

The Piermont Newsletter

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FALL 2018

A Piermont Marsh Update

The future of the 1,017-acre Piermont Marsh is back in the hands of New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation. It has been five years since the DEC told our village officials that it wanted to kill 200 acres of the marsh's phragmites (the dominate tall reeds) to allow native plants to regrow. This was not happy news to most Piermonters. In a series of tense meetings with the DEC, many speakers pointed out that by diminishing waves the invasive phragmites protect the pier and its buildings from storms. They also objected to using the controversial glyphosate-based herbicide to wipe out the reed. Roundup is the version used on land. The wheels of government grind slowly. It took until last winter for the DEC to come back with a new plan. It differed in two significant ways from its original proposal:

1. The DEC replaced the original language referring to eradication of phragmites on "up to 200 acres" with language stating that there would be three initial "test areas" in the center of the marsh, measuring a total of 40 acres (i.e., approximately 30 football fields).
2. The DEC acknowledged that phragmites serves a use-

ful role in reducing damage from storm surges during severe weather events.

However, the plan continued to rely on glyphosate-based herbicide as its primary method of eradication.

Responding to the DEC in February, the Piermont Village Board adopted a resolution highlighting the important role of the marsh in protecting village life and property and the opposition to herbicide use. It also said that the plan did not adequately address the issue of water quality in the Sparkill Creek.

In its June answer, the DEC dismissed the suggestion that it use alternative eradication methods. It also said that marsh funds can't be used to address water quality issues. The DEC wanted the village to agree before it moved forward.

The Village Board has decided to hold off its agreement until the DEC-funded study on the role of coastal marshes in protecting areas from storm surge and flooding is completed. It also reminded the agency of residents' serious concerns about glyphosate and the recent negative news stories about glyphosate. The next move is up to the DEC.

-- Margaret Grace

New Bag Law -- A First Step

Piermont's new "Reusable Bag Law," the first of its kind in Rockland, goes into effect January 1. It prevents village stores and restaurants from using plastic bags and Styrofoam containers.

Mayor Bruce Tucker wants their customers to use reusable bags, not paper bags instead. But the village will not have a paper bag fee like some other communities. "We want people to get into the habit of carrying reusable bags without overburdening our businesses." Won't the new rules discourage shoppers? "I think that the opposite will happen," he said. "I think

that more people will want to support a green village."

Businesses seem to be embracing the change. Many, including newcomers D'Vine Pie and TWK Community Market, are already using cardboard boxes and reusable bags. And some (like Bunbury's Coffee Shop) are switching to paper straws.

Tucker admits that the new legislation won't reduce any village costs or help us become a Climate Smart Community (more on that later). So why do it? Because while helping in

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Nearly 100 fire trucks and many marching bands came rolling and marching down Main Street during the Rockland County Volunteer Firefighters Association's 106th annual parade. Hosted by Piermont's Empire Hose Company, the march started at the Grand View line and ended at the pier. —Betsy Franco Feeney photo

Piermont Reflections



I passed the Flywheel Park gazebo one perfect summer night. It was full of people. More were on the walkway near the water. They all seemed to be tourists.

I've been around here long enough to remember when there were no tourists in Piermont. Why would there be? The people who lived here then loved Piermont – the residents always have -- but this was a sooty, hardworking mill town with boilermaker bars.

Almost forgotten was the Piermont that was a booming resort town in the early 1900s. A mind boggling 50 trains a day delivered tourists to our little station. Horse drawn carriages carried them down the hill to the Fort Comfort Inn. It was a little north, and across Piermont Avenue from where the Pier 701 Restaurant is now.

The Inn was no dump. It had full dress dances and teas. Two French chefs from Delmonico's restaurant in New York manned the kitchen. They used what we now call farm-to-table food: "Vegetables fresh from the Inn garden are supplied," promised a brochure, "and a carefully stocked dairy farm furnishes all the milk and cream used, while a flowing well provides an abundance of clear, pure water."

Guests could cross the street to the Fort Comfort Beach (now the 701 and the marina), with its "many attractive features not found at seaside resorts," promised an ad. "The clean, fine sand bottom sloping gradually for a long distance makes it absolutely safe for small children and enjoyable to all. A modern Bathing Pavilion is lighted by electricity for bathing at night." There also was a merry-go-round, shooting gallery, dance hall, swings, boating and other amusements.

We don't have classy hotels now. No one swims in the river anymore although it may be cleaner today (because we have sewers) than it was during Fort Comfort's prime. Today's tourists come to enjoy what we all enjoy – the river, the pier and our many restaurants, shops and art galleries. They visit and go home. We get to stay. Lucky us!

— Bob Samuels

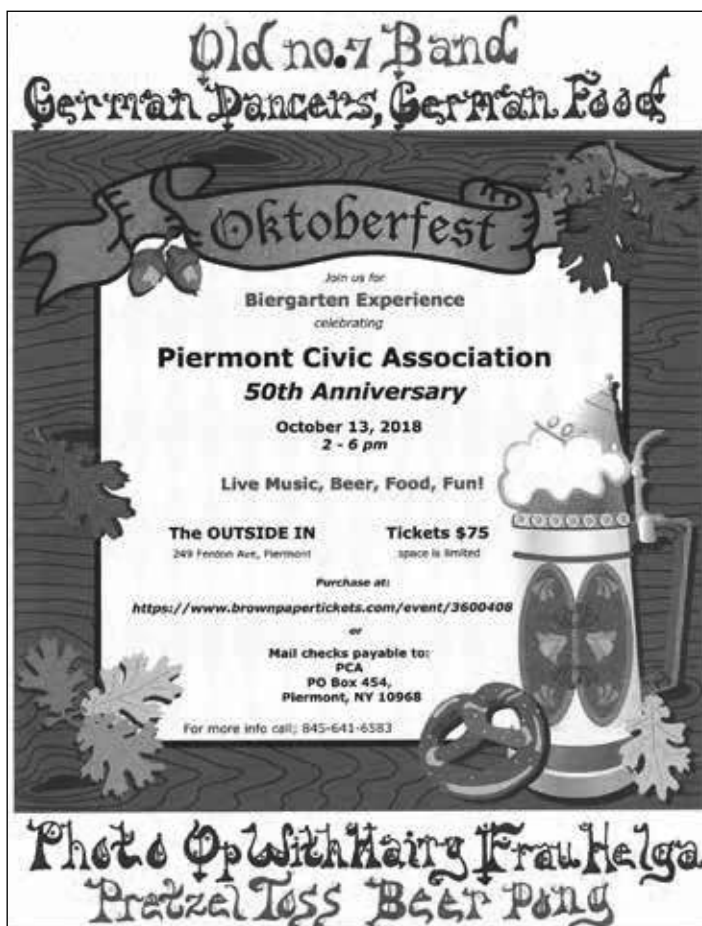
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This issue of *The Piermont Newsletter*, and many past issues, can be found online at <http://www.piermont-ny.com/newsletter/> thanks to volunteer Richie Stark.



New Bag Law continued from page 1

recent "Clean Up Rockland" days, he noticed that around 80% of the garbage was plastic waste.

"The idea," he said, "is to cut waste and help clean up the environment. Yes, we're a small village, but if we do our part, hopefully we'll inspire other villages in the county to institute similar laws and make an even bigger impact. Every little bit helps."

The new law is part of the village's larger vision of sustainability. It includes replacing streetlights with less expensive LED lamps, and installing solar panels on buildings like the Village Hall and the Community Center. Those projects, besides cutting costs and energy consumption, will help persuade New York State to designate Piermont as a Climate Smart Community, making us eligible for new grants. Oddly enough, the Reusable Bag Law does not give the village "points" toward this goal, but that doesn't bother Tucker.

And those plastic straws, why not ban them? "Right now, there is only one manufacturer of paper straws," explained the Mayor, "and the cost is four to five times that of plastic. We didn't want to burden our restaurants. But with so much national attention to this issue, I expect the cost to come down soon, so we'll relook at that in a year or so. For now, the majority, if not all, restaurants are only giving straws if they're asked. Piermont's new law is just the right thing to do," said the Mayor.

-- Joe Serra

Lamont-Doherty's Field Station Repairs Are Underway

For more than two decades, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory's Hudson River field station, which sits in a low-slung building at the end of the Piermont Pier, had been a place for research, education and outreach programs on the Hudson River and in the adjacent Piermont Marsh.

Much of that activity stopped after the pounding from Superstorm Sandy in 2012 severely damaged the building. The good news is that Lamont, the famed Palisades, NY, research lab, has fully funded Phase 1 of the repairs and construction is underway.

"This phase includes remodeling and repairing the exterior of the building, and also includes a budget for signage," she explained spokesperson Marie DeNoia Arohsohn. Lamont continues to fundraise for other parts of the project such as educational equipment and operations support. Gifts made to the field station also will benefit the cost of the educational materials to outfit an Exploratorium.

The inside of the field station will have a working lab dedicated to research and technology. The rest of the building will be used for the Exploratorium. It will have a seismograph where visitors can see incoming seismic data in real-time; a kid-friendly microscope exhibit where children can view microfossils, fish larvae, pollen and more from the Hudson, said Arohsohn.

An audio-visual display system will make science both fun and interactive. Educational wall maps and displays will teach children about the geography and geologic history of the Hudson River. The building will offer wader boots and seining nets to allow student and teachers to explore the river and surrounding marshes.

Lamont sees a newly designed, updated field station as an enormous opportunity to create to serve the multiple goals of research, outreach, and education. The interdisciplinary study of rivers and estuaries has historically been a high priority research area for Lamont, with much of this work centered there.

In August, Lamont's held its annual Hudson River Fish Count in Piermont. "With the help of forty volunteers, including parents, grandparents, middle and elementary school children, we put on our boots and waders and netted and collected the fish, so we count and

identify them," Education Coordinator Margie Turrin. The two hour, three-net pull yielded: a summer flounder, one male mummichog, a white perch, 14 small striped bass, 210 Atlantic Silversides and 2 very feisty male blue crabs!

For project updates, visit the Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory website at: www.ldeo.columbia.edu

-- Deborah Friedman



*Lamont's Hudson River field station is being rebuilt.
-- Staff photo*

The Diplomat is Sorely Missed

Usually when a business closes few people notice but when Piermont's Diplomat Health and Swim Club shut down in July it left many of its members at a loss and bereft. Like Cheers, the bar in the tv series, it was a place where everyone knew your name.

"I loved the camaraderie and challenge of the aerobics and stretch classes, but now I miss the friends as much as the exercise," said Sally Savage, a former Piermonter who lives in Nyack. "We cared about each other. If a member was absent due to a fall or an illness, there was always a card, signed by all."

Jan Stephan feels the same way. "My husband Bruce and I loved it" said the Piermont resident. "It was not just a place to get our exercise, but it was a place for us to socialize in our retirement years. Whenever we went, there was someone to chat with -- always neighbors but also friends from the wonderful classes. We are very sad that it has closed." Owner Bruce Woolley looked out for his older members. When there was ice and snow on the ground, he would walk them to their cars to make sure they got there safely. Piermont's

Lola Esnard knows of an elderly couple who moved to a condo to be next door to the gym. "For them, the loss of the Diplomat must be tragic," she said.

It wasn't all socializing at the Diplomat. There was serious exercise going on too. Sparkill's P.J. Mouquin joined the club in 1982 to get in shape after the birth of her third child. "At the time," she recalled, I could swim five lengths in the pool." To be able to go home and tell her husband that she swam a total of 10 lengths, she'd swim five, then sit in the whirlpool for 10 minutes before going back in and swimming five more. "By the time of my daughter's baptism," she said, "I was up to 20 and soon passed a mile swim of 104 lengths!" "Perhaps the best of all," said Stephan "were the Friday stretch class. It was a perfect way to end a stressful week. One of gym instructor said if we all stretched on Fridays the world would be a better place!"

"It was a place where everyone knew each other and shared their stories," Lola declared.

-- Staff

Working at Solving our Traffic Problems

If the number of bicycles and cars on sunny weekends are any indication, the Piermont a writer once described as “the undiscovered gem of the Hudson,” has indeed been “discovered.” Its roads and traffic often appear woefully inadequate to handle its popularity.

After a litany of complaints about traffic, road rage and near accidents at a Village Board meeting earlier this year, Piermonter Marty Rosen suggested that the village start a traffic study. The Board liked the idea, quickly creating a Traffic Committee, which Trustee Ivanya Alpert agreed to head. Its members include Mayor Bruce Tucker, Police Chief Michael O’Shea, Fire Department Chief Donald Hardy, DPW Superintendent Tom Temple, Rosen and several of other residents.



Village Trustee Ivanya Alpert
-- Ron Derven photo

One of the Committee’s first moves was to put an online survey on the village’s Facebook page, asking people what they thought the

key traffic problems were and how they could be solved.

“We received 120 responses, mostly from people living in Piermont,” said Trustee Alpert. “The two main areas concerns were speeding on Route 9W and on Piermont and Fer-

don Avenues. Residents identified three intersections in the village as particularly treacherous. Those include the five-way intersection near the 14 & Hudson restaurant, the hairpin turns on Ash Street, and the left-hand turn at the top of Ash, onto Route 9W south [Ash Street becomes Broadway near its entrance to 9W].

The survey asked for solutions. Some of the quick fixes that the Traffic Committee and residents came up with are already done. The DPW mounted a parabolic (fisheye) mirror at the hairpin turn on Ash Street and removed brush to clear drivers’ views.

At the five-way intersection near the 14 & Hudson restaurant, the village changed some banned trucks from parking near the restaurant. That improved the view of drivers coming out of the “Patch” from Ohio Street onto Piermont Avenue. Police are continually cracking down on Piermont and Ferdon Avenue speeders.

Other suggestions offered by residents will require further study and perhaps the hiring of a traffic consultant, noted Trustee Alpert. That’s because they involve creating new traffic flows within the village, such as more one-way streets. The committee will also be considering suggestions to create bike paths to keep bicyclists and cars apart and for better control of bike traffic.

—Ron Derven

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Our Fish Ladder is One Year Old

As Piermonsters welcome the long-awaited completion of the new Tappan Zee Bridge, a much more modest transit undertaking for glass eels is celebrating its first year of success at the Silk Mill Dam on the Sparkill Creek.

Those eels have been migrating to this part of North America for thousands of years. Their journey starts in the Sargasso Sea, a warm water region near Bermuda approximately 800 miles from New York. These juveniles are transparent, with distinctive black eyes and a visible spine that earns them the name “glass eel,” will spend their formative years in fresh water. Many years later they return to the Sargasso to reproduce and complete their life cycle. But man-made obstacles, including our dam, make that odyssey a challenge.

In 2015, some members of the Piermont Civic Association asked officials from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to find a way to get the eels past the dam to the upstream waters of the Sparkill Creek where they could mature for the next few decades.

What the DEC developed was a fish ladder. Its a name commonly given to devices that boost marine life up and over both natural and constructed obstacles. Piermont’s system, designed and beta tested in 2016 by DEC’s Dan Miller, is winkingly called an “eelevator”.

“We built it in-house, and it only cost a few hundred dollars with commonly available materials from a local hardware store”, said Chris Bowser, a Science Education Specialist at the DEC. “Once we caught an eel or two, we knew we had something!”

The way it works is that eels of about 3 to 6 inches in length – in what is called the “elver” stage – navigate a short ramp. It’s kept wet by hoses from above and lined with old netting to offer traction. The eels next slither into a bucket of circulating water that is checked twice weekly by trained volunteers. Sizes and numbers are recorded, and the eels are then released above the dam to continue their migration.

The eel ladder operates from about May to October, and the metrics from the first season in 2017 were good, according to Bowser. “Last year we gave over 30 eels a “fin up” over the dam, and this season we had several eels in the first week.”

The program is poised to grow. Those interested in helping can contact Sarah Mount of the Department of Environmental Conservation (sarah.mount@dec.ny.gov) or Nicole Laiblen of the Rockland County Division of Environmental Management (laiblen@co.rockland.ny.us) for more information on how to get involved.

More than four tons of U.S. glass eels are exported each year as “seeds” to help regenerate Japan’s eel farms. High demand has driven the price for these silvery, slippery critters to over \$2,600 a pound. But to Chris Bowser, the real market value is in what these animals can teach us about the environment.

“The American eel is an incredible animal,” said Bowser. “Piermont’s enthusiasm for eel conservation is encourag-



The Piermont fish ladder. -- Ron Derven photo

ing,” he added. “We talk about the interconnectedness of the world’s ecosystems, but the eel lives it. They are an ideal ecological indicator that all these habitats are fully functioning.”

“Robust eel populations are important ecologically; and I also think that eels are the perfect ambassador for people to get involved in their local natural resources. The eel’s life story, and community accessibility, is like an amazing nature documentary in your own backyard.”

– Julie Harman

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Lis for Lori

You can find the charming book, "Piermont History, A-Zee," at the Piermont Train Station. It was both written and published by Piermonter Lori Lowell.

The book begins with Lori's tribute to the Piermont Community: The Piermont Historical Society, the Empire Hose Company, and the Piermont Civic Association. These Piermont organizations and volunteers, Lori will tell you, inspired her to create this history of a village and community she loves.

The book's cover has a vibrant painting of the train station by Piermont artist Trine Giaever. Inside, "Piermont History A-Zee" is filled with alphabetically listed fascinating Piermont tidbits. Among them are "P" for Protection Engine Company. It's the name of Piermont's original fire company. The letter "T" reminds us that the "Tappan" of "Tappan Zee" is a derivative of the Dutch name for the local Lenni Lenape tribe, meaning "cold water." "Zee." of



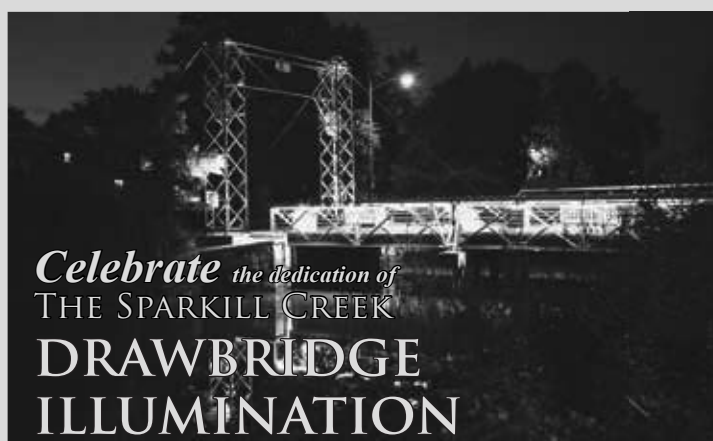
Author Lori Lowell

course, being the sea. Each of the books pages, one for each letter of the alphabet, pictures an original collage created by Lori, using photographs, memorabilia and hand-cut paper shapes, cut and pasted into visual vignettes of Piermont History.

For the past 24 years, Lori Lowell has been a pre-kindergarten through first grade teacher at the Elisabeth Morrow School. "Along with teaching academic skills," she says, "I try to build a positive classroom community and encourage dramatic play as part of a spontaneous curriculum." Clearly her students are also the beneficiaries of a teacher with a passion for local history and an artist's creativity. Looking at her book's collages, one can well-imagine her telling her little students: "Now take out your scissors and paste..."

The mother of two grown sons, Lori, has lived in Piermont for over 20 years. She and her parents, Fred and Elsie Lowell, were early residents of Piermont Landing - Lori and Elsie still live there. Lori is a member of the Piermont Historical Society and volunteers as a docent at the Train Station Museum. You'll find her wonderful "Piermont History A-Zee" there, on display and for sale at the train station. All the proceeds benefit the Piermont Historical Society.

-- Margaret Grace



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on Bridge Street near the Post Office, Piermont, New York
Rain Date: Friday, October 12th



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From The Library

News:

The library has launched an all-new piermontlibrary.org built by Rockland Web Design. The new website clearly and quickly connects library users with the information and services they want.

Some features of note are a newsletter, event calendar, and movie streaming service. The current issue of the newly designed e-newsletter is linked to all the latest news on programs and services. It has an event calendar that offers online registration and reminders to help users track library activities they'd like to attend.

The new digital content service called Hoopla allows anyone with a Piermont library card in good standing to stream movies. Hoopla also offers eBooks, audiobooks, and music. Card holders can access Hoopla for three borrows per month. We welcome feedback on the new website and its contents. E-mail info@piermontlibrary.org with your comments.

Fine-free Alert: To support youth literacy and to create life-long learners and readers, the library is participating in a 6-month trial (September '18 – March '19) during which children's and teens' books are fine-free.

Events for Adults:

As part of the Piermont Holiday Festival, the library hosts the Annual Gift of Art Show & Sale on Sunday, Dec. 2, 3 – 5 pm. The theme for 2018 is Postcards from Around the World. Then on Sunday, Dec. 16 at 2 pm, Piermont's own Anna Veleva will present a Classical Holiday Concert. Both events are free and open to the public. Please join us.

Programs and Events for Children:

Miss Nancy has a full calendar of special programs and events for the little ones in addition to the usual schedule (weekly Monday morning Story Times at 10:15 & 11:15 am, Pre-School Story & Craft for ages 3 & 4 on Thursdays at 4:30 pm, and our monthly Music Together on the third Tuesday of every month at 11:45 am). Join Miss Nancy in your jammies for a story time before bed on the first Thursday of the month. Upcoming Pajama Times are: Nov. 1 & Dec. 6, 6:30 – 7 pm. Two reading discussion groups for kids meet once a month. Book Buddies for Readers in Grades K – 2 meets Thursdays Nov. 8 & Dec. 13, 6 – 7 pm. Book Club for Readers in Grades 3 – 5 meets Thursdays, Nov. 15 & Dec. 20, 6 – 7 pm. Check the library website for "Let's Knit" adult-child knitting projects and the next round of Children's Art Classes to be scheduled throughout the year.

Two special holiday break events are scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 27. Do-It-Yourself Family Crafts will be held 2 – 4 pm. Kids and parents come in together. (All ages welcome

with an adult.) We supply the materials; you supply the fun. Later that evening, Movie & Dessert featuring "Babe" [G] starts at 8:15 pm. After being separated from his family, a young pig learns to herd sheep to save his own life. Please call or come in to register for any of the children's programs.

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Front Line Report

The entertainment was in top form and the weather bright but hot at this year's Labor Day Concert at the Rittenhouse Field on the Piermont Pier. The proceeds help support Piermont's PAL Youth Program.

The concert featured four great bands: the Old Number 7 with Bruce Tucker, Piermont Mayor, on banjo, Adam Falcon Band, the KJ Denhart Band and Prof Louie and the Crowmatix.

"We want to offer our special thanks to John McAvoy of The Turning Point who presented the concert," said Piermont Police Chief Michael O'Shea "John has been running the concert for the past 10 years and we are deeply grateful to him." The chief also specially thanked Stavros Ostrowska of The Filling Station restaurant on Route 9W in Palisades for supplying the food. All its proceeds went to help support the PAL.

Turning to other matters, O'Shea noted that the police and the fire departments will begin joint drone training. Members of the fire and the police department will travel to Long Island for training. In the event of an emergency that requires special photos or surveillance, a drone pilot and a spotter are needed to operate the drone.

Leaf Collection

October 15 to December 3

The Department of Public Works starts collection leaves week of October 15 through the week of December 3, according to Tom Temple, DPW Superintendent. "All leaf piles should be placed at the edge of your property," he advised. "They should be clear of rocks, brush and any other debris that could cause damage to our collection unit. Leaves that are to be bagged should be put in biodegradable bags."

While supplies last, They're free at the DPW garage during regular business hours. "The DPW will not collect leaves that are placed in plastic bags. Please do not block any sidewalks with loose or bagged leaves. This creates a hazard by forcing pedestrians to walk in the roadway," he said.

The Fire Department Wants You

The Piermont Fire Department is continually looking for new members. Anyone interested should come to the firehouse on any Mondays between 7-9 pm.

—Ron Derven

How to Reach Village Officials

Bruce Tucker—Mayor, 845-359-1258 ext. 304;

Email: btucker@piermont-ny.gov

Mark Blomquist--Deputy Mayor;

Email: mblomquist@piermont-ny.gov

Ivanya Alpert—Trustee;

Email: ialpert@piermont-ny.gov

Rob Burns—Trustee;

Email: rburns@piermont-ny.gov

Jennifer Deyorgi--Village Clerk,

845-359-1258 ext. 303;

Email: clerk@piermont-ny.gov

John Gallucci--Village Justice,

845-359-1258, ext. 330;

Email: jgallucci@piermont-ny.gov

Michael O'Shea-- Chief of Police,

Phone: 845-359-1258 ext. 305

Tom Temple--DPW Supervisor,

Phone: 845-359-1717

Charlie Schaub--Building Inspector,

845-359-1258 ext. 311



Piermont Historical Society's film "Piermont's Papermill Stories from the Factory" won "Best Local Documentary" at this year's Nyack Film Festival. Society Chair Barbara Scheulin (center), joined co-producers and board members Betsy Franco Feeney (left) and Patti Panayotidis at the August screening.



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