

Mayor's Column

March 26, 2018

It is the yearly budget season when trustees must go into overdrive. Warts and all, here is where we are with our preliminary budget. We will continue to dissect it at a Public Work Session on April 9th.

As an overview, our budget calls for general fund appropriations of \$16,458,082, an increase of \$274,675 or 1.7% from the 2017-2018 adopted budget. The Village has a taxable value of \$3,160,000,000 reflecting an increase of \$45,631,022 from last year.

The net result is a real estate tax levy increase of 3.84% resulting in a 2.35% increase in real property taxes next fiscal year.

In real dollar impact, the Village median priced home with a value of \$2,200,000 would see a \$160.60 increase in their Village bill to \$6,976.20. Along the continuum, a home valued at \$1.2 million would see a \$79.00 increase to \$3,440; and a home valued at \$4.2 million would see a \$307.00 increase to \$13,348.

The principal drivers for the modest budget increase is a salary increase attributable to the fourth year of a negotiated labor contract with our police department as well as a significant (\$70,000) increase in our health insurance payments.

To put in perspective, the 2017-2018 Village fiscal year saw many exciting and long planned projects come to fruition, notably the completion of the flood mitigation project and the opening of Villa BXV, hospital enhancements and the Kensington Road parking garage. The proposed revenue side of the equation is projected to be down by \$191,351 as a corollary to our major initiatives. Parking meter revenues dropped near the respective construction sites and building permit revenue will decrease to reflect the completion of the major projects. The good news is that revenues from sales tax, State local funding share, mortgage tax, and franchise and gross receipts tax are on track to remain largely unchanged.

Expenses unique to this budget are the purchase of Kevlar vests for our police. This expense appears every five years as the fiber of the vests disintegrates after a five year life. In addition, we needed to add a new budget item – electricity for the new Kensington Garage. Our new camera system has also added some first time expenditures.

Believe it or not, the snow season was not a budget breaker as we calculate our snow removal projections based on ten years of costs so it served to even out.

In an effort to plan for the future, we have created a tax stabilization reserve through the use of \$500,000 from unassigned tax reserves, still leaving us with an Unassigned Fund Balance reflecting a very healthy 38% of proposed appropriations. The healthy fund balance will ensure retention of the highest possible bond rating for a Village as well as monies on hand to contemplate major improvement projects.

The focus of the Trustees this past year has been to retain the highest level of services to Villagers while being good stewards of the future.

To that end, the 2017-18 year included the commencement or completion of an unprecedented number of capital projects focusing on repairs of a now 100 year old plus infrastructure.

To put in a more global perspective, the passage of the proposed budget as described above will be 14¢ of your Town/County tax dollars with the others costs being Fire 8.6¢, County Government 13¢, School taxes

60¢, Eastchester Town Taxes 2¢ and sewer and water district taxes equating to 3¢ per dollar. On the Village level, 17¢ of every tax dollars funds the municipal government.

There is not much room for further trimming. One possible exception would be the collection of leaves in bags vs on street pick up which would save almost \$100,000.

Staffing, which is the major cost driver of all municipal budgets, is as lean as possible. In the 30 years that I have been in the Village, the Police Department, Public Works Department and Administrative Staff are at their lowest personnel numbers.

In addition, people are crossed trained especially in the Administrative division. As example, our front desk staffer is also now the registrar responsible for the several thousand birth and death certificates we process yearly.

Our Village Administrator is also our Village Clerk responsible for running all elections and being a Memorial Day Parade coordinator in addition to his regular duties.

I am confident in this budget we continued to maximize the use of your tax dollars and prepared a responsible budget mindful of the fact that we are stewards of your tax dollars.