

Legislative Updates

My last column provided news of the Town of Pittsford’s pending plans to install sidewalks. This week let’s consider the progress of some pending legislation.

Derelict Properties

The sight of vacant properties that have fallen into disrepair is disconcerting to everyone. For nearby homeowners it represents an even greater imposition. We all recognize the problem when we see it: boarded windows, legal notices pasted to doorfronts, a tarp over a failing roof and other obvious symptoms of decay.

I’ve reviewed the scope of the Town’s authority to act to address these troubled properties. It turns out that the Town Code allows certain actions to address health and safety issues presented by neglected buildings, but little to remedy conditions constituting an eyesore. For this reason I’ve asked the Town Attorney to research and propose revisions to Pittsford’s municipal code, to give the Town the maximum scope of authority permitted by law to take action in addressing derelict properties. You can expect to see this on the agenda for discussion by the Town Board at one of its working sessions in the months ahead.

Recreational Vehicle Storage

Pittsford is an outlier among towns in Monroe County in having no code provision for reasonable regulation of storage of large recreational vehicles in residential neighborhoods.

In December the Town Board presented for public hearing a proposed model ordinance based on successful models in place in nearby municipalities, models that have worked well for RV owners and their neighbors alike. Based on comments at that hearing and on submissions by interested parties, the Town staff is drafting revisions to the proposed law to accommodate the many helpful suggestions derived from that session. It is possible that these revisions may be significant enough to warrant an additional public hearing. In any event, the Town government will provide ample notice to RV owners and other interested parties prior to any meeting to take up the matter. Such notice would, of course, be posted as well on the Town website for access by everyone, accompanied by the draft of the proposed statute.

To some the sight of a large recreational vehicle in the driveway is a symbol of leisure, of freedom, of affluence, attainment and fulfillment. To others it’s as welcome a sight as a derelict property. The history of Pittsford’s process in considering an RV storage law presents a classic example of one of the principal functions of municipal government: reconciling conflicting interests and values reasonably, and in the best interests of the whole Town. If, from time to time, that process has brought out some stridency in heartfelt expressions of opinions by members of the public, that’s part of the process. Many of the comments, strident or not, have provided helpful and welcome guidance to the Town Board in its effort to strike the right balance. As ever, the voice that will resonate with us most powerfully will be the voice of reason and of sound public policy. My expectation is that we will be ready with the revision of the proposed law in the month ahead.

If you’d like to comment on these matters or on any other issue involving Town government, please stop by my office in Town Hall, give me a call at 248-6220 or send a message to bsmith@townofpittsford.org.