

MAYOR MARVIN'S COLUMN

A very important election will be occurring in the Village on December 14th to select a member of the Eastchester Board of Fire Commissioners to serve a five year term. The Fire District election is routinely overlooked – less than 4% of the eligible voters came out in 2009 –yet it greatly affects the pocket books of Village taxpayers. The person elected will be responsible for a 14.5 plus million dollar budget, all raised from property taxes. To put in context, the budget for running every facet of the Village is \$13.7 million this year. Unfortunately, the hours for voting are very restricted - from 5PM to 9PM - at the Bronxville Fire House and almost unbelievably, there is no provision for voting by absentee ballot. Despite these impediments, I urge you to educate yourselves about this large taxing authority and vote for the candidate that most shares your views.

Staying with the public safety theme, I thought I would share information about the inner workings of the Village police department and the costs and services associated with running our local department.

We currently have 22 officers whose complement includes a Chief, one Lieutenant, five Sergeants, and two Detectives. In the years prior to 1976, the Village had 28 police officers. In 1976, Mayor Schoen commissioned a study to determine optimal staffing and the final report recommended a force of 23 officers and the hiring of non-police staff to take over the writing of parking tickets. The recommendations were implemented and resulted in the hiring of our first Parking Enforcement Officer, Helen, whose fame still lives on. Our 22 officers on staff are divided into five squads consisting of a sergeant as supervisor and two to three patrolmen. These five squads cover the patrolling of our Village 24/7. Each officer does five shifts on a rotating basis in the 8AM – 4PM slot, then the 12PM – 8PM, and finally the 4PM – 12AM shift. The Chief, Lieutenant and Detectives are based at headquarters but supplement with manpower as needed.

The level of activity during each shift has increased dramatically in recent years going from 1,900 calls requiring the dispatch of a police officer in 1976 to 3,013 last year, with two fewer officers on staff.

The police department's budget is \$3,440,000 all encompassing including salaries, supplies, healthcare and pension costs. Officers earn a base salary in the range of \$47,974 - \$122,480 exclusive of overtime. We have a mix of ethnicities and skill sets including a female officer, three African American officers and a Spanish speaking police officer. Our force is relatively new and young – though many have arrived with prior experience in Mount Vernon, New York City and White Plains - with thirteen new officers hired since 2007 to fill vacancies created by retirements. Six of our officers are certified Youth Officers. Their goal is to interact with our students in a non-adversarial way and build a relationship of trust as well as helping in times of trouble. All our officers are trained in basic EMS, CPR, and there is a defibrillator in every police car.

We routinely turn our police cars over after 90,000 to 100,000 miles due to major wear and tear caused by 24/7 operation. We have found that due to heavy usage, major repairs are often needed at this juncture including new engines and transmissions and it is more cost effective to sell cars at auction below the 100,000 mile threshold.

Our patrol units divide the Village into three distinct areas, one centering near the business district and the residential areas adjacent, another toward Tuckahoe encompassing Concordia College and the Siwanoy area and the third toward Mount Vernon from Woodland Avenue to the Village line.

The system has proved to serve our residents well. It takes, on average, less than one minute for immediate help to arrive in emergency situations.

Our police department is the first responder for all types of emergencies since all 911 calls go directly to our department which then contacts fire or EVAC services as needed.

Most of the calls received at our front desk involve auto accidents, needed medical aid, suspicious persons or activity in a neighborhood and the activation of house alarms.

The department encourages you to call them when you sense anything unusual and let them decide its importance. After incidences in neighborhoods such as car thefts or burglaries, more often than not, neighbors will recount seeing something amiss in the neighborhood prior to the criminal activity. The patrolling of our neighborhoods is the number one activity and priority of the department. The department does offer many other services that only a small municipality can provide. Our officers will do vacant house checks, keep your keys on file for emergencies, check on our senior citizens, do car seat checks and offer spur of the moment assistance for parades and neighborhood events.