

MAYOR'S COLUMN

As the year comes to a close, 2008 will be remembered as one of great economic turmoil and financial reverses. However, with every crisis comes opportunity – maybe this is our moment as a Village to take stock of what is really important and appreciate what we have. 2009 will be a year of discerning what we really need as a community as opposed to what we want.

Despite the diminution of financial resources, the Village is truly blessed to have in abundance the most important natural resource – the people who live and work in the Village.

Those who come to mind first are the men and women who worked for our Village. Our very lean and efficient police department of currently 19 officers (in the past we have had as many as 28 policemen) do an outstanding job of keeping the Village safe and looking out for residents young and old.

Our Public Works force, just 21 strong, seem to care for everything in the Village, be it garbage pick-up, tree planting, recycling or plowing. Many people say that on a wintry day, they know they have reached Bronxville just based on the quality of the plowing and sanding. What is truly gratifying about our police and public works staff is that they view their work as a career, not just a job, take great pride in their work and stay with us until retirement.

The same can be said of the Village Hall and Library staffs who are extremely dedicated, hard working and loyal to our Village.

Much like the School, the Village simply could not operate without the legions of Village residents who volunteer their time and expertise to a myriad of Village committees – be it the Planning, Zoning or Library Boards just to name a few.

In these challenging economic times, let us not forget our Village merchants who give so much to our community year round. It is important to take note that whenever a benefit or charity comes knocking, it is not the “big box” stores who donate a gift or lend a hand – it is our very generous local merchants who are called upon often and give unfailingly. Their beautiful stores and a vibrant business community - directly affect our property values. Let's support those who support us.

As we approach the 2009-2010 budget cycle in Village government, our emphasis will focus on people, rather than things. We will most probably make equipment last a little longer, maybe pave a few less streets and like most households make due with less. We will need to rely on the quality of our staff and volunteers to step up when needed.

The Trustees and I are acutely aware of the onerous tax burden on our residents, paying Federal, State, County, Town, fire district, school and Village taxes yearly. It is still

astounding to me that we as Village residents pay more to the County government – over \$8 million in property taxes alone - than we levy to run the Village of Bronxville.

These times offer an opportunity, a challenge to Village government not just to raise or lower line items in our budgets but to take a long hard look and re-examine our spending asking – Do we need this? Does it maximally benefit our taxpayers? Can we accomplish the same goal in a more efficient way? Are there alternative sources of funding? We will need to be creative and seek more avenues to purchase cooperatively with our neighbors to achieve volume discounts. We will need to review “user fees” to ensure that those who receive the benefits equitably shoulder the financial burdens. We will have public hearings on the budget in late winter and early spring and welcome all ideas and comments. We cannot do it without you.

As the year closes, I want to reiterate the Board of Trustees and my thanks to all the people who continue to make this Village a truly special place to be.