

The Town of Oswego Enters a New Budgetary Era

In the early 1990's, the Town of Oswego Board entered into negotiations with the Metropolitan Water Board seeking a source of public water supply for its residents, many of whom depended upon private water wells for their drinking water and other domestic needs. Supply of water from those wells was often undependable, especially during dry, summer months, and some of those wells supplied water which was simply unfit for human consumption. Development of residential housing and establishment of businesses, dependent upon a reliable water supply for both health and safety, was discouraged by this lack of public water.

The negotiations with the Metropolitan Water Board produced an agreement, effective in 1994, which provided for the systemic infrastructure and supply of potable water throughout the Town of Oswego, together with a twenty-year annual payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) to the Town. The Metropolitan Water Board's water treatment and supply facilities located in the Town became exempt from property taxes by reason of the Town's receipt and use of the water that the Metropolitan Water Board draws and treats from Lake Ontario.

The annual payments under that PILOT program end this year, but the development realized in the Town of Oswego since the installation of such water service has, since its initiation, provided many new taxpayers, both individuals and businesses, to shoulder our burden of annual municipal expenses. Certainly, we will miss the annual PILOT payment in meeting the Town's budget for necessary and ordinary services the residents enjoy, but the benefits obtained by the agreement with Metropolitan Water Board have enhanced, and will continue to enhance, the quality of life of all Town residents and businesses.

We thought it would be unethical to artificially ease taxes higher over the years by over-taxing residents to soften the blow of the loss of the PILOT. My philosophy has always been “your money is yours, and we will only tax to raise the funds we need to operate the Town.”

The Town Board has decided to make up for the loss of the PILOT revenue over two years. We will use \$89,090.00 from our fund balance and have a .61 cent per thousand tax increase. For example, for a home assessed at \$100,000.00 the increase will be \$61.00 a year. The total tax rate for the Town of Oswego will be \$3.56 per thousand of assessed value.

In 2016 we expect retirements, and at that time we will reevaluate positions and keep the second-half increase as low as possible.

There are four taxing authorities in the Town of Oswego; they are the County, the School Districts, the Fire District and the Town. Of the total taxes paid annually by property owners, 9% is paid to the Town of Oswego to provide services.

The services provided to our residents include the maintenance and snow removal on town roads, the Justice Department, Code Enforcement, Dog Control, Cemetery, Assessing, Bookkeeping and Records Management as well as Tax Collecting, Historical Society and the Town, Zoning and Planning Boards, and maintenance of all buildings and grounds.

In September we received a letter from the New York State Comptrollers “Fiscal Stress Monitoring System.” The Town of Oswego received a “no designation” for 2012 and 2013, meaning the Town is in good shape financially!

If anyone has any questions or concerns please feel free to contact myself or any Town Board Member.

Victoria Mullen, Supervisor, Town of Oswego