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Sherman board talks trail community, tourism with upgrades

By DAVID PRENATT

editorial@westfieldrepublican.com

The village of Sherman, while still an agricultural district, is transforming itself into a trail community and a destination for tourists. At their meeting earlier this month, trustees learned about the "seeds that are being planted" to make the community inviting.

Village Mayor Colleen Meeder updated board members on the New York Main Street project, as well as progress with lights, flowers, signs, the dog park, trails, EV charging stations and other endeavors that will put Sherman on the map.

Meeder said the New York Main Street awning project is underway and almost everyone is participating. "The whole point in doing awnings is opening it up, bringing light in and showing the actual facade of the buildings," she said. "This is a unique project. They don't have walkway awnings very many places."

Meeder also spoke about the state Preservation League Technical Assistance Grant for the

purpose of remodel and reuse of inauthentic museum buildings. Although there are no definite plans, ideas include repurposing the grocery store and the church in the Yorkers Museum for community use, she said. "I'm not sure we're going to apply for the grant for that," she said. "What happens to all the period pieces if you repurpose museum buildings?"

Meeder told trustees that the EV charging stations became available for use on Sept. 27. She noted the charging stations were installed to bring people into town. "These are 110% for people to get off I-86 and go past our businesses and walk and shop while their vehicle is being charged," she said.

One of the main attractions to the area is that Sherman has the trail, Meeder said. She told board members that, according to Chautauqua County Equestrian Trail Systems, Inc., trails are the 'economic engine' driving tourism growth. She also noted that the planning consultant said "trails are the number one national tourist attraction."

Trails are the 'economic engine'

driving home purchases; national associations recognize the 'proximity of living near a trail' as one of home buyers' top priorities, Meeder said. "CCETS wants to educate the businesses in trail communities about these benefits; the health, recreation, and economic benefits to a trail community," she added. Meeder told trustees the Rosie Billquist Trail resurfacing grant application sent in by CR2T and Chautauqua County Trail Coordinator, Jacob Bodway, was not awarded. "There were \$2.8M of grant requests, and only \$200,000 of available funds," she said. "However, Jacob is investigating funding available through TAP - Transportation Alternatives Program, and we are setting a meeting with CR2T this month to discuss it." Meeder noted all these projects need to be State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) approved in order to receive tax credits. The good news about this is that even if the village receives a grant for a project, the property owner can receive tax credit based on the entire cost, she said. Meeder added

that a goal for the future is to have Sherman on the National Historic Register.

For instance, Meeder said, if they had an \$80,000 project for which they received a \$50,000 grant, they would still receive a tax credit based on the whole \$80,000. "Basically, by the time these projects are done, they can be nearly all paid for with grant funds and tax credits," she said.

In another tourism-related matter, Meeder told the board that there has been a lot of discussion about short-term rentals. She noted that the planning board is reviewing a law for adoption similar to the one recommended by the Chautauqua County Department of Planning and Development. It is a law that the board likes, which comes from another community.

Meeder noted that the rentals are of particular concern to communities. "Air B&Bs are interesting things. They can change the lifestyle of people who live next to them," she said. "Visibility and signage are important, if you don't want people walking into your

home thinking it is a short-term rental."

Meeder summarized a number of other endeavors that are underway in the village, noting that the lights strung over Main Street, which change color to coincide with seasons and holidays, as well as the flowers on Main Street have received nothing but praise. "Everyone who visits Sherman mentions the flowers," she said.

Meeder also told trustees that Village Clerk Jeanette Ramm's efforts to get Sherman in the Tour Chautauqua Magazine have paid off immensely. "That really got us on the map," she said.

In other business, Meeder extended her appreciation to the District Attorney's Office for their efforts resulting in the restitution of a portion of the loss suffered by the Village from the removal of cash for personal use by previous Clerk Treasurer Ann Gilbert. "Restitution will be made monthly over three years," she said. "The resources it took to see this case adjudicated is staggering!"