

26 September 2023 Mayor's Report

As the summer winds down, the Town has many deadlines and activities going on as our fiscal year ends in a few days. I'm going to primarily focus on the budget and the November election.

First, I'd like to acknowledge the work the Finance Committee, Commission and Deputy Clerk Roberts have done to finalize our budget for FY23-24. It is always difficult to balance funding the Town while acknowledging the tax burden on residents. Please keep in mind that the Commissioners are also residents and affected by the tax rate just like you.

We were once again able to reduce millage rate and are hopeful this trend will continue. Even with the reduction, I've had questions asking why the millage rate isn't lower, and why resident taxes are increasing even though we no longer have our own police force. It is impossible to have or expect a 50% reduction in the tax rate because we now have a contract with the BCSO for law enforcement coverage in the Town. In addition, we are now able to divert money to the Town's reserves. We had virtually no reserve money for many years and need to build this up. I think we all understand the importance of a savings account to address future needs, such as repaving and striping the roads in the village (last done in 1975).

Taxes can increase even with reduced millage rates due to higher tax assessment values, which happened this year. However, when I reviewed my Trim Notice, the main reason for my tax increase is due to a new line item added this year "BPS Voted Teachers Pay". The amount of taxes going to the Town increased less than a dollar.

Many of these questions and topics are discussed at the Budget workshops, but only 1, maybe 2 residents attended. If you want your voice heard and questions answered, please come to these workshops next year. We welcome your participation.

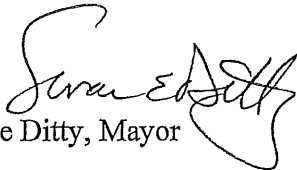
We are moving forward using grant funds with work beginning in the next few days on the garage and town hall roofs and replacing the conventional septic systems at HWCH and the Garage with Advanced Septic Systems. Heather and I met with our engineer to start the process of repairing or replacing the Hall Road culvert, and restoration of the HWCH exterior should start in the next month or two. The HWCH restoration will be paid from funds generated by rentals and grant funds, if needed. The playground will be replaced with parts that were under warranty with grant funds paying for shipping and incidentals.

As you may have heard, the Town will not be holding an election this year. The new state mandated Financial Interest Form-6 impacted our town and many other local municipalities in that we had fewer candidates than openings. In addition, the Commission decided last month that we would not hold a referendum regarding the level of BCSO coverage. We want to ensure that more than a small percentage of our residents understand the financial impact and the difference between passive and active coverage of an MSTU vs our current contract coverage. Stay tuned for additional information on this topic during the coming year.

In addition to standard grounds maintenance and upkeep, our volunteer PWs group has made great strides cleaning feeder ditches that haven't been touched in years. We are still waiting for a few parts to finish repair of the Public Works Trailer but when this is finished, work will begin on digging swales in the ROWs around town based on a priority schedule.

On a lighter note – we have several activities for our residents coming up: Halloween Trunk or Treat on Oct 31st in the AHF parking lot. Decorate your cart, car or truck or just come for the treats. And November 11th we will hold our first Veteran's Day Recognition celebration in the AHF Hall. Please provide your name and branch of service to the office staff if you or someone you know has served. Hope you can attend both of these events.

Thank you. Let's keep the conversation going!


Sue Ditty, Mayor