

MAYOR'S COLUMN

Our Village is thankfully in excellent financial shape, however due to the general economic downturn, there are many projects that we have had to place on hold or find alternate means of financing save for expending taxpayer dollars.

As an example, we sought funding for the refurbishments of both Sagamore Park and Maltby Field from our State representatives Senator Klein and Assemblwoman Paulin who came forward with member item funding. However, these grants may be in jeopardy given Governor Patterson's line item vetoes of late. We have plans in hand, but thankfully we chose not to break ground without funds in hand. As a result, these two sorely needed renovations set to commence this summer now remain on hold.

Certainly, the biggest casualty of the economic tailspin was our Kensington Road project. The area was long left dormant because we did not want to spend money on property that we hoped would soon be developed. We realize the need to clean up that area and will be doing so this summer. We will try to make it as attractive a parking area as possible as we continue to gauge interest in its highest and best use.

We spent a great deal of time and energy applying for every conceivable grant opportunity from the County level to the State and to the Federal stimulus program. We applied for flood remediation funds, street lighting grants, environmentally friendly garbage trucks, and police personnel funding, just to name a few. We made it to the final "round" in several application processes, but no money came our way despite truly best efforts.

As a result, though the "to do" list is long and project goals extensive, in the immediate future we will be concentrating on initiatives that bring the greatest value per dollar to benefit the Village. For example, we will be doing general maintenance projects such as tree trimming, tree removal and replanting throughout the Village. In that vein, if you believe a Village tree needs care or removal, call our Public Works Department with the location and we will have it assessed.

We have again joined with Eastchester and Tuckahoe in an inter-municipal paving contract and work will commence in late summer. Given the times, we will be paving fewer streets this year than in past year's capital programs. If you believe your street, or any particular area in the Village needs road maintenance, please call the Public Works Department and we will add the location to the list and evaluate its condition for repair.

Unfortunately, many of our beautifully paved streets have been dug up by Con Edison or United Water to do various repairs. These utilities do the repairs and then contract out the road resurfacing to a subcontractor. This process causes what seem to be unusually long delays between repairs and resurfacing and the installation of metal plates stay far too long as stop gap measures. We are very vigilant in pressing the utilities for timely repair, and will continue to do so though their status as monopolies certainly affects their responsiveness.

Similar to the Village, other entities we rely on to do needed repairs and maintenance are also experiencing a money crunch. Metro North is the prime example. The fencing along the length of the tracks needs painting and the condition of the underpass, though quite safe, is exceedingly unattractive. However, there are no capital funds in the MTA budget to do any work of this kind.

At times like these, we are particularly grateful to and reliant upon the volunteer efforts of our community organizations such as the garden groups, who plant and weed, and the Rotary Club who donates recycling bins for our business district.

All of the beautiful plantings you see throughout the Village are the result of volunteer donations and labor.

Even the smallest of improvements, barely perceptible, can have a significant budgetary impact. Some of our great old trees that must be cut down due to disease can cost in the neighborhood of \$3,000 to \$5,000 per tree for removal. Multiplying this number Village wide results in significant dollar expenditure.

In a similar scenario, the installation of just one traffic light costs upwards of \$140,000 translating into a tax increase of 2 percentage points for one item.

We continue to balance the need to maintain our Village at the level residents expect with the revenues available to us in a difficult economy, and pick and choose projects that result in the greatest impact for the dollar. We will continue to actively seek funding for any future projects from all available sources other than totally relying on Village taxpayers.