



A RURAL ECONOMY UTOPIA

By Dawn Rivers Baker

Travel with me for a few minutes to my own version of Rural Economy Utopia, 21st century edition.

The landscape is dominated by small farms, whose owners opt out of national and international food distribution networks in favor of feeding the people within a 250-mile radius of where they are located, supported by a community of small and micro-businesses.

They keep costs low and produce healthier crops because they keep their use of exotic chemicals to a minimum, make good use of their land, take advantage of the space they have available to install renewable energy sources that make use of wind, water and sunlight, keep their transport-to-market costs to a minimum, and sell as close to retail as they can by supplying individuals and local restaurants,



grocers, processors, and schools with food.

They make pretty good money, too, through bypassing a whole passel of middle men. And, because of that, farming starts to look like a much more attractive career than it did a decade ago.

Rural economies start buzzing because, in addition to the brisk business enjoyed by the local farmers, there are new food-related businesses cropping up all over the countryside — especially small food processing plants that take the locally grown produce, can it and sell it regionally (within, say, a given three-to-five state area).

These efforts are supported by state and federal governments, which have

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IT'S UP TO US TO LEAD THE WAY

By Eugene Marner

In October 2005, I helped bring Richard Heinberg - a leading writer and educator on the subject of Peak Oil - to speak in Oneonta. We arranged a lunch meeting in Oneonta before the lecture and invited the NY State Legislative and U. S. Congressional representatives for Delaware and Otsego Counties to meet with Professor Heinberg. A few days before the lunch, I got a call from Congressman Sherwood Boehlert, the chairman of the House Science Committee. Franklin was no longer in his district, but Oneonta was. He apologized for being unable to attend the lunch or the lecture but wanted me to know that he thought educating our fellow citizens about Peak Oil was probably the

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most important thing we could be doing. I figured I wouldn't often have his ear, so I noted that, since he was clearly aware of Peak Oil, he should be educating his colleagues in the Congress. "Oh," he said, "they all know about it. But it's politically impossible to say or do anything."

I was not as shocked as I should have been by his words. But once I got over being flattered by a call from a Congressman, I realized that what he was really saying is that we are on our own: that the Congress isn't even going to talk about Peak Oil, and that nothing will be done to prepare us and our neighbors unless we do it for ourselves.

I'll resist the temptation to rail against the politicians of both major parties who, for nearly forty years, have simply sat



The Babcocks with Bud and Bob lead the 2008 Memorial Day Parade on Main Street

PEAK OIL: A COLLEGE

STUDENT'S VIEW

by Ryan T. Parker

Peak oil means the climax in production of the oil and natural gas that we as human beings have grown accustomed to using to power just about everything around us. For decades we have been drilling into the earth and sucking out of it the very essence of pure oil. Now we have reached a point where we have almost used it all up. Scientists have been debating what will occur after we have used up all the fossil fuel sources. We have finally reached a point where we must find alternate forms of power and fuel for all the machines we use today.

Some scientists believe that this is the beginning of the end, not in the sense of doomsday, but in the way that we have come to real-

ize how dependant we are on this substance. It is not just automobiles, planes, and other machinery using up the oil - in the United States, for every ten calories of fossil fuels we produce, we only get one calorie of food. Even fertilizers and pesticides are made from natural gas, which will peak about ten years after oil does. In the United States, a piece of food travels about fifteen hundred miles before it reaches your plate. People are basically like SUVs, in that for every thing we eat, we are, metaphorically speaking, guzzling down oil.

A day will come when the significance of the oil peak is better known, and we will all see it coming with the raising of prices for gasoline and other products

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YOUR PROPERTY TAXES AT WORK

by Brian Brock

Property taxes are a source of funds for all our local institutions: Village, Library, Town, Board of Education, Fire Districts, and County. It is the largest source of funds for Village, Library, and Town, and would be for others if not for State and Federal payments. It is a tax on real property (or realty), which is defined as the land, waters, and trees and all "improvements" made to it, such as buildings, roads, and plantings. Personal property includes such things as cars and clothes.

For local governments, tax on real property is the only source of funds guaranteed to them by the New York State Constitution. All other sources must be approved by the legislature

and governor, and could be revoked. Also, property taxes are a reliable source because the local boards set the amounts to be collected. By contrast, county sales tax is collected on money spent. Also, it is harder to hide property than it is to hide income. Property taxes go into general revenues, which are used to pay for everything.

Property tax has been collected since the earliest days of Franklin. Local government kept a record (roll) of who owned each real property, thus it was comparatively easy to tax those properties. Today, Delaware County maintains a graphical database at giswebhost.org/delaware/index.asp. This displays ownership (Decem-

ber 2006), size, maps, and aerial photos (April 2001) of all land in the county. By contrast, the Federal government only began collecting income tax during World War I, when it needed additional money to pay for the war.

Money and Value

The annual amount to be raised through property tax, called the levy, is set by each local board. For 2007, the levies in millions are: Village, \$0.08; Library, \$0.02, Town, \$0.99; Board of Education, \$1.66; Fire Districts, \$0.17; and County (Franklin levy), \$0.88 - for a total of \$3.72. The assessor determines how those tax burdens are to be distributed among the property holders in Franklin. He

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The NEW Franklin Register

The Newsletter of the Franklin Citizens Commission on Peak Oil

Editorial Board

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Have an opinion? Write to us!

At: The New Franklin Register

P.O. Box 258

Franklin, NY 13775

or by email: franklin_local@frontiernet.net

What are we about?

The Franklin Citizens' Commission on Peak Oil was authorized on December 6th, 2005 by a Town Board Resolution. Our purpose is to assess the needs and resources of the Town of Franklin in the face of Peak Oil, and to report back to the Town Board and to the people of Franklin.

We are a group of Franklin residents who meet for one evening a month at a member's home. We begin with a pot luck supper before we get down to actual business. All are welcome to join us, to ask questions and help us answer them, to share thoughts and ideas

We have a number of projects that we hope to move from idea to action:

- Local food production network
- Skills and services exchange
- Goods exchange
- Ride sharing bulletin board and/or website
- Farm to School Program for school lunches **GOOD**
- Community Greenhouses
- Community Energy Production
- Community Health Network

In a nutshell, we are trying to imagine a more energy efficient habit of living, and to put it to work here in Franklin, for a brighter, more sustainable future..

We hope you will join us!

For meeting times, location and directions, email us at franklin_local@frontiernet.net

You can also join our Peak Oil Awareness Yahoo Group.

It's POA_CNY@yahoo.com.

That is, Peak Oil Awareness_Central NewYork.

This group fosters discussion of local efforts, potential or ongoing, to deal with the effects of Peak Oil on our communities.

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BEYOND HOPE AND DOOM:

Time for a Peak Oil Pep Talk

"Awareness of Peak Oil, Climate Change, impending global economic implosion, topsoil depletion, biodiversity collapse, and the thousand other dire threats crashing down upon us at the dawn of the new millennium constitutes an enormous psychological burden, one so onerous that most people (and institutions) respond with a battery of psychological defenses - mostly versions of denial and distraction - in an effort to keep conscious awareness comfortably distanced from stark reality. I discuss this in

Chapter 7 of PEAK EVERYTHING, where I conclude that the healthiest response to dire knowledge is to do something practical and constructive in response, preferably in collaboration with others, both because the worst can probably still be avoided and because engaged action makes us feel better."

Richard Heinberg

February 29, 2008

To read more:

http://www.postcarbon.org/beyond_hope_and_doom_time_peak_oil_pep_talk_0

THE BEST FREE LUNCH AROUND:

how the Franklin Free Library serves our town

By Linda Burkhart

It was Pearl Whigham's 99th birthday that motivated her trip to the Library. The former Town Historian wanted to revisit the two hundred scrap books she'd compiled many years ago, which are filled with Franklin history. She claims she doesn't remember very well, but each time she glanced at a page of photographs and memorabilia, Pearl would recite an oral history of the people, place and time reflected on that page.

One family of four stopped by to get a book about dog breeds, hoping to find the perfect pet. For starters, they found the right book.

A couple planning to drive across Alaska couldn't imagine the trip without books on CD to entertain them.

Are you looking for the most efficient dishwasher or lawn mower? Or a used car that's not a lemon? Stop by the Library and check out the latest Consumer Report. And stop drooling over those six-dollar magazines at the check out counter! All our magazines circulate - yes, even the current ones. And you can read them all for free!

The FFL acquires nearly four hundred new books each year, the latest in fiction and non-fiction, plus a new collection of Large Print books every ten weeks.

On any given day, people drop in, to research medical information or look up part numbers for an old John Deere tractor. Many of the articles in this newspaper have been researched in the Library. Imagine being able to search the catalogues of forty libraries at once. You can order any book in the system and have it delivered to the FFL. You can even place those orders through your home computer. The Internet has made all this possible. But because not everyone has a computer at home, at the Library, there are computers for everyone. Last year, we had almost a thousand computer-using visitors.

Better still, this summer will see the arrival of three new state-of-the-art computers, paid for by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and by matching funds donated by Tom Morgan and Erna Morgan-McReynolds. Next year, we will be adding a scanner, so that the Franklin

Free Library can continue to provide the best technology possible to our community. And, yes, we have WiFi - bring your laptop!

Summertime brings in people looking for books on landscaping and gardening, nature crafts, outdoor grilling, summer vacation ideas, cycling, kayaking, as well as games for family reunions. Or just looking for a chance to meet new people and connect with old friends. Every Tuesday, from June 26th through Labor Day, there are performances at 10 a.m. For schedules and information, check out our website at: franklinfreelibrary.org. Next, click on "programs." Voilà! Tibetan horns, Flamenco dance and music, ventriloquism, bass and cello, theatre, magic and much, much more! Are the visiting grandkids restless and bored? Bring 'em to the Library! On July 8th, we'll have a peregrine falcon in residence. And our children's book collection is one of the best in the area.

In July and August, the newest group arrives: the genealogy tourists. The Franklin Free Library has an extraordinary historical collection, including Civil War records, cemetery records, as well as local newspapers on microfilm, dating back to the 1860's. Do you have a relative who was an early settler? Chances are you'll find just the volume you need to open the door to your family's past, right here at the FFL.

What about photocopies of all that research? We can provide them. The latest suggestion to those concerned about identity theft is to photocopy every card in your wallet, especially when traveling. Stash the copies in a safe and separate place. We also have a color copier for posters and brochures. One Saturday, someone closing on a home in Franklin came in frantic for a fax machine to send insurance papers to a waiting realtor. Guess what? The FFL has one of those, too.

Do you have your own library card? If not, drop by for a simple application. Better still, become a volunteer. For only two hours a month, you can become a part of the Library community. If you're not already a weekly visitor to the Library, we hope we've given you all the reasons you need visit us soon and start enjoying your own community library.

IN FRANKLIN: JULY

3rd Thurs. 7:30 Franklin Planning Board
Town Garage
8:00 **Measure for Measure**, Opening
Chapel Hall
4th Fri. **INDEPENDENCE DAY**
5th Sat. 10to5 Stage Coach Run, Treadwell & Franklin
10:00 Opening: Stone & Bones of Delaware County (Bertha Rogers), Bright Hill
6th Sun. 10to2 Franklin Farmers' Market
Chapel Hall
10to5 Stage Coach Run
Treadwell & Franklin
7:00 Franklin Explorers
7th Mon. 7:00 Franklin Fire Department
Franklin Firehouse
8:00 Treadwell Fire Department
Treadwell Firehouse
8th Tues. 10:00 Fidgat's Freedom, Falcon (Jeff & Susan O'Handley) Franklin Free Library
7:00 Treadwell C'munity Improve. Club
7:30 Franklin Town Board Town Garage
9th Wed. 6:00 Franklin Local Brock'
7:00 Doodlebug Club Ogden's
8:00 Treadwell Emergency Squad
Treadwell Firehouse
10th Thurs. 6:00 Franklin Town Court Town Hall
7:00 Word Thursday (Paul Genega & John Paul O'Connor) \$3, Bright Hill
13th Sun. 12:00 Broadway Brunch (Patrica Dell, Kent Brown) \$12.50 Morgan's

14th Mon. 7:00 Franklin Village Board
Village Hall
7:30 Washington Reading Circle
15th Tues. 10:00 International Dances: Hula, Boot, and Haka, Franklin Free Library
17th Thurs. 6:00 Ouleout Valley Historical Society
Town Garage
7:30 Board of Education
Franklin Central School
19th Sat. 9to2 Book Arts Workshop, Tunnel Books (Bertha Rogers) \$40, Bright Hill
20th Sun. 10to2 Franklin Farmers' Market
Chapel Hall
21st Mon. 7:00 Franklin Emergency Squad
Franklin Firehouse
7:00 Franklin Improvement Society
Village Hall
22nd Tues. 10:00 Music from the Top of the World (Karma Lodro) Franklin Free Library
7:30 Treadwell Fire Dep't Auxiliary
Treadwell Firehouse
24th Thurs. 6:00 Town Court Town Hall
7:00 Word Thursday (Rick Henery, Sharon Mosera) \$3, Bright Hill
8:00 **My Arm**, Opening (Tim Crouch)
Franklin Stage at Chapel Hall
26th Sat. 11:00 **I, Peaseblossom**, Opening (Tim Crouch) Chapel Hall
28th Mon. 7:30 Washington Reading Circle
29th Tues. 10:00 Merry-Go-Round Playhouse
(**The Emperor's New Clothes**)
Franklin Free Library

Your Neighbor's View...

DON'T SIGN THAT!

A gas drilling Q & A

by Mike Bernhard

I've been approached by a gas company with a lease agreement...What should I do?

You should *not* sign the agreement. You should find out more about the consequences of having gas drilling on or near your property including water pollution to your aquifer, ground water, well water and other consequences of drilling. Check <http://www.damascuscitizens.org/> and www.chenangogreens.org for information and links that you can investigate. Then urge your neighbors to not rush into any agreements.

Do I have to accept this lease as it is written?

No.

What can I put in the lease to protect myself?

Consult a lawyer who can help you take out the clause that says you can't sue them to enforce the contract. Add provisions that give you the right to veto location of the gas well, pipelines and storage facilities, or to agree that they will only be in designated locations that you approve of. Make the driller *specifically* responsible in triple value for damage to your property, and for any harm done to you or your family. Have them set aside a designated amount to fund independent water testing, blood testing, air testing. Put in a provision that makes the gas company pay your attorney fees, and the costs of suing them if you win. Require the gas company to have liability insurance that covers you in case you are sued because of activities carried out under the lease.

What if the gas company won't accept my changes to the lease?

You don't have to sign the lease, and neither do they. Neither can force the other to sign. A true contract is freely negotiated and accepted. Without the above protections, you put yourself at risk.

What about verbal assurances?

Anything not in writing is not enforceable. Being told the gas company will or won't do something isn't worth a thing.

What if the gas company violates some terms of the lease? Can I sue?

The leases I've seen specifically prohibit law suits. Instead, the contract provides for arbitration with the costs to be paid equally by both sides. You can try to sue, but you will have to pay your own attorney's fees and you will probably get knocked out of court based on the lease saying no lawsuits are allowed. Although people think they can always sue, it isn't that simple. It requires time and money which the gas company has more of than you. The lawsuit may be removed to a court elsewhere.

The lease agreement I've been offered says I will be indemnified if someone sues me for damage to their health or property arising from drilling on my land.

Have a lawyer look at the language, because your right to be paid back by the gas company if you are sued by a neighbor for something that happens to them due to the drilling on your property, will depend on how detailed is the language of the indemnification agreement. As part of the lease, require the gas company to have an insurance policy covering your possible liability.

The company tells me I am holding things up, that my neighbors are mad because they want to start collecting royalties.

The gas isn't going anywhere. Each well requires a \$5 million investment. Whether they pay you \$30 per acre or \$30,000 is insignificant to the gas company. Your neighbors might be told it's you who are in a rush.

New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) says their regulations are "as strict or stricter" than the federal government's. Aren't I protected by these regulations?

"As strict" is the case, which is to say it's completely unregulated in any way that is protective of the personal and environmental health of New Yorkers. "Stricter" would imply legal sanctions against the injections of carcinogenic chemicals into the ground, venting of pollutants, disposal of fracking fluids, capping chemicals, ozone releases, evaporation ponds, pre- and post-

testing of water wells, etc. But the Federal Energy Act of 2005, written by the big players on the oil 'n' gas scene, in secret conference with Dick Cheney, "formerly" head of oil 'n' gas technology supplier Halliburton, excluded the industry from compliance with the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, etc. Next time a DEC representative talks about regulatory oversight, ask that rep to produce a list of the chemicals in the frack-fluids. Not a list of the chemicals NYS is "regulating", but all of them.

I don't know how these guys operate. If they found a big deposit somewhere, would they try to force an eminent domain situation? Or would they simply try to throw irrefusable amounts of cash at the holdouts?

How these guys (the oil & gas industry) operate is that they buy the government. They pass laws that exempt their activity from compliance with the environmental laws that were the crown jewels of the old environmental movement: Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, etc., and they make their activities (drilling fluids, chemical disposal) opaque to the public. They staff regulatory agencies with ambitious men who will retire into consulting jobs with the drillers. That's the general picture, in terms of pharmaceuticals, insurance, consumer protections, foreign policy, etc. Specifically, once 60% of the land in a drilling unit - which is established by the company with some reference to underlying geology and is rumored to be 640 acres around here - the rest of the properties are inducted through a DEC permitting process event called Compulsory Integration: eminent domain without the figleaf of a Public Interest hearing. Some of the drillers are

simply buying properties to keep from having to "bargain" with other property owners. In my town (Afton, Chenango County) Nornew paid \$1 million for the farm of the Town Supervisor - I think 150 acres - and similar amounts for adjacent properties, enough to control the drilling unit. The driller doesn't even have to notify the other property owners prior to the announcement of the Compulsory Integration Hearing. This is explained at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/1590.html>. There's no opting out.

What is the Green Party's position on industry regulation?

The oil/gas industry was deregulated to serve the needs of the oil/gas corporations, not yours. Agencies like DEC, like most others in the current political atmosphere, are in the business of serving their corporate "clients". In a regulatory environment dominated by corporate needs, we are left in the lurch by our own governments, and are left to our own devices, trying to protect ourselves by contract. The Green Party wants to get the government out of the role of permitting energy projects over the objection of communities and landowners. It wants to end the use of Eminent Domain, or Integration Hearings to force people to provide their land and mineral rights to energy corporations. It believes that the role of government is to promote the welfare of the people and let the corporations fend for themselves, and not the other way around.

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 Please visit our wiki at <http://oneonta-region.wikispot.org/>

YOUR NEIGHBOR'S VIEW regularly showcases opinion pieces by concerned residents from around our community. The views stated do not necessarily reflect those of the New Franklin Register or its editorial board.

If you have an opinion you'd like to share with your neighbors, or a response to the views expressed above, please write to us c/o Editor, at the addresses listed on Page 2.

EGG-CITING FACTS:

In 1974, the British Journal of Nutrition found that pastured eggs had 50 percent more folic acid and 70 percent more Vitamin B12 than eggs from factory farms.

In 1988, Artemis Simopoulos, co-author of THE OMEGA DIET, found that pastured eggs in Greece contained 13 times more omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids than commercial eggs from the United States.

FRANKLIN FUTURE

News from **Frank Fokish**, our correspondent down the years apiece.

GAS TODAY - Quick-way: not today, not tomorrow. Next delivery only \$23.89 a gallon! Remember: agricultural vehicles have strict priority. Only certified 60 M.P.G. vehicles allowed. Ten gallon limit per customer, first come, first served. Leave your weapons at home. Good luck!

HOT WHEELS: Once again, New York State leads the country in highway innovation. The new High Occupancy Tricycle (HOT) Lanes on Interstate 88 have proven highly successful, especially during rush hours. While there have been an increasing number of pile-ups in icy weather conditions, roadkill has been reduced to mostly frogs and insects.

ETHANOL: With the ethanol content in gasoline so high, local moonshiners find themselves competing with Mirabito. Motorists can either pump it or drink it. Well, it's one way to settle the dry-town question...

MERGERS: Now that the Beehive Restaurant and Burgin's Auto have joined to form The Hive & Hammer, customers can have lunch in Franklin's favorite pub while having their dents knocked out. The food's good, but bring earplugs. The place is a mite noisy.

SWEPT AWAY: Giant whirlpools of plastic shopping bags clog the world's oceans, but in Franklin, IRE-bot is doing its part by introducing the Neighborhood Rhumba Remote-controlled Robotic Vacuum on its Franklin and Treadwell trash pick-up routes. Vet's Disposal has moved to Indiana. And many dogs and cats have gone missing.

BLACKOUT: The Tri-County E-Grid went down again yesterday, with no word of when it might be restored. All those folks with electric cars suddenly find themselves house-bound. The Franklin Fire Department has set up a community charge-car generator. Farm and emergency vehicles will be served first. Home owners with solar or wind units are making lots of new friends.

MORE TO COME IN THE NEXT ISSUE FROM OUR MAN IN FRANKLIN FUTURE. STAY TUNED.

PEAK OIL, continued from Page 1
we are so accustomed to receiving for a low price. The effect that peak oil will have on the United States, let alone the world, will be huge. As the fuel becomes more expensive, people will do less traveling to save money and begin to clump together in groups to stay in closer contact. The lack of natural gas will also show in the food service area, such as the fast food restaurants we have come to take for granted. With no fuel for their ovens or freezers, they will not be able to prepare or save the food they acquire.

These examples are on a small scale compared to the mass effect that the lack of oil will have on our lives. The governments of all countries must make it a priority to find new sources of power. Even solar energy and nuclear energy are in jeopardy because it takes oil powered machines to make the equipment used to create these new energy forms. This upcoming scare of not having any forms of energy is not at the point of an immediate threat as of now, but it is quickly approaching that point. With an oil based economy such as ours, we don't even need to run out of oil to begin the devastations. Skyrocketing prices alone will put millions of people into poverty.

There is talk all around about how the oil companies are not just stopping

their expansion but also beginning to dwindle in size, as many of them merge together. The big oil companies are also being very sneaky about buying back their stock, almost as if they are looking to liquidate them in years to come. While the oil companies begin to take precautions and make arrangements to save their money, they are not preparing us for the drastic change to come. At some point, the government will have to take control over the oil companies to regulate matters and slowly change our fuel dependency.

People will need to change their way of life since most things revolve around the use of oil. The food we consume and the amount of gas we use are just a couple of things that will have to change. Food and other products we take for granted will begin to disappear as well. It has been stressed for years to carpool, mainly for pollution reasons, but now it is a matter of conserving our natural resources which are being depleted so rapidly. The information is out there, but people are still denying the fact that we might have to change our lifestyle. When peak oil finally rears its ugly head, the motto of "only the strong survive" will again be at hand. People who are able to adapt will be far beyond the ones who can't, in wealth and chances of survival. When asked if we should just relax and not

worry about peak oil, we should laugh at the very thought because it is our duty as human beings to preserve what things we have. It will take all of us to change and assist in the efforts to keep our economy and lives going as smoothly as possible.

With all the information out there already I personally do not see how people can deny the truth of all that is happening around us. In time people's eyes will be opened, and the revolution of our time will begin. The government has not been fulfilling its duty to serve the people's best interests. When this reality is accepted by both people and government, it might be too late. This will leave us in a time of depression and poverty. We must take time now to prepare for when the time comes. For instance, we have grown so dependant on our technology that we have lost our ability to live off the land. I believe we will reach a time when all our higher education will not be needed and we will once again resort to our instincts and the land we live on.

Ryan T. Parker wrote this essay for his English 100 class at SUNY Delhi in 2007

SPEED LIMITS: a study by the UK's *What Car?* magazine found that the average car consumes 38 per cent more fuel at 70mph than it does over the same distance at 50mph. At 60mph, it uses 34 per cent more than at 40mph. - *The Peak Oil Review*, 6/12/08, #5

KICK THE BOTTLED WATER HABIT

"Bottled water costs 240 to 10,000 times more than tap water, most of which goes for bottling, packaging, shipping, marketing, retailing and profit. Many of us think bottled water is cleaner and better (thanks to all that expensive marketing you pay for in each sip), but the federal standards for tap water are actually higher than those for bottled water. Besides, it can take 1,000 years for a plastic water bottle to biodegrade in a landfill....

"Instead of adding to the problems of global warming, diminishing oil supplies, plastic in the landfills...get a filter, if you concerned about the quality of your tap water."

- *National Resources Defense Council*

LEAD THE WAY

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on the knowledge of Peak Oil and hoped it would go away. I will, however, use a few words to praise Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD), the one Congressional Representative who has worked tirelessly to bring awareness of this momentous change in the way we live to the attention of the government and the American people. Sadly, the media do little to help.

I know, however, that the price sign at the Franklin Quickway has caught people's attention. \$4.09 (at the time of writing) for regular may seem high today but is likely to seem cheap in a year or two or three. And rising price is only part of the story: as oil production continues to decline, we won't always find it to buy - at any price. We are entering a period of declining energy resources and there is nothing we can do to arrest that process. Nothing. But we can do many things to make the transition less painful.

We can learn to live using much less energy. Our ancestors lived, for tens of thousands of years, with only a tiny fraction of the energy we each use today. And with that tiny fraction, they created agriculture, built the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome, China, Medieval Europe; built the

Parthenon and Chartres Cathedral; painted the Sistine Chapel; and drank in the work of Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare. So it should be clear that even a sharp decline in available energy need not be the end of the world. But it is equally clear that a great change in *how* we live is coming and soon.

For the past year, we at the New Franklin Register have been encouraging our neighbors and fellow citizens to think about rebuilding our local economy. We need to do this because, as the age of cheap and abundant oil comes to a close, the distance economy - the system that brings lettuce 3,000 miles from California - will no longer be practical, or even functional.

Let me propose a number of actions that we can begin to undertake locally and immediately that will help to focus attention on the problem and, even more important, begin to provide solutions to our predicament.

- Buy local. Support local farmers and other businesses. Urge shops to seek out and buy from local sources. If not available locally, then from New York State. If that is not available, then Made in USA.

- Begin a widespread push to highlight farming

and agriculture as a career choice. The praiseworthy Farm-to-school movement is about bringing local foods into school lunch programs and providing markets for local producers. But we also need a School-to-farm program that teaches kids soil science, gardening, food preservation, cold weather gardening techniques, etc.

- Bring in Mennonite and Amish speakers to discuss low petroleum input farming.

- Encourage a bicycle shop to set up in our town, or set one up ourselves. The Wright Brothers bicycle business was a great idea - this tool remains one of the most amazingly effective ways of harnessing human energy ever invented. (Their airplane idea? The jury is still out. The rising cost of jet fuel is putting many airlines out of business.)

- Speak to the local "unemployment office" and encourage them to work with the extension service to push ag careers and small business start-ups. (Perhaps they already do this, in which case we can help make it more visible.) A local food processing business (or public processing kitchen) and a bakery are obviously desirable.

- Encourage local machine and blacksmith

shops. Offer an annual prize competition for creative and/or practical work by a local smith and/or machine shop.

- Restore shop classes in school.

- Eliminate local taxation on greenhouses and/or high hoop houses, to help encourage extended season agricultural production - critical for trying to feed a local population to a reasonable standard of living year round.

- Push for local building ordinances that encourage passive solar construction, renewable materials, and low energy use. Reward those features with tax breaks.

- Encourage value-added processing on farms: cheese and butter-making, smoking meats, etc. Our few Delaware County industries seem to be leaving or cutting back. Franklin still leads Delaware County in dairy producers, I believe, and New York State has many urban mouths to feed.

- Offer prizes and/or publicity to local chefs who not only use local produce and meats, but also help educate the public to a more seasonal outlook on foodstuffs. Start mentally preparing people for the inevitable return to seasonal eating. Asparagus comes in the spring, not early winter, from Peru!

(Unless you are in Peru...)

- Demand that our political representatives work to restore electrified rail and light rail transport. Public transit is the most important investment that government above the county level can make, in my opinion.

- Buy local. If we support our local farmers and business people now, they will thrive and be there when the distance economy vanishes.

This is not, by a very long shot, an exhaustive list. Some may differ about what our priorities should be. But we need to discuss such proposals among ourselves and start doing some of them before we are blind-sided by the collapse of the distance economy.

There is a lot in the media these days about "sustainability." But it's important to remember that sustainability is not, as the public relations firms would have us believe, a virtuous life-style choice. Sustainability is inevitable and necessary. By definition, whatever is not sustainable will cease to exist. We need to examine everything in which we invest our effort, time and money, to be certain that what we are creating will be here for our grandchildren and their grandchildren.

UTOPIA, continued from Page 1

enacted new processed food guidelines that include freshness requirements (so that foods don't have to be drowned in sodium as a preservative) and content requirements (so that purchasers of processed food don't have to live on a diet of sugar and fat) and marketing requirements (so that food processors are no longer allowed to claim their food is good for you when it isn't).

Within a few years of all these changes, and much to everybody's astonishment, health care expenditures on all sorts of chronic diseases begin to decline. There is much learned discussion and several research reports funded to try to ascertain the reason for the mysterious improvement in American health.

Meanwhile, in addition to the food processing plants, rural economies also start seeing a resurgence of other, once-common food-related businesses like butchers and bakers and millers and the like (all supplied by local farms). Some regions with particularly intriguing local foods will see an uptick in their travel and tourism revenues, and new business springing up to cater to that new market.

There are small biofuel manufacturers and biogas digester distributors and suppliers offering residents new and less expensive ways to heat their houses and power their stoves, providing local farmers with new revenue streams.

And, as more of these small, food-related businesses and agribusinesses spring up, other entrepreneurs begin to see opportunities in offering various business services — from photocopying to accounting — to serve their needs. All of which will be of benefit to existing businesses in the community as well.

Sooner or later — probably sooner — it will also occur to a few entrepreneurially minded souls that all work and no play is no fun at all. So, in addition to the travel and tourism businesses, other lifestyle amenity businesses will begin to emerge. Everything from the standard eateries to electronic gaming destinations for the under-twenty crowd can be possible.

Or perhaps someone will notice that buying life's basics closer to home would be a good thing, as

well. Clothing, furniture, furnishings and a variety of home and garden supply businesses, many of which will specialize in hand-crafted items that can be sold outside the region to bring additional money into the region, could spring up.

With the added tax revenues from this economic activity, local rural governments will be able to pay for new infrastructure projects, like renewables-based town power, transportation infrastructure improvements, better sidewalks and parks for walking and bicycling, energy efficient, greener public buildings and the like.

And, with gas at \$7 a gallon, people are much more inclined to walk or ride a bike when they go out to buy from their local merchants, which will also improve their health and lower our collective health care costs.

Perhaps the best part would be that suddenly, almost magically, long-dormant communities would come back to life. If you have ever spent any time living in cities, then you know that people interact differently in large, crowded stores than they do in small, community-based shops and businesses — which is to say that, in

“It is amazing how much can be accomplished by a set of people who no longer buy into notions of their own powerlessness.”

- Dawn Rivers Baker

those larger stores, they rarely interact at all.

Local businesses give the community a pool of natural leaders. The more widespread business ownership can be, the more individuals there are with a real stake in the fortunes of their community. That alone can help to neutralize the apathy that is so often inherent in a stagnant economy that has been leached of hope and optimism.

It is amazing how much can be accomplished by a set of people who no longer buy into notions of their own powerlessness.

The result: diversified and robust rural economies, lower food prices for everybody, reduced dependence on petro-

leum-based fuels, lower energy prices for everybody (except folks who cling to their cars), lower health care costs for everybody (meaning lower health insurance costs for everybody), healthier people, better lifestyles, more cohesive communities, and less dependence of social welfare programs.

Now you see why I call it Utopia.

And yet, there is a definite national trend toward economic re-localization, particularly in rural America. Self-employment is another relevant trend; according to the American Sociological Association, by 2012, one in three rural Americans will be self-employed. So, there is no real reason why a scenario like the one I described above wouldn't be replicated in countless communities around the country.

Of course, the latest incarnation of the Farm Bill, which survived the President's veto via Congressional action last month, does nothing to support any of this, largely because it doesn't look like any of it has occurred to the lawmakers who negotiated the legislation.

So, for now at least, the transformation is going to be up to us. Too often, leaders at the state and local level champion economic development plans that involve large business concerns (whether manufacturing plants from existing large businesses or high-tech entrepreneurial gazelles) moving into an area and creating hundreds of new jobs.

It sounds good. But it's not practical for much of rural America, which has neither the population density nor the infrastructure to support such plans. Unfortunately, politicians feel they can't afford to think long-term. Whatever they do, they believe, must produce results within the next election cycle.

Meanwhile, the people who live in those communities are in it for the long haul. They need leadership with a longer attention span than the average three-year-old. We must use these trends and transitions to bring our lives back down to human scale because, in the long run, “human” is what will sustain us now and in the future.

Dawn Rivers Baker is editor and publisher of The Micro-Enterprise Journal:
<http://www.microenterprise-journal.com>

DRIVE SMART AND SAVE FUEL

Fuel-efficient driving tips

by Andy Goodell

Fuel economy has become a great concern to consumers over the past few years, and only recently has it been taken seriously by automakers. But getting better fuel economy does not require buying a brand new car. While some new cars, especially the smaller hybrids such as the Honda Insight and Toyota Prius, are ushering in a new era of fuel conserving techniques, a new car is not the only way to save on gas. And it's certainly not the cheapest option.

The fuel economy of every car model is rated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on a machine called a dynamometer. This process tries to replicate what driving through a city or on the highway should yield in terms of miles per gallon, but it does not take driving *technique* into consideration. We're familiar with certain driving habits that are bad for fuel economy, such as accelerating quickly from a stop, but there are other simple techniques that, when used regularly, can easily and safely increase the fuel economy of any car by 50%.

A few years ago, I acquired a Subaru Legacy Wagon AWD, which is rated for 23 miles per gallon. After committing to driving in a less fuel-guzzling style, I was able to get 40 miles per gallon for highway driving, an increase of almost 75%. The driving techniques listed below are a simple start to increasing gas mileage, and are safe and easy enough to use every time you drive.

- Find the shortest route possible. Often county and state routes are much more direct and can save many miles on longer trips. If you drive a certain route frequently, taking the time to figure out the best route now will save you gas and money every time you drive that route in the future.
- Inflate tires to the proper pressure to lower the rolling resistance on the road.
- Keep the trunk empty when practical. Adding extra weight to the car requires more energy to move it, especially on hilly terrain.
- Only use roof boxes and bike racks when necessary. These can dramatically reduce aerodynamics and therefore gas mileage, and are used only occasionally.
- Accelerate moderately. Most cars accelerate best around 2200-2500RPMs. Anything more than that is inefficient and energy wasting.
- Slow down! Aerodynamics greatly affect gas mileage over 40 miles per hour. Driving 55 miles per hour on the highway not only saves you gallons and dollars, but is proven to increase safety.
- Drive smoothly. Keep a constant speed when you can. Braking and accelerating both decrease efficiency.

For an extensive guide to driving more efficiently, see <http://oneonta-region.wikispot.org/>.

A warning from John B. Hess, chairman and chief executive of Hess Corp., made at a conference of the Cambridge Energy Research Associates in Houston, an organization known for denying the imminence of Peak Oil.

“Given the long lead times of at least 5-10 years from discovery to production, an oil crisis is coming and sooner than most people think. Unfortunately, we are behaving in ways that suggest we do not know there is a serious problem.”

- OGJ Online, Feb. 15, 2008

No-Grain Organic Dairy

At Moore Farms, Rob and Pam Moore seasonally milk 60 organic dairy cows on 240 acres of managed pastures without supplemental grain. Over the past 12 years the Moores have improved this system, finding a healthier balance of high quality forage, cattle genetics, and management for their no-grain feeding program. They are first to admit that it's not as easy as it sounds!

Come learn about their intensive grazing system, pasture management, strategies for raising calves, milking, and maintaining good herd health on a grass-only diet. \$5 NOFA members, \$10 non-members. **10am-1pm, Moore Farms, 2083 Moore Hill Rd, Nichols, NY (Tioga Co.) ~ Monday, September 15, 2008**

RELOCALIZING BUSINESS: ALL IN THE FAMILY - The Millers' latest venture

by Marjorie B. Kellogg

Inoculating 70 hardwood logs with shi-take mushroom spore wasn't time-consuming enough for Bob and May Miller. Now, together with their son Mike and his wife Mary Lou, the Millers are starting a family business.

Called Enviro Energy, LLC, the business will manufacture grass pellets for home and commercial use. Based on Route 7 in Wells Bridge, on the site of an operating gravel mine, Enviro Energy will offer a locally produced heating fuel that, says Mike Miller, "is actually good for the environment."

If this seems hard to believe, EE's brochure tells us: "Grass pellets have almost the same BTU's per pound as wood pellets, without ever cutting down a tree... Pellet stoves and boilers produce 90% less greenhouse gas than fossil fuels, and are ten times under the EPA emission limits. It takes seventy million years to grow gas or oil, twenty to a hundred to grow a tree, but only 70 days to grow a new crop of grass."

"But what really got Dad going," Mike continues, "were the thousands of acres around here that people are paying someone to brush-hog and let lie. All that fuel going to waste!"

Grass pellets can be made of almost any biomass, wild or cultivated, though woody stems are best. "The older and tougher it is, the better," Mike declares. "We can use old hay, ruined hay, hay that got rained on. Okay if it's full of goldenrod and multiflora roses." Switch Grass is commonly used but has too long a growing season to be practical in Delaware County. The Millers prefer Reed's Canary Grass. "It matures

in early August, by which time it's four to five feet tall. It gives the best tonnage per acre." And it's a hardy perennial. Plough and plant once, and there's your crop. Bob Miller adds: "There's a stand of Reed's Canary Grass up on the old Burgin farm that's been there for 48 years!"

"Collecting the raw materials will be just like haying, but since we'll only do it once a year, that means burning less diesel in the process. It'll be good for the farmers because they can grow it on their less useful acreage. The fields won't need heavy fertilizing, either - maybe a bit of lime now and then. And..." Mike reads from the brochure. "Cutting late in the summer virtually eliminates wildlife damage, as song birds and turkeys are through nesting and fawns are up and away." Plus, "this permanent sod cover is excellent erosion control, and maintains the combination of woods and green open space that makes this area so desirable to wildlife and humans alike."

What's left in your stove after burning grass pellets? Ordinary, non-toxic ash, as in a wood stove, that can be scattered on your garden as fertilizer. "Premium wood pellets burn a bit better," says Mike. "Only three to four percent of ash produced, as opposed to five or six with grass. But we're working on that. Mixing in a percentage, to be determined, of waste cardboard - not the corrugated kind you can already recycle, but the waxy, packaging kind, cereal boxes, the stuff no one wants - will raise the BTU's to where it's about equal to wood pellets, and might reduce the ash content. But our

locally-made pellets will be cheaper, due to the elimination of long-distance transport costs."

If you already own a wood pellet stove, it might or might not be appropriate for grass pellets, due to the increased ash, which some stoves can't handle efficiently. Multi-fuel stoves work the best, according to Mike, and as interest in alternate heating fuels grows, new and better stoves are being developed. Operating a pellet stove requires about the same amount of electricity as an oil furnace, to run the auger that feeds pellets into the stove and the fan that forces air into the combustion chamber.

Comparing costs per BTU is a constantly shifting challenge, as the prices of oil, propane and other fuels spiral ever upwards. "One thing we know for sure," offers Mike, "is that 17 pounds of pellets will equal the BTU's of one gallon of oil. With grass pellets about twelve cents a pound, you do the math."

Once they're up and running, Enviro Energy's facility will produce approximately two tons of pellets an hour. They will be sold through local distributors or directly to the individual in 40 lb. bags, with 50 bags to a pallet, which is equal to a ton of pellets. A pallet measures 42" x 48" x 42" tall, taking up about half the space of a cord of firewood. But a dry storage area is essential: the pellets absorb liquids so well that some horse breeders are using them for stable bedding. The Millers estimate that an average household would use two to three tons of pellets during a typical heating season.

And...they will deliver.

HAYES FARM TOUR: a visitor's report by Gene Marner

On May 17th, following up his article in the NFR's spring issue about winter grazing, James Hayes, retired professor of Animal Science at SUNY-Cobleskill, and his wife Adele took 15 visitors on a tour of their Sap Bush Hollow Farm in Schoharie County

If you thought that "Hollow" was just a colorful place name, arrival at the Hayes' farm sets you straight right away. The farmstead is tucked into a little valley with steep slopes rising sharply to either side and a stream actively pursuing its ancient task of carving the hollow out of the hills. This is clearly grazing land: there are not many fields you would want to cultivate on a tractor. In fact, the previous owner of the place lost his life in a roll-over accident in one of the fields that we visited with Jim, high on the slopes overlooking the farm.

For cattle, sheep, pigs, turkeys, geese, and chickens, however, these pastures are ideal. Jim Hayes recognized that peak oil and the rising cost of fossil fuels make it essential to learn to sustain livestock over the winter without using a lot of energy to make

hay and other forages. The Hayes found that with careful pasture management and a well-planned rotation, they could graze their fields year-round.

As an animal scientist, Jim is especially conscious of the nutritional needs of his animals. He explained that, after World War II, the chemical industry realized that the facilities built to make ammonium nitrate for explosives would now be idle. So they looked for new markets: agricultural nitrogen was the answer and corn the crop. Applications of nitrogen vastly increased corn yields but they needed a market for the corn. What they did, Jim said, is turn cows into pigs and started to feed them corn. "Corn-fed beef" became an advertising slogan. But cows are ruminants, and need no grain to grow and thrive. Feeding corn and other grains to cattle changed the fat profile of the animals and the nutritional content of the beef. Before the war, said Jim, there were no cardiology departments in medical schools because of the way we ate.

Another health problem develops when feeding

grain to ruminants. The corn raises the pH in the cows' rumens (the organ where beneficial bacteria convert grasses into protein). As a result, e. coli bacteria can grow in the now low-acid rumens. In order to control the bacteria, the feedlot cattle are fed antibiotics (which end up in us) but the e. coli often contaminates the meat anyway, leading to outbreaks of infection and of beef recalls.

The Hayes stop grazing their winter pastures in mid-July or early August, so that the grass can grow up again before snow cover. They graze the pastures intensively year-round, but in winter even more so, using electric fence to create strip paddocks within the larger permanently fenced fields. By keeping the grazing area small, the animals are encouraged to eat everything in a section before moving on.

All their pastures are native grasses. They do add some lime to maintain pH levels for clover and trefoil to thrive, but the fields are fertilized by the manure of the grazing animals.

Adele explained that they had started out at Sap Bush Hollow Farm in 1979

with sheep. The conventional wisdom at the time taught that they would have to lamb in January and February in order to have lambs ready for the ethnic Easter market. "When the lambs were born in February," Adele said, "we called them 'lambicles'." They soon realized that their lives would be much easier (and the lambs' lives more assured) if they let nature's rhythms take care of the schedule and the lambs came in April, May, and June when the pasture is lush and the living is relatively easy.

Easier is a relative term, however, for both animals and farmers. Year round grazing requires study, labor and constant supervision. Instead of a large investment in machinery and feed grains, the farmer starting out with grass-feeding must invest in fencing and, above all, in knowledge of soils, and of the physiological needs and temperaments of the animals. Once the grazing system is in place, however, its maintenance greatly reduces the burden on the farmer. Ruminant animals, said Jim, are the future of protein. The currently dominant grain/hay method may not survive the rising

cost and declining availability of fossil fuels.

Jim and Adele Hayes' decision to rely upon the animals' natural capacity to look after themselves arises from a philosophy of stewardship. They have gone back to traditional pastoral methods armed with knowledge of modern agronomy and an awareness of future necessity. While cutting back on energy use, they also are building the soil and leaving it richer and more productive than they found it.

To learn more about Sap Bush Hollow Farm or to buy the Hayes' pastured meat and poultry products, visit their website at www.sapbush.com.

FREE BROCHURES!!

Students in Grades 3-6 at Franklin Central School have created nine free brochures illustrating aspects of the Village of Franklin's history. Reference materials included newspapers, Pearl Whigham's scrapbooks, historical records and information from the Franklin Free Library, illustrated with images from our village past.

Pick them up at Dawn's Deli. Donations to finance more printings welcome!



Hartwick students plant raspberries at Handsome Brook Farm

HANDSOME BROOK FARM: Sustaining the Land, Enhancing the Community

by Betsy and Brian Babcock

It all started with a neglected vegetable patch. It was clear that someone had loved and cared for this space in years past, but it was now overgrown with weeds and thistles, and surrounded by tumbled down chicken wire.

Visiting only on weekends and Bryan's school breaks, we couldn't raise vegetables, but we wanted to do something productive with the space, which was delightfully close to the house. The previous year, our friend and neighbor, Al Bruno, had cleared a path to the wild blackberries near our house. Perhaps, we thought, we could grow raspberries in this little spot. We purchased 15 raspberry plants (which look like dead sticks), and some blueberries just for fun, and planted them - not knowing exactly what would happen, nor really what we were doing. What we found the next summer was that, because of the forgiving nature of raspberries, we had 10 surviving plants. However, in our ignorant bliss, we did not pay attention to the low pH requirements of the blueberries, and most of them died. Undeterred, we researched and *did* pay attention to their soil requirements (a pH of 4.5-5), then planted more. We were rewarded the following year with a bountiful harvest of raspberries, plus blueberries that survived.

Encouraged by that success, we went on to research the economics of growing blueberries in our area. We found that blueberries can be profitable, but one must wait for up to 5 years for the plants to yield enough to be commercially viable. In addition, harvesting labor is a potential challenge. As farming is not our only career, we did not consider the waiting time till yield to be an issue. But we de-

cidated that we would offer U-Pick berries for our area, and that we should provide all three major berries for our summer customers, in an environment that was fun and family friendly. The addition of strawberries and raspberries to our plans has the benefit that the strawberries will be ready for U-Pick as early as this summer, and the raspberries in 2009.

We spoke with our neighbor who had some unused hayfields, and decided to embark on a business that would embrace two elements: 1) Pick-Your Own raspberry, blueberry, and strawberry operation. This would also provide berries for farmer's markets and wholesale to local retailers. 2) A Bed and Breakfast, which would provide people with an opportunity for a first-hand experience of life on a small farm, and give area residents a nearby inn to house guests and visiting family members. Last year, we planted 200 raspberries and 100 blueberries at the top of our 9 acre berry hill on East Handsome Brook Road. We learned a lot, the most important thing being to plant as early in the spring as possible, so as to take advantage of the plentiful rainfall. This April and May, with the help of local Hartwick students, we planted 2500 raspberries, 800 blueberries, and 4,000 strawberry plants. We look forward to our first crop of strawberries this summer...and lots of raspberries next year! Next, we added to our house: two guest rooms with private baths. The Handsome Brook Farm Bed and Breakfast is now open for business. (Oh yes, we now are living our dream of being here full time, as Bryan is teaching at Hartwick.)

Bryan and I have always loved the idea of sustainable agriculture, and of

the sense of independence and community that existed before the advent of commuting and strip malls. The idea of being self-sufficient in our food production provides a sense of security in unstable economic times, and the satisfaction of raising it is like nothing else. And, the ability to reclaim previously productive land, and in an ecologically sensitive way bring it back into production enables us to be good stewards of a great gift. Our small farm now includes one cat, two pigs, two lambs, two steers, two pigs, two Belgian draft horses - our friends have accused us of trying to start our own Ark - and 10 chickens that we raise for eggs. We compost the manure that our animals so generously provide, and use it in the raised vegetable beds that Bryan built a couple of Christmases ago. Next year, we are thinking about growing oats, in order to produce our own grain for the horses (who will be providing hayrides for the U-Pick guests and groups, and helping to haul water for the plants), and oat straw to mulch the strawberries.

It will be a busy life. We look forward to getting to know our friends and neighbors who come to pick berries, and our B and B guests who come to relax and enjoy the peace and quiet of our area. We look forward to the laughter of parents and children enjoying bonfires and hayrides. And we look forward to continually learning, one of the huge benefits of practicing sustainable agriculture. The learning process never ends, and it bridges the experience of area farmers and residents who have seen it all, with innovative ideas of new generations.

Handsome Brook Farm, LLC
(Berries, Bed and Breakfast)
Bryan and Betsy Babcock
4132 E. Handsome Brook Road
Franklin, NY 13775
(607) 829-2587
www.handsomebrookfarm.com

FRANKLIN FARMERS' MARKET

by Ellen Curtis

Well, the Farmers' Market promises to be very successful. There are twice as many vendors this year, with a much larger assortment of produce, plants, meats, eggs, jams, honey, maple syrup, baked goods, local arts and craft articles, and refreshments. So far, each market day has had a different special event and entertainment. Customers can get their blood pressure checked, learn about knitting or take a hayride. The music, performed by local artists, sets the atmosphere for a social get-together where you can meet friends or new acquaintances, and catch up with the latest news while you shop for fresh local organic food. There will be more entertainment and special events during the summer and the produce will be more abundant as the growing season advances. Bud and Bob the hayride horses will be back in August in the company of a visitors' guide, as they take you on a tour through Franklin. We are planning a squash (mostly zucchini) festival in August - we invite everyone to submit their recipes and ideas.

Please send your comments and/or ideas to: this paper @ PO Box 258, Franklin, NY 13775 or by e-mail to: franklin_local@frontiernet.net

Remaining Market Days: Sundays at 10 a.m.

July 6 th	August 31 st	October 12 th
July 20 th	September 14 th	
August 10 th	September 28 th	

FRANKLIN YARD OF THE MONTH

June 2008

856 Main Street

Mature trees and shrubs fill this yard, mingling with accent borders brimming with perennial flowers. Colorful spots of annuals add to the overall affect of color, texture and neutral greens. Perennials are considered to be the backbone of a garden, and Tom and Monica Wilber's yard at 856 Main Street demonstrates that premise with a seasonal variety. June is the month for peonies, and they line the perimeter of the lot as boundary accents along a split rail fence. Asiatic lilies are just beginning to open with promises of blooms to come. Spent blooms of iris, rhododendron and other earlier flowers are also in evidence. Work continues on beds of perennials between Main Street and the new village sidewalk, drawing the eye up to the neatly-mown lawn.

Outdoor living space appears to be important to the Wilbers, as evidenced by a side deck and seating. Slight terracing continues the yard up behind the house, with interest centers of a fire pit and an Asian-style garden lantern.

Tom and Monica's home and yard are a wonderful introduction (or goodbye) to our charming village. Their plantings and vegetable garden echo the pride and interest of other Franklin gardeners, reflected in the gardens and borders lining the streets of our village.

May Miller
Karen Kemp
Louise Hebbard

The National Resource Defense Council's new web feature, *Eating Local*, tells you which fruits and veggies are in season in your state. Visit www.nrdc.org/health/foodmiles.

A NEW BEEHIVE

The Beehive has changed ownership but stays local. The new owners are siblings Sue Gray, Carol Ganim, and Bill Zipp. The sisters have lived in the Village for five years and their brother is newly arrived.

The solstice on Friday the 20th of June ushered in both summer and dinners at the Beehive. Dining is Friday and Saturday from 5 to 9 pm, reservations suggested. And the day now starts earlier, with breakfasts and lunches from 6 am to 2 pm, Tuesdays to Fridays and brunches from 8 am to 2 pm, Saturday and Sunday. Weekdays, there is an early bird special before 8 am. Patio seating is an option for brunch and dining.

The new chef is Jim Carey from the Delhi Culinary Academy. Menu features international cuisine and hometown fare. Local and organic ingredients are used where possible. Breads are baked on site and desserts are from a local baker who used all local and organic ingredients.

At present the Beehive can not serve beer or wine nor can you bring your own. A second petition drive for amending Franklin Local Law to allow serving of beer and wine with meals may again put the issue before the voter this November.

report by Brian Brock

TAXES, cont'd from Page 1 values each parcel in the Town, then totals them up – all that are not exempt. The tax burden for a property owner is proportional to the value of that property relative to the value of all taxable properties in Village, Town, Fire District, School District, or County. Library tax is collected from only those in the school district.

Not all property owners pay these taxes. By State Law, churches, schools, and charities pay no taxes on their \$22 million of value in Franklin – roughly 10% of total. These organizations are thought to contribute to our community through their good works and so, need not contribute through property taxes. Similarly, by State Law, veterans and farmers are granted partial exemptions. By Franklin Town Law, veterans receive an additional partial exemption. In some towns, firemen and EMS responders receive partial exemptions. The STAR program gives a partial exemption from Board of Education property tax to all residents and an additional exemption to low-income elderly residents.

The Town of Franklin has approximately 81.6 square miles (52,200 acres) of land. But we are taxed on 84.0 square miles, meaning that some owners are paying for 2.4 square miles that don't exist due to inaccurate surveys. Today, the land is divided into 2,265 tax parcels, to a total value, with improvements, of \$212 million. Most of the tax burden is on residential parcels, which are half (50%) of the acreage and more than three quarters (77%) of the taxable value. The next largest categories are vacant and forested parcels with a third (33%) of the acreage but only an eight (12%) of the taxable value. Farms are 16% of the acre-

age and 5.1% of the value but are 3.7% of the taxable value due to exemptions – a small loss to the general revenue that makes a big difference to farmers with an average exemption of 38%. Franklin being a rural town, commercial and industrial parcels comprise only 0.5% of the acreage and 2% of the taxable value. While nonresidents of Franklin own almost half (49%) of the acreage, they pay only about a third (38%) of property taxes because more of their land is vacant or forested and their buildings are less valuable.

Assessor: Originally all assessors were elected. Today, in Delaware County, all but a few towns have appointed assessors, as does Franklin. Appointed assessors, unlike elected assessors, do not have to live in the town where they work. In New York State, all appointed assessors serve for terms of six years that begin simultaneously throughout the state. Our Town Board last appointed our assessor in 2007. His current term runs from 1st October 2007 through 30th September 2013.

The Franklin assessor is Jim Basile, who began in 1996, replacing a board of three part-time elected assessors. Full-time appointed assessors must be certified by NYS to have taken the required initial course work, and must take 24 hours of continuing course work each year. Jim can be reached by mail at 12480 Co. Highway 21, Franklin, N.Y. 13775 or by e-mail at townoffranklin@frontiernet.net. His office is in the Town Garage at the intersection of County Rt 21 and State Rt. 357. Office hours are most Monday and Friday mornings and his phone number there is 829-5618. A website for the Town govern-

ment is being designed, which could provide access to assessment data.

Assessment: The last comprehensive assessment in Franklin was 11 years ago in 1997, and before that 23 years ago in 1974. At those times, throughout the Town each property is separately assessed at 100% of market value. (Currently there is no plan for another town-wide assessment until values are less volatile.) Between these comprehensive assessments, annual assessments determine the current average assessed value for the Town relative to market value – 79% in 2008. Individual property values are then adjusted so that none are greatly more or less than this. (There is the option to recalculate all values to 100%.) For 2008, real property was valued for its condition as of March 1st of this year, the Taxable Status Date. However it was valued as if sold on July 1st of last year (2007), the Valuation Date. As a result, when you receive your tax bill in December of 2008, it will be based on a property value almost a year and a half out of date.

Some local budgets are funded by taxes on properties from more than one town, such as those for school districts and the county. Because each town may assess properties as different percentages of the market value, there needs to be a way to equalize the burdens. New York State calculates an equalization rate for each town in the state.

Appeals: On May 1st, our Assessor released the roll of tentative assessment values. Each value will be used in calculating that year's property taxes unless the owner challenges it. This roll, a printout of almost 600

pages and some two inches thick, can be viewed at Assessor's office or at Clerk's offices in Franklin or Delhi. For a few weeks afterwards, an owner can discuss the value with our Assessor.

If the owner can not convince our Assessor to change that value, then the owner can appeal the value to the Board of Assessment Review, a board of three residents of Franklin who were appointed by the Town Board. It meets one afternoon each year - this year on 28th of May – known as Grievance Day. The tax payer should file Form RP-524 at least three business days before the meeting, so that the Board may prepare. (This form maybe obtained Town Clerk, Town Assessor, or State website.) Without that filing, the dispute may have to be adjourned until later if additional information is needed. In a typical year, a half dozen or so owners appeal, but following a comprehensive assessment there can be dozens.

After review by the BAR, the final roll is prepared and can be viewed at Clerks' offices or website of NYS Office of Real Property Services (*orps.state.ny.us*). This year it was released on July 1st. If the owner still is unsatisfied, he or she may appeal again, this time to Small Claims Assessment Review by a State employee, which meets at the Town Garage 30 days after the final roll is released. The rejection letter from the Board of Assessment Review contains information on how to begin this second appeal.

Collection: Property tax bills are mailed by the county at the end of December. You have until January 31st to pay our Tax Collector, Connie Young, without penalty. After that, each 1st of the

month adds a 1% penalty. If the taxes are not paid by April 30th, Warrant Day, our Tax Collector forwards the list of debtors to the County. Delaware County which continues to add penalties on top of the 4% charged by the Town as it tries repeatedly to collect. The ultimate penalty is foreclosure, when a property is seized by the government and sold at auction.

Things to Come? Currently there are 1,126 separate assessment districts that New York State has to keep track of and calculate a equalization rate for: 920 towns, 145 villages, and 61 cities. The State government would like to simplify by eliminating town and village assessors and having the county assessors do it all. In Delaware County, we would go from 20 assessors (19 towns and the Village of Stanford) to one in Delhi. Over half of the states use county assessment, although many of those are western states with low populations. If that happens here, we would lose any local oversight of assessments that comes from our Board appointing our Assessor and Board of Assessment Review. Also we could loose the convenience of making appeals at the Town Garage.

As the responsibilities of local government have grown, so have the resulting costs and property taxes. There are disadvantages to raising so much money through property taxes. This tax levy is relatively constant through ups and downs of the economy, which can hurt people whose income fluctuates. Instead, the revenue could come from income tax or other source, which would result in shifting the burden from some taxpayers to others.

IN FRANKLIN: AUGUST

To have your event listed, contact Brian Brock at this newspaper or at 607-829-3202

- 2nd Sat. 6to9 Chamber of Commerce Dinner, Auction, & Raffle
Franklin Firehouse
- 3th Sun. 12:00 Jazz Brunch (Hilary Kole, Tedd Firth) \$12.50, Morgan's
3to5 Opening: Clues and No Answers (Emily Martin) Bright Hill
7:00 Franklin Explorers
- 4th Mon. 7:00 Franklin Fire Department Franklin Firehouse
8:00 Treadwell Fire Department Treadwell Firehouse
- 5th Tues. 10:00 Magic, Music, and Ventriloquism (Steve Charney)
Franklin Free Library
4:00 Friends of Franklin Library Franklin Free Library
7:30 Recreation Committee Village Hall
- 6nd Wed. 7:30 Treadwell Explorers
- 7th Thurs. 7:30 Franklin Planning Board Town Garage
- 10th Sun. 10to2 Franklin Farmers' Market Chapel Hall
- 11th Mon. 7:00 Franklin Village Board Village Hall
7:30 Washington Reading Circle
- 12th Tues. 10:00 Tacones Calientes, Flamenco (M.Zemantauski, R.Byan)
Franklin Free Library
7:00 Treadwell Community Improvement Club
7:30 Franklin Town Board Town Garage
- 3th Wed. 6:00 Franklin Local

- 7:00 Doodlebug Club Ogden's
- 8:00 Treadwell Emergency Squad Treadwell Firehouse
- 14th Thurs. 6:00 Franklin Town Court Town Hall
- 7:00 Word Thursday (Liz Beasley, Jay Rogoff) \$3 Bright Hill
- 8:00 GALILEO, Opening Night - Franklin Stage at Chapel Hall
- 17th Sun. 8:00 I Gelosi Chapel Hall
- 18th Mon. 7:00 Franklin Emergency Squad Franklin Firehouse
7:00 Franklin Improvement Society Village Hall
- 19th Tues. 10:00 Fat Fiddles, Bass & Cello (Jered Egan, Steve Stalker)
Franklin Free Library
- 21st Thurs. 6:00 Ouleout Valley Historical Society Town Garage
7:30 Board of Education Franklin Central School
Institute Street
- 23rd Sat. **Old Franklin Day**
- 24th Sun. 8:00 THE MAIDS Franklin Stage at Chapel Hall
- 25th Mon. 7:30 Washington Reading Circle
- 26th Tues. 10:00 Sights & Sounds of Ghana (Zorkie & Felix Nelson)
Franklin Free Library
- 7:30 Treadwell Fire Department Auxiliary Treadwell Firehouse
- 28th Thurs. 6:00 Town Court Town Hall
7:00 Word Thursday (Susan Hoover, Sere Smolen) \$3
Bright Hill
- 31st Sun. 10to2 Franklin Farmers' Market Chapel Hall