

## **MAYOR'S COLUMN**

As 2008 comes to a close, the Trustees and I look back on a year filled with activity and accomplishments including a few disappointments.

Given the tumult of the tax reassessment process, we are most gratified that Bronxville now has the lowest co-efficient of dispersion (COD) or ratio of possible inequity in Westchester County at 7.7%. As an illustration, our neighboring communities all hover in the 19% range. The reassessment process has also turned out to be inevitable for most Westchester communities and we are regularly called upon for advice and assistance. We continue to monitor our tax rolls diligently to maintain tax fairness.

Our police department saw great change and rejuvenation. We have a new Police Chief, six new officers, a new labor contract and opportunities for promotion and advancement in the department including the addition of a second youth officer to meet the needs of our teenage population.

Our commitment to green practices included the successful and energy efficient employment of our Village Hall geothermal heating and cooling system. We also committed to use only natural cleaning products throughout the Village and we now are only the second municipality to commit to using organic products exclusively on Village property. We are currently working with our local Rotary Club and you will soon see attractive can and bottle recycling baskets in the business district.

We continue to address the flooding issue and have applied for several grants to address problems near the Bronx River and the School.

We have also embarked on a major sanitary and storm pipe cleaning effort, addressing pipes not scoped in decades.

A landscape architect is currently drawing up plans for improvements at Sagamore Park and the open space near the former Girl Scout Cabin. Some of the cost is financed by a State grant we applied for and received through the efforts of Assemblywoman Amy Paulin. We also renovated Bicentennial Park and initiated a tree donation program that so far allowed us to plant several dozen street trees.

Our vibration study relating to the third track along our rail corridor resulted in readings well beyond what Metro North had forecast and in some cases guaranteed. We continue to meet with Metro North officials to discuss mediation measures and will reach out to our political representatives and/or pursue our legal remedies in 2009 when appropriate and if necessary.

We recently completed our Community Plan with great assistance from the Village Planning Board. The plan gives us a road map for the improvement and updating of Village codes and laws. For example, going forward we will be considering Code guidelines for generators, solar panels and reviewing our demolition rules and ratios of structure to open space on property renovations.

We have made a number of changes to our road system including a record amount of resurfacing and curbing throughout the Village. In an effort to become more pedestrian friendly, we reconfigured the intersection near Starbucks and repainted all our crosswalks. In addition, Palumbo Place is now open with Midland Avenue, Gramatan Avenue and Pondfield Road reconfigured to decrease congestion.

In an effort to increase parking near the train station and business district, we leased the Avalon/Mobil lot and are diverting train commuters to this lot. This opens up dozens of spaces on the Kraft Avenue side for shoppers and residents doing their errands. Also, the Village owned gas station on Kraft Avenue will be demolished and converted into approximately 45 parking spaces this spring.

We also negotiated a very favorable agreement for the Village with Verizon for FIOS cable service.

We continued to foster a high quality of communication with our residents through newsletters, tv shows, and increasing the information available on our Village website.

Our greatest disappointment was the bankruptcy of our Kensington Road developer, WCI Communities. We believed the quality and design of the project was a great fit for our Village and had hoped to be breaking ground at this point in time. However, thanks to the oversight of our attorneys and

Trustee Robert Underhill, we ended the deal with a \$275,000 refund to the Village.

We had also hoped to end the year with a contract with the Teamsters who represent our Public Works employees and have our village wide e-mail system and Police alert up and running.

It promises to be a very busy year as the Trustees and I soon convene to discuss priorities and strategies. However, uppermost in our minds will be the overriding goal to limit expenditures in this very challenging economic environment. 2008 is now behind us. The foundation we established in 2008 should serve us well as we prepare for the challenges in 2009.