

MAYOR'S COLUMN

This week's column is an amalgam of information relating to current Trustee activity and issues specific to this time of year.

Of particular importance to public safety is a reminder that residents are responsible for the care and cleaning of the sidewalks adjacent to their homes, regardless of the surface – be it concrete, dirt or gravel. Clearing of snow and ice shall be done “within 12 hours of the cessation of snow falling and ice remaining on the sidewalk after it has been cleared or forming thereafter shall, if not easily removable, be kept covered with clean ashes, sand or the like, so as to be safe for pedestrians.” A sidewalk is defined as “any area, whether paved or otherwise improved, unpaved or unimproved, designated on a filed subdivision plat as a sidewalk, or as a pathway or trail intended for pedestrian use, or which, even if not so designated in a filed subdivision plan, is built and/or constructed as a pedestrian way.” Our Village code mirrors most other Westchester towns and villages in this requirement.

Snow and ice maintenance is particularly important this time of year but we will also be vigilant in the spring in enforcing our code in reference to repair of walkways. The proper maintenance of sidewalks, both private and public, is the first step toward making the Village more pedestrian friendly. As we encourage Villagers to walk to and from town and school, we must make sure their passages are clear and safe. A well maintained walkway is also our best defense against trip and fall lawsuits. In tandem with this, is a reminder that pet owners must be attentive in picking up after their animals so our streets stay clean. It is a sign of respect to our Village and most importantly your neighbors to clean up after pets.

Last week, I wrote at length about the upcoming tax roll and methods to determine equity. In thinking this week, I realized the column could be distilled down to one essential issue. When the tentative roll is published on February 1, 2009, each homeowner should ask, “Has my home value disproportionately dropped in comparison to my neighbors and do I have concrete data to support this supposition?” If so, you should avail yourself of the grievance process. If it is just a belief of disproportionate assessment, it will not meet legal muster unless supported by appraisals and comparable

values. Recognizing the uniqueness of the subject, the Village is ready and available to answer your questions. Please ask for our assessment professionals, Janet Grosso, Gerry Iagallo and Anthony DeBellis at 337-6500 or reach out directly to our assessing consultant, Gerry Iagallo at (914) 346-0764.

Our police department has been very proactive in alerting residents about recent crimes. The goal is to change behavior which may inadvertently aid the criminals – be it unlocked cars or back doors or keys left in ignitions. Let me assure you that though we are very transparent in reporting criminal activity in the Village, the actual number and severity of crimes did not increase in any category in 2008. Though given the difficult economic times, the Village will be even more watchful in protecting our residents and businesses.

Speaking of our businesses, Village government is doing everything we can to support them. In these times of economic difficulty, we must keep local money local. Along with Chamber officials, I have walked the business district and spoken with many merchants to learn what we can do to keep stores viable and prospering. Our business district is a huge asset to this Village – it makes our Village unique and lively directly affecting the value of our homes. In response to merchants suggestions, the Village will aggressively enforce the “no crossing double lines” on Pondfield Road, make our business approval process as streamlined as possible and communicate with current landlords and future tenants to impress upon them the history and value of our business district. Our merchants are the most accommodating and generous people and they deserve our support.

The Village has also moved our commuters to the parking lot across from the Avalon apartments, freeing up over 25 spaces along Kraft Avenue and in the Kraft Avenue lot near the movie theater for customers. Please avail yourself of these new spaces.

Hoping to be at least in the running for the upcoming public works funds proposed by President Obama, the Village has submitted applications for flood mitigation, a “green” public works facility and police security measures. Though realistically our chances of funding are limited, we can guarantee a result of no funding if we do not do the paperwork and apply.

We are also completing the work needed to reissue our RFP (Request For Proposal) for the Kensington Road property. Despite the economic downturn, we have been surprised and pleased at the continued level of interest by major companies in our development. We have reached out to entities including Metro North and United Water to re-affirm their previous agreements with the former developer.

Our RFP solicits proposals to build the exact project including quality of materials and landscaping that was approved in the two year Village/neighborhood approval process. Since all approvals run with the land and not the developer, the hope is that our quality project can be built more expeditiously because of the approvals already in hand.

Our Post Office is offering an entire day with staff dedicated to processing passport applications and renewals. On Saturday, February 7th, from 9AM to 4PM all passport needs will be handled. We thank the Post Office for their help and cooperation.

And finally, in an unabashed advertisement for our Village merchants, I can personally attest that you not only receive courteous and friendly service from our merchants but “good deals” as well. The Complete Kitchen has prices on popular items competitive with Williams Sonoma, Womrath’s Bookstore got purchases to my door faster than Amazon and Mrs. Morgan’s Flower Shop had decorations identical to items sold at Smith and Hawkins for \$15 less and I walked to all.