



Deb Amery

Candidate for Supervisor

Town of Spider Lake (TOSL)

As a candidate for Town Supervisor, one of my guiding principles is to encourage a community conversation. I believe this conversation can improve our collective knowledge; which will strengthen our decisions as a community and renew confidence in the future of our town. This will take a lot of hard work. I am committed to a “hands-on” approach as a Town Supervisor; to get involved and gather all the information I can about our town and the people who care about it. To get the ball rolling, the following is a summary of observations on an important issue. My goal is to encourage thought and debate, which I believe can elevate our community conversation. (Contact me at: voicesofspiderlake.com)

Town Management and Budget

Topic: Benjamin Franklin said there were only two things certain in life: death and taxes. Most of us accept property taxes as a fact of life, asking only that our taxes be spent wisely. For Spider Lake, we might envision a well-managed town where the work gets done and we keep a lid on taxes. This requires a team of competent people that are familiar with how the town works. Right now, we are in a leadership transition with the resignation of our Town Clerk and a changeover in Board membership. This, combined with shutting down some committees, is disrupting the continuity, knowledge, and leadership experience we have relied upon in the past. We are at greater risk of missing things. Some mistakes or oversights could be costly. How do we ensure the Town of Spider Lake is effective in getting the work done, and does so while using tax dollars wisely?

Facts:

- The Town Board is responsible for preparing and managing the annual budget. For 2020, the budget is \$785,000 -- an 8.08% increase over 2019.
- Budget funding is a mix of inter-governmental revenues, miscellaneous fees and property taxes. On a tax base of three hundred million, TOSL generates \$3 million in annual property tax. Of the \$3 million the town gets \$268,749 -- the remaining dollars go to Sawyer County and schools.
- The budget of \$785,000 pays for roads, solid waste and recycling services, fire department, administrative costs, and to meet various other municipal requirements.
- In addition to budget revenues, as of last November, TOSL had over \$700,000 in its checking and money market account. Most of these dollars can be used to run the town, if needed. If we stay under budget, this balance will go up. If we go over budget, our checking account balance will go down.

Conversation: There is much that is good about our town and the way it is running. We have a Treasurer that is skilled, knowledgeable and dedicated. A recent audit of the town books was favorable. The Board of Supervisors is identifying current and long-term budgetary issues. We have enough cash in our checking account to run the town several months. Yet the question remains: Could we do more?

Yes. Much more. We could improve our website to enhance communications on all TOSL activity; making it a two-way process that is more inclusive of stakeholders not here on a year-around basis. We could re-establish committees to guide our decisions, especially as they relate to the long-term needs of our town. We could think about expanding our view of Town Supervisor's role, to include involvement and accountabilities that go beyond the traditional policy making function.

The list goes on. None of this will be simple. The rancor and disagreements we are currently experiencing in Spider Lake won't make it any easier. Let's take the energy that currently divides some of us and use it to do good. Let's have a community conversation.