

Mayor's Message for March 2018

As we “spring forward” and change the clocks, I am sure we are all looking forward to spring weather. Back to back nor'easters have dumped more than 2 feet of snow, which dropped trees onto power lines, lawns and streets, and knocked out power to many people not once, but TWICE. I am truly amazed at the resiliency of all of you. Each storm bought its own set of issues, and the biggest one was the loss of power.

This is a huge public safety issue, and we were working non-stop on getting the power restored as quickly as possible. In the meantime, Police, Fire and EMS emergency services were standing by at the Firehouse at all times in order to deal quickly with emergencies. Our crews from the Village and Town Highway Departments kept the roads open and made sure first responders could get where they were needed quickly. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, we worked hard with the County Executive who was getting us county assistance, as well as putting continuous pressure on our utility providers. We were also in contact with the Governor's office. We had a direct line to a County Emergency Operations Center to report outages, road closures and downed power lines. One of our water plant operators spent the night at the plant for fear of not getting in at 3 am when the pumps need to be restarted to replenish the reservoir. We were all in constant communication with each other so that everyone was in the loop and we could respond to problems as soon as they were discovered. I am so thankful for this team of people who were dedicated to doing whatever was needed. And, I am thankful to all of you who helped us and helped neighbors as we made it through these storms.

I know that in some cases it felt as it was an eternity to get power restored, but you have my commitment that you were never forgotten. To communicate with people, I ended up taking to the streets and going door to door. Looking ahead, I believe we must establish a better communication plan with residents for “non-emergency” storms. One important thing that many people were not aware of is that we had the Village Hall open to anyone who wanted to come use the kitchen, bathrooms, charge cell phones, or go online. We will make a point of developing a system for getting this information out to everyone in the future.

Now as I also look at the other side of the desk and still see my neglected tax return waiting to be started, I will give you a quick budget recap. February, was a month of weekly meetings where department heads, liaisons, and the treasurer went through each item in the budget line by line. In planning for the future, we are using 3-year trends to guide us on where we need to spend resources. When in doubt, we pulled invoices to verify that the expense was appropriate. New ideas and proposals were also given a hearing, and many made it into the plan.

Our overall goal was always to preserve taxes and stay under the tax cap. And, this year we had some things in our favor. There was an increase in the overall assessment of the Village, the allowable tax levy limit was increased to 2% from 1.015%, an increase in cell tower rent, and projections of more income from fire inspections all added to our income. We were able to include some items in this year's budget, including hiring a

consultant to advise on historical preservation, and buying time recording equipment for employees.

The plan is to be submitted to the Village Board meeting on 3/13. That leaves us one month to make final adjustments before the public hearing. Where are we today?

We are under the NYS Tax Levy limit by \$4,800. With a reasonable approach, we can keep the tax rate the same.

Salaries were calculated with a 3% increase as per the last year of current union contract. We compared our salaries for equity within our municipality and across other municipalities.

Revenues increased by \$49,490 over last year with increase in property sales tax, cell tower rental, and fire inspections.

Expenses increased by \$94,500 over last year for codification of our code, a sustained annual highway paving plan, and the addition of a new position for Municipal Fire administration and event support.

The Water Budget is set at \$993,752 and the Sewer Budget is set at \$812,039. Neither will require a raise in rates at this time.

We also held our first workshop on the short-term vacation rental committee's report to the board. At this meeting several items were discussed in-depth and will require continued discussions. Some of the issues were:

1. Restricting the number of rentable bedrooms to 2 for non-hosted entire home rental.
2. Restriction on parking in the front, street side of a house
3. A limitation on the number of adult occupants to 4 with a total occupancy of 6.
4. Retaining a registered licensed real estate broker if you leaved Dutchess County.
5. Non-conforming use of a non-primary residence as a short term vacation rental.

These issues, plus more, will be discussed at the next workshop on March 15th.

One final note is the Village elections on March 20th from 12 noon to 9 pm at the Town Hall.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me, I can always be reached at 845-876-7015 or MayorBassett@VillageofRhinebeckny.gov or come to see me during open hours from 1pm to 2pm daily

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