

Community keeps fireworks from being extinguished

Contributed by Jane K. Dove and Ken Mastro
Wednesday, June 03, 2009 15:27

After teetering briefly on the brink of extinction for this year, the town's annual fireworks show, set for Saturday, June 27 at Onatru Farm Park, will go on.

The spectacular fireworks have been held for more than a decade and are a much-anticipated event in town, drawing well more than a thousand residents to the fields at Onatru. Many families arrive early for picnicking and to enjoy the music and other activities.

The fireworks were in jeopardy this year because officials are struggling to plug a large gap in the 2009 town budget. They were on a list of potential cutbacks prepared by Town Supervisor Edward Brancati after asking department heads to look for programs and services that could be trimmed from the budget. But, after discussing the event at last Thursday's Town Board work session, officials decided to leave the \$30,000 show intact.

"This is the major community event in this town," said Town Board member Peter DeLucia. "We have already paid a non-refundable deposit of \$5,000. It doesn't make sense to cut it."

Mr. DeLucia went on to say that town recreation programs and the fireworks were important. "I think if we go to the community, we can get funding for the fireworks. I would be willing to take the lead on this."

Officials agreed that the fireworks have become a tradition that is important to maintain. "Now that I see we have already put out \$5,500 and some community groups, mainly the Lewisboro Lions, have already spent advance money, I think we should go ahead with the event," said Town Board member Dan Welsh. His fellow board members agreed.

Speaking to The Ledger on Tuesday, Mr. DeLucia said that he was very pleased with the response he has received to date to acquire funding for the fireworks.

"The Horse and Hound Restaurant was one of the first local businesses to respond with a donation," he said, "and their patrons contributed additional funds." As of Tuesday, other donors included the Lewisboro Baseball Association; Wolf Conservation Center; the law firms of Wallach and Rendo LLP, and Casper and Fischer, LLP; Gossett Brothers Nursery; the Lewisboro Republican Town Committee; Nino's Restaurant; Vista Market; Greenwich Produce; Cablevision; Bria Carting; and Cross River Wine Merchant."

Parks and Recreation Supervisor Dana Mayclim said that all sponsors contributing \$200 or more by Monday, June 8, will be recognized on the staff T-shirts worn at the event, and that sponsors will be publicly recognized and thanked.

Mr. DeLucia said he was halfway towards raising what he hoped to be almost the whole amount needed to mount the fireworks. "Other organizations are interested but have to wait for their boards to meet," he said. "The Town Board is very grateful for the support of our community during these difficult economic times."

Anyone wishing to donate may contact the Parks and Recreation Department at 232-6162.

Who said what?

At the Town Board meeting, Mr. DeLucia tried to determine why some residents were under the impression that the fireworks were being canceled.

The Ledger obtained a copy of an e-mail that had circulated among a number of Goldens Bridge residents emphasizing the need to attend the Goldens Bridge Fire Department's 100th anniversary fireworks display at Fox Valley Park on Saturday, June 13, because "town will NOT be doing fireworks this year, so this will be the only fireworks display this summer." The Ledger also has a copy of the minutes of the Lewisboro Lakes Committee meeting on Wednesday, May 27, the day before the Town Board meeting, in which it states, "Note for those interested, attend June 13th Fox Valley fireworks and do not count on ones at Onatru."

"How come people in town know more than I do?" Town Board member Bruce Pavalow asked at the Town Board

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meeting.

Mr. DeLucia then asked Ms. Mayclim if she had any information about who raised the issue of the fireworks at the lakes committee meeting.

"I was told that a senior town official had come to the lakes committee meeting and said that residents should plan to go to the Goldens Bridge fireworks because the Onatru fireworks would not be held," she said. Ms. Mayclim did not attend the meeting, but Mr. Brancati and Mr. Welsh were both listed in the committee's minutes as in attendance.

Ms. Mayclim would not elaborate when pressed by Mr. Pavalow and Mr. DeLucia regarding who made the comment. A few minutes later, Mr. DeLucia told Mr. Brancati that "it was you, I think, from what I heard who made the announcement at the meeting last night," according to a transcription of the audio tape of the Town Board meeting.

Mr. Brancati said he did not say that the town was canceling them and that he was encouraging residents to attend the Goldens Bridge fireworks. After some more prodding from Mr. DeLucia, Mr. Brancati said "it's been something that's been on the table for debate for a while, for a month now." The exchange then immediately ended as Mr. Welsh suggested that it was not being productive, according to the transcript.

After obtaining the minutes of the lakes committee meeting on Tuesday, The Ledger asked Mr. Brancati who discussed the possibility of not having the fireworks at that meeting. Mr. Brancati told The Ledger that the minutes were not completely accurate but that he had told people to attend the Goldens Bridge fireworks. People at the meeting then asked him if the town was planning on having its fireworks as well, and he told them it was "unclear at that point." He noted to The Ledger that the Town Board did not decide to keep the fireworks for this year until its meeting the following day, and that prior to that cutting the fireworks was a possibility.

Mr. Brancati then responded to a question from The Ledger, which had not obtained a transcript of the Town Board meeting at that point, that he told the Town Board the same thing when Mr. DeLucia accused him of making the announcement at the lakes committee meeting.