

# The Piermont Newsletter

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## Waiting For The DEC's Marsh Decision

It has been two and a half years since Piermont first learned that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) planned to "restore" the 275-acre Piermont Marsh by using a herbicide, to clear out its principal plant, Phragmites. It wants to replace them with more "native" species. The village is still waiting to hear details of the state's plan.

Phragmites is the tall, tough grassy plant that has dominated our marsh for more than 30 years. It supports a rich diversity of wildlife. Those who want to get rid of them argue that a marsh with a greater variety of plants would attract more and different birds and animals. Skeptics reply that those plants have no proven resilience in the changing conditions of the Piermont Marsh environment.

Most experts agree that Phragmites reduce storm damage to Piermont Landing and the south side of the village. "For a lot of residents, they were our palisades," Piermont Mayor Chris Sanders told a reporter. "They were what protected us from Hurricane Sandy."

The state seems to have gotten that message. Betsy Blair, the woman heading the DEC's Piermont program, told the Mayor in late July that they are now considering a more modest plan. It would involve a smaller area in the middle of the marsh. That's where a number of "native" or rare plant species have been identified. How small an area and its exact location is not yet clear, but Mayor Sanders was assured that the DEC is aware of the important part the common reed plays in storm protection and will not jeopardize it.

The problem remains that the only way to get rid of Phragmites is to kill them with multiple applications of herbicides containing glyphosate. That's what various experts told a standing-room only crowd in May at the DEC's fourth and final Marsh Management

meeting. You can use a lot of the poison (which has been called a cancer-causing agent) or very little but you have to use it. Opponents of the plan not only fear the effect on all the living things inhabiting the marsh, but also on the residents and parkland adjacent to the marsh.

One expert showed alarming photos of crop-duster planes in Delaware repeatedly spraying sprawling Phragmites marshlands with vast quantities of glyphosate-based herbicides over many years. By contrast, on Constitution Island, up the Hudson from Piermont, they're knocking them down and suffocating them with heavy black plastic. But to kill the tougher plants,

they must use small amounts of the herbicide.

While Piermont waits to see what the DEC and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (both "owners" of the marsh) decide, the press has picked up on the community's concerns. The first was a Journal News article about Piermont beekeeper Marty Rosen's on-line petition "Don't let our honeybees die" directed to Governor Cuomo. It asked him to ban the spray of "chemicals including Monsanto's lethal RoundUp and Rodeo, into Piermont Marsh and the Hudson River". It quickly had 10,000 signatures from all over the globe.

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Woody Allen began shooting *The Purple Rose of Cairo* on our Main Street 30 years ago. Local photographer Sally Savage was there to capture the excitement. Read her story about how the film changed Piermont forever, and learn about the events planned to celebrate the anniversary on page 6. Sally Savage photo

## President's Corner



At the Old No. 7 Band concert this summer in Flywheel Park a woman asked me if I would be going to see them at the Turning Point. I told her I might if I could get into the place. The difficulty is I get around in a heavy power wheelchair and the Turning Point is not wheelchair accessible. She was surprised.

Although she lives in Piermont and goes to the Turning Point frequently, it had never occurred to her that it (and many of our village's stores and restaurants) is not wheelchair accessible. The nation just celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Many people think that ended all of our accessibility problems. It hasn't.

The law mandates that new and substantially rebuilt commercial buildings be wheelchair accessible. Older commercial buildings should be made accessible if it can be done "without much difficulty or expense." That includes "the simple ramping of a few steps," says the United States Department of Justice.

Piermont has not been following the law. When Mom Miraglia's (now 14 & Hudson) was rebuilt the village should have insisted its plans include a ramp. The nearby pizza shop should be required to remove its wheelchair barriers. The village needs to look at all its existing commercial buildings and consider whether it would be difficult or expensive for landlords to add ramps.

We have wonderful restaurants here in Piermont. I've been lucky enough to have eaten in most of them. At 14 & Hudson they will pull out a portable wheelchair ramp for me. That's fine in warm weather but it is a nasty job for them and a cold wait for me in winter. Some places go to extraordinary lengths to help. If I arrive in my lighter weight manual wheelchair, Casey, the Freelance Café's maître d', will ask some employees to help him pull me up the stairs and into the place. Jack does the same thing for me at his Portofino.

The last time I tried to get into the Turning Point, my

wheelchair slipped out of the hands of the people helping me. I wasn't hurt but the crash cracked the chair's frame. That was some years ago. I've always thought that adding a ramp from the driveway side – even a steep one -- would help the musicians who have to wrestle heavy equipment into the place and allow more people with disabilities to enjoy the music.

In the years I've lived here, we have gone from having the area's least accessible library, to having one of the most accessible. The Village Hall has added a ramp, a push button front door and an elevator. When the new owners of the Community Market wanted to make changes to the building, an earlier Village Board insisted they add a ramp. On the other hand, a quarter of a century after the first President Bush signed the ADA, the village still has corners that lack curb ramps and some that are dangerously steep.

If any other minority were kept out of stores and restaurants and had trouble using the sidewalks, there would be riots. Piermont can do better. Piermont must do better!

~Bob Samuels

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This issue of *The Piermont Newsletter*, and many past issues, can be found online at <http://www.piermont-ny.com/newsletter/> thanks to volunteer Richie Stark.



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## Grace Meyer, She's A Prize-Winning Environmental Activist

When longtime Piermonters hear Grace Meyer's name they think Piermont library. After all, she ran the place for most of her 35 years there, retiring in 2004. So last spring when Rockland County honored her for her environmental work many villagers were pleased and a little surprised.

They shouldn't have been. Grace's environmental work started back in 1974 when she helped to develop the Piermont Conservation Advisory Commission (CAC), the first CAC in Rockland County. It advises government about important environmental matters. She remained with it for five years, acting as liaison between Piermont and Rockland County (Environmental Management Council) involving environmental issues, specifically wetland issues. In 1988, when she moved out of the village to an old farm house in Orangeburg, she joined the Rockland County EMC. She is currently an Orangetown representative.

"It's important," said County Executive Ed Day last April at the Kennedy Dells County Park awards ceremony in New City, "that we recognize the people that work so hard to protect our natural resources, while also teaching others about sustainability. Today," he added, "we honor Grace Meyer for her lifelong commitment to our environment." He then presented her with the 18th annual County Executive's Outstanding Environmental Volunteer Award. He also dedicated a serviceberry tree in Grace's honor.

Grace spent much of her career in the old Piermont library building on Hudson Terrace. She actually lived on its top floor for seven years, starting in 1969. Because she got the apartment in lieu of a salary for working at the library, she kept a part-time job at the Pearl River Library. She also started back to school to finish her degree at Columbia University, School of General Studies, majoring in botany, then English. She went on to earn her degree in Library Science.

The Piermont marsh has long been Grace's passion. The 1969 book, *Life and Death of the Salt Marsh*, by John and Mildred Teal had a great influence on her. The more she learned about the importance of wetlands, the more involved she became. Her leadership on the Village Board (she served



Grace Meyer. Fred Burrell photo

from 1979—1982) was instrumental in having the Piermont Marsh added to the National Estuarine Sanctuary Program. The marsh is also now a Research Reserve. Scientists, teachers and students actively study its intricate makeup and its role in the Hudson River.

Grace is against any large-scale plan to eradicate the marsh's predominant plant, Phragmites [see Page 1 story]. Even though they are not a native plant, Grace points out that they protect the south side of the village from flooding.

"My main interest has been the Piermont Marsh," Grace says, reflecting on her years of involvement, "but construction issues were important, as well as the many other environmental issues involving the area."

And, what about Piermont's future? Is Grace still involved? Of course! Grace Meyer will always be actively involved. Thank you, Grace!

~Carolyn Doyle



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## Fracked Oil: Good News/Bad News

The good news is that last year, after serious pressure from New Yorkers fearful of the land and water contamination associated with the extreme method of fossil fuel extraction known as hydraulic fracking, Governor Cuomo banned the process from the state. The bad news is we're getting the highly flammable product anyway; fracked oil is arriving in New York from the west in stunning quantities. One fourth of the oil extracted from the Baaken shale in North Dakota is coming across the country to the north east and Albany is now the second largest oil transfer station in the nation with a 4000% increase in crude oil transport between 2008 and 2013.

All that gummy stuff needs to get down to refineries in New Jersey or Pennsylvania by any and all methods possible. And alas, as Tyson Slocum, director of Public Citizen's Energy Program has commented, "Transporting oil—whether by rail, pipeline or sea tanker; from offshore oil rigs or onshore oil operations—is an inherently dangerous activity."

One method of moving it is by water. Every day a barge carrying 3 to 4 million gallons of Baaken oil moves down the Hudson River (past Piermont), and since 2013, roughly every eight days a tanker called Afrodite (!) carrying 8 million gallons has headed down the river beginning a round trip out the New York harbor, north to New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, to return empty. The good news is that, according to Riverkeeper John Lipscomb, the safety record of the double-hulled barges and tankers is excellent.

He notes also that our beloved Hud-

son for decades has been a watery highway on which barges of refined petroleum products—gasoline, heating and fuel oil—have moved upriver from the refineries. The difference is not the direction the barges move, but the fact that these refined products, were they to spill, either vaporize or float and can be recovered.

The same safety, alas, cannot be assumed for the contents of the oil trains that carry thousands of gallons of sinkable, remarkably flammable Baaken oil south on our own West Shore line (only 2.5 miles from Piermont) in tanker cars of the kind that spilled more oil in 2013 than in the preceding 10 years combined, and whose flaming accidents have made headlines. Two or three 100-car trains each carrying 3 million gallons of oil, go down the West Shore line every day. And even though the rail lines in our immediate neighborhood are several miles behind us in Blauvelt and Tappan, further up the river the tracks are right on the shore and any leaks would obviously move down river. It may not surprise you to learn that the rails and rail bridges carrying these trains are in very questionable shape—there is one federal bridge safety inspector for 14 northeastern states.

It was the reality of what might happen if there were a derailment or spill that attracted the attention of our Fire Chief Dan Goswick. First, to date, all of the rail accidents involving Baaken oil have had to burn themselves out. In none has the fire been able to be extinguished.

Second, when there is an accident that spills oil in the water, the recovery

achievements to date have ranged from the pitiful to the pointless. When a Mississippi barge spilled 34,000 gallons last year, creating a 60 mile sheen down the river, 95 gallons were recovered. A more recent 30,000 gallon spill reported zero recovery. The oil recovery organizations in our area are located in Staten Island and Newburgh—far enough away to allow our entire waterfront to be coated with oil before help could arrive.

The reason for sharing all this bad news is that we have a fire chief who believes his job requires him to learn everything about public safety; Danny Goswick is finishing up a degree at Empire State College's School for Emergency Management and Disaster Preparedness, and when he heard about the oil transport problem, he reached out to Riverkeeper, John Lipscomb, the DEC and New York State's Fire and Emergency Services to put together a mitigation plan just in case. Goswick's initiative is unique in the Hudson Valley, Lipscomb remarked, a possible model for other communities. And Piermont's Fire Department is putting together its own mitigation plan. Lipscomb said we would need 6 thousand feet of boom just to protect the marsh. But protecting the marsh is not enough for Goswick who says we need 9 thousand feet of boom to protect the village.

We all need to hope he finds funding to get it because it's increasingly hard to imagine that a serious accident won't happen and, as Riverkeeper President Paul Galley says "transport of crude oil is the most significant new threat in a generation."

~Joan Gussow

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# Piermont's Community Garden, Looking Back, Looking Ahead

I lived in Nyack for many years. During that time I became friends with Piermonter and garden member Sandy Sheridan. One June, Sandy invited me to the Piermont Community Garden's Summer Solstice Picnic in Parelli Park. It was lovely—twinkling lights, wreaths with flowing ribbons to wear on our heads, a Maypole dance, delicious food, and most importantly—lots of friendly people.

When I eventually moved to Piermont, one of the first things I did was to get on the garden's membership waiting list. After I received my quarter plot, I dove right in: buying seeds, planting, learning, joining committees, watering, joining more committees and weeding. I was hooked on gardening and the community garden, and I still am.

This year is the Community Garden's 20th Anniversary season. To celebrate, the gardeners are looking back and looking ahead. To understand how it was started I sat down with garden co-founder Joan Gussow. To find out

where gardeners think the garden may be going in the future, I spoke with original garden members Ellen Tress and Denise Oswald, as well as a number of new gardeners.

The garden sits on land that was a part of a factory parking lot. When the factory left Piermont, it was given to the Village, but the section where the garden sits became a junk-filled eyesore. When Joan and her late husband Alan Gussow moved to Piermont they realized the lot would make a great community garden. They brought the idea to the Village Board. If there was enough interest among the residents of the village, the Mayor agreed, the garden could move ahead. In a jiffy, the number of people interested in joining was large enough to meet the Village's mandate and the garden was underway.

Lots of work followed—some done by the Village's DPW, and some of it done by the new gardeners. Landscape architect Dan Sherman designed it, Colleen Duffy ceile Leidy became Joan's

garden co-chair and also developed the lottery system for giving out the first garden plots. The lot was cleared, wood chips were spread, and the gardeners built and filled the first set of wooden raised bed boxes. The garden requires all members to help maintain the common spaces, and keep their own spaces tended and weeded. The garden participates in Plant a Row for the Hungry and donates food to the St. Anne's food pantry.

Over the years there have been numerous floods, some deep enough to float the wooden raised bed boxes and churn them around like the blades in a mixer. Every time that happened the wooden boxes had to be rebuilt. After Hurricane Sandy destroyed the garden yet again, the gardeners decided to rebuild in a new form. Dan Sherman redesigned the garden, and with the help of numerous donors and even more hardworking volunteers, the garden was rebuilt with brick walkways and brick bed outlines. It also included

*continued on page 13*

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# The Movie that Changed Piermont Forever

The first sign was a sign! It was a faded painting of an old milk bottle; advertising Meadow Fresh dairy products. It was on the side of the then Meyer family home at 437 Piermont Avenue. There were more changes and then, suddenly, early one morning I saw Main Street filled with small, black, 1920s and 30s era cars, and actors in 1930s garb. We knew the "shoot" had begun. I grabbed my cameras and started snapping away.

The joke was that Woody Allen had picked Piermont for his *The Purple Rose of Cairo* movie because our fading mill town looked then more like the setting, a depression era community, than any other place near Manhattan. Even so, they spent months giving 1983 Piermont an authentic 1935 look. Main Street's buildings got a drab, grey-green hue. They even built two fake buildings opposite the Turning Point. One was the Jewel Theatre, showing *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (where Mia Farrow's character goes to escape the sorrows of her sad life). The other facade was Wm. Ross & Son pharmacy.

Piermonters had fun checking the unrecognizable contents of windows of our main businesses. The actual shop owners put out "Open for Business" signs between filming shoots, letting real customers would know they were still there. The late Stuart Wurtzel, the film's production designer and Ed Pisoni, the art director created some wonderful store fronts.

Piermont's Village Hall turned

## The Film's 30th Anniversary Events

The Piermont Civic Association and the Piermont Chamber of Commerce will combine forces to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the filming of Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, here 30 years ago. Its impact changed of Piermont forever.

The celebration features an exhibition of photographs by Sally Savage documenting the film, and a special public art installation by Kristina Pfadt Burns. At 3 pm there will be a roundtable discussion in the Piermont Village Hall, bringing together those who worked on the film, and those who witnessed how the film impacted the village.

That will be followed at 6 pm with a champagne toast and a showing of the film. Check back for updates!

into The Public Library. The Turning Point became The Salvation Army, but owner John McAvoy didn't have to change much because one of the movie's signs on his building read: "He is Your Turning Point." Some key scenes with his stars, Jeff Daniels and Mia, took place at the current Sidewalk Bistro. Its windows became Gutterman's bakery and a candy store.

Piermont Wine's neighbor was

Rudy's Tavern, a pawnshop, Crane's plumbing supplies, a barber shop, a vegetable stand, Style Mode ladies' apparel, and a real estate window offering prime Piermont houses for a few thousand dollars! Owners of the Community Market had to alert customers that the prices in the window were NOT current (a 3 lb. tin of coffee: 65 cents; 2 lbs. of cookies: 25 cents; and a dozen eggs, 11 cents). The crew hid the M & T Bank with an enormous billboard advertising Sunshine Krispy crackers.

Piermont watched enthralled from the sidelines through the winter of '83-'84, as Woody Allen worked his magic.

Many say money from the film was the kick in the pants Piermont needed to find its way back to prosperity. The cash rolled in and the village used it well. Woody Allen's people paid Main Street property owners for filming rights; they hired many villagers (including one actress, Marilyn Heitman). Its hungry crews kept local delis and restaurants hopping.

Although I have worked as a photojournalist since the late 1960s, nothing was as much fun as photographing this event. It truly changed Piermont forever.

~Sally Savage

*Editor's note:* You can see Sally's full photo essay about the filming by making an appointment with Sally (845-359-5735), or by visit her website: <http://sallysavage.com/exhibitions.htm>:



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## From The Library

As many patrons of the Library are well aware, the First Friday Film Series has been a longstanding, much loved tradition since the Library moved to our current location. Marc Farre will close out his run as curator of the library's First Friday Film Series with a screening of *Big Night*, the same movie with which he launched the popular monthly event back in 2008. The movie will be shown on Friday, October 2 at 7:30 pm. Marc's enthusiasm and insight has been a boon to our community. He will be greatly missed and we, along with those who have come to love his personal take on the films shown, wish him all the best.

We are proud to host the Local Harvest Book Brunch on Sunday, October 18 from 1 to 3 pm. Join us at the Library for an afternoon of local fare both literary and culinary. Attendees of this event will hear presentations of books by local authors and enjoy refreshments from local vendors. This event is a wonderful opportunity for our community to learn about the books written right here in Rockland and to sample the offerings of our local food and beverage merchants. Authors participating in the event represent a variety of subjects and genres. The Fiction offerings are *Musings of a Mystery Sibling* by Marian Armstrong, *15* by Carolyn Doyle, *Ascent to Avalon* by Bill Hohlfeld writing as Dennis Patrick. The Nonfiction books and authors are *Happiness Is a Habit* by Michele Phillips, *Reality Boulevard* by Melissa Jo Peltier, and *Relationship Reboot* by Dr. Debra Castaldo who wrote portions of her book right here in our Library. Advanced reservations are required for this event. Please call (845)359-4595 to reserve your spot.

Have a Green Thumb or wish you did? Do you miss gardening in the long winter months? If you've answered yes to either of these questions, be sure to join us on Sun-

day, October 25th at 1pm for Winter Container Gardening presented by Vivienne Dieckmann, Master Gardener with Cornell University Cooperative Extension of Rockland. This lively and informative presentation highlights valuable tips and easy techniques for growing ornamentals and miniature evergreens throughout the fall and winter. It will also demonstrate different methods of decorating the containers with branches, berries, and twigs for the holiday season. Through the use of live, winter-hardy plants and shrubs that have interesting texture and form, the winter container will provide long-lasting color through the cold, snowy months.

During the month of October, the Library's gallery space will feature the paintings of Ms. Haile Bins whose works are inspired by local landscapes and the natural beauty of flowers.

In November, we will be showcasing the photography of Ms. Page Simon and Mr. Daniel Kazimierski. The opening for their show "Page Simon and Daniel Kazimierski:



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Recent Works" will be held on Sunday, November 8 from 2 pm to 4 pm.

In addition to our unique adult programs and special events, we also have a wealth of fun and educational children's programs in the upcoming months.

The Five Libraries of South Orangetown have partnered with the Delaware Valley Raptor Center for the program Close Encounters with Birds of Prey. The DVRC, a wildlife rehabilitation and education facility, has been promoting the conservation of raptors (hawks, falcons, owls, eagles, and vultures) since its inception in 1987. The audience will experience the majesty of hawks, falcons, owls, and eagles up close, while gaining an understanding of a variety of ecological concepts. This program will take place at Tallman Mountain State Park on Sunday, Octo-

ber 18 at 1:00pm and is appropriate for children in grades K thru 6. Please come in or call the Library to register.

Readers in the Book Club for Grades 3 thru 5 will receive a free book each month! Members of the club may pick up their books at the front desk one month before the meeting. The books under discussion are: October 8th: *Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo, November 12th: *Little Lion* by Ann Hood and December 10th: *Fantastic Mr. Fox* by Roald Dahl. The Book Club will meet at from 6:45pm to 7:45pm. Please come in or call the library to register.

Popcorn Anyone? The Library will show *Paddington* (PG) on Friday, October 16 at 6:30pm and *Minions* (PG) on Tuesday, December 29 at 2 pm.

If you're looking for a last-minute costume or are just in the market for

some yummy desserts, come to the Library's Halloween Party on Thursday, October 29th from 6 to 7 pm. We'll be making masks and playing fun games. Ages 4 and up are welcome.

On Friday, November 13 at 6:30pm swing by the Library for a fun and frosty event. "Pop-Ups and Cupcakes" is for the whole family and we invite you to come in and read our new Pop-up books. Afterwards, you can decorate your own dessert! Please call or come in to register.

For more information on any of the events at the Piermont Public Library, please feel free to contact us at (845) 359-4595 or check us out on our website [www.piermontlibrary.org](http://www.piermontlibrary.org), where you can join one of our mailing lists to receive notifications of upcoming Library programs.

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# The Front Line

## On Bears, Bicycles and Bridge Traffic

The Piermont Police are responding to sightings of black bears in the Village (see article in this section), increasing numbers of bicyclists on the roads, traffic snarls on Rt. 9W due to construction of the new Tappan Zee Bridge and a growing number of unlicensed contractors working in the Village.

"Regarding the bears," said Police Chief Michael O'Shea, "residents need to pay attention to their surroundings. A bear might be sleeping at the side of a trail and when a jogger comes along the bear could become frightened. Pay attention to what's around you."

He also warned residents about leaving any form of food out for bears. "A bear is not a duck or a goose--do not feed it. At 180 pounds, they are capable of hurting people if they feel threatened or frightened. Further, if a bear finds a good food source, it will keep coming back."

With a growing number of bicyclists enjoying the Village and its roads, the Piermont Police are using a combination of education, engineering and enforcement to keep streets safe and enjoyable for everyone. The department is working with bike clubs to help them educate their members on the rules of the road. He said that the engineering part of it is to have proper road signage in place to explain traffic rules. And finally, there is enforcement. The Department has extra personnel on duty during weekends of the warm summer months to enforce the laws.

Regarding Rt. 9W traffic, Chief O'Shea said that on a typical day prior to the start of construction of the new Tappan Zee Bridge, about 10,000 vehicles used the road. With construction, traffic is considerably greater now. He urged caution entering and exiting the road.

Finally, the village is experiencing an influx of unlicensed contractors. As a result, the police have received complaints of larceny, fraud, and shoddy workmanship. "There are reasons that these contractors are unlicensed," said Chief O'Shea. "To get a home improvement license, you need to undergo a background check and you have to have proper insurance. Be careful who you let into your home. When you hire a licensed contractor, you can always go to the consumer affairs website: (<http://rocklandgov.com/departments/consumer-protection-weights-and-measures/licenses-and-permits/>) and check out the person to determine if there are complaints against him or her. When the contractor is unlicensed, you generally do not know who you are hiring."

As always, the Chief urges residents: "When you see something, say something."

## Leaf Collection Starts 10/19

Tom Temple, Supervisor of the Piermont Department of Public Works (DPW), said that leaf collection begins during the week of October 19 and runs through the week of December 7.

"All loose leaf piles should be placed at the edge of your property," he explained. "All leaf piles should be clear of rocks, brush and any other debris, which could damage collection the village's collection machinery. Please do not block any sidewalks with loose or bagged leaves. This creates a hazard by forcing pedestrians to walk in the roadway."

Leaves that are to be bagged should be in biodegradable bags -- it will not take leaves in plastic bags. The DPW supplies these biodegradable bags to residents free of charge. While supplies last, you can get them at the DPW garage during regular business hours. This information and updates are available on Piermont's website [www.Piermont-NY.gov](http://www.Piermont-NY.gov).

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**Fire Department Looks for  
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The Piermont Fire Department is constantly looking for new members to join its ranks. Anyone who is interested in joining should come to the firehouse on any Monday evening between 7-9 pm.

~Ron Derven

**Piermont Government Numbers**

Piermont Village Hall

845-359-1258

Police Department

Emergencies: 911

845-359-0240

Water Rescue 911

Emergencies: 911

Fire Department

Emergencies: 911

845-359-1208

Department of Public Works

845-359-1717

Dennis P. McHugh Piermont Public  
Library

845-359-4595



*Kids started the dancing at the Old No. 7 Band concert this August in Flywheel Park. The concert was one of two plus a movie that the Piermont Civic Association sponsored in the park this summer. Betsy Franco Feeney photo*



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## Waiting For The DEC's Marsh Decision continued from page 1

In the September issue of Harper's Magazine, the plan to restore "native" plants to the Piermont marsh drew national attention. Prize-winning journalist James Cockburn used Piermont as an example in an article that accuses the chemical giant Monsanto of inventing the "invasives" frenzy to sell more RoundUp.

Why would the DEC have targeted the Piermont Marsh for a large-scale eradication in the first place? Two reasons emerge: money and philosophy. The agency stands to gain \$800,000 in funding for the project and it has a "nativist" philosophy. That's the belief that native plants offer superior habitat and opportunities for diversity, albeit many of those

plants are no longer well-suited to the habitat changes of the past decades. Non-nativists see an existing, evolved ecosystem, existing plants, animals and habitat as having equal value.

Betsy Blair, the woman heading the DEC's Piermont program, began each Marsh Management meeting by reiterating the goals, specifically 1) sustain native marsh communities and biological diversity, 2) promote marsh resiliency to sea level rise, 3) maintain or enhance marsh's ability to provide storm protection for the Village, and 4) increase scientific knowledge and public understanding of the marsh.

She told audiences that she was here to listen. The vast majority of Piermonsters who spoke at the meetings said they were against using herbicides on the marsh. Toward the end of the May meeting, anyone who thought that the speakers had softened the DEC's attitude about using poison learned they were mistaken when Blair said herbicide remains in the DEC "toolbox." The DEC already has the permits it needs to proceed, she revealed. They were granted as part of its original 2013 proposal to eradicate 200 acres of Phragmites. It was part of the permit to build the new Tappan Zee Bridge. This "marsh restoration" was considered compensation for environmental damage caused by bridge construction.

Blair she would return later in the summer with a new long-term marsh management plan. It would be based on findings of the four meetings. At press time, Piermont was still waiting that plan.

~Margaret Grace



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## Community Garden continued from page 5

two wheelchair accessible raised beds, a new fence and more composting space. This spring, the shed was fixed and a new arbor was finally built to replace the original one which was also destroyed by Hurricane Sandy.

The garden participates in Plant a Row for the Hungry and donates food to the St. Anne's food pantry. Over the years members have moved away, become busy with other things, or in some cases, have passed away. Yet there has always been a waiting list for plots for new members. Recently, there has been a large influx of new members, some with young children. The garden continues. There will be a more formal celebration in September.

~Susan Freiman

Next issue – Looking ahead: some of the gardener's ideas for the next 20 years—for their own plots, and for the garden as a whole.

### Community Garden Anniversary Party!

The Piermont invites you to celebrate its 20th Anniversary at 6 pm on Thursday, September 24 at Union Arts Center in Sparkill. Tickets are \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door. For more information, call Mary 365-0826.



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