

TOWN OF COLUMBUS

Quarterly Newsletter



September 2017

Chobani Global Holdings, LLC, owner of the Columbus yogurt plant, has sued our Town, seeking to lower its assessment by about 36 percent - from \$27.24 million to \$17.5 million.

For Town taxing purposes, the Town including Chobani, is assessed at \$79.8 million (<http://www.co.chenango.ny.us/real-propertytax/documents/rolls/2017/final/Columbus.pdf>).

If Chobani is granted this reduction, other property owners' taxes to the Town, Chenango County and the Unadilla Valley Central School District will increase unless these entities can shrink their budgets to account for fewer dollars coming from the nation's premier Greek yogurt maker.

The company also has sued the Town of Norwich, seeking to reduce the assessment of its facility there.

Chobani has retained the Paradigm Tax Group and the law office of Bruce S. ZefTel to make its case against the Town.

After receiving notice of the pending lawsuit, on the advice of Town attorney, James Cushman, the Town Board retained Coughlin & Gerhart, LLP, to represent Columbus in NYS Supreme Court in Norwich. Attorney Oliver Blaise of Coughlin & Gerhart met with the Town Board Aug. 10 to discuss the case.

Chobani, currently sheltered from paying full taxes by a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) agreement, approached our assessor, Michael Maxwell, with its request in March. On review, Mr. Maxwell decided the reduction was unwarranted when compared to how other yogurt markers, such as Fage in Johnstown, are assessed.

On May 30, 2017, our Board of Assessment Review – James Lambert, Shirley Davis, and Jack Harper - granted a \$110,000 reduction in value, but rejected most of the \$9.74 million request.

In an effort to avoid a lawsuit, Town officials have met with representatives of Chobani and Paradigm, toured the Columbus plant, and exchanged information, but as of this writing, no agreement has been reached. It is expected that this case will take a year or more to resolve.

We will keep you up-to-date on this and other Town activities on our website: www.columbusny.us

Your Town Board: *Roger Adams, Jane Prohaska, Marsha Guzewich, Pamela Weidman & Tom Grace*

Town Board meetings are held in the Courtroom at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday; Planning Board meetings, same place, at 7 p.m. third Thursday. If you have questions, please contact a Board member or call the Town Clerk at 607-847-8891.