

Conversation with the Mayor September 18, 2006

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Let's Talk About Money

Money is a touchy subject and discussions of money - the amount available, how to use it, and, frequently, what we should have done - more often than not have an emotional overlay. There is never enough of it and tough choices have to be made. Accurate information can help lessen the emotion.

Our main source of income in the village, of course, is the property tax we pay. Our taxes pay for the services we receive - fire department, police protection, sidewalks, street lights - things of that sort. That is why we are working so hard to have the NYS legislature rethink the law which cuts the assessment of existing subsidizing housing units, leaving the taxpayers to make up the loss of revenue. It is a forced tax increase which benefits owners of for profit housing and for which we receive nothing. (If you agree that this is not an equitable law, stop in and sign the petition. It will go out to our legislators in early October.) None of this is news.

What may be news is that there are other income streams for particular projects. Right at the moment, there are several, none of which involve local taxpayer money. At the September 18th Board meeting we dealt with four of them. The Village approved a proposal for \$19,750.00 for a truck traffic study on Routes 21 and 31. Source of

funding: private grant money. We also accepted a grant for \$20,000.00 to do a companion air quality study. Source of funding: private grant money. Mention was made that we had not yet heard on our grant application to the NYS Canal Corporation for funding to increase access to the canal for local residents and to open up docking space for more boats to increase business in local shops. Source of funding for consultant to prepare application: Member item, Senator Nozzolio. Also discussed was the Pedestrian Kiosk which will provide information to visitors about the off-Main Street shops and restaurants. Source of funding: Member item, Assemblyman Oaks. Yes, I know that the member items come out of tax payer, NYS tax payer, money, as will the Canal Corporation grant should we receive it. The thing is: Somebody is going to receive that money; it might as well be Palmyra. The money allotted for projects like these does not go back into a pot to reduce NYS taxes, nor can we use it here in Palmyra for anything except the designated purpose. It is an entirely separate funding stream and it cannot be diverted to another need.

There are other things that have happened and are happening in the village that do not and have not required local taxpayer money. The refurbishing of our 1892, one-of-a-kind flagpole was accomplished with a member item from Senator Nozzolio and private funds. The Wetlands Nature Trail in Aqueduct Park was the work of a graduate class at ESF, Syracuse, and the handsome sign was done by Eagle Scout Nick Falanga. The newly dedicated Erie Canal Mural on Market Street was also a school project, this time an independent study by nine Pal-Mac art students under the supervision of Molly Day-Karpovage. The cost of

the project was borne by Severn Trent Environmental Services, JRLON, Wooden's Custom Upholstery, Brad Jacobs & Sons, Pal-Mac Rotary and private donors. Help was provided by Historical Palmyra and many, many individuals. No taxpayer money was used. The new kayak dock a-building at the marina is being paid for by re-cycled economic development money. That is state or federal money that was loaned and has now been repaid, with interest, to be used again. That is the same source of funding for micro-enterprise loans, facade paint, new sign support and even pigeon deterrents. Really. None, absolutely none, of these funds can be transferred to the General Fund. We have to account for their use and could be in very big trouble should we use it for any other purpose. The handsome new interpretive sign at the marina is a gift to Palmyra from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Taxpayers across the US paid for that sign and those placed in ten other Erie Canal Communities. Brand new in that same area is a monument to Viet Nam Era Veterans. In the spring it will have an American flag and be surrounded by service flags. This project is funded totally by donations. No taxpayer money was used. The same is true of the Veterans monument in front of the Village Hall.

This may not make you feel any better about the taxes, but it explains where the extras to enhance village life and support local business come from. These extras are making a difference and are bringing in new merchants who, in turn, will bring in new residents and visitors who will spend money in our shops and restaurants. It is already happening. Side note: This morning at Muddy Waters we met two couples whose boat was moored in the marina. They had stopped

yesterday for lunch, did some exploring, and decided to stay several days. They listed the shops they had visited and those which were on their list for today. They even got to the library book sale and took advantage of the \$2.00 per bag opportunity.

You can help. Shop locally; keep the money in Palmyra. Get involved. Sign the petition. Talk to our representatives. Talk up Palmyra. There is a lot here to brag about. We shouldn't need our visitors to tell us that.