

Conversation with the Mayor - March 7, 2011
Vicky Daly

We Are Tying Up Loose Ends

When I was first elected I envisioned being in the office a couple of afternoons a week and on a Saturday morning once a month as Ellen Polimeni, Mayor of Canandaigua, has done for years to be available to the residents. It hasn't worked out that way. It is sort of a chicken and egg situation: Am I in the office more hours because of the growing complexity of the job or has the job become more complex because of the hours I am in the office? Doesn't matter, it is what it is and there is a lot going on in the village of Palmyra. When that is the case, there are loose ends to be tied up.

Loose end #1 – Buildings & Grounds Superintendent Gary Hopkins isn't going anywhere. His job is secure. Blame the mistake on cut& paste strategy. It happens to everyone who uses a computer. We are just sorry it happened to Gary.

Loose end #2 – The village is in the process of preparing an application for Main Street Program funding for rehabilitation of commercial buildings in the business section of Palmyra. The owners of commercial, residential rental and not-for-profit buildings have been contacted. Private residences are not eligible for funding. I mention this because the office has received phone calls from home owners about eligibility. This grant doesn't fit their need, but we will keep looking for one that does.

Loose end #3 – The Big One – On March 21st we will hold the public hearing for the village's 2011-2012 budget. The bottom line is that the projected tax rate will drop \$.11 per thousand, from \$11.77 last year to \$11.66. No cuts in personnel or services are projected. Nor will there will be any increase in either water or sewer rates. How does this happen? Hard, ongoing effort, making what we hope is the right decisions. The budget prep season starts officially in the village in mid-December when material goes to our hard working department heads. In January we meet with each department head individually to look at how the then current budget is working and projections for the next one. In the meantime, we are gathering information about those costs over which we have no control, primarily insurance and pensions. That information comes through our Clerk/Treasurer who has been working with our financial advisor. We are now up to 7 or 8 meetings. In February, we put all this information together for a preliminary look at a budget which includes absolutely everything that has been requested. During 3 work sessions which follow, we go through the General Fund budget, the determiner of the tax rate, line by line by line, and do it more than once. There are more than 300 lines in the General Fund budget and each one is scrutinized. This is not a task we enjoy, but it must be done. We do the same for Water and Sewer. Roy McMaster, our financial advisor, provides us with 6" plastic rules to facilitate the work. Thanks to his technical savvy we can see electronically the impact of each action, addition or cut, on the tax rate.

Those 9 or so public budget meetings, however, are really just our final budget prep. Budget is uppermost in the minds of not only the Board members but also of the Clerk/Treasurer and our department heads throughout the year. Every request is always greeted by "Do we really need this? How much? How are we going to pay for it? Can we do this

another way?" Decisions that have been made this fiscal year will enable us to keep water and sewer rates stable and to reduce energy costs in the village owned buildings. A willingness to cooperate with other municipalities in the purchase of needed equipment and services is another way we work to save our residents money. Come to the public hearing at 7:00 PM on the 21st and you will see for yourself in greater detail what is projected for the next fiscal year.