

# Town of Sardinia

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August 31, 2011

Greetings to all Sardinia Residents/land owners/business owners:

Hopefully, this letter finds you all well and satisfied with the wonderful summer weather we have been blessed with this summer in Sardinia.

There have been numerous issues that the Board has dealt with this year; however, the one that has captured much attention is the one that was voted upon at the last board meeting in August; that being the firemen's retirement program (Length of Service Award Program or LOSAP). Over \$466,000 has been invested in this program since the inception, giving approximately 26 firemen a vested retirement program which, if ended this year, would still produce them with a \$160 check every month, after they turn 65, for the rest of their lives. Some are already benefitting from these monthly checks. This plan, a "defined BENEFIT" plan, if left in tack, would be open to the other 20 or less firemen (and open to their membership allotment of 75) to enter into the program and for every year of service, an additional \$20 per month is added to their retirement, allowing volunteer firemen to receive \$400 per month at the age of 65, for the rest of their lives. Again, this plan is a defined BENEFIT program. This plan costs the town anywhere from \$60,000 to \$200,000. Quite a stretch between numbers, right? Well, that's the problem. Because this plan is based on an actuarial plan, (an estimated guess on how long each member will live past 65 and how many members will attain the 50 points needed to participate in the program), one has no idea what the real final cost will be. And, with the current financial crisis with our economy, the bulk of any market losses is the Town's responsibility, creating more of a liability, and greatly reducing our fund balance. It should also be noted that at the August board meeting, I brought forth information that the Town of Sardinia's retirement program that is sponsored by New York State is also a defined BENEFIT program. And, that cost of that program was \$36,000 last year – this year, the cost increased to \$63,000. Last year, we paid \$100,000 for the firemen's retirement program. And, I won't know how much we have to pay for this year, until March of next year - Let's hope that hasn't doubled also.

Now comes the "other plan". The defined CONTRIBUTION plan. This plan is exactly what it says it is, you get what you contribute into it. At the last board meeting, I put together 2 resolutions for board vote. The first resolution is to end the defined BENEFIT plan, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> resolution refers to installing this new defined CONTRIBUTION plan for the volunteer firemen. The defined CONTRIBUTION plan will cost the Town \$29,000 per year – that is for 42 firemen, each having \$575 per year contributed from the Town, an additional charge of \$1,000 for administering the plan, and an approximate cost of \$3,046 for their own life insurance plan. This amount, of course, will increase OR decrease, depending solely upon the number of actual eligible volunteer firemen each year. So, in the end, the choice is yours – simply stated, the cost of the defined BENEFIT plan is anywhere from approximately \$60,000 to approximately \$200,000 per year. While the cost of the defined CONTRIBUTION plan will be \$29,000 per year for 42 firemen and \$575, plus life insurance cost, for each additional fireman.

Bottom line of all this information is that there will be 2 referendums to vote on in November that have to do with the volunteer firemen's retirement program. The first referendum asks if you, the taxpayer, want to end or abolish the current defined

BENEFIT program. The 2<sup>nd</sup> asks if (and only if the first referendum passes) you want to create a defined CONTRIBUTION plan for the volunteer firemen. And, as a taxpayer, this plan will have a HUGE impact on cost savings for the town and the residents that live here. Further, a meeting has been set up for Wednesday, September 14, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. at the Sardinia Town Hall with the plan's administrator, Mr. Gene Heeter, from Hometown Firefighters, Inc. Mr. Heeter will be explaining in detail the difference between the 2 plans. I encourage you to attend the meeting and come to your own conclusion on how to vote on the referendums this fall.

**OTHER NEWS** - The Sardinia Town Board has voted to cease the Tiny Tots program which is a fall/winter recreation program for 3 and 4 year olds that provides services to them for 9 hours per week. This year, only 8 town residents were enrolled in Tiny Tots. The cost of this program for the year is estimated to be over \$10,000. The Sardinia Youth Board has already come up with ideas to service more youth on a monthly basis with such events as a pumpkin decorating contest, a Christmas Party, a series of bus trips, and educational programs. Increased services for all the youth will be the benefit of this decision.

There will be a dog census this year starting in the fall. The Town has taken over dog licensing from the State, and in order to get our books updated, a dog census is necessary. Dogs may be licensed at our Town Clerk's office at a fee of \$5 for spayed/neutered and \$13 for not spayed or neutered. Also, there will be a \$5 fee imposed on anyone who has an unlicensed dog.

Councilman David Montgomery has set up a Rabies Clinic for Friday, October 22, from 9:30 a.m. until 12:00 noon. The Rabies Clinic will take place at the Highway Barns on Route 39. A Senior Flu Clinic has also been set up by Councilman Montgomery for Friday, November 4 at the Sardinia Town Hall.

Councilman Earl has put together a 3-series concert in the park for our residents that worked very successfully. The town was not involved in any cost whatsoever, minus the use of the park. Any businesses or private donors who would like to participate in this program, please contact Councilman Earl for next year's program.

Manion Park looks simply amazing with all of the great updates that included a walking path, baseball bleachers, and a sealed blacktop basketball court (which was done at our Town Park also). Thank you, Gernatt Gravel for those generous donations.

The Board also approved a Special Use Permit to Waste Management for a liquid solidification process. After much review and legal consultation, along with a few stipulations that Waste Management must comply with, the Board was unanimous in this decision. It should be noted that our Town Attorney was very successful in acquiring full accountability for all the liquid material, even the solids being mixed with the liquids so that Waste Management will pay the Town the full tonnage fee and not the cover-material fee – a difference of over \$2.00 per ton. Waste Management will be hosting their annual Household Hazard Waste Drop Off Day on Saturday, September 24 from 8:00 a.m. until 12 noon.

We have worked hard as the Town Board to provide you with services which are beneficial and cost effective. Should you have any further ideas or question, please do not hesitate to contact me. Please consider attending the meeting on September 14 at 7:30 p.m. at the Sardinia Town Hall which will be to discuss the firemen's retirement program. Thank you for your time and enjoy the last days of summer!

Sincerely,



Mary L. Hannon  
Supervisor