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Sherman ahead of the zoning game

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SHERMAN — The Village of Sherman is "ahead of the game," when it comes to zoning code enforcement, members of the zoning board learned at their meeting on Sept. 4.

Sherman Mayor Colleen Meeder distributed copies of the results of an investigative report on zoning code enforcement in New York State to members of the zoning board, noting that the document cites many state and municipal shortcomings.

The report shows that zoning code enforcement is a low priority in most municipalities, Meeder said. Inadequate training of code enforcement personnel,

inadequate recordkeeping, insufficient penalties for violations and persistent vacant and abandoned buildings are among the key findings of the study, she added.

"This report may be followed by new legislation," Meeder said. The Village of Sherman has recently adopted a policy regarding dumpsters, junk vehicles, unsafe structures, and grass and weeds.

According to the village website, it is the goal of the board and officers "to inform residents about zoning laws and then to enforce the codes." Code enforcement officers, Greg Gormley, Dave Heckman and Jeff Messenger are working "to enforce the codes for the betterment of the entire

community."

Meeder reviewed Gormley's report with members of the board. He is continuing to work with Farmer's Mill, Meeder said. "They've been playing the 'we're filing for bankruptcy, so we don't have to do anything' game," she said. However, Meeder said, their attorney should know that they are still responsible for the upkeep of the property.

In another matter, zoning board members discussed the persistent problem of feral cats in the village. "Several people have come in with complaints," Meeder said. "There seem to be a few hot spots in the village."

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Meeder described a program offered by Little Angels Animal Sanctuary of Mayville, in which feral cats are trapped, treated and released. She said that for a fee of \$45 for males and \$70 for females, cats are neutered or spayed, treated for fleas, immunized and given care before being released.

Meeder noted that treat-

ing the cats, then returning them to the same area serves several purposes. "It keeps new feral cats from entering the property, neutered males will no longer fight and it will keep the cat population and feline disease under control," she said.

It is estimated that there are about 50 cats that should be trapped and treated, and the cost for

that would be \$3,200, Meeder said. However, since it will not be possible to trap and treat so many before winter arrives, Meeder recommended that the village commit \$950 from the general purpose fund for processing the cats.

Notices would go out in the next month and would be posted in the bank and post office, Meeder said.

"We are going to solicit donations right along with the notices," she said.

Following discussion of the difficulty of trapping feral cats, the inability to spay or neuter young kittens, and the ability of the Little Angels Animal Sanctuary to assist with the feral cat population, the board voted to commit \$950 for fees for processing the felines.