

Conversation with the Mayor - March 1, 2010
Vicky Daly

The Budget – What & Why

Well, it's pretty much done. Three plus months, December – mid-March, of budget preparation is over. A final check is happening and on March 15th the public hearing will take place prior to the regular meeting of the Village Board. It appears that we will have approximately a \$.27 or 2.3% increase per thousand, bringing it to \$11.27 per thousand of assessed valuation. That equates to \$27.00 total increase on a \$100,000.00 assessment. I wish it were less. I am relieved it is not a larger increase. Going into our final round of meetings, prospects looked particularly dire. You read here about pension and health insurance increases so large that they could not possibly be passed along whole to our property owners. Those two budget lines were the chief villains in this piece, but everything, absolutely everything contributed to the increase as it has in your own home and business.

I raised the question 'Pay me now? Pay me later?' The board elected to belt tighten and postpone non-essentials rather than mortgaging the village's financial future. We dealt with the needs, not the wants, again just as in your own home or business.

Water and Sewer rates are not a part of the General Fund Budget which generates the tax levy and tax rate, but they are dealt with at the same time. The New York State Department of Health is requiring that we paint, inside and out, the village water tank and that we make some internal infrastructure changes on it. Replacement of filters at the water plant on Spring Street is also necessary. No one was more surprised than the Village Board to learn that the cost would be in the realm of half a million dollars. Is there a choice? Not on whether or not it gets done, only in how we pay for it. Again, with not wishing to mortgage our future, the board chose the 'pay me now' option. To fund the cost of the mandated work, the minimum water bill will go from \$30.00 a quarter to \$40.00 for the first 500 cubic feet and from \$2.50 to \$2.75 for every 100 cubic feet thereafter. New rates will go into effect with the June billing. Try to think of it as less than fifty cents a day for the new base rate. That might help. The overage use you have some control over – fuller laundry and dishwasher loads, less watering next August. Let me end with answering an unasked question: If we were to go out of the water business and purchase water elsewhere, would we still have to repaint and refurbish the tank and water plant? Yes, it remains the responsibility of the users of the water to maintain it, not of the sellers of the water.

And so there we are. I believe we are following the right course, pay-as-you-go. That's the philosophy that has been used in the development of the Palmyra Community Center complex and in the village at the marina. It seems appropriate.

Ending on a bright and happy note, congratulations and thanks to the members of the Rochester Curling Club and our own Irene and Bill Unterborn who brought a hugely successful Curling on the Canal to the Village of Palmyra on February 21st. As many as 500 people from all over the region enjoyed a delightful afternoon at the Port of Palmyra.