WORK Benefit Concert

One Voice: A Concert of African Songs

featuring

Samite and the Cornell University Glee Club and Chorus

Sunday, February 9th at 3:00 PM -- Bailey Hall at Cornell

Students: \$5 Adults \$8 in advance & \$10 at the door

Tickets Available at Clinton House and the Willard Straight Hall Box Office

