

Town of Walton Joins Village In Joint Flood Commission

By Robert A. Cairns

WALTON - Officials of the town of Walton will join their counterparts in the village in a commission to study ways to reduce the impact of floods throughout the township.

Representatives of the Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) and Delaware County Planning Department attended last Tuesday's meeting of the Walton Town Council to give a presentation on flood issues. SWCD Executive Director Rick Weidenbach said. Walton Mayor Ed Snow wanted to appoint a flood commission. "Everyone thought it would be a good idea to make it a joint commission," he said. "Maybe we can get together on a few things." Village trustees Patrick Meredith and Andrew Rutherford attended the meeting.

SWCD engineer Tom Mallory gave a presentation on flood control and mitigation. "We know we're not going to stop floods," he said. "Let's make it as easy on ourselves as we can."

He presented the findings of studies done on East Brook, West Brook, Third Brook and the west branch of the Delaware River. The study found that failures of slopes caused sediment to clog streams during floods, especially in areas where water flow was restricted by bridges, culverts and narrow channels. The problem was exacerbated, he said, by "tampering" with former natural floodplains. He identified areas near Water Street and behind the Country Store in

the village as places where floodplains had been filled, causing greater flood problems elsewhere. He also said an earthen embankment at one end of the bridge on Bridge Street causes water to back up into the village, rather than dissipate.

Recommendations for mitigation include floodplain management, stream maintenance and debris removal, increasing the capacity of bridges and culverts where possible and stabilization of slopes adjacent to streams.

Mallory said the Open Space Institute is in the process of purchasing land near the Country Store from owner Keath Davis, and that SWCD is seeking funding to remove the fill from that area. The move, he said, would alleviate flooding at the Walton Central School bus garage and at the Big M Supermarket. "Walton's got some things to think about with the development that's going on and climate change," he said.

At the end of the presentation, the board adopted a resolution, agreeing to participate in the flood commission.

Also at the meeting:

- Highway Superintendent Walt Geidel said he expects that the town will have about half as much vegetative debris removed from

streams as was done last year.

- In his role as dog control officer, Geidel suggested that an enumeration of dogs should be conducted. Supervisor Bruce Dolph said that penalties for harboring unlicensed dogs should be increased. "We need to look at that topic and find a way to handle it," he said. "We'll look at it and see what we can do to make people take responsibility for owning dogs."

- Town Clerk Ronda Williams reported that she had collected 84 percent of town taxes, but that she sent out 527 second notices - the most, ever. Taxes will be turned over to the county at the end of April and will be subject to a five percent penalty.

- Dolph reported that petitions are being circulated, calling on state officials to open Bear Spring Park. The park was closed last year due to budget cuts, and state officials do not plan to open it this year. "My understanding is that they're now ticketing people for fishing in the (Launt) pond," he said. "It seems a shame for that park to sit up there, empty."

- Dolph urged Walton residents to return their U.S. Census forms. "If you've gotten them and haven't sent them back, please do it right away," he said.