

Mayor's Column  
October 31, 2016

Many of you have commented on the increased number of drivers crossing double yellow lines to snag a coveted parking space, particularly on Pondfield Road.

The Police Chief is quite aware of the uptick and adds officers when available to concentrate on this violation which we know will increase as the holiday shopping season approaches. (Of late, our overtime budget and added officers have been tasked to concentrate on the crimes in our residential neighborhoods.) Crossing the double yellow line is a difficult offense to punish as a police officer must actually witness the violation. Unfortunately calling the police desk with license plate numbers and photos has no effect.

Our Parking Enforcement Officers or PEO's cannot act even when an eyewitness to this behavior because they are not police officers, rather authorized and trained only to issue parking tickets, and in very limited cases an appearance ticket for minor violations. New York State Vehicle and Traffic Laws can only be enforced by trained police officers. Traffic stops are actually the most dangerous duty of a police officer because stops often lead to more serious charges such as stolen car cases or outstanding criminal warrants and a PEO has none of the training, equipment or weapons needed to handle these unpredictable situations.

Quite related is the proliferation of bicycle riding on business district sidewalks. A provision in the Village Code dating back decades prohibits riding on commercial sidewalks by those 11 years of age and older. Quite clearly this language serves to make the law nebulous and unenforceable.

To that end, the Trustees are conducting a hearing process to change the legal language to a total ban on bicycles on crowded sidewalks to safeguard pedestrian passage.

In the same vein, as a reminder, when a pedestrian enters a designated crosswalk, New York State Law requires not only the car in the immediate lane to stop, but also the cars traveling in the opposite direction. As illustration, at the crosswalk near the soccer store and Houlihan Lawrence Realty, the law requires that all four lanes of traffic stop when an individual enters a crosswalk. However, conversely, it

is important to remember that a crosswalk is not an extension of the sidewalk and pedestrians must exercise careful judgement before taking that first step off the curb. When crossing a roadway without a marked crosswalk, a pedestrian must yield that right of way to all vehicles.

Many pedestrians are also concerned about the speed of cars as they cross throughout the Village.

New York State Law requires a minimum vehicular speed of 30 mph for Villages. The only exceptions are school zones, (20mph), and exceptional circumstances that must be documented with evidence of a history of multiple significant accidents. As of yet, none of our streets have met this threshold allowing us to lower the speed limit.

Remaining on business district issues, parkers often ask the rationale for the days our meters are in operation as they don't always coincide with Federal holidays. The purpose of a meter is to stimulate the movement of cars to increase customer parking for our businesses and it has no relation to the Village's respect for certain holidays over others. As example, on Veteran's Day all of our stores will be open so providing free parking from 8am to 7pm would severely hurt business traffic vs free meters on Memorial Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day when all stores and business close have no impact on the flow of space turnover.

Parking on all village streets is currently prohibited from 2am to 6am. The rationale is not only for the obvious reasons of street cleaning and snow plowing but also to spot abandoned or suspicious cars left on village streets.

However, the Trustees are aware that this prohibition presents hardships to disabled residents and residents having children and extended family visit from time to time so we re-examining the blanket prohibition. We realize accommodations and some flexibility is needed for deserving residents.

All of the above are quality of life concerns that must be addressed so as to maintain our village as the special home it is.

Of additional community concern of late is the proliferation and length of major home renovations.

As background, the terms of any village building permit allows work to be done from 8am to 6pm on weekdays only, with no exceptions. If the activity is one that does not trigger a permit, house painting as an example, work can be done on weekends provided it does not violate the Village's blanket ordinance relating to undue noise and disturbance.

Due to the protracted length and extensive disruptions to neighborhoods of some projects, the Trustees are reviewing our permit time lengths as well as penalties for violations and the need for neighbor notice if particularly disruptive procedures such as rock chipping and demolition are part of the project. Again, a very important quality of life issue in our densely compacted community.

All of the small things matter, be it always operational street lights, attractive street signs, a streetscape replete with healthy trees, quality plantings and level sidewalks, clean parks, peace and quiet in neighborhoods, and roads free of potholes if we are to remain the treasured village that was advertised in an early prospectus for homebuyers in the 1800's that has become a favorite of mine.

"Few New Yorkers know that within three miles of the city limits is varied and undulating country. There are no fences; everyone appears to own everything. You will find the lawn of one residence winding curiously into that of another whose grounds turn, merge into still another occupant's. There are not flat lawns or level gardens, but the slopes are dotted with trees, ribbed with fine rock and starred with flowers."