

Mayor's Column  
January 29, 2018

As my first official Village centric column of the New Year, I wanted to share with you what the Board of Trustees has determined as priorities for the upcoming year.

Truly, the year promises to be one of the busiest I can recollect as so many major projects are front burner.

As an overview:

Garage for our Public Works Staff and Equipment

Built in 1942, and not substantially remodeled since, our current facility has a compromised infrastructure. Leaking in so many spots, the building cannot hold our equipment, necessitating outdoor storage which halves the life of most of our intricate vehicles. Repairs also have to be made in the freezing cold and on a public street.

Last year, we sought proposals which resulted in estimates much higher than anticipated so we are going back to the drawing board. Regardless of the scope, something has to be done to improve working conditions and storage of millions of dollars of equipment.

Comprehensive Plan

In light of changing residential and business realities, our overall Zoning and Planning regulations must be updated to reflect the current climate.

As example, due to the popularity of internet shopping, stores want to operate in the Village with a service component or solely as a service such as exercise studios and restaurants.

On the residential side, tear downs, tree removals and multiyear construction projects need to be addressed with new rules and regulations. The quality of life of neighbors must have a more central role in our consideration of permits and approvals.

Upgrade to Village Commercial and Residential Lighting

We currently have the most inefficient lighting system possible employing 189 Watt incandescent bulbs on most of our streets, near both homes and businesses. We will move slowly, especially in residential areas, as needs are very different depending on street width, topography and density of homes. Our neighbors in Scarsdale are ahead of us in the process and we are learning from their rollout. Certainly, aesthetics is a major factor throughout the Village. In the business district, other factors must be considered including insurance and liability issues, traffic flow concerns and illumination needs when businesses are closed.

Teamsters Labor Negotiations

Our Public Works Department employees are represented by the Teamsters. We are currently in constructive talks to craft a new agreement going forward. As would be no surprise, healthcare coverage and contribution rates are the main issues under discussion.

Infrastructure Improvements

We continue on our aggressive course to repair our 100 plus year old infrastructure in a methodical way to avoid patchwork emergency deferred maintenance issues that are much more costly. The sewer system is currently our main focus as we enter Phase Two of pipe repair and relining.

### Midland Avenue/Pondfield Road Intersection

We continue to seek a light/walk configuration that will improve pedestrian flow in particular as we encourage residents to embrace a more walking environment. In recent years more stringent state rules apply when an intersection is reconfigured, (witness what we were required to do near St. Joseph's Church), and we are conscious of the unobstructed beauty of the Village's crossroads at Pondfield and Midland. Currently we are reviewing many options, aware that an improvement is warranted.

### Budget

Starting in early February, the Trustees, staff and I begin a very comprehensive review of our spending in anticipation of a new budget being crafted and adopted by May 1, 2018.

Municipal expenditures are 19% of every Village tax dollar. Given the recently passed tax laws, we are acutely aware of the added burden placed on Westchester County residents in particular.

### Kensington Road Improvements

As the Villa BXV project nears successful completion, we are looking towards upgrading the nearby Bacon Woods Park, sidewalks and intersections that were left in limbo as we awaited positive development on the long unattractive Kensington parking lot. A hidden gem, the Village owns Bacon Woods, a 1.6 plus acre park straddling Kensington and Sagamore Roads, that warrants upgrading and refurbishing.

### Business District Revitalization

Extremely important to the value of everything in the Village, we continue to work with our Chamber of Commerce, standing committees, merchants and landlords to not only fill the vacant storefronts but ensure that we have the optimal mix of businesses to promote stability and profit.

### Parking Opportunities

We are actively working with various property owners and Village entities to increase our inventory through Village ownership and/or public/private partnerships.

### Smaller in Scope but Equally Important

- Constant refurbishing and maintenance of the condition and attractiveness of Village public spaces
- Village Hall:
  - Improvement of our website
  - Startup of the Community Garden
  - Repairs to the Library's HVAC system
  - Upgrades to court security, phone system, parking software, records retrieval and cameras.
  - Improve our green efforts re: composting, recycling volume
  - Replace street trees lost over the years to age, storm and disease.

Our overarching goal is to make the Village the most efficiently run, fiscally responsible, attractive and inviting place to live. As most residents did, we came to the Village for the excellence of the public school system. The task of the municipal government is to offer enough services and amenities within a very small budget to want you to make the Village home long after the children are off to college. For long term sustainability, it is imperative that we keep a healthy balance between school and non-school families and encourage lifetime investment in our community.