

Conversation with the Mayor - February 17, 2012  
Vicky Daly

## Here We Go Again

Perhaps the budget process would be less onerous if it came at a different time of the year. Dealing with this particular task during a time of leaden skies, icy sidewalks and sometimes gale-like winds makes for a miserable combination. But this is Western New York in winter and NYS Village Law requires that the budget be prepared at this time, so we do it.

If you infer from my tone that it is a difficult process, you are right. We all know from our personal and business budgets that it is a demanding task. Our taxes provide services. If we, as a community, want the services then we have to pay for them through our taxes. The difficult thing to determine, if money is tight which it is, is which services may have to be cut or be eliminated. What is valuable to one person may not be to his neighbor.

There are options, of course, to avoid cuts, but they have ramifications. One is certainly repair, don't replace, and hope that the repair bills on the vehicle, the computer, or the equipment will not cost more in the long run than the new purchase with a warranty. Another option is using the reserves, i.e. savings intended for future major costly repairs, sort of the major medical of government. And, of course, the tax levy and tax rate could reflect the increase in costs. All decisions have consequences that have to be considered.

At no level – village, town, state or federal – does the individual taxpayer have the ability to choose what he/she wants the taxes to fund. Nor does the governing body, including the schools, have the option to select which unfunded mandates or expenses it can choose to fund. Cost of health care? Price of fuel? Pension contributions? We have no say. As a result, governments at all levels, including School Boards, face this quandary. It is often said that a decision/ contract/ budget that makes everyone unhappy is a good one because everyone is impacted equally. Maybe so, but the result is also a group of unhappy people. And that includes the group/ board/ administration making the decisions. I recall from my School Board days that someone said "They don't put up a plaque when they close a school."

The Palmyra Village Board will continue our work on preparing a realistic, equitable budget for the 2012-2013 fiscal year with public meetings on February 20<sup>th</sup>, March 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> in the Village Hall. They are Open Meetings which you are welcome to attend. The Board members, as residents of the village, users of village services, and payers of village taxes, are acutely aware of their impact and the fact that we are working with other people's money.