

Town of Clarence Grant writer hits a \$416,000 grand slam.

12/22/14

I always appreciate good news, especially first thing in the morning. That is why I was ecstatic when I received a call from our grant writer, Bernie Rotella. Bernie is the owner of Rotella Grant Management, and he specializes in writing municipal grants. Before we get into the good news, let me give you some background on the Town of Clarence and the grant writing process. The Town of Clarence has had a string of grant writers over the years, but none have been particularly successful. I can't blame them- writing grant for the Town of Clarence is truly a herculean task. The problems that plague the grant writer are both economic *and* demographic. The majority of municipal grants that are available are destined for low income areas. That cuts out a HUGE swath of grants that we would otherwise receive. The next issue that grant writers face is that a large portion of the money that is available for grants is targeted. Grants for waterfront development? No help for Clarence. Brownfields? Nope. Exactly what are we eligible for?

- Grants that assist our senior citizens. We receive a grant from Erie County every year to pay for shuttle services for all of our senior citizens.

- We are also able to obtain, on a limited basis, funds for the purchase of Greenspace.

The project that we received \$416,000 in grant money for has been on the Town of Clarence radar for the last ten years. It involves installing both new and refurbished sidewalks on Main St. from Thompson to Transit Rd. New sidewalks will be installed where there are no sidewalks now, and the older sidewalks that are in dire need of repair will be refurbished. Sidewalks are one of my favorite subjects. I would love to have sidewalks in all new residential developments in Clarence, but have not been able to convince the Town Board that this is a priority. In fact, when given the opportunity, the Town Board has voted **against** every sidewalk project that came up for a vote in 2013. This never fails to amaze me. **All** the members of the Town Board have children, and **all** will be seniors some day. You would think that when the subject of sidewalks came up, *especially* those that benefit children and/or seniors, they would see the light. Nope!

My special thanks to Town of Clarence Engineer Tim Lavocat for his help. Tim has worked tirelessly with grant writer Bernie Rotella to secure this grant, and he deserves equal credit for 'bringing home the bacon'. The work of Tim and Bernie will continue to benefit all the residents of the Town of Clarence for many years to come.

Should you have any questions or positive suggestions about this column, please feel free to call, email dave@clarence.ny.us or stop by my office at Town Hall. My door is always open!