

MAYOR'S COLUMN

Events in Albany impact Village government in many different ways that ultimately affect our final yearly budget and expense projections. As the 2008 legislative session approaches, there are a myriad of items in various stages of discussion that deserve careful monitoring by Village government.

Of primary importance is the apportionment of revenue sharing or Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM) as it is now called. The original purpose of AIM was to redistribute State tax revenues to municipalities. Various constraints have been imposed on the monies resulting in 100% of all villages receiving less than they did in 1989 when adjusted for inflation. Bronxville currently receives \$66,000. We were scheduled to receive nothing in the most recent state budget and only had funding restored thanks to the intercession of Senator Klein and Assemblywoman Paulin. It is important that the legislature devise an allocation formula that is fair and predictable so municipalities can budget intelligently.

Another area of possible change or reform is a restructuring of the Wick's Law. Dating from 1912, the Wick's Law mandates that government construction projects costing more than \$50,000 be subject to separate plumbing, heating/ventilation/air conditioning and electrical contracts. Studies estimate that this requirement has resulted in increasing project expenses anywhere from 8 to 30 percent. Governor Spitzer has recommended that the \$50,000 threshold be increased to \$3 million for projects in New York City, \$1.5 million for projects in Westchester, Nassau and Suffolk counties, and \$500,000 for the rest of the State.

The following topics are of particular relevance to the Village and currently in various stages of discussion and bill production in Albany:

- A proposed funding mechanism for municipalities via a real estate transfer tax to create a designated fund to improve and preserve aging infrastructure and open spaces.
- A suggestion to follow the trend in some other states and permit local municipalities to impose charges on tax exempt properties to help defray the cost of municipal services such as police, fire, street maintenance, lighting and sanitation services.
- Legislation that would increase fees for copying under Freedom of Information Law requests from the current 25¢ per page and also allow municipalities to charge increased fees for excessive document production.
- Legislation to reduce the use of certain pesticides for lawn maintenance, particularly on municipally-owned property.

- Amendment of the Real Property Tax Law so that market value, rather than income producing value, becomes the valuation method for cooperatives and condominiums. Current law requires that the sum of the assessments of the individual coop or condo units cannot exceed the value of the entire complex if it was sold as a single entity.
- Legislation that would authorize local governments to purchase a percentage of energy from renewable sources without being in conflict with State competitive bidding law and/or include a subsidy to close the gap between the price of renewable energy and conventional energy supplies.

The new state legislative session will begin in January 2008. We will be watching closely to help protect the interests of our Village government.