

MAYOR'S COLUMN

Even though our Village government year does not begin until April, the advent of the new calendar year causes us to focus on our goals and objectives.

Uppermost will be our review of all Village expenditures, outstanding obligations and future spending. Given the current economic climate, we can no longer just review line items and adjust accordingly. We need to address program and approach each item asking if this is something the Village should be funding in 2009 or is there a more efficient way of reaching the same objective.

It was very clear when speaking to residents as they came to Village Hall to pay their 2008 taxes that they had reached the tipping point. Simply put, many residents are simply tapped out on local taxes. Though the Village government accounts for only 13% of this bill, it is incumbent upon us to make do with less, just as we are doing in most of our homes.

Given the constraints, we still anticipate some very positive initiatives for the Village in 2009.

First on our agenda will be to find the best possible use for the Kensington Road property and return it to the tax roll with a project that will enhance the entire neighborhood.

Equally important will be to partner with our business district and local merchants to help promote their economic stability and the vitality of our business district. Their success has a direct relationship to the character and property value of our Village and we need to be productive partners in this economic downturn.

We will also continue our green initiatives adding recycling receptacles in the business district thanks to the generosity of our Rotary Club and continue efforts to make the Village more pedestrian friendly. In that vein, we will be enforcing our current code requiring residents to properly maintain and repair their sidewalks.

Partnering with the School, we will pursue additional State and County flood mitigation monies and expand our local initiative to clean and repair our pipe/drainage system badly in need of attention.

Another goal is to finalize a contract with our Public Works employees and hire a new Library Director to replace Jane Marino, who has taken a position as head of the entire Great Neck, NY system.

Of great importance will be a concentrated effort to continue to seek noise and vibration mitigation measures from Metro North along our entire rail corridor.

We will also enact local legislation to address the shoddy and untimely repairs of our Village streets after utilities excavate. Of particular concern have been the sub par repairs of late by Con Edison and United Water.

We will also address Village Code revisions reflecting the realities of 2009. For example, we need to set standards for generators, solar panels and the recent spate of “tear downs”. It is also time to review our building structure to open space property ratio ensuring that sites are not over built going forward. We will also review the effects of major landscaping projects on neighboring topography and drainage areas.

We continue to improve the professionalism and technological capabilities of Village Hall and anticipate having a Village wide e-mail notice capability as well as a separate “Police Alert” e-mail.

We have increased parking for customers and merchants on the east side by relocating our commuters to the Avalon lot and we anticipate the addition of 45+ spaces on the BAMS gas station property. Concurrently, we plan to reconfigure the intersection at Cedar and Kraft, long a source of confusion and potential danger.

It will be a year of challenge, but with challenge comes opportunity. We are in this together. We ask for your help and advice and promise to be vigilant stewards of your hard earned tax dollars.