

MAYOR MARVIN'S COLUMN

As is custom this time of year, those of us in Village government take stock of what has been accomplished in 2009 for Village residents and most importantly address what remains to be accomplished in 2010.

Our overarching goal in 2009 was to make do with less. We needed to find ways to deliver the high level of services that you expect as taxpayers while spending less. A full 43% of our overall budget is derived from non-property tax revenue sources. All of our non-property tax revenues were significantly down last fiscal year. Revenues from the mortgage tax, sales tax, parking fees and interest on income accounts all experienced significant drops in comparison to the previous year.

Drastic decreases in spending were required to offset the lost revenue. As a result, we made painful staffing and operational cuts in every department. We were the only community in Westchester County to achieve a 0% tax increase in last year's budget cycle.

The 2010-2011 budget will be even more daunting because of the projected decreases in our State funding coupled with additional unfunded mandates including the newly imposed MTA payroll tax. As a result, we are already working on the budget which will be adopted at our April Board of Trustees meeting. Since we trimmed so many things to the bone in the last budget cycle, we now need to look to less obvious avenues for savings. To that end, we are now revisiting the idea of shopping our health insurance plans, legal services and phone service contracts. By repackaging and rebidding our general liability insurance this past year, we achieved substantial savings. Just a \$77,000.00 spending differential represents a full tax point in the Village's budget.

In an effort to decrease the tax burden, we have aggressively sought grant monies. To date, we have received over \$300,000.00 for the refurbishment of our public spaces, most notably Sagamore and Maltby Parks. We have also received monies for advanced record keeping and improvement for court operations here at Village Hall. In addition, we applied for stimulus money in the amount of \$6 million for flood abatement. We just recently learned we have been approved at the State level for \$3 million of the project. Now we must pass Federal review. If we are successful, we will then resubmit our County grant application for \$3 million in matching funds to complete the project.

Some of our other efforts this year included adding public parking inventory by reconfiguring the BAMS property, negotiating new labor agreements, forming a Green Committee, strengthening our Police Department and pressing Con Edison, Metro North and Verizon to better serve our community.

A great many challenges remain for 2010. First and foremost is the need to continue to work with everyone involved with our business district to fill the empty storefronts and increase business for our existing merchants. Their success is directly related to the value and quality of life of our Village.

We will continue to vigilantly monitor the roll out of the Westchester County Affordable Housing Plan and the eventual implementation of the plan.

This coming spring we will refurbish both Sagamore and Maltby Parks to update and improve our treasured open space.

The intersection of Kraft Avenue and Cedar Street will be reconfigured to increase driver visibility and pedestrian safety.

We will continue our efforts to develop the Kensington Road property with a project that will enhance the neighborhood and put the parcel back on the tax roll. We recently reissued the Request for Proposal to developers but due to the soft real estate market, interest has been tepid. The deal breaker seems to be the \$7 to \$10 million in environmental clean-up costs before a shovel can be put in the ground. Formal responses to our proposal are due February 1, 2010.

Priority will be placed on maintaining Village infrastructure including buildings, sewers, roads, pipes and street trees mindful that deferring maintenance only increases eventual costs to the Village.

Finally, we will continue to encourage the intangibles that make our Village so special be it the volunteer spirit, neighborliness or the willingness to help a friend in need.

Ever mindful of the economic conditions, we promise to approach every issue asking the questions "Can we provide the same service in a more economical way?" or "Is there a better way to achieve the same end result?"

I wish you all a year of health, happiness and a life filled with family and friends in 2010.