

State of the Village Report

January 2008

Dear Briarcliff Manor Villager:

This is the second annual “*State of the Village*.” This report presents a synopsis of the past year of issues, policies, capital projects, Village law changes, personnel and finances. The Board of Trustees, the Village staff and all our volunteer Boards and committees have worked diligently in a cooperative effort this past year to improve our Village. These efforts not only make living in Briarcliff Manor today a unique experience but provide for a bright future for our Village.

Your Village staff including the Administration, Police Department, Recreation and Parks Department, Water Department and Department of Public Works have all made improvements and changes this year which make operations more efficient and help keep expenses in check. Additionally, the Board of Trustees, along with staff, continues to evaluate the consultants who perform services for the Village to insure that we as a Village receive the best advice and performance at reasonable rates.

The Fiscal Condition of Our Village

Our Fiscal Mission Statement: *The Board of Trustees in its oversight of Village Finances is committed to minimize taxes, replace deficient infrastructure, provide quality services, utilize best technologies, protect Village assets, and protect the general welfare and quality of life of its residents and employees in a fiscally sound manner.*

General Finances: The General Fund Operating Budget this current Fiscal Year (6/1/07-5/31/08) is \$13,850,213. The tax rate decreased by 0.8% in the Town of Mount Pleasant and increased in the Town of Ossining by 3.4%, *one of the lowest tax increases of any Village/Town in Westchester County*. The Water Fund Operating Budget is \$3,299,464. Our current Moody’s rating for borrowing is 1A.

Undesignated Fund Balances: Two years ago the Board of Trustees increased the Undesignated Fund Balances to allow the Village to better manage its finances on an operational basis. Larger fund balance levels also enable us to maintain or improve our financial ratings which impact the interest rate the Village pays for borrowed money. At the beginning of our Fiscal Year the Village’s Undesignated General Fund Balance was \$2,171,546, and the Undesignated Water Fund Balance was \$1,603,139. Our Undesignated Fund Balance in the General Fund is 15.6% of our expenses. This is a reasonable number per our Auditors, but less than the 25% to 30% which is recommended by Moody’s.

Dedicated Reserve Fund: Last year the Board of Trustees established a Dedicated Reserve Fund for the “Full Supply Water Project”. (“Full Supply” is our new water delivery system that enables us to tap into the Catskill water system. This long term project, mandated by NYS Department of Health, will ensure that the Village finally has clean, potable water.) The amount currently in this dedicated fund is \$1,263,340. Although this amount is included in the undesignated fund balance for audit purposes, the Board has taken the action to specifically reserve the monies for this project. This fund will allow the Village to borrow less initially and pay down more of the principal amount

on an annual basis. This will accelerate the re-payment of the bond and save the Village interest expense.

Status of Trustees Four Major Village Goals

1) Update the Village's Comprehensive Plan: This goal has been completed! Nearly two years ago we started the process to update our outdated Master Plan (original Plan circa 1958, with a reaffirmation in a 1988 update). The Board of Trustees selected a diverse group of Village residents for the Comprehensive Plan Committee and hired a consultant, Buckhurst, Fish & Jaquemart. The committee met on numerous occasions, held five Neighborhood meetings, a public workshop and a required public hearing prior to forwarding the document on September 20, 2007 to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees after its own public hearing process and some minor modifications adopted this important document on December 6, 2007. This Plan does not change any laws but it does provide a "vision" or roadmap for our future, along with some recommendations and timelines. The "Vision Statement of the Plan is important enough to repeat in here:

The vision for the Village's future is based on protecting its neighborhoods and the natural environment. To protect and enhance the good quality of life in the Village, we will:

- *Provide open space, parks and both passive and active recreation opportunities for all villagers*
- *Provide stewardship over the Village's unique setting along the Hudson with its slopes, wetlands, views, trees, and semi-rural environment.*
- *Maintain the Village's neighborhood character of traditional and varied housing.*
- *Encourage measured growth and physical and visual improvements in our business districts to 1) provide a variety of goods and services to our Villagers, 2) expand the Village's commercial tax base and 3) create a more vibrant downtown experience.*
- *Improve pedestrian amenities and streetscape experiences through the Village.*
- *Provide a safe circulation network for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles including a particular focus on a safe link between the commercial areas east and west of Route 9A.*
- *Provide reliable infrastructure maintained in good working service (including drains, water supply and sanitary facilities) in a fiscally sound manner.*
- *Maintain or enhance the existing quality of Police, Fire, Library, Public Works and Government Administration services while seeking avenues to keep taxes under control.*

2) Provide Reliable Source of Clean Water – "Full Supply Project":

We have made major strides towards achieving "full supply", and anticipate this goal should be complete in late 2009/early 2010. The Village continues to comply with the "Order of Consent" signed by the Village in 2004 to procure a reliable source of clean potable water by building a connection to the Catskill water system. The Fully Supply Water Project is ninety percent (90%) designed by our consultant Hazen & Sawyer. A required NYCDEP Permit is in the process of being procured. The Village is also addressing the local requirements associated with the construction of those parts of the project in Tarrytown and Greenburgh. The project has been phased so that we construct only what is required in the near future thereby reducing current expenditure and borrowing. We anticipate bidding the project in late spring. A final estimate of cost will be developed prior to bid so that the Village can properly plan for the financing. We expect the construction will take 18 to 20 months. In the meantime, the Village in cooperation with the Village of Sleepy Hollow upgraded the Village of Sleepy Hollow's pump station to provide water to Briarciff Manor from the Catskill Aqueduct on a supplemental basis. This supply does not have

the capacity to provide our required volume on a permanent basis and cannot meet our needs during the summer months. In October of 2006 the interim Catskill Aqueduct connection was completed and turned on which saved the Village \$286,753 last year over the cost of purchasing water from other sources.

3) Infrastructure:

This goal is an ongoing process to institute and establish sound policies to both protect our assets (roads, drains, equipment) and to improve services to our Villagers. The Village continues its *pro-active approach* of replacing and updating our aging and deficient infrastructure in a planned manner. The Village has conducted several engineering studies of both sanitary sewer and drainage areas to address areas where insufficient facilities exist. The Village along with our engineering consultants has prioritized these studies so that deficient systems can be replaced to address the most critical areas immediately. Other items will be replaced/upgraded over the next five (5) years. The Village has also replaced many of its older vehicles which were fuel-inefficient, did not comply with exhaust emission standards or no longer functional. Replacement has included Fire Engine 94, an ambulance and several DPW trucks. These policies enable A) Village staff to be more effective in performing their duties and B) provide for the fiscally sound practice of planned replacement rather crisis management which is expensive and inefficient.

4.) Open Space/Land Preservation: The Board of Trustees established an Open Space Committee as a sub-committee to the Conservation Advisory Committee. This group over the past year has made an inventory of all open space and developable parcels of land in the Village. These parcels have been categorized (private, Village owned, municipal, corporate, educational, religious, etc.) and where appropriate outreach and specific recommendations are being made to sensitive parcels. The Westchester Land Trust has been an advisor to this group on an ongoing basis. The committee is also drafting an Open Space Policy with specific recommendations and will be submitting its report to the Board of Trustees in spring of 2008. This report in conjunction with the adopted Comprehensive Plan will provide a basis for the Board of Trustees to legislate an Open Space/Land Preservation Policy which currently does not exist in the Village.

Other Important Initiatives

While the Village made significant strides on its major goals, other important projects also deserve mention:

Scarborough Station Parking: Metro-North informed the Village 18 months ago that it would be re-constructing the Scarborough Train Station Platform, overpass and adding new amenities. This major construction will impact our commuters and reduce parking spaces during construction. In an effort to address the problem beforehand the Board of Trustees created a volunteer Scarborough Parking Committee to evaluate consultant reports, meet with Metro-North, gather information and make recommendations on how to proceed. On October 4, 2007 the committee presented its report and recommendations to the Board of Trustees, including a proposal for valet parking. Based on that report the Village has instituted the “Valet Parking” service with ProPark; it is anticipated that the Village will continue the “Valet Service” throughout the construction period, expected to last approximately 30 months. The Board of Trustees will continue to monitor parking needs and make adjustments as necessary.

Library and Community Center Construction: On November 7, 2006, residents approved a \$4 million referendum for library with community room construction. On June 7, 2007 the Board of Trustees awarded contracts for General Construction, Plumbing, HVAC and Electric totaling

\$3,571,784 (an amount well under the budget established by the Board of Trustees). Construction is under way with the concrete foundations poured as well as some underground utilities installed. It is anticipated that construction will be completed late in 2008. The Library will have a Community Room for meetings and it is anticipated that the Historical Society will also be housed at this location. Parking is also being expanded to accommodate Library, Law Park and community needs. We will continue to monitor progress and costs to insure completion is both on time and within budget. The Library remains open and we encourage you to use its services.

Holiday Display: The Board of Trustees convened a Holiday Display Committee of volunteer residents to recommend a holiday display for Law Park that A) reflects the community values of inclusion and tolerance, B) represents the diversity of our residents' beliefs, 3) and is consistent with all applicable laws. The committee in an open, non-partisan, and sensitive discussion developed a recommendation for this year's display which the Board of Trustees adopted on September 25, 2007 and implemented for the 2007 holiday season.

Legislative Action: During this past year the Board of Trustees continued to review and revise Local Laws which were outdated or did not address the needs of our Village today. The following is a summary of Local Laws amended or adopted this past year:

- 1.) Local Law 1-Amended Chapter 45 to provide for participation by Alternate Member in Planning Board deliberations.
- 2.) Local Law 2-Amended Chapter 195, Taxation, Article II to increase Senior Citizen and Disabled Veterans Exemption.
- 3.) Local Law 3-Added Section 220-9A for regulation of solar energy collectors to make process less cumbersome.
- 4.) Local Law 4-Amend Chapter 168 for sanitary sewer connections to be in conformance with Westchester County Health Dept.
- 5.) Local Law 5-Amend Chapter 27 Ethics Law to improve process.
- 6.) Local Law 6-Amend Chapter 220, Zoning, to allow reconstruction of non-conforming residential homes.
- 7.) Local Law 7-Amend Chapter 220, Zoning regarding size, placement and lot coverage of homes (previously referred to as Bulk Law)
- 8.) Local Law 8-Chapter 127, repeal and enact new law regulating Flood Plains to be in conformance with NYS and Federal regulations.
- 9.) Local Law 9-Adopt new Chapter 184, Storm water, Drainage, Erosion and Water Pollution Control

Communications: The Board continues to look for additional ways to improve communications with our Villagers, including:

- Continuing the “Manor Monthly” mailings. Included more Village Manger reports and include updates on construction such as Library and Metro-North which impact you; we also increased Special Village mailings on major topics such as the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Law changes.
- Board of Trustees and Village Manager Reports at Board meeting offer safety and advisory items that are often forgotten.
- Direct mailings for Recreation to Village residents in the Ossining School District.
- Continue to hold Neighborhood meetings to discuss local neighborhood concerns.
- Established an “informal discussion time” prior to regular meeting to have open discussions with public on new initiatives.

- Increased Volunteer committees to provide direction to Board of Trustees such as Scarborough Parking Committee and the Holiday Display Committee.
- Board will continue to hold extensive public hearings and discussions in the future on items where there diverse views are anticipated.
- The Village has a new web site which has more information and easier to use. It is located at www.briarcliffmanor.org.
- The Village now offers automatic email notices for Village functions. You can sign up on the website (left side of home page).

To continue to improve services to our Villagers and create a better Briarcliff we have also addressed many miscellaneous items including:

For Health and Safety

- A. *Received the new ambulance.*
- B. *Updated and added sections to the Police Procedures Manual.*
- C. *Replaced bullet proof vests for Police Department.*
- D. *Adopted Minimum Training Policy for Planning Board and Zoning Board members.*
- E. *Promoted Police Officer Scott Gramam to Sergeant.*
- F. *Developed and adopted Hazard Mitigation Plan for Village.*
- G. *Finalized and ratified contract with Police Benevolent Association.*
- H. *Adopted "Workplace Violence Prevention Program" for our Village employees.*
- I. *Awarded contract to Architect for expansion of Scarborough Fire Station to address space needs and eliminate outside storage of equipment which affects equipment life span.*
- J. *Hired one new Police Officer, Thomas Nacke.*
- K. *Appointed 11 new volunteers to our Fire Department. Kudos to the officers and Fire Department on their recruitment efforts.*
- L. *After four years of cooperative efforts with Ossining and Mount Pleasant the NYSDOT finally repaved Route 9 and re-aligned the pavement stripping creating a safer traveled way.*
- M. *Established a "Road Safety Committee" to provide policy decisions for pavement markings.*
- N. *Continued to meet with NYSDEC to pursue solutions to Pocantico River flooding. As all alternatives have been exhausted NYSDEC has agreed to entertain dredging and widening of stream bed to help alleviate flooding.*

Park and Recreation Improvements:

- A. *New fence at the tennis courts at Chilmark Park.*
- B. *Upgraded playground at Chilmark Park.*
- C. *Finalized design for construction of "pocket park" next to municipal lot. Construction to begin this summer.*
- D. *Received grant and awarded contract to architect to develop plans for our only riverfront property, Scarborough Park.*

Infrastructure upgrades:

- A. *Continued upgrading of antiquated Public Works vehicles.*
- B. *Instituted Phase II of Storm water Management Plan.*
- C. *Installed new "Village Hall, DPW and Recreation Department signs similar to "Welcome Signs" to provide uniformity of signage.*
- D. *Installed next 1/3 of Village street name signs featuring our unique Briarcliff Rose.*

- E. Established an "Annual Sidewalk Contract" policy to replace old sidewalks throughout the Village. The first contract is schedule to start this spring.
- F. Relocated modular structures that were used for temporary Library space to DPW for much needed permanent facilities for both DPW and Water Department.
- G. Awarded annual contract for electrical services on established rate basis for performing repairs to Village facilities as required.
- H. Established policy of annual contracts for guide rail replacement to replace deficient guide rails throughout Village. Awarded first contract and installed railings at numerous locations to address long standing issues.
- I. Awarded contract for Epoxy Pavement Line Painting contract for major roads. These lines are more visible and last longer which will eliminate Village cost of repainting each year.
- J. Awarded contract to replace inadequate Village Hall generator which was over 40 years old.
- K. Continued cleanup and reorganization of the Public Works yard.

Negotiations:

- A. Established discussions and process for Briarcliff Manor Investors, LLC who wish to construct a Continuing Care Retirement Community at the Old Kings College Site. The formal process of review and approval has started and will continue throughout 2008.
- B. Negotiated and approved on December 20, 2007 agreement with Verizon to service the Village with FIOS. This will provide a competitive alternative for cable and satellite service in our Village!

Ahead in 2008

As we look to the upcoming year, there are many items and changes that will be discussed or implemented by the Board of Trustees and the Village staff. First, the Board of Trustees is requiring "Goal Setting" and "Mission Statements" for tasks that are undertaken by the Board of Trustees, the various Village Departments as well as Village Staff. At its first work session in January, the Board of Trustees set forth the following projects for 2008:

- A.) The "Pocket Park" will be constructed this year. This will add some green space to our downtown.
- B.) Planning for the improvements at the Pleasantville Road/North State intersection has begun. The Village will look to improve the safety and look of the intersection.
- C.) New Community Bulletin Board will be installed in the Village. It will be two sided and follow the style of our "welcome signs". This will help keep all informed.
- D.) Library construction will continue with a dedication anticipated sometime in late 2008. We all look forward to this long overdue expansion and our new Community Room.
- E.) Metro-North Construction, while disruptive, in the end we will have new, safer platforms, a plexi-glass wind shield along the river, a new overpass, an elevator and required ADA compliance for handicapped uses. Let's all display patience as well as awareness of the construction signs and directions.
- F.) The Full Water Supply Project will be bid and we will finally have a reliable clean water source that has been talked about for twelve years. And we will no longer be subject to the "Order of Consent"
- G.) Development of a new Community Calendar which will have all local events, meetings, etc. located on one calendar.

The Board of Trustees wants to thank all the Village employees for their service as well as their professionalism. They are an integral part of our community. Next time you speak to one we ask that you thank them also. We also thank the many volunteers on our various boards and committee's who give up their time to serve the Village. We expect many new volunteers this year as we expand committee participation.

The Board of Trustees extends a special thank you to our all volunteer Fire Department members. When the alarm goes off they do not hesitate or think twice about the risk they take to preserve life and/or property. This past year the Fire Department responded to 549 calls and the Ambulance responded to 720 calls. **Please VOLUNTEER** for your Village. Volunteering is a Briarcliff Manor hallmark – and our Village functioning depends on it. Please send a letter of interest to our Village Manager, Michael Blau.

We hope that you will get involved, as we are a community built around volunteerism! We invite you to our meetings and work sessions. Regular meetings are held on the first and third Thursdays of the month at 7:30 PM in Village Hall. The meetings are broadcast and can be viewed at home; however, attending them enables you to express your opinion. Villagers will always be notified of special meetings, such as the Neighborhood Meetings and Public Hearings. Please e-mail any ideas, concerns or questions that you have to any of the Trustees.

Again this past year, it has been our distinct honor and privilege to serve as your elected Board of Trustees. The Trustees anticipate the Village will continue to move forward in a fiscally sound manner with new initiatives and improvements that continue to make our unique Village a better Briarcliff Manor.

Respectfully,

William J. Vescio- Mayor

David Venditti- Deputy Mayor

Elsie Smith- Trustee

Gayle Waxenberg-Trustee

Robert Mayer- Trustee

Village of Briarcliff Manor
1111 Pleasantville Road
Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510



PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
White Plains, NY
Permit No. 10016

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

William Vescio, Mayor
David Venditti, Deputy Mayor
Robert Mayer, Trustee
Elsie Smith, Trustee
Gayle Waxenberg, Trustee
www.briarcliffmanor.org

POSTAL CUSTOMER -Local & PO Boxes
BRIARCLIFF MANOR, NEW YORK 10510

SECOND ANNUAL
STATE OF THE VILLAGE REPORT