

Supervisor Chris Burdick's Report – August 22, 2014

2015 Town Paving Nearly Complete - This week the Department of Public Works has nearly completed the 2015 paving program for our Town roads. As reported earlier, the paving this year is considerably more than last year due to the ravages of the past winter. Subject to budgetary limitations, we hope to have a robust paving program for 2016 as well.

Proposed Settlement with Blue Collar Unit - As you may know, on September 2 the Town Board will be resuming its consideration of a proposed settlement with its Blue Collar unit. There are a number of “firsts” – what some might call “give backs” from the employees. For the first time every existing Blue Collar employee would be contributing to health care costs – granted not as much as we might want, but it is a start. For the first time new employees earning up to \$60,000 would pay 10% of the premium costs and those new employees earning \$60,000 or over would pay 15%. For the first time new employees would pay toward health care costs in retirement. Given the community interest in the proposal, we have created a separate page on the Town’s website devoted to union contracts which can be accessed at www.bedfordny.gov and on the home page, simply click on “Union Contracts” appearing in the right side of the page.

Traffic Safety Working Group - The Town Board approved a proposal for a traffic study of Cherry Street. We also have scheduled the next two meetings of the Traffic Safety Working Group: Wednesday, September 17 at 7:30 PM at Bedford Historic Hall and Wednesday, September 17 at 7:30 PM at Bedford Village Historic Hall and Wednesday, October 15 at 7:30 PM at Bedford Hills Community House. We also have created a separate page on the Town’s website devoted to the Traffic Safety Working Group on which we have posted notices, documents, studies and so forth which can be accessed at www.bedfordny.gov and on the home page, simply click on “Traffic Study Working Group” appearing in the right side of the page. Finally, I wish to remind the community that the Town Board is accepting applications for resident members of the committee. If you or someone you know may be interested, a brief e-mail or letter together with resume should be e-mailed to supervisor@bedfordny.gov

Request for Proposals for Bedford Hills Train Station - The Town issued on August 15 a Request for Proposals for leasing the train station. The lease depends upon the MTA entering into a long term lease with the Town – with the present lease due to expire in May 2015. We are hopeful that we will receive much interest to help the vitality of the hamlet of Bedford Hills which at present is beset by vacancies. If you or someone you know may be interested, you can obtain information at the Town’s website at www.bedfordny.gov and click on the “Bedford Hills Train Sta RFP”.

2015 Budget Preparations - We have some simple objectives: maintain or improve existing service levels; stay within the property tax cap; maintain healthy fund balances; and keep our triple AAA bond rating. I am confident that we will achieve these objectives, but to ensure that we do, I’ve asked our Department Heads to get started now on the 2015 budget process because there’s much work to be done. Comptroller Ed Ritter and I have begun our meetings with the Department Heads to make sure we’re on

track and to put the proposed budget in shape before work sessions with the Town Board in September. We have challenges given that the projected property tax cap is a meager 1.5% (remember that the cap is the *lower* of inflation and 2%).

2014 Budget Update -I am pleased to report that Standard & Poor's recently re-affirmed its highest bond rating for the Town: a triple A rating. Bedford is among a select few municipalities which can boast of the highest rating. This also comes following the results of the 2013 audit reported in the Spring which shows the Town in a strong financial position with healthy fund balances. In his most recent report to the Town Board, Ed Ritter noted as follows:

REVENUE AREAS OF NOTE - Mortgage Tax has actual data from October through June 2014. The actual percentage over 2013 is a 14.03% decrease. This amount has been used as a basis for projecting the remainder of the year (through September). Mortgage tax is projected to be \$922,030, which is \$27,970 under budget.

Sales Tax has actual data from January through June 2014. County sales tax shows a 3.99% increase over 2013. This revenue is projected to be \$2,535,730 which is \$135,730 over our budget of \$2,400,000.

Parking has actual data from January through June 2014. The actual percentage over 2013 is a 3.78% decrease. Revenue to date is \$665,159 which is a decrease of \$26,102 from last year at this time. Parking renewals have been revised this year and we expect to have revenue at projected levels within one more month. This revenue for the year is projected to be \$930,073 which is \$73 over budget.

Fines and forfeited bail has actual data for January through June 2014. Revenue is \$342,000 which is \$20,727 under last year's revenue at this time. This revenue is projected to be \$589,445 which is \$39,445 over budget.

Safety Inspection Fees has actual data for January through June 2014. Revenue is \$390,805 which is \$137,265 over last year's revenue at this time. This revenue is projected to be \$936,228 which is \$396,228 over budget.

EXPENDITURES - 2014 expenditures on target for this time of the year with the following exceptions:

POLICE DEPARTMENT OVERTIME – 001.3120.0101 is not overspent but is at 81% compared to 74% at this time last year.

Bedford Hills Post Office Lease - I also am working with CBRE, the leasing agent for the U.S. Postal Service, to move forward on the renewal of the USPS lease from the Town which expires in 2015. The process is slow, but I am optimistic that we will reach an agreement in the next few months.

Affordable Housing - The Town's affordable housing law under the Zoning Code provides that within all single family zoning districts, residential developments of five or

more units must provide that no less than 10% of the units be affordable (according to HUD's guidelines). In multifamily zoning districts, at least 20% of the units developed must be affordable. That Town's affordable housing law helps provide affordable housing, however, private sector development plans take time. Under SEQRA, a larger plan, such as Alchemy's proposal for the Bedford Playhouse building (which may or may not go forward and may or may not be approved), typically require environmental impact statement. In the first few weeks of my taking office, I worked with our Planning Director, Jeff Osterman, who suggested that we could do more. He proposed evaluating development potential for single parcels. Among the possibilities we are pursuing are the following:

- 1) In the Spring, the Town Board approved entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Blue Mountain Housing Corporation (the Town's affordable housing affiliate) under which the Town would convey a vacant lot the Town owns on Deer Park Road in Katonah for the purposes of developing two affordable housing units.
- 2) In July the Town Board approved entering into another MOU with Blue Mountain under which the Town would convey a vacant lot the Town owns on Jefferson Lane in Bedford Village for the purposes of developing a single family house.
- 3) We are attempting to acquire from the DOT a parcel on Railroad Avenue contiguous to the parcel mentioned below for the new recycling center. We hope that it may lead to the creation of two or three affordable housing units.

We also are contacting lenders with foreclosed properties in Bedford, some of which sit vacant for years and deteriorate. We feel that these "zombie" properties are good candidates for affordable housing. The Town Board, Planning Director, Planning Board and Blue Mountain all are committed to providing more affordable housing and, as indicated above, we are highly proactive and creative in developing opportunities.

Did You Know?

- We overhauled our website earlier this year, have been ramping up communication with the community with Constant Contact e-mails on a weekly basis and now have a monthly Supervisor's update on BCSD-TV.
- You can be notified of news affecting you by signing up for the e-mail news and get Nixle safety alerts from the Police Department. Sign up if you haven't already: on the home page of the Town's website at www.bedfordny.gov

Relocation of the Recycling Center Moving Ahead - I am pleased to report that the New York State Department of Transportation has given at no charge to the Town a permit to use DOT property on Railroad Avenue in Bedford Hills to which the Town will relocate its recycling center. We expect to have work get underway this fall and possibly completed this fall. This paves the way for the Department of Public Works to expand its crowded 1950s era facilities into the adjacent lot which the recycling center now occupies. Don't worry. We won't close the existing center until the new center is up and

running. Many thanks to Kevin Winn for spotting the possible location and helping to make all this happen!

Department of Public Works Report - DPW Commissioner Kevin Winn reported in his July monthly report to the Board as follows:

Highway - Work during the month included pothole patching, installation and maintenance of drainage systems, and dirt road grading. We also prepared roads for paving and started paving in the last week of July. Paving is going well so far. The extra funds allocated in 2014 will help!

The Valley Road sidewalk project is progressing well and should be completed in August. The Jay Street sidewalk project was completed in June, with the exception of line striping and a few punch list items, which are being scheduled.

Consolidated Water District Microfiltration Plant - Operations continue to go well, and we have received positive feedback from customers on the taste and softer quality of the new supply. It will be blended with the existing groundwater supply until WCDOH approval to operate the plant in unattended mode is received. This is anticipated in late 2014. The WCDOH automation demonstration test period began on May 21. Testing is going well to date.

The DEP has finalized the water supply agreement to incorporate remaining Town comments. The Town has provided documentation of the existing system and district population for the agreement appendices for DEP review. The easement description is being finalized between Hahn Engineering, the water plant contractor's surveyors, and NYC DEP.

Recycling - The facility is functioning well. Monthly revenue to the Town from the recycling contract is averaging approximately \$900 per month.

2014 Legislative Agenda

1) Amendments to the Film Ordinance: At this week's Town Board meeting, the Board scheduled a public hearing for September 16 for amendments to the Town's Film Ordinance which would encourage film production in the Town of Bedford, while also minimizing the impacts of filming and photography activities on neighbors and the community – primarily the impacts of noise, traffic and lights, among other concerns. The amendments, which were inspired by the work of the Film Committee, would provide a streamlined permitting system that would allow for the quick processing of applications through an administrative permit issued by the Town Clerk for activities with little or no impact – other applications would go to the Town Board. This system would provide applicants with quicker and clearer answers, necessitated by the fast paced commercial film and photography industry. The proposal was developed with the participation and input of the Film Advisory Committee, Town Clerk Boo Fumagalli and Director of Planning Jeff Osterman – my thanks to all of them.

2) Amendments to the Wetlands Law:- The Wetlands Control Commission is considering amendments to the law to modify and expand administrative permits to provide more flexibility to applicants but while also ensuring that such permits will not be issued if there would be adverse impacts to the wetlands. The amendments also clarify certain practices and procedures. The overall impact will be to make the law more user friendly, easier to administer and easier to achieve the law's objectives of protecting these environmentally critical resources.

Addressing Wastewater Issues - As many of you know, Bedford is beset with serious issues in the safe disposal of wastewater. Many properties in the hamlets of Bedford Hills and Katonah have old and failing septic systems and cesspools. At one time the Town was considering construction of a wastewater treatment plant to serve those areas. It would have been an enormous undertaking which would cost as much as \$65 million and create tremendous disruption in digging up streets throughout the hamlets. Given the massive cost and the advancement of new technologies, the Town Board formally decided in 2012 to discontinue that approach and instead consider others.

Recognizing the Town's decision, our County Legislator, Pete Harckham, made a brief presentation to the Town Board last year at its March 19 meeting regarding Enhanced Treatment Units ("ETUs") and Decentralized Septic Systems. Pete, who chaired and founded the County Board's Sub Committee on Septics reported that he has been working with regulatory agencies, such as the NYS Department of Conservation, NYC Department of Environmental Protection and the Westchester County Department of Health and has obtained approval for proceeding with a pilot project using one or more ETUs. There are significant advantages in this approach, with potential cost-effective solution to waste water challenges in the NYC watershed of which 85% Bedford's land area is a part. Bedford, like other Northern Westchester municipalities with similar issues, cannot afford the expense and disruption of massive wastewater infrastructure. ETUs and decentralized systems provide the same level of treatment at a more competitive cost.

We are developing two proposals to be made to the Northern Westchester Watershed Committee, Westchester County and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection for (1) funds for Septic Failure Repair Fund of as much as \$3.5 million; and (2) Feasibility Study for Enhanced Treatment Units which would cost approximately \$35,000. The County is repository of some \$10 million in DEP funds earmarked for the Town of Bedford, which would be the source of the funds. The Town Board supports the proposals and the next step is a scheduled meeting in early September with Pete Harckham, DEP Deputy Commissioner David Warne and members of his staff. I'll keep you posted.

Other Matters; Additional Information; Reminders

Town Board Agenda, Agenda Package - I encourage you to take advantage of the fact that the Town Board agenda, Agenda Package and monthly department reports now are posted to the Town's website. The Monthly Reports and Town Board Agenda Backup

Packet are separate. The most recent agenda and package are on the website. The monthly department reports also are on the website. The reports will remain on the site until the following month's reports are posted.

Yard Waste - While not easy to manage in the winter months, there now is available to residents without charge drop off of yard waste at the Department of Public Works composting site above Canine Commons (off Beaver Dam Road).

eWaste - Also the Recycling Center now offers eWaste disposal without any additional cost to the Town. You can read about what eWaste may be recycled and the Recycling Center's hours at

<http://bedfordny.info/html/pdf/DPW/2011%20ewaste%20poster.pdf>

I ask you to please send me an e-mail at supervisor@bedfordny.gov should you have any questions or comments on this report or any of our work on the Town Board.