

Town Topics

by Richard Craft, *Wawarsing Supervisor*

Going to the Mountains

An old saying goes, "If Muhammad won't go to the Mountains, then the Mountains must come to Muhammad." This is our story... with Muhammad representing the County and the Mountains representing Wawarsing.

It has often been said that Muhammad doesn't care for the Mountains and, to some degree, that was and still is true. I recently met a Kingston businessman who didn't know where Wawarsing was! I don't think we can blame it all on Muhammad. The truth is that Wawarsing isn't exactly a household word much beyond our own borders and maybe, to some degree, it's our own fault. I can state, however, that Wawarsing is finally getting some much deserved attention and serious consideration.

In defense of Muhammad, I wish to point out two of the services provided to our town that other towns wish they had. I draw your attention to the newly-expanded *Mental Health Center* at the **Trudy Farber Building**. Then I would like you to drop in at the **Town Hall** parking lot on Wednesday mornings. There you will find standing room only crowds waiting to do Department of Motor Vehicle business.

And need I remind you of the debate surrounding the prospects of a casino in our region, where I took Muhammad to task for their actions without our knowledge? After all the dust settles, and the political rhetoric subsides, it will be Muhammad who will come to the Town. We will sit down as equal partners and lay out our needs and wants. The Mountains will be satisfied, or there will be no casino.

Long before the casino issue ever became a major topic of discussion within the county, I began to seriously think about our relationship to the County. I began to reason, "Maybe it's not all Muhammad's fault. Maybe we've been asking for things and been too lazy to go and get them, expecting all the time for them to come to us. Maybe it's time for us to go to them and see what they've got for us." Thinking this was a brilliant idea, I began poking around and it was soon evident that all I had to do was knock. My presence was as welcome as the flowers in May. In fact, any time a Town Supervisor shows up in Kingston he/she is given the red carpet treatment. They're so happy to see your interest that they can't do enough for you.

Within a short time, I found myself as first an alternate and then a full voting member of the Coalition of Water Towns with the Catskill Watershed Commission. In this capacity, your Supervisor has a voice on policies, the budget, and regulatory issues that involve all the towns within the Catskill Watershed area. Within a short time, I found myself a member of the Kingston/Ulster Empire Zone

Boundary Revision Committee and soon a full voting member of the Empire Zone Governing Board. In this capacity, I was able to bring zone certification to eight local firms, with more to follow. And finally, the Town of Wawarsing stands an excellent chance of being placed on the Board of the newly formed Metropolitan Planning Board that will now determine how NYS DOT funds are spent in Ulster County.

Instead of fighting Muhammad, we've joined forces, and it is the Town of Wawarsing that has benefited in so many ways. I've attended seminars and meetings where I was the only Supervisor in attendance and each time I've walked away with something for the Town. There is no other township, with the exception of Ulster, and maybe Saugerties, that is represented more often than Wawarsing. Muhammad isn't that bad after all; there just had to be some movement on our part.

We have turned the corner and once again Wawarsing is a town to be reckoned with. Contrary to some, Wawarsing is not depressed, nor is it on life support. In fact, its state of mind is quite healthy, and its future is exciting. The year 2003 promises to be a banner year.

Wawarsing is Rising; just watch it shine.

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