

MAYOR MARVIN'S COLUMN

As we begin the New Year, I want to thank all the residents for their volunteerism, helpful suggestions and generous support. Your contributions made 2011 in the Village a successful and positive year.

In the spirit of the new year, I want to address issues/questions that are particularly germane to the season. The following is a compilation thereof.

Unfortunately, January is also synonymous with taxes. Tax payments are due by January 3rd without penalty. Payment after that date incurs penalties that escalate depending upon the payment month. Several years ago, the Trustees and I decided to send out just one paper bill with two payment stubs in an effort to save staff time, paper and postage money and ultimately taxpayer dollars. The common practice in most municipalities is to send one yearly bill similar to the way we pay our Eastchester taxes. Because of the large Village tax bill, village leaders in the past began the practice of a two payment system. We continue to send multiple electronic reminders via our new e-alert system and I urge you to sign up to help avoid missing any important Village deadlines.

Some residents have wanted to pay taxes via credit card given the benefits associated with card usage. Appreciating the logic of this option, we have tried to find a bank that would waive the attendant 2 – 4% transaction costs in exchange for our business with no success. Given the dollar amount of most of the tax bills, neither the homeowner nor the Village can currently absorb the transaction fees.

January is also the month for renewal of home alarm permits. The annual fee is \$50.00 and due by January 1, 2012 with a grace period until February 1, 2012. Residents will receive a renewal notice only via e-alert, the cable TV scroll and newspaper announcements. Paper notices will be sent out only as a last resort. All homeowners are allowed two false alarm responses by the police before a \$25.00 fee is charged. In addition to registering alarms, other safety precautions should be taken if extended travel is planned. Ask neighbors to park in your driveway and have a friend pick up items such as Pennysavers and phone books that cannot be cancelled by calling the Post Office or the provider.

Should the snow fall in the coming months, and from a budgetary not a beauty perspective, I pray not, regulations are triggered to provide for safe sidewalk passage.

In the Village's business district, sidewalks must be cleared of ice and snow by 9AM and 4PM of each day whether or not the snow is still falling. On residential streets, snow and ice must be removed within 12 hours of the cessation of snowfall. As a reminder, sidewalk maintenance and repair, irrespective of the season, is the responsibility of the homeowner or landlord.

During snowy weather, residents often ask us to clear paths or "shortcuts" that have been carved out of hillsides or alleyways. We cannot maintain these areas, however well used, because our maintenance would condone the use of paths that are neither sidewalks nor safe passage.

The holiday season also brought an increase in door-to-door solicitations. Individuals selling goods cannot do so legally without first receiving a permit from the Village. Do not hesitate to call the police department if the salesperson cannot produce their permit. Upon investigation, the police have found that some of the charities that were purported to benefit from our purchases were non-existent. The First Amendment does protect all those “selling” an idea or cause so groups such as the Jehovah Witnesses or Greenpeace do not need permission to ring your bell. To limit this kind of visit, a small “No Solicitation” sign near the front door has proven effective.

As a reminder, Village Hall issues birth and death certificates but pet licenses are now issued by the Town of Eastchester at Town Hall at 40 Mill Road. Only children born at Lawrence Hospital can receive birth certificates at Village hall. Residents born in New York City can apply for certificates at www.nyhealth.gov/vital_records.

Many residents have inquired as to Village rules governing the hours of operation for construction companies working in the Village. Home improvement work that requires a building permit can only occur on weekdays between 8AM and 6PM. Work not requiring a permit such as house painting or lawn care may be done on weekends. However, any work producing a great deal of noise may be in violation of the Village noise ordinance, whether done with or without requiring a building permit.

Finally, two of our most recent initiatives undertaken late in the year, have proven quite successful. Our police officers on foot patrol detail were received so positively by merchants and residents alike. Not only did the officers make new connections with residents, they were also on hand to issue tickets to drivers crossing the double yellow line on Pondfield Road, a source of frustration to every patient and law abiding parker in the Village.

Thanks to the Green Committee’s “Leave the Leaves” initiative, we never picked up a single leaf on Village Hall property, rather mulching them in place. Not only did we save time and money, but the lawn has never looked better.

I wish you all a new year full of promise, health, family, laughter and kindness.