

## **MAYOR MARVIN'S COLUMN**

It is tax time again. In an effort to save time, money and be more environmentally conscious, the Village has decided to send one tax bill in lieu of the traditional twice yearly notices. In the tax bill you received in June, we included a second half tax stub to be used at this time. If you did not retain the stub, payment by a check displaying your address will be sufficient identification.

Since our process is a departure from the norm, we will be mailing a postcard reminder in the next few weeks.

Tax season presents a timely opportunity to review the process of tax billing as well as the larger issue of the amount of taxes Village residents pay yearly.

Second half tax payments must be received at Village Hall by 4:30PM on Thursday, December 31, 2009 or postmarked no later than the 31<sup>st</sup>. The postmark must be from the U.S. Postal Service. Private or corporate postmarks cannot be accepted.

If the payment is not timely, a 5% penalty is added to the balance if payment is received anytime between January 1<sup>st</sup> and January 31<sup>st</sup>. If payment is not made until February, the penalty escalates to 6%. Payments received between March 1<sup>st</sup> and March 19<sup>th</sup> carry a 7% penalty. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, delinquent taxes go to lien sale. Taxpayers will then be notified by the Village as to the purchaser of their liens.

By January 31, 2010, the Village Treasurer is required to reconcile all tax payments and following this accounting, notices of non-payment are sent to residents during February. Partial payments cannot be accepted by the Village.

All of the above dates, calculations and procedures are prescribed by the New York State Real Property Law leaving the Village no flexibility to modify procedures.

At Village option, we divide the yearly tax bill into two payments due to the sizeable tax obligation. We are prohibited by law from dividing the payment into more than a semi-annual collection.

The law places the onus on the taxpayer to notify the Village of any changes in property ownership and mortgage company designation. If your mortgage is escrowed and payments are current, the mortgage company is responsible for any late fees, not the property owner. The Village is required to send a receipt for all tax payments.

Residents have expressed an interest in paying taxes by credit card. We struggle with this because there is a processing fee attached to this method of payment. Given our average tax bill, even a 2% fee is a sizable dollar amount that would have to be either added to the taxpayers' bill or absorbed by the Village as a new line item expense.

The Village collects taxes for the School as well as monies to operate Village government. Last year's levy was \$36,047,424 for the School and \$7,683,816 for the Village representing a 83%/17% split.

The Town of Eastchester collects taxes for town services and operations and the Fire District and the County of Westchester. Bills are mailed annually on April 1<sup>st</sup> with payment due by April 30<sup>th</sup>. Bronxville residents paid \$4,224,645 for fire services last year, \$831,051 as our portion of the Town budget and \$8,867,037 to the County of Westchester.

Net-net the 2,312 taxpaying addresses in the Village of Bronxville pay \$57,653,973 in local taxes in 2009.

I echo the beliefs of many residents that this tax burden is unsustainable. I believe we must begin to work together and engage in constructive conversations to find ways to decrease this burden so Bronxville can remain affordable for all of its residents.

I urge you to familiarize yourself with all municipal budgets and become well versed as to how your tax dollars are being spent.