

SUPERINTENDENT'S PROFILE AND PRODUCT - SERVICE DIRECTORY

Since 1978, New York State's exclusive magazine to, for, and about, our Highway Superintendents and Public Works Officials • May 2007



Director of City Services
David Greener
and the City of Peekskill

Director of City Services David Greener and the City of Peekskill



By Mary S. Yamin-Garone
PROFILE CORRESPONDENT

Dave Greener knows a thing or two about breaking down barriers. In fact, as director of city services for the City of Peekskill (aka highway superintendent), he has made it his business to do just that.

"I like to break down the barriers between departments and maintain open relationships with other divisions and city agencies," Dave explained. "That is what I attribute much of my department's success [to]."

At the same time he admits that accomplishing that is one of the more difficult aspects of his job.

"Getting around the red tape and realizing you can't do everything you want without going through the appropriate channels hasn't been easy."

A Bronx native, Dave moved to Newburgh in 1968 at the age of 13. He entered the service in 1972, serving two years with the Army's Air Defense Artillery before going to work for the City of Peekskill as a laborer in 1974.

After working his way up through the ranks, Dave now heads the Bureau of Public Works.

"I never expected to sit in this seat," he confessed. "I wasn't looking for it. It fell on me. The city faced an especially challenging project and I was the person they thought could fix it."

The project was a result of damage incurred during Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

"There was a long outstanding problem as far as flooding any time there was a significant rain or snowfall. I was asked to complete a project that had come to a standstill," Dave recalled. "It involved an intersection that had too many utilities for the project to work. I halted the project, redesigned it, dismissed the contractor and then re-bid the work. We were successful in completing it and also recouped our money from Emergency Management, FEMA and

the state. I was made director when I handled that project. Talk about running scared?"

Despite his baptism by fire, Dave never looked back. He relied on his previous experience to show him the way.

"The knowledge I gained through working for the city for 33 years has been better than any [formal] schooling I could have received. Hands-on experience always is best. What is especially important is my knowledge of the city gained through working here for 33 years. My understanding of drainage, sanitation and development also has been vital."

With an eye on retirement in 2011 Dave said if there are unfinished projects, "I would stay and complete them, but you have to plan on going sooner or later. In four years I will have 37 years on the job. I'm looking forward to just being at home with my family.

When you put in 15 to 16 hours a day at work, it's nice to be home."

Dave has been married to wife, Karen for 30 years. They have three children: David, 27; Adam, 24; and Stephanie, 22.

Getting the Job Done

The City of Peekskill Highway Department is responsible for 45 to 47 miles of road. "That's not lane miles," said Dave. "Double that for lane miles.

During the winter months that translates into five plowing routes that takes us about 2.5 hours to complete."

Dave and his crew of 60 also are in charge of the maintenance and capital improvements for six firehouses, city hall, the police department, courthouse, library, neighborhood center, youth activity center, parks, pump house, city and central

continued on page 26



Dave said there is no such thing as a typical day in this business. "You come to work and there could be a personnel issue confronting you; a public emergency, whether it be an accident or a fire; there could be a water main break, a street collapse. Each day is different."

In spite of their daily responsibilities, Dave and his crew also find time for special projects. Some of their major accomplishments include:

McGregory's Brook Storm Water Project

In 2005, McGregor's Brook was redirected out of the crumbling, collapsing, galvanized steel culvert that held it and into a new concrete culvert that could withstand intense pressure. The many utilities that lie under the street were rerouted and the road was paved over. In late 2004, the steel culvert began showing serious signs of decay and collapse, with roadways and sidewalks shifting and large sinkholes forming.

According to Peekskill Mayor John Testa, "Dave responded quickly with a highly creative plan that routed the brook to run alongside Central Avenue instead of underneath it. This dramatically cut the project's cost and reduced the time needed for completion. Because the project also reduced the flood threat in an area that experienced repeated inundations, Dave was able to secure vital funding from FEMA for the effort. Redirecting the water demonstrated the true potential of Dave's vision. By running alongside the street, McGregor's Brook now flows exposed for 300 feet and then tumbles down a lovely cascade into a thickly wooded ravine."

Upper Central Avenue

"The project was a result of storm damage," recalled Dave. "We declared an emergency because of the situation and the utilities that were in the way. We did a redesign and cut the cost in half. The result was an improved project, an extended parking lot and an

employee lot for the police department."

Griffith's Pond

"The pond was a place locals would go to fish and ice skate. Located on the side of a state roadway, it had become overgrown and stagnant. We did a storm drain project in which we redirected storm water into the pond to rejuvenate it. We directed a stream in there. By doing that, many of the flooding issues in the residential area were relieved," he said.

Seeing projects such as these come to fruition is Dave's favorite part of the job. "It is a great feeling when you have a vision, such as Central Avenue or Griffith's Pond. You can actually picture it in your mind. Then you go through all the steps and all the work and it's complete. Every time I drive by that area... it's just a good feeling, a sense of accomplishment."

There is — as they say — no rest for the weary. Dave and his staff have a myriad of projects in the works that include:

Rebuilding Tompkins Park

"I am finishing my final approvals on a new park. There is a ball field at the other end of town where there is an enormous drop in elevation with a brook running through it. I want to pipe in part of the brook and install an athletic field. At the end of the field there will be a waterfall cascading down about 25 feet into a reclaimed pond, which will be used for recreational activities like fishing and ice skating," he explained. "The project will use roughly 400 feet of expensive pipe leftover from my first project. I wanted to make use of the pipe since it is already paid for. Additionally, the contractor will receive certified clean fill to create the level playing ground so there will be little or no cost to the city."

Water Filtration Plant

"Our present water filtration plant is nearly 100 years old. To

continued on page 34



Peekskill's fleet of vehicles includes everything from garbage trucks to customized buses for seniors and staffers alike. All are kept on a strict maintenance schedule.



Fall is a busy time for the DPW, with numerous days set aside for leaf pickup. A measure of the importance of the task is the recently purchased unit for vacuuming up leaves.



For the city's new water plant, site work is currently being performed and the infrastructure, pipe, foundations and footings are being installed. It should be completed within two years.

garages, water filter plant, the Paramount Center for the Arts and the nature center.

With his main headquarters located in city hall, Dave also has two garages. One is for vehicle maintenance for all city-owned vehicles, which is referred to as the central garage. The other is a DPW/sanitation garage.

"We use an old incinerator building to store our 400 tons of salt," explained Dave. "The city will be undergoing future development so we are getting ready to relocate to another piece of property. I hope that will happen by next year."

To get the job done the highway department uses an assortment of equipment that includes: pickups, dump trucks, a tanker, wood chipper, loaders, tractors and a leaf machine. Maintaining and repairing the several hundred pieces of city equipment is done in-house by five full-time mechanics.

While there is no pressing need for new equipment, Dave does



Approximately 13,125 tons of garbage is picked up and disposed of annually; 4,100 tons per year of recyclable materials, such as cardboard, paper, glass, metal and plastic are similarly handled.



The city's water filtration plant is nearly 100 years old. To keep up with state regulations and to remove traces of certain chemicals, Peekskill is building a new plant.

have a "wish list." He hopes to replace the backhoe recently lost in a fire and purchase a new refuse truck and a large plow. His dream piece of equipment "would be a large vacuum and sewer jet."

Like most highway departments, Dave prepares his own budget, which is then submitted to the city manager. "We try and project the future and how to replace equipment but you always hit bumps in the road along the way."

The highway department functions on a total operating budget of between \$11 and \$12 million. That includes salaries and benefits for employees and an annual CHIPS allocation of \$200,000, which is earmarked for street paving.

"I don't have a specific number of miles to pave each year. We compile a list of which streets need to be done and then pave the worst ones. I try and spread things out throughout the city... so everyone feels they are getting something."

Factors that determine whether a street will get paved include whether its surface is "alligatored," the number of potholes present, the amount of traffic traveling the road and if drainage issues are present.

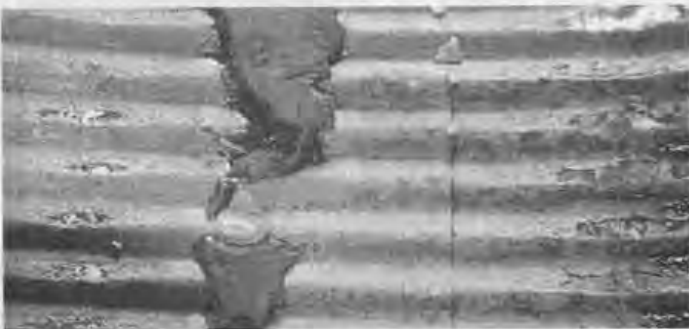
All in a Day's Work

Peekskill's Department of Public Works provides a variety of vital services to the city's 23,000 residents. It includes the Water, Building and Engineering Departments.

Public Works provides refuse collection, snow plowing, street cleaning, and maintains sanitary sewers, storm drains and the city's street paving program. Other services include streetlight, traffic signal and parking lot maintenance and administering the recycling program.

Sanitation is another major responsibility of the department. Approximately 13,125 tons of garbage is picked up and disposed of annually; 4,100 tons per year of recyclable materials, such as cardboard, paper, glass metal and plastic are similarly handled.

continued on page 30



First, the tar-like protective coating wore off. Then, the galvanized culvert decayed on each side of the water flowing through it, as foam created a corrosive broth. Finally, with the entire bottom of the culvert destroyed, the pipes lost their structural integrity and collapse began.



Creating a long-term solution was an essential part of the Central Avenue reconstruction project, and the city used high-strength hydraulic concrete culvert instead of the cheaper galvanized pipe that had already failed.



Space is at a premium at the DPW's facilities. Here materials are stored to help handle tasks ranging from dealing with broken water mains to repairing streets damaged by traffic and erosion.



Installed in the 1970s, this culvert had a designed lifespan of 30 years. It lasted approximately 35 before rust and decay caused it to collapse.

keep up with state regulations and to remove traces of certain chemicals, we are building a new plant. The original cost came in around \$36 million. After revamping the project and eliminating the construction manager — which saved the city roughly \$4.5 million—DPW will be overseeing the work. At present, site work is being performed and the infrastructure, pipe, foundations and footings are being installed. It should be completed within two years.”

Redeveloping the Waterfront

At the end of 2006, Gov. George Pataki committed \$8.3 million to assist in redeveloping Peekskill's Hudson River waterfront area. The project will create additional waterfront access and develop venues along the shoreline, including:

- A new Lincoln Plaza at the base of Central Avenue to the west of Water Street
- A “Riverview Walk” pedestrian promenade
- Pedestrian bridges to Peekskill Landing Park
- A 500-car commuter parking garage with a rooftop park
- Refurbishing the Centennial Firehouse
- A public park on the corner of Hudson and Water Streets
- Relocating Water Street north of Dains Lumber Company
- Railroad fencing
- Main Street Arrival Park

Rebuild Belden Street

This would include extending a water main, road widening, new sewers, curbs and other features.

With all those feathers in his cap what has been the most challenging for Dave?

“Four years ago our sanitation refuse was restructured to increase recycling and reduce our solid waste disposal. I didn't feel taxpayers should be offsetting a business so for the first time, charges to commercial businesses were incorporated into the sys-

continued on page 40



Early in its history, Peekskill prospered as a manufacturing and shipping community. Its maritime heritage developed largely because the Hudson River's east bank widens significantly at the inlet known as Peekskill Bay.

tem to keep the tax increase down. It was a political nightmare but everybody stuck together and we got it done. As a result, we received two awards from Westchester County: one for the most innovative brochure, the other for the most innovative sanitation program."

About the City of Peekskill

Peekskill was recognized by sailors in the 1600s as a distinct locale on the Hudson River. The first recorded white person to set foot on this territory was Jan Peeck, a New Amsterdam (New York City) resident. On numerous sloop journeys to this region around 1640, Peeck exchanged various manufactured items with native tribal people located along Peekskill Bay.

The Peekskill region, specifically what is now Annsville, was first identified by European immigrants as "Peeck's Kill." The name Peeck (Peak or Peek) was combined with the Dutch word for creek (kill or kil) and the area was known to the Dutch as "Jan Peeck's Kill" and to the English as "John Peak's Creek."

Peek's Kill was identified as a distinct geographic location in 1643, when products were officially transferred from the Europeans to the native tribe. These items included: brass kettles, fish hooks, knives, swords, muskets, lead, bullet molds, gun powder, pistols, needles, axes, hoes, tobacco pipes, rum, beer and tobacco. The deed transfer of land for the items was the Ryck's Patent, signed by the chiefs and the English governor in 1685.

Initial growth of the community was slow. In 1712, only 32 people made their homes in the area known as Ryck's Patent. Within 20 years, portions of that tract were sold off for residential and commercial development. The Post Road brought tavern keepers, boat builders, blacksmiths, carpenters and farmers.

Early in its history, Peekskill prospered as a manufacturing and shipping community.

Its maritime heritage developed largely because the Hudson River's east bank widens significantly at the inlet known as Peekskill Bay. Annsville Creek and McGregory Brook were recognized as ideal locations for water transport and waterpower.

Sawmills and grinding mills were located on these streams, convenient to river shipping. Industrial processes were established to turn wheat and corn into flour, tallow into candles, leather into shoes and rags into paper. Docks and wharves allowed sloops and other vessels to carry flour, leather and manufactured material to other locations while importing necessary supplies.

Construction of the "Queen's Highway" also contributed to Peekskill's growth and development. Built early in the 18th century, it linked New York City to Albany, passing through Peekskill. Also known as the Post Road because of the post (mail) riders who frequented it, the highway entered Peekskill near the railroad bridge at Buchanan, followed Lower South Street to North Division Street, through Van



During the sail and steamboat eras, Peekskill was a busy port. Its position at the Gateway to the Hudson Highlands meant plenty of vessels stopped before daring the narrowing river.

Cortlandville and northward. The stagecoach made its first appearance on local highways in 1785 and by 1800 scheduled runs began.

Building the railroad in 1849 and discovering iron at Todd & Croft Iron Mines at Annsville Creek in 1851 became seminal events in Peekskill's continued growth.

These events helped Peekskill's numerous foundries and blacksmith shops to prosper. This, coupled with the invention of the portable stove, placed Peekskill at the center of the stove manufacturing industry as Peekskill's iron stoves were shipped all over the world.

continued on page 44

Peekskill was a significant military base during the War of Independence. It was used intermittently as the Hudson Valley Headquarters from 1776 through 1782.

General Washington established Peekskill as the regional command center for the Hudson Valley following a personal inspection tour in November 1776 following the battle at White Plains. The former Birdsall House at the corner of Division and North (now Main Street) was used as headquarters for the officers.

Peekskill was important for its hilly defensive location, its view of the bay and its military industries. The Overlook, now known as "Fort Hill," was the site of five large barracks and two redoubts. An average of 1,000 Continental soldiers were stationed there and at Camp Peekskill throughout the eight-year war.

Events surrounding the Benedict Arnold conspiracy in 1780 were significant in Peekskill's history. General Arnold received the official command of West Point from General Washington while they were present at the Birdsall house. When Arnold secretly planned to consult with British officer John Andre on a conspiracy mission, Andre's British warship was attacked. The mission was foiled by Jon Peterson and Moses Sherwood from Croton Point, and Peekskill's John Paulding interrogated and captured Jon Andre, the British spy, at Tarrytown. The cannon believed to have been involved in the attack sits on the lawn of the Peekskill Museum.

Peekskill's incorporation as a village within the Town of Cortlandt in 1816 hastened the growth of its industrial, commercial and civic activities. Beginning in the early 1820s, industrial development expanded. Brick making was one of the earliest endeavors, followed by a variety of foundries producing stoves and farm implements that were exported across America.

In 1829, plow and stove making factories began to flourish. The

Annsville Wire Company became active in 1833. By 1895, seven Peekskill foundries were producing and selling more than 200,000 heating and cooking stoves of all sizes and models annually. The importance of the heritage of Peekskill stoves and implements is reinforced by being included on the seal of the City. Pottery, pots, pans and tea kettles also were manufactured. Other notable industrial endeavors in Peekskill include Fleischmann's, the company that developed the first pound of compressed yeast at its Charles Point plant in 1900. This operation became Standard Brands in 1929. Generations relied on unionized jobs until the company left in 1977.

In 1861, president-elect Abraham Lincoln made a stop at the old Peekskill Train Station on Water Street to deliver a short speech. Lincoln's Peekskill stop was his only living appearance in Westchester County. A memorial marker on South Street, named the Lincoln Exedra, overlooks the original railroad depot, which is slated for restoration.

Peekskill also served as an "Underground Railroad" station. Two prominent African American property owners active in the Abolitionist cause, allowed their 112 Main Street house to be used as an Underground Railroad safehouse. The prominent abolitionist preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, lived at his East Main Street mansion and was visited by his sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin.

After the Civil War era the City of Peekskill saw an economic and population expansion. The city is noted for bearing the name of the first factory that later developed into the international Crayola Company. The Peekskill Chemical Works was founded in 1864 as an early maker of dyes, inks and paints. The factory was

continued on page 52



(L-R): Brian O. Havranek, director of planning and development and code assistance; Edward Khuns, water and sewer superintendent; Marcus Serraco, deputy city manager / city comptroller; Dan Fitz, city manager; and Dave Greener, director of city services, Department of Public Works.



(L-R): Edward Khuns, water and sewer superintendent; Dave Greener, director of city services, Department of Public Works; and Mattie Whitted, Kelly Crawford and Marie Burrett, all senior office assistants.



(L-R): Vince Powell, deputy water and sewer superintendent; Vinny Nardone, foreman, water department; Edward Khuns, water and sewer superintendent; and Glenn Allen, chief filter plant operator.

located in a former tobacco warehouse at Annsville. This company created the first "Crayola" product after 1900, after operations relocated to Easton, Pa., as Binney and Smith Company.

During World War II the local Fleischmann's Company (a branch of Standard Brands) received several U.S. Army-Navy "E" awards for producing dry yeast used by American and allied soldiers. The "E" was for excellence.

Locally raised war bonds were used to build four B-17 bombers: the "Peekskill Avenger," "Peekskill War Eagle," "City of Peekskill" and "Peekskill American Legion."

Peekskill officially became an incorporated city on July 29, 1940, two years after it was legally separated from the Town of Cortlandt. In 1967 its city charter was revised to allow for a city manager form of government that included a mayor and six council members.

Peekskill's greatest years of expansion were between 1870 and 1930. The rise of the automobile in the early years of the 20th century brought considerable change with the construction of bridges that bypassed the downtown area. To address traffic-related issues in downtown in the early 1970s, many historic buildings were cleared to allow for the construction of large-scale parking structures,

In 1976, the community initiated its preservation efforts with its fight to save the former Herrick House from demolition and its adaptive reuse as the Peekskill Museum. Following that, the Paramount Center for the Arts — one of the community's most recognized architectural gems — was rehabilitated. In May 2000, the City's Historic District and Landmarks Preservation legislation was passed and the following year, downtown was designated as a local historic district. Both actions ensured that the community's distinctive and irreplaceable character and its widespread architectural legacy would be maintained.

As the 20th century progressed, traditional northeast manufacturing saw a steady decline and northeast towns' and cities' waterfronts fell into decline and under utilization. Unfortunately, Peekskill was no exception.

Many of these towns and cities, however, have come to realize that their waterfronts are a major asset and that the time is ripe to redevelop and revitalize them to once again become centers of activity and economic growth while now recognizing that economic activity must be also be coupled with public access and spaces that will be vibrant year-round.

Peekskill was New York State's first community to have an African American mayor. The former councilman was appointed to serve the unfinished term of George Pataki. After serving eight years as mayor, Richard E. Jackson was later selected as New York State's Commissioner of Motor Vehicles. The city elected its first woman to the Council in 1983 and its first female mayor in 1994.

With the 1994 election and 1998 re-election of George Pataki as New York's governor, Peekskill continues contributing outstanding individuals as American leaders. Gov. Pataki established the Hudson River as a National Heritage River in 1999.

The newly formed New York Jets football team trained in Peekskill from 1963 to 1968. The annual Jan Peek Road Race has taken place on Peekskill streets since 1978. The modern technology of trash incineration and recycling has been an on-going operation at Charles Point since 1984.

The National Maritime Historical Society has published their magazine, Sea History, at Charles Point since 1991.

Among other recent accomplishments was the celebration of 15 years of continuous operation by the Paramount Center for the Arts in 1996. The downtown Business Improvement District had been in operation since 1996.

(City history courtesy of www.ci.peekskill.ny.us.) P