

by Richard Craft, *Wawarsing Supervisor*

Good Neighbors

Several weeks ago, an article appeared in one of our regional daily newspapers regarding the economic value of local State Correctional Facilities. A study had been conducted on the issue with the conclusion that if there was an impact it was negligible. I do not know where the authors got their information or how they got it but it was apparent that they did not live on our planet.

Eastern, the *Annex*, *Ulster Reception Center*, as well as *Sullivan* and *Woodbourne*, are among the employment cornerstones of this region. Correctional officers, ancillary personnel and their families have bought and built homes in our area. They shop in our stores, go to our schools and churches, volunteer in the fire companies, Little Leagues, fraternal and service organizations. Just about everywhere you turn there is an off-duty CO serving in some community outreach program.

Ask any area church, municipality, museum, or public park whether they have benefited from work crews from these facilities. You will hear an emphatic, "Yes!" In the Town of Wawarsing alone their demolition work in the old **Napanoch School** saved us tons of money, so that we could afford to complete reconstruction of that building. This summer, that building will house a fully-operational Day Care Center.

They have painted churches, parsonages, village and town buildings; planted flowers in our parks; restored historical buildings that will soon be open for public display. They are presently rebuilding the old canal berme and rail bed at the *O&W/D&H* corridor, which will join a major section of that walking trail that extends from Kingston to Carbondale, Pa. They march in our parades and are present at services such as Flag Day and Memorial Day. They have cleared wooded areas for public use. And the list goes on and on.

Just this past year, Napanoch literally ran out of water. What did *Eastern* do? Without even hesitating, Superintendent David Miller had outside water connections installed so that Napanoch residents could go to the facility and bring home drinking and cooking water. That is what I call a good neighbor.

I attended the New York State Special Olympics at the *Nevele Grand Hotel*. Guess who is one of the major contributors to this statewide event. Yes, the employees of the State Correctional Facilities. I know for a fact that they have also been generous in their support of the local hospital. And then there is their **Unity Hall** and grounds which are open for local meetings, wedding receptions, birthdays, picnics... you name it.

Anyway you slice it, the local Correctional Facilities (once called prisons) have been, and hopefully will always be, an important part of our scenery. Generations of families have called "the Jail" their source of employment.

The Town of Wawarsing is proud of our good neighbors, Dave Miller and company. You couldn't ask for better neighbors. Dave and his staff are simply carrying on the legacy of former Superintendents like Coombe and Kuhlmann. He has just taken it to a higher level.

Thank you Glenn Goord and the DOC. You have a home here in Wawarsing. You can stay as long as you'd like and please do not believe everything you read in the papers. *Keep Wawarsing Rising!* ❖



(Supervisor Craft speaking to the Ulster County Legislature on March 18th during a public comment segment; Chairman Ward Todd presides at the right. Some excerpts from his presentation follow.)

"Through circumstances not of our own making, the Town of Wawarsing has been thrust into the limelight as a major player in the issue of casino gambling. As Supervisor I represent a diverse community of hard-working people. We pride ourselves as being industry-friendly and look upon casino gambling with an open mind. As the manufacturing center of Ulster County we are proud of our heritage and of our future.

For the past six months the Town of Wawarsing has been dealing directly with the management firm BGA/LLC, and in particularly with their attorney, Mr. David Lenefsky. Mr. Lenefsky is a smart lawyer and discussions held with him have always been of a cooperative nature. To date, the Town of Wawarsing is more than satisfied with the outcome of our discussions held with him...

The Town of Wawarsing Board is unanimous in its support of a deadline and contract extension...

Of particular interest to the Town of Wawarsing is the impact casino gambling will have on our neighboring townships to the north. I'm thinking particularly about traffic congestion along Route 209. I can assure them, that before the Town of Wawarsing makes any final decision, or submits its needed signature to that plan, that a plan will be in place for a smoother traffic flow through that area. This is priority number one, and those agencies involved should begin preliminary discussions as to a solution for this project.

The greatest impact will be upon the Town of Wawarsing. Not upon the County of Ulster, not upon any other county or any other town. But the impact will be upon us. Our town will be forever changed by casino gambling. We will look long and hard before we make any decisions. And I ask all parties to work together with us, NOT behind us. We need your input, both pro and con...

Our signature is the final stroke between approval and disapproval of this entire project. As supervisor, I will be negotiating with the county in the best interests of the residents of the county and of our town. Please give us that needed support."

(Contact: **Supervisor Craft, Town Hall, 108 Canal St., P.O. Box 671, Ellenville NY 12428**
Telephone: 845-647-6570 Ext 1; Fax: 845-647-1046;
TTY: 845-647-1046; E-Mail: pat@mtntop.net) ❖