

## **MAYOR MARVIN'S COLUMN**

When you move to Bronxville, the first Village employees one is likely to meet are our multi-skilled members of our Department of Public Works (DPW). The DPW is truly the face of the Village and the majority of the staff has been with the Village twenty plus years. The department has a staff of 19 – down from 21 just two years ago. The Department is ably led by Rocco Circosta, a civil engineer and thirty year veteran of the industry who joined the Village six and a half years ago. The work day is 7AM to 3:30PM with one fifteen minute morning break. Most of the men take vacation in summer allowing us to hire Village students to supplement the staff.

With leaf season almost over after a 10 week pick-up cycle, the crews are focusing on preparation for snow removal. The Village has to be proactive and purchase salt eight months in advance to benefit from the discounts offered by participation in a State bulk purchase contract program. In a normal year, the Village uses 800 tons of salt per season with the remainder stored in the shed behind the Bronxville fire house.

In the past several years, the department started using a salt brine to pre-wet the streets in anticipation of a snowstorm. The brine's content is 23% salt and produces the shiny lines you see on our dry roads prior to a storm. Once snow begins to fall, the salt trucks are deployed, followed by the plows if the accumulation is two inches or more.

The biggest problem for the Department of Public Works is the disposal of the snow after large accumulations, especially in the business district. For many years, the snow has been deposited on the Maltby Field, adjacent to the former Girl Scout Cabin. However, since we are planning to restore that area to a park setting, we need to find alternative locations for the snow. The department has been evaluating the purchase of a snow melting machine but as yet, they have not found one that meets the particular needs of the Village. Since this machine is quite expensive, the department is weighing the options carefully.

The Department of Public Works operates very efficiently especially in light of the lean staffing. However, there are many challenges going forward to keep the department efficient and environmentally progressive and cost effective.

The biggest hurdle is the condition and location of the department itself. Our operation is housed in a structure built in 1942 which has never been remodeled. There is only one bay for vehicle repairs and no room for indoor storage of vehicles or machinery. Hence, the need for parking our entire fleet outdoors on Palumbo Place. The larger trucks must also be repaired outside even in sub-freezing weather. Due to the space limitations, some repairs must be outsourced at a higher cost to the Village. It is estimated that the life of some of our equipment is diminished due to the 24/7 outdoor storage. Since garbage trucks cost \$180,000, this is no small item to have to replace at an accelerated rate.

There is also no space for a compressed gas terminal or a charging station for electric vehicles. Both of these facilities will be required to progress to more energy efficient and environmentally friendly equipment which must be the future for the department in lieu of relying on gas and diesel powered vehicles.

With energy costs ever more expensive each year, in the not too distant future, we must address the lighting throughout the Village. Many of our older streetlights use 189 watt incandescent bulbs. Not only will these bulbs be extinct in upcoming years, they are extremely energy inefficient and fragile as well. As a result, the Department of Public Works replaces on average 20 bulbs per week throughout the Village due not only to their short life span but filaments damaged by wind, rain or snow.

We also need to get a better handle on the location and condition of our Village assets such as sanitary sewers, catch basins, municipal trees and power poles. The maps and data currently at Village Hall are antiquated and incomplete. The County of Westchester, as I mentioned in a previous column, is embarking on a GIS/aerial photography program to assist municipalities in locating their infrastructure. We will need to spend the resources to customize the data for our Village. Going forward, this would allow us to be much more effective in locating problems and expediting repairs, as well as having a complete record of Village inventory.

It has amazed me that the same nineteen gentlemen who pick up trash also clean the streets, maintain our parks, clean the sewers, plow the roads, replace the street signs, repair our vehicles, plant the trees and maintain the lights. Much of the work accomplished by DPW is supported by Maryann Urrico who does double duty as secretary for both the DPW and the Village Building Department. We are so fortunate to have a veteran department of gentlemen and a lady who know and love our Village and care for it as if it were their own.