

# The Piermont Newsletter

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## Making Things Beautiful



If there's anything you've found particularly attractive about Piermont, the person at least partially responsible is probably Dan Sherman. In addition to having designed and helped bring into being the original Community garden—and its brick-pathed second incarnation after Superstorm Sandy tore the first one to pieces—Dan has, among other things, laid out and executed the GI Joe Statue, the dog run on the pier, the memorial benches on the pier, the seasonally updated street planters, the flowers for the pier memorials, plantings in the North parking lot, the new village hall historic panels, and too many other aesthetic interventions—some executed, some only planned—to list.

And because he almost always says “yes” when asked to help out, he now finds himself—after fifteen years as Chairman of Piermont's Parks Commission—also chairing several other public art-related organizations in the county.

Where did this generous and aesthetically-gifted man come from? How did he find his way to Piermont? Dan was born sixty five years ago in Niagara Falls Hospital, the middle of five children, and grew up in Lewiston, New York a town in sight of the falls. The fact that he shares Canada's famous niceness may be at least partially explained

by the fact that his family home was below the escarpment above the falls, blocking U.S. television; during his formative years he saw only Canadian TV.

After 12 years at Lewiston Porter Central School, Dan moved on to Niagara County Community College where he took all the difficult courses—math, chemistry, psychology—so he would be eligible to enter a four year college.

He may be the only person who ever found psychology 101 the most valuable class he ever took; he says he still uses what he learned there about how people are motivated.

But his most important encounter was with a guidance counselor to whom he went for advice about his future career. After reading Dan's responses to questions like “If you had \$25 extra dollars what would you spend it on? What would you do with a free Sunday? What sorts of items do you clip from the paper?” the guidance counselor thought briefly and announced “Landscape Architecture.” Opening his directory he directed Dan to several pages describing landscape architecture programs. Dan looked at it intently for a minute, then slammed the book closed. The programs were so perfect he was afraid if anyone else saw them, the classes would all be filled.

But they weren't, and he ended up spending 3 years earning a Bachelor of Environmental studies from the College of Environmental Science and Forestry's School of Landscape Architecture at Syracuse University, followed by 1 more year, some of it spent abroad doing his thesis study in Venezuela on urban space microclimates, (don't ask) which earned him a bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree in 1977.

His first post-college summer, he worked at a nursery to get practical landscaping experience, after which he was hired by a large land development firm near Buffalo where he stayed three years before moving to a firm on Park Avenue. That move brought him to Piermont,



Dan Sherman at the Community Garden

*continued on page 3*

# Piermont Musings



I am the last of the Piermont Bobs. Sure, there are still guys named Bob living here, but not nearly as many as there were in the 80s. The village had so many then that it was spooky. Even the priest at St. John's was Father Bob. My Bob pals and I joked that we were going to ask the Village Board to change Piermont's name to Bobsville.

When we were born, Robert often topped the list of favorite boy names just as Liam does today. I've always enjoyed being a Robert. The name has built in flexibility. My parents called me Bobby and so did their friends, but my friends knew me as Bob. To schoolteachers and other authority figures I was Robert. Try doing all that with the name Liam.

The three Bobs I am thinking of were all members of the Piermont Civic Association, and all took an active interest in the village and its government. We didn't hesitate to let the Village Board know what we thought. We gave this place a new vibe, helping it change from a rough and tumble mill town to a creative hub.

The first Bob to come to mind is the late Robert Sennish. He was an often cantankerous English professor who lived with his wife Peggy, on the creek at the end of Paradise Alley. They had a charming and beautifully restored saltbox house with a well-tended garden. He had grown up poor in the Midwest, so he was very proud of his home.

When younger people moved into his Bogertown street, Bob would urge them to get involved in village government. He was surprisingly successful doing it. He got the young architect Robert Silarski (another Bob!) on the Zoning Board, and Vince O'Brien to become a Village Trustee. He also talked the late Richard Dunbar into running for Village Board. As far as I know, Dunbar, who was not a Sennish neighbor, is the only African-America Piermont Trustee we ever had.

Although Sennish was active in the Piermont Civic Association, he never wanted to be an officer. Occasionally, he wrote articles for this Newsletter, and always put himself in charge of the charcoal grills at the PCA's annual bluegrass festival. There was one way to light the grills – his way – and we learned that pretty quick.

Bob Sennish passed away in 2002. Ten years later, Tropical Storm Sandy tore into Piermont. The Sennish house was destroyed. That hurt to see.

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Unlike Bob Sennish, Bob Cone held office in the PCA. He was president at least once, and took a regular turn as Newsletter editor. The Bluegrass Festival the PCA hosted for many years was his idea.

Bob Cone owned a photo chemical business called Rockland Colloid. His most popular product, Liquid Light, makes it possible to print photos on ceramics and other hard surfaces. He invented the stuff and mixed and bottled it in the basement of his Franklin Street home. When Piermont's paper mill was shuttered, a friend joked that it made Bob's business our largest industry. Their son (yes, one more Robert) runs it now from the West Coast.

In those pre-internet times, Bob would go to the post office daily to check on orders. He would chat with whomever he ran into, getting a real sense of what Piermonters were thinking. You could count on Bob to have a strong opinion about all that was going on. He didn't read the local press, so I started sending him clippings. That's how the PCA mailing list began.

Cold weather and high real estate taxes sent Bob into retirement in Arizona, but he missed Piermont. "So, you can't go home again," he wrote in the Newsletter, "but you can think about it, and not a day goes by that we don't." He died three years ago at 91.

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Bob Heitman, the last Bob to be remembered here, retired to Florida years ago. He also missed Piermont. However, he and his wife Marilyn managed to come back most summers, staying in rented or borrowed houses. They were here so often, that some people didn't realize they had sold their place years ago.

Although people knew Bob was a successful actor, few were aware that he had started his life as an MIT educated engineer. He alone among the Bobs could read a set of blueprints. That's not a bad skill to have when you are involved in a zoning dispute. No one kept the PCA's books as well as he did when he was treasurer. If you wanted him to reimburse you for an expense, you better have given him a receipt.

On their summer visits, Bob and his wife Marilyn sometimes helped the PCA by taking a turn at our Bastille Day booth. Bob, who had appeared in many commercials, was a superb salesman. If a customer bought a cap, he'd be quick to suggest they might want a matching tee shirt. They often took his suggestion.

Bob died of a stroke earlier this year. He was 83.

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No one can say that us Bobs didn't do our share to keep the pot boiling in the village. Do you think someday there'll be a group of Liams who can say the same thing?

—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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# Shopping Locally

It's the Holiday Season and that means it's also gift shopping time for family and friends. Are you shopping locally, especially right here in Piermont? This season, add the newer businesses in town to your favorite village stops, including Flower Power for herbs, tinctures and teas, La Reine Boutique selling one of a kind jewelry, DARVIN Studio ceramics, Elisa for unique women's clothing, and ArtSuiteGallery for works of art. Welcome also Peace in Piermont for children's yoga and Piermont Creamery (scheduled to re-open in March 2020).



Our shops and restaurants are owned and operated by people who live in or near our village and are more invested in the community's future. In fact, studies show that locally owned businesses contribute 3x more than their national counterparts to local charities and fundraisers.

## *Small businesses carry unique products that you won't find elsewhere*

When you shop at a local business, you're likely to get something that is unique and exclusive. Our village in particular, boasts many shops, boutiques and galleries with this feature.

## *Small businesses offer a more pleasant customer experience*

When shopping in an independent store, generally you're more likely to experience shorter lines and a personal touch. You are seen as an individual, not a consumer. The people working there tend to be more personally invested, more educated about their products and are more likely to go the extra mile for their customers. They are not wedded to corporate marketing plans and most are not paid on commission – so they are not going to try to sell you something you don't want or need.

## *Shopping locally helps the environment*

By purchasing what you need locally, you can reduce processing and packaging, and the generation of transportation waste because separate word here locally owned businesses make more local purchases for products and materials, requiring less transportation and packaging. Less packaging means less waste. According to the National Resource Defense Council, buying locally will help reduce pollution, improve air quality and improve our health.

Shopping in Piermont – a great idea. See you in the Village!

—Joe Serra

Shopping locally has many pleasures and advantages for our community. Consider some of these:

## *Small businesses support our local economy*

When you spend money at a local independent business, most of it stays your community through purchases from other nearby businesses and service providers. There are numerous studies one can find to back this up. One published in a 2017 Huffington Post article lists these 3 compelling stats:

- For every \$100 spent at an independent business, approximately \$68 stays in the community compared to only \$48 for big box stores. (Other studies show an even greater disparity).
- Local business generates 70 percent more local economic activity per square foot than big box retail.
- Expenditures at local businesses generate 3.5x more wealth for their local economies compared to chain-owned businesses.

## *Local businesses help define and improve the character of our village*

Unlike many other towns and villages, there are no chain stores in Piermont, making it a unique and special place.

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## Making Things Beautiful continued from page 1

where he and his sister rented the second floor of the house next door to the house he now owns at 415 Valentine.

His next professional move was to an international company with offices in NY, Lyon and Paris where he ended up as office manager. Among their major projects were redesigning former army bases in Germany for civilian use, the development of a derelict industrial waterfront in Lyon into public parkland and the design of a scenic highway from Nice to San Tropez.

After a stint at the city Parks Department, Dan was advised by a friend and mentor that he was ready to go into business

for himself. So he set up his first office at 588 Broadway in 1992 and began focusing on the sorts of projects he realized he was most interested in—designing the landscaping around the large old estates of Greenwich and Westchester. In 2002, he moved his office to Valhalla, in central Westchester. Now, hundreds of projects later he is beginning to think about retiring from running a design practice, but has no plans to leave his home on Valentine where he lives with his husband, the entertainer Richard Skipper. Indeed, leaving his daily office work, he says with a smile, will leave him more time to beautify our local world. —Joan Gussow



## From The Library

There is always so much going on at the Piermont Library! To stay up on the latest, make sure you're receiving our emails- write to us at [info@piermontlibrary.org](mailto:info@piermontlibrary.org) if you are not on our email list. Our website [www.piermontlibrary.org](http://www.piermontlibrary.org) always has a full list of events on our calendar page. You can also look for us on Facebook (Dennis P. McHugh Piermont Public Library), Twitter (@mchughpmtlib), and Instagram (mchugh\_piermont\_library).

Don't miss our annual fundraising event, A Gift of Art Show happening now through Christmas. Our theme this year is Shades of Blue. This festive group show of small affordable works is filled with special treasures perfect for holiday gift giving.

2020 will bring a wonderful array of monthly art exhibitions to our gallery space. Patrons are continuously delighted with the quality and variety of these shows. If you have not been in to see them recently, do make a point of coming. Receptions are usually the first Sunday of the month from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. For January, the Library presents *Il Classico Duo: Pencil Drawings* by Remo Barone and *Pen and Ink Drawings* by John Kingston. These exquisitely rendered pieces in complementary styles are sure to impress. February will bring Shakira Chin to the Library with her colorful landscapes and seascapes. For March, we will have a local favorite, Piermonter Dan Lukens, with oil paintings from Piermont and the surrounding area. In *The Light in Ordinary Days: New Paintings* by Dan Lukens he will explore area places, people, and familiar themes in an ode to the simple wonders in our everyday lives. Robert Adzema formerly of Palisades will be displaying "Landscape Watercolors and Paintings of The Piermont Marsh and Waterfront" for April. For May, we will have another watercolorist, Cecilia Lotse of Piermont, sharing her art.

New for adults in 2020 will be a series of meditation classes with Dr. Frank Pawlowski. These will occur monthly on Wednesdays at 3:00 p.m. The New Year is a time to create a clean slate and these powerful workshops will help. Dr. Pawlowski has been inspiring audiences on how to practice and learn this very simple technique which provides many benefits. There will even be a little meditation sitting at the end. Join Dr. Pawlowski and bring joy, peace and relaxation into your daily life.

Also new for 2020, we will be running Canasta lessons Thursday mornings from 10:30-12:30 from May 14 to June 18. Ongoing programs for adults include our monthly film

series, generously hosted and curated by Chris X. Carroll. If you have been thinking of joining a book club, look no further than your library! Our monthly book discussion group meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in the Library's conference room. Members pick out selections together and enjoy lively discussions at each meeting. Other ongoing programs for adults include Mahjong Open Play, Canasta, and Knitting Club.

For children, the Library will continue with our many popular programs. Story times with Ms. Nancy and Ms. Judy are held at 10:15 and 11:15 a.m. on Monday mornings. Story and Craft classes for ages 3 - 6 are held on Thursday afternoons at 4:30 p.m. Ms. Nancy is also hosting monthly book clubs for elementary school aged children. The Library offers weekly art classes on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays for grades 1 - 9 with Alexis Starke which will culminate in our Annual Student Art Show in June. Look out for special one-off art classes as well. Monthly events include Music Together, Family Bingo, and Family movies.

If you haven't already, do sign up for our wonderful R.E.A.D. Read to a Dog program! This sweet program allows children to read to carefully trained (and incredibly cute) dogs in a fun and relaxing atmosphere. Our caring volunteer teams of dogs and owners come to the Library twice a month, on Thursday afternoons and Saturday mornings. Children are loving this program.



*Reading to dogs at the Piermont Library.  
—Alexis Stark Photo*

We are in the midst of planning some very special one-off events for 2020 as well. Details for all these events and more can be found on our online calendar at [www.piermontlibrary.org](http://www.piermontlibrary.org). —Alexis Stark

# Piermont Waterfront Resiliency Commission Shares Updates

The Piermont Waterfront Resiliency Commission (PWRC) was established after Hurricane Sandy struck in 2012, ravaging the East Coast from October 22 to November 2, costing nearly \$70 billion in damages. One of the mandates of the Commission at its formation was to have two meetings a year with village residents: the first around the time of Hurricane Sandy, and the second in the spring.

Chair Nathan Mitchell held a meeting with residents at the Village Hall on October 29 to furnish an update on how residents can protect themselves and also to share some of the successes of the PWRC.

Since the dark days of Hurricane Sandy, the Village has indeed made strides, according to Chairperson Mitchell.

Piermont has made the following adaptations:

- Additional storm water check valves.
- Backup generator for firehouse emergency shelter.
- Establishment of an emergency operations center at the firehouse.
- A system for neighbor-to-neighbor notifications or N2N notifications.
- Publication of a helpful flood guide and designated flood parking areas.
- Overnight parking ban lifted in flood events.
- Ferry Road elevation.

Mitchell said the projects Piermont is working on include:

- Climate Adaptive Living Shoreline Design
- Neighborhood liaisons
- Flood resiliency network
- Cornell and CCNY Climate Adaptive Design studies



Piermont Village Trustee, Nate Mitchell.

Even though the PWRC is doing a lot of valuable work, the reality for most Piermont residents is that we will likely be hit by more Hurricane Sandys in the future, and the possibilities are great that wind speeds and tidal surges will worsen. This is why the PWRC put together nuts and

bolts materials on what residents can do to protect their lives and their homes.

For example, Mitchell said people can flood proof their homes two ways: through dry-proofing and wet-proofing their home. Obviously, if your house is in a flood zone, one of the most effective ways to protect yourself in the future is to raise the home to a level above predicted floods. According to materials Mitchell presented at the meeting, it will cost from \$65,000 to \$200,000 to raise a house depending on construction of the home, site conditions, and the elevation lift that is required. In

addition to saving your home from damage, this effort could also result in lower Flood Insurance premiums in the future.

An effective way to make preparations for future flood emergencies is to download the Village Flood Guide, which can be found on the village website: <http://piermont-ny.gov/pwrc>. At this link is information on the Stevens Institute Flood Advisory. Mitchell also offered a link to allow residents to get a look at instead use- allow residents to “see” what sea level rise will look like in the future in their neighborhood. Click this link to find out: <http://scenichudson.org/slr/mapper>

– Ron Derven

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# Sparkill Creek Watershed Alliance and Riverkeeper Ask Orangetown to Prioritize Sewage Leak Detection in Sparkill Creek

The Sparkill Creek Watershed Alliance is a community action group committed to protecting and restoring the health of the Sparkill Creek. Many of us in Piermont live along the waterway enjoying it in numerous ways through the seasons. Piermonters interact with the creek from the skating pond, through the historic district, under the King Iron Bridge and finally to its meanderings through the Piermont Marsh. Recently the SCWA presented to the Orangetown Board to encourage the administration to help us continue to work on getting to the root cause of the exceptionally high levels of bacteria that plagues the entire waterway. Below is the letter that was presented. The Board members were receptive and committed to helping. We would welcome more neighbors to join us in our efforts and work along the creek. Additional information can be found about our water people, projects and meeting schedules on our website [www.sparkillcreek.org](http://www.sparkillcreek.org). Hopefully we can continue to improve this precious resource that courses through our community. —Rod Greenwood

November 19, 2019

Honorable Supervisor Day and Town Board Members Bottari, Diviny, Troy, and Valentine,

In 2011, the Sparkill Creek Watershed Alliance (SCWA) began water sampling at over a dozen sites along Sparkill Creek, to test for fecal contamination. This monitoring project built upon five years of similar water quality testing throughout the Hudson River Estuary, including sites at Piermont Pier and Fardon Pond, by Riverkeeper, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory (LDEO) and CUNY Queens College. Sparkill Creek was among the first tributaries to be sampled as part of this project. SCWA's monitoring data show that the Sparkill Creek has the worst levels of fecal-indicating bacteria of 19 tributaries sampled by community scientists, based on data compiled by Riverkeeper in the Hudson River Watershed. The high levels of Enterococcus bacteria found in the Sparkill indicate an increased risk that pathogenic bacteria from sewage, septic or other sources are present.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) has designated part of Sparkill Creek as an "Impaired Waterbody," meaning that it is heavily impacted by pollution, particularly pathogens, and has noted that the stream requires a watershed plan (Total Maximum Daily Load) to address fecal contamination.

SCWA, Riverkeeper, and several academic partners have conducted numerous studies to track down contamination sources in Sparkill Creek. These projects include EPA-funded sampling designed and led by SCWA; two Hudson River

Foundation research fellowships utilizing DNA to characterize bacterial communities and sources; GIS analysis of wastewater infrastructure; stormwater outfall monitoring and testing; and a LDEO Ph.D. study of bacteria, including pathogenic groups, in Sparkill Creek sediments.

Though these projects have built up our understanding of the ecology of the Sparkill Creek and the Lower Hudson River, they have not identified a "smoking gun" when it comes to fecal contamination. Nonetheless, over a decade of monitoring and research clearly show that fecal pollution is harming Sparkill Creek, which flows through our communities, yards and parks. Most likely, the contamination comes from many sources over a wide area.

We respectfully request that the Town of Orangetown prioritize sewage leak detection in the Sparkill Creek Watershed. We ask that the Town Health Engineer and Sewer Department be given ample resources to thoroughly investigate wastewater infrastructure in this watershed, using methods similar to those that have been successful along the Nyack waterfront.

The Sparkill Creek is designated as an "Impaired Waterbody" by NYS DEC. Wastewater infrastructure projects that would benefit Sparkill Creek receive priority scoring in state funding applications. Hence, this may afford the Town of Orangetown an opportunity to obtain funding for wastewater projects. We urge the Town to prioritize grant applications for wastewater infrastructure projects within the Sparkill Creek Watershed, and to emphasize benefits to Sparkill Creek in its grant applications.

We look forward to discussing this information further. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Jim Elling Chair, Sparkill Creek Watershed Alliance.  
[www.sparkillcreek.org](http://www.sparkillcreek.org)

Jennifer Epstein, Water Quality Program Scientist,  
Riverkeeper. [www.riverkeeper.org](http://www.riverkeeper.org)



Skating on Sparkill Creek. —Bob Samuels photo



# HOW TO EARN MICRO-SCHOLARSHIPS

**Are you looking for ways to plan financially for college?** St. Thomas Aquinas College has partnered with RaiseMe to offer high school students the opportunity to earn “micro-scholarships” for their accomplishments in high school starting as early as 9th grade, making access to higher education more affordable.

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One of Piermont's finest tops off the tree at St. John's church. —Margaret Grace photo



## Piermont Celebrates...

Santa arrives on ladder Truck #7, direct from the firehouse as children gather in expectation at this year's Holiday Festival. The Chapin Family leads us in joyful caroling and Soprano Anna Veleva mesmerizes revelers with songs of the season. Sparkling reindeer, a gift to the village from Lynn Boone, light up the celebration.







## ...the Holidays

Centerfold photos by  
Betsy Franco Feeney

The Holiday spirit is on display at Piermont's historic Train Station's Holiday Bazaar, and in the Piermont Public Library, artists are gathered for the annual Gift of Art holiday party. On Sunday, Dec. 22nd at 7:30pm., the Village will light the first candle on the Menorah at Village Hall in celebration of Hanukkah.



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# Front Line Report

Mayor Bruce Tucker and Village Board of Trustees announced the retirement of Piermont Police Chief Michael O'Shea. Chief O'Shea had been a member of the Piermont Police Department for 35 years, the last 15 years as Chief. The Board thanked Chief O'Shea for his years of outstanding service to the residents of Piermont. "We wish him the best of luck for all his future endeavors," they stated.

Chief O'Shea came to the department as a patrolman in 1985, and worked his way up to Sergeant. Chief O'Shea was appointed to the rank of Chief of Police in December 2006. He is a graduate of the F.B.I. Academy in Quantico, Virginia and is currently serving as Vice-President of the Rockland County Police Chief's Association.

The Village Board voted at its November 19th meeting to name Sergeant James T. Hurley of the Piermont Police Department as Provisional Chief and Officer in Charge. Chief Hurley came to Piermont from the town of New Windsor, New York, which is about an hour north on the Hudson River. Chief Hurley received a BA in Accounting and a Masters in Administration.

He joined the New Windsor Police Department in 2006. "My father and my uncle were policemen and it was my dream to follow in their footsteps," he said in a recent interview. Chief Hurley joined the Piermont Police Department in 2013. He is a much-decorated police officer. He was named both "New Windsor Officer of the Year", and "Orange County Officer of the Year". He has received four lifesaving citations and 8 life saving honorable mentions. Piermont is indeed honored to welcome Chief Hurley to his new position.

Any village resident or visitor who has witnessed Piermont's Fire Department or Ambulance Corps in action is often amazed at how our outstanding volunteer Department is able to respond to emergencies in less than a few minutes. That's why when the Department came to the Village Board

at its November 19th meeting to ask for approval to purchase a new ladder truck, the Board gave the Fire Department the go-ahead.



*Sergeant James T. Hurley, Piermont Police Department, has been named Provisional Chief and Officer in Charge of the department.*

The ladder truck is the largest emergency vehicle that arrives at a fire or another emergency. Its price tag is high as well, costing around \$1.1 million. The National Fire Protection Association, the organization involved in writing fire and electrical codes in the U.S., says that a fire truck over 15 years old having been well maintained, needs to be put on reserve duty. A well-maintained fire truck over 25 years old needs to be replaced.

The Piermont Fire Department's current ladder truck has been used for emergencies for 30 years - having been donated to the village by the developers of Piermont Landing to

service the new taller buildings on the Pier. It played a vital role after Hurricane Sandy, clearing power lines and restoring electricity and power to the village. It is a sure bet we will need a ladder truck in future storms as well as fires. According to Fire Department estimates, it would cost \$480,000 to refurbish the existing truck. A big problem with this approach is that because it is 30 years old, many original parts are no longer available.

The Department of Public Works needs our cooperation! "With winter approaching, we would like to remind village residents to be cautious to not throw snow into the roadway when clearing their driveways and sidewalks," said Tom Temple, Superintendent of Public Works for the Village of Piermont. "Snow thrown back into the street after the DPW has cleared the road could refreeze and cause potential accidents for both motorist and pedestrians."

After the holidays, the DPW crews will be collecting Christmas Trees on Thursday, January 2nd and on Wednesday, January 15th as part of its tree recycling program. "Please remove all lighting and decorations from the trees before placing curbside for collection," urged Supervisor Temple.

**Weekly recycling starts in the Village of Piermont every Thursday, beginning on January 2, 2020.**

*- Ron Derven*



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