



The Chairman's Corner

by

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RAY JURKOWSKI – COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC WORKS

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In January 2022, Ray Jurkowski joined Columbia County as Commissioner of Public Works and since has made a huge impact on the departments he oversees, which include the Highway Department, Engineering, Solid Waste, Facilities, and the Columbia County Airport.

After graduating from Boston's Wentworth Institute of Technology in the early 1990s, Commissioner Jurkowski went immediately into the municipal consulting business with Morris Associates, of which he became senior partner in 2003. "I've always enjoyed working with municipalities, helping them reach their goals, whether they're planning items or capital projects, things of that nature," he said in 2022. At that time, Commissioner Jurkowski estimated that over the years he had worked with "close to 70 percent of the communities in Columbia County as a consulting engineer. I'm very familiar with the county."

Prior to Commissioner Jurkowski's appointment, the DPW Commissioner position had not been formally filled for several years, as the position requires a professional engineer license. In many respects, Dean Knox as Director of Engineering did fill those shoes until his untimely death in April 2021 – "Dean did a great job for years at organizing bridge and road projects as well as overseeing airport operations," said Stuyvesant Town Supervisor and county Public Works Committee Chairman Ron Knott.

With Commissioner Jurkowski now onboard, he added, "The opportunity for Highway, Facilities, and Solid Waste departments having access to an on-staff PE who has a good deal of knowledge of our county has been great. Organizing state or federal aided bridge and highway reconstruction projects is a major part of this position and they often involve hiring outside firms, for instance, but now, having someone on staff who can review their proposals and work and often provide in-house inspections services, has been an asset to county supervisors and saves taxpayers money."

Said county Solid Waste Department Director Wendy Madsen, "Ray has been an asset to the Public Works Department. For the Solid Waste division, he has been instrumental with the Greenport Transfer Station upgrade, and the convenience station upgrades. His expertise, knowledge and taking lead on the project has not only been beneficial but was much needed. He also has a great vision for the direction of the county and how to best utilize the space and footprint that we have."

At the county highway department, Superintendent of Highways Tony DeMarco noted, "From Day One, Ray told us he was here to help and he has been – he never hesitates to take something on. He's been great for the DPW. Any problem, road issue, or bridge issue we run into that we can't solve, he's right there even though he always has a lot on his plate. I'm happy he's here."

As for myself, I'd like to echo the comments of the others. We're glad to have Ray aboard and helping to keep moving Columbia County forward.