

From the Mayor's Desk...April 1, 2013

The Tentative Budget for 2013-14 reflects a tax rate of **\$281.97** per thousand of assessed valuation, an increase of **\$6.21** per thousand, up 2.25% over last year. For a property owner with an assessed valuation of \$20,000, the Tentative Budget represents an increase in taxes of \$124.20. After several consecutive years of service and personnel cuts, the current budget maintains the same level of Village services. It has not been an easy task with increased costs in pension, health insurance, workers' compensation and union obligations. The vigilant review of operations, cost saving opportunities and revenue maximization is the new standard operating procedure. This has afforded us the ability to present a budget that meets the mandated increases while doing the same, often with fewer resources. As I have mentioned in the past, my goal is to keep tax increases right around the rate of inflation, so by that measurement, we have succeeded this year.

This is the second year of the 2% NYS Tax Cap legislation. The Village levy, as defined by the formula, is under the cap at 1.45% and cumulatively under the cap by \$176,059 over the two years. Assessed values for the village, which will not be finalized until May, are anticipated to see a meager increase of approximately .10%. While 0.10% is not a large increase, any increase is welcome after five years of sharp decreases. While we are again under the cap by a wide margin, the Board of Trustees will likely vote to override the tax cap to avoid any potential future issues with interpretation or calculation that would incur a penalty on the Village. While this step is likely the result of an over-abundance of caution on our part, I believe it shows the flaws of the way the law is written and lack of guidance by the state. The only reason not to vote to override a state imposed tax cap (that we are well in compliance of) would be purely political.

In total, expenditures are up \$475,644 (3.08%). Of this, increases in New York State Retirement contributions, workers compensation, health insurance and liability insurance comprise approximately \$186,000. Contractual union increases account for approximately \$220,000. There is an increase of \$35,000 for DPW capital improvements for roads. Other increases include Certiorari (\$50,000) and the Library fund (\$14,000). Increases in the Justice Court, Building Department, Recreation Department and the O'Hara Nature Center totaling approximately \$75,000 are offset by increased revenue projections. A reduction in debt service (\$89,000) and a reduction in across the board costs of approximately \$15,000 have helped to mitigate these increases.

Unfortunately, Village costs for water continues to rise from our supplier, New York City, who is proposing to increase rates in July by 10.78%. The impact will result in an increase in water rates by 2.9%. Sewer rates (a much smaller portion of the quarterly bill) are proposed to rise 8.5% and reflect an allocation of expenses.

The budget process has focused on meeting cost increases, finding sustainable revenue growth and compliance with the mandated tax cap. With the cooperation of Department Heads and the Library Board, current services have been maintained. I am very grateful to Village Administrator Larry Schopfer and Clerk/Treasurer Brenda Jeselnik for all their help with the budget. I would also like to thank my current Board Members for their continued focus on weighing costs and services. Municipal budgets do not have "right answers" only carefully reached tradeoffs that can only be reached through discussion and input from our experts (i.e. department heads), our administration, the Board and mostly importantly, the public. Along those lines, a public budget hearing will be held **tonight**, April 1, 2013 at 7 p.m. in Village Hall. Residents are encouraged to attend. Comments may also be submitted by letter addressed to Lawrence Schopfer, Village Administrator, 85 Main Street or by email to lschopfer@irvingtonny.gov. **The budget will not be finalized tonight so there is still time to get your comments in even after tonight's hearing.**

Best,
Brian C. Smith
Mayor