

# Barnett a big draw

▼ Spafford residents turn out for first town meeting of the year

by Ellen Leahy

Despite an arctic chill and blowing snow, the Spafford Town Hall was hopping last Thursday.

About two dozen people were in the audience for the town meeting, a record crowd for Spafford, the most rural of Onondaga County's towns. On the other side of a false partition, the Spafford Area Garden Club - about 15 strong - was also gathered, creating even more of a buzz in the sleepy town's hall.

Joyce Barnett was the draw. Barnett was elected last year as a member of the upstart Spafford Party, which challenged the Republican leadership last November. Many who attended were members of Citizens for Spafford, a political action group formed after the election that is open to all members of the Spafford community. The group meets the third Saturday morning of each month at the town hall.

Barnett asked the board to make several changes in the way it does business, including providing extra copies of the minutes for those who attend the board meetings, posting a sign to note that public notices are published in the *Skaneateles Press*, clarifying how citizens can get an item on the agenda, posting an agenda on the outside bulletin board, and setting procedures for questions and answers from the audience.

Town Supervisor Gordon Ireland said he did not like rules in writing because "it is too confusing," although he did concede that Town Clerk Lisa Valetta could take care of some of the communication concerns if her time permitted.

Valetta coached Barnett through the process of the business meeting, and at one point, had to go behind the partition and ask the members of SAGE to settle down as their voices were drowning out the town meeting.

Ireland asked Barnett to represent the board with codes enforcement, and she asked if she could decline, stating she did not feel she had the experience or expertise to handle this prop-



ELLEN LEAHY

**Spafford Party first elected official, Joyce Barnett, attends January board meeting.**

erly at this time.

"It's a great way to get your feet wet," Ireland said. Barnett still asked to decline.

Fred Chappell volunteered to take on the responsibility and Ireland agreed, but said Barnett would be his back-up.

The Spafford Town Board meets the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m.

Town Supervisor Gordon Ireland noted that Chris White was appointed to the zoning board of appeals.

The subject of the grant Ireland acquired for the renovation of the Spafford Area Historical Society was debated quite heatedly. A story on status of this grant will be published in next week's *Press/Observer*.