

Rhinebeck News

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RHS Journalists Team Up with Mayor

What are Rhinebeck High School journalism students up to these days?

Thanks to Mayor Gary Bassett, they're learning the ropes of journalistic writing not only for school publications but also for a newsletter their local community can enjoy.

Bassett's idea has offered students a unique chance to collaborate with the mayor's colleagues and to learn more about their local government. When our class first began researching for the project, most students were unaware of Rhinebeck's two municipal divisions.

Mayor Gary Bassett described the organization of Rhinebeck best: "Think of it as a doughnut. You have the village as the center, and the town around it." Students dug right into the Rhinebeck "doughnut." But as with any new endeavor there were a few challenges and more learning ahead.

We thank the Mayor and his team for the opportunity, and we look forward to collaborating on future issues of **Rhinebeck News**.

---Sarah Wheeler, *English Teacher RHS*



Photo Credit: Reagan Schweppe
Board Trustee John Rossi, Village Clerk Patricia Coon, and Mayor Bassett spoke with Junior Enya Cupano and Senior Lexi Lamprou about the evolution of towns and villages.

Rhinebeck News Contributors:

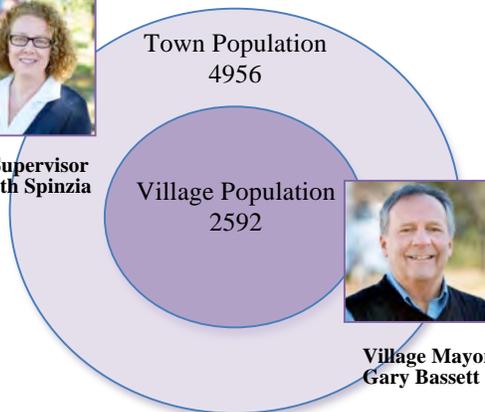
Alexandra Lamprou, Enya Cupano, John Fleming, Sarah Wood, Isaac Jeffreys, Lashelle Carroll, Roy Cooley, Reagan Schweppe, Natalia De Zubiaurre, Jamie Rifenburgh

Rhinebeck: A Village within a Town

Rhinebeck was settled in 1686, when the Dutch purchased acreage from the Iroquois. The Town of Rhinebeck was officially organized in 1788, and the Village was incorporated later, in 1834. As the graphic below indicates, the Town of Rhinebeck encompasses the Village of Rhinebeck.



**Town Supervisor
Elizabeth Spinzia**



**Village Mayor
Gary Bassett**

In most cases, towns predate villages, but villages have changed more over time, mostly because they can self-govern through legislation. Historically, villages were formed to provide governmental services for concentrated populations.

Rhinebeck—its past, present, and future—are a passion for our mayor. Bassett described the appeal of the many historical pictures on the walls of his office. He loves to see "where we were and where we are now" and how we have improved.

One of the most important pieces of information in our research was the fact that so many of the people that make Rhinebeck what it is actually work on a part-time or even volunteer basis. And, as issues often overlap the boundaries of village and town, collaboration is essential.

Community service, therefore, is the key to the proper function of our town and village. Whether elected or appointed, the many board trustees, committee members, and liaisons to particular departments all preserve this unique place we call home.

I like seeing where we were and where we are now. -- Mayor Bassett

It's Tax Time!

Taxes are not everyone's favorite topic. And when it comes to villages and towns, taxes can be a touchy subject.



Photo Credit: Reagan Schweppe
Village Treasurer Karen McLaughlin introduces Junior Sarah Wood to taxation in Rhinebeck.

Town residents pay a number of property taxes, and the revenue helps pay for things such as our schools, fire departments, and library to name a few.

Village residents pay town taxes as well as village property taxes, but town residents don't pay village taxes. So what do villagers get besides plowed snow, leaf pick-up, and street paving? Recreation!

All taxable property within the town is handled by the same three elected assessors who value all real property for the town, village, and school district. This three member board reviews your tax assessment in cases where you and your assessor disagree as to the value/relative value of your property for real property tax purposes. Here is where you can apply for tax exemption and appeal your property assessment. Open Book days are held in Town Hall in May each year.

When members of the village pay these taxes, they are not being double taxed. But clearly, village residents and officials need to take a very active role in the town budget process to make sure town expenses are not being financed by levying taxes on properties in the town (beyond the village).



Let's Do the Math:

You can calculate the amount you pay in property taxes by...

multiplying your property's taxable assessment (your assessment minus any exemptions)

X

the tax rates for school districts, municipalities, counties and special districts.

Tax Rate per Thousand =

Tax Levy ÷ total of all taxable assessments in jurisdiction x 1,000

Grievance Day is not required but is recommended if you are interested in reducing taxes. Submit a short form and submission to the assessor's office prior to the end of day. It is advised to submit the form 10 days before the 4th Tuesday in May.

If you believe your assessment is accurate but your property taxes are too high, you should:

1. Examine the scope of your taxing jurisdictions' budgets and expenditures.
2. Address your concerns to the appropriate forum, such as meetings of the Rhinebeck Board of Education, city council, town board, or county legislature.



Zoning, Planning, and Conservation

Have you ever found yourself strolling along Market St., admiring the quaint village residences and charm of Rhinebeck’s shops and cafes? Well, we know who you have to thank for it all!

The Village Planning and Zoning Boards are great assets to Rhinebeck. The Boards work hard to preserve our history and environment as they review applications from homeowners and prospective developers.

John Fenton—Superintendent of Public Works, Building Supervisor, and Zoning Enforcement Officer all in one—explained that the process for examining applications in Rhinebeck is a very thorough, painstaking one.

Set back requirements, neon sign permits, and variances are just a few of the concerns Fenton and the Board members investigate.

To Serve and Protect Us All

Did you know that the Village Mayor is the Chief of Police?

The Town has no police department. But, if you’ve ever been pulled over outside the Village, you know that there are police officers in the Town of Rhinebeck. The Village Police Department is contracted to patrol the town.

State Police Troop K has barracks in Staatsburg, and they also operate within the town. Rhinebeck benefits from its proximity to both the county sheriff’s office and state police.



The Village Department has 13 officers and a sergeant, who coordinates the officers. Just like with the Village police’s expanded jurisdiction, the Village’s volunteer fire department covers parts of the town. There are also two other fire departments, Hillside and Rhinecliff, which have mutual help agreements with Rhinebeck. These Protective Districts allow fire fighters adequate time to reach all hamlets in case of fire.

Additionally, the eight members of the Conservation Advisory Board consider not only the welfare of Rhinebeck’s future but also study its history as a part of the Hudson River National Heritage area.



Photo Credit: Reagan Schweppe
Senior Jamie Rifenburgh listens as John Fenton explains aspects of Public Works.



Water Works

Village water comes from surface water on the Hudson River and is pumped into a treatment plant.

The Village Water Department uses a conventional water plant. Some of its main features include: a low-lift pump well, a ground level reservoir, and a sand filtration system. There is no fluoride added as in other municipalities, but chlorine is used to eliminate bacteria.

The plant pumps about a half a million gallons of water a day. About 98% of the water is used by the village, but the remainder is used by the town.

Fun Facts:



Village water supplies the town with fire protection.



There’s no tax for water. Waste and water plants are user funded.