

MAYOR MARVIN'S COLUMN

The Village's 2009-2010 fiscal year began this Monday, June 1st. Concurrent with this is the approved change in fee structures for recreation and parking. Our tennis and paddle permits for both residents and to a greater degree non-residents were raised to narrow the gap between revenues generated by the permits and the actual costs of the programs.

In the parking realm, we increased the penalty for fines including parking in front of hydrants or in crosswalks. The adjusted fee schedule for violations is available on the Village website. Of particular relevance is the increase in the fine for parking meter violations from \$15 to \$20. This represents the first increase in 6 years and the new fee puts the Village more in line with fee structures in neighboring communities – Eastchester at \$25, Scarsdale at \$20 and Yonkers at \$35.

By way of explanation, Parking Enforcement Officers, or PEOs, each have an assigned route or “loop” and must walk it in a consistent pattern to spot expired meters. This accounts for why sometimes you may receive a ticket just minutes after meter expiration while others avoid tickets even when many minutes overtime. We continue to educate our staff to be the most professional and consistent when doing what is admittedly a very difficult job in the best of circumstances.

All of the above represent increases in user fees needed to help reach our zero tax increase in the Village budget. These were in lieu of a property tax increase which is born solely by Village residents and a fairer way to reach our financial goals for the Village.

The meter fees themselves will remain at 20 minutes per quarter. However, to help our merchants by increasing parking space turnover on our primary commercial streets, the Trustees enacted legislation prohibiting meter feeding on Pondfield Road, Park Place and Paxton Avenue. To be forthright, the chief violators and those whose patterns we must change are the employees of some of our businesses. Employers have been either unwilling or unable to police their employees' parking patterns.

As a result, many conscientious business people arrived at work only to find people from other businesses parked for the day in front of their stores. This is quite demoralizing as well as terrible for business. Our effort is a pilot project and the Trustees and I are open to expanding or contracting the streets involved if warranted.

In tandem, the Village has made available additional parking for merchants and customers in the Kraft Avenue lot by moving commuters to the Avalon lot. We have also made the Avalon lot free all day Saturday and Sunday for shoppers and diners.

As anticipated, we discovered some asbestos in the BAMs garage structure and we have begun remediation. We expect to have the structure demolished and the area ready for parking by Labor Day. In conjunction with the addition of these 40 plus spaces, the Village will also be reconfiguring the intersection at Cedar Street and Kraft Avenue near St. Joseph's Church, long a source of confusion to many drivers.

The police will also be monitoring streets adjacent to the business district to ensure that long term parking from the business district is not diverted to our residential neighborhoods.

In recent years, not only have the needs for school staff parking increased, but also employee parking for businesses even though the number of stores and offices has essentially remained static. This is the result of an interesting intersection between small business and national health care costs. Historically, stores had one or two full-time employees who received a full benefits package triggered by their hours worked. In the current economic climate and adjusting to financial realities, most businesses have overlapping part-time employees to accomplish the same work without triggering costly benefit packages.

The above efforts are initiatives by the Trustees to look for the most efficient ways to utilize our downtown parking inventory for the benefit of our loyal merchants and businesses. They continue to need us, now more than ever, to patronize their stores and help them ride out the economic downturn. Supporting our local merchants not only gives a local economic benefit but directly contributes to maintaining the home values in our beautiful village.