

LAND BANK WORKS ON SEVERAL REMEDIATION PROJECTS, CEO HELPING TO MAKE VILLAGE SAFER

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C-S-E Editor

ST. JOHNSVILLE — During Tuesday’s Village of St. Johnsville meeting, held in person at the Community House with attendees, councilmembers and department heads spaced at least six feet apart, the board discussed several village projects being undertaken by the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank.

The GMVLB is currently doing remediation work at 3 W. Main St., where asbestos abatement was recently completed. Explained St. Johnsville Mayor Charles Straney of the GMVLB, “Once that’s done, they will do the structural work inside and it will be offered to whoever wants to buy it with certain provisions.”

The GMVLB has already removed one village property on Monroe Street “at no cost to the village,” according to Straney, who added of the work being done at the W. Main St. building, “I think it’s really important, because it’s in the central block,” of the village’s historic downtown sector.

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Noting that the GMVLB will also be working on a Center Street property, Straney commented, "There's things happening. We have to avail ourselves of that [opportunity], because we don't have the money to do these things. These are big ticket items."

Straney has offered the GMVLB the village Department of Public Works' assistance as needed.

Since the village hired Code Enforcement Officer Cliff Dorrough, Straney said that he's been very productive, the experienced and knowledgeable CEO helping to make the village a safer place.

He explained that enforcement-related revenue has risen substantially — from \$300 to over \$3,700 — since Dorrough began, stating that the figure provides "a good way to gauge what's happening in the department."

"What that really means to me is not the money," said Straney, continuing, "It means that people are interfacing with their government and things are getting built right." Straney said there are too many structures in the village built incorrectly, "where it's a roof on a roof on a roof, with another roof on top of that."

"It's all dangerous," he said of the buildings containing balloon construction, which often poses a problem for fire departments, as when a blaze breaks out in such a structure, the open pockets provide space for the fire to manifest and grow."

"Codes," said Straney, "is just as important in public safety as anything else," naming the village's most important public safety agencies as the code enforcement, fire and police departments.

Straney added that the village board would like to determine what banks own the most derelict property in the village, the goal being to then approach the owner as a significant community stakeholder to inquire about plans for the structures they possess.

A resident asked whether there's been any movement at the former grocery store and apartment complex on W. Main St., which was destroyed by fire last year. Stated Straney, "We've been working on that since it caught on fire. We are trying for the best outcome for the community. I think what we have in the works right now is that."

Dorrough explained that an individual is interested in the property, noting that the interested person will attempt to determine whether a portion of the structure can be saved.

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If not, the building will likely be removed, that space becoming a lot that could potentially be utilized in the future.

The village board unanimously voted to cease cash payments for village transactions over \$25 as of June, 2021. That means cash can still be used for some transactions, including notarization, though water and tax payments must be made in a cashless fashion. The potential to pay bills online may exist by that point, as the Village of St. Johnsville's official website is in the process of being upgraded.

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