

February 2017 Supervisor's report

With a little over a year in the position of Town Supervisor, I thought I would take a little time to reflect on the status of the Town. Whenever you have a fresh set of eyes reviewing the landscape, there are bound to be new views or visions. However, for the most part the view of the Town is consistent with what I observed a year ago. While the Town of Oswego, like most municipalities within our state and local area, faces a number of fiscal issues, we are moving forward positively. All municipalities struggle with the issue of taxes and striking that balance between keeping taxes as low as possible while providing all of the mandated programs and services expected from the state and the residents. Past administrations have worked hard to keep the taxes low, but one result of this has been the dwindling of our reserves. While the budget process was painful this year, we worked hard to get the Town back into a position of maintaining its reserves (fund balance). Every year the NYS Comptrollers' office reviews the fiscal stress of all municipalities. While the Town of Oswego had some indicators of stress, largely due to fund balance indicators, we were rated as not being in stress. We anticipate that this will continue in the future and are working hard to secure the Town a positive financial status.

Maintaining a solid financial status is not the work of just one person, and indeed relies heavily on Town officials and employees working together towards common goals. I am very grateful that we have a very productive and cohesive team at the Town level. Not only do we have a Town Board that works well together, yet seeks information and feedback regarding Town functions, but one that actively reviews issues, asks questions and yet provides support. Coupled with this, the elected officials work very well together. The Town Clerk and Highway Superintendent ask questions, and but consistently provide feedback, guidance and support. Our Assessor, and former Budget Officer, Rick Hogan is open to explaining what his department is doing and has actively and voluntarily, participated in a number of meetings regarding projects that effect the Town and development in the Town. This has resulted in, I believe, better and more informed decision making regarding Town activities.

I am very fortunate to have a Highway Superintendent, David Sterio, who not only keeps me informed of activities in his department and throughout the town, but willingly shares his thoughts and concerns. Working as a team, we have been able to work on more projects and complete more activities than either of us could have individually.

To further complement this team effort, I have been able to have a number of county legislators who call upon the Town regularly and who have been of great assistance on a number of projects.

I mention all of this because with this team, we have been able to accomplish quite a lot this year. Some of these are highlighted below:

- Completed the Cornell Road Report Survey, which inventoried our roads and other infrastructure. This will allow us to better access what improvements should be undertaken
- Successfully converted the highway garage from propane to natural gas, an effort that will reduce future expenditures.
- Received a grant award from NYS to undertake a feasibility study for sewers for the Route 104 commercial corridor.
- Completed an application for a grant for a snow plow.
- Submitted applications for several BRIDGE_NY funding opportunities
- Successfully disposed of several items of excess inventory resulting in recovered revenues for the Town
- Updated and modernized many procedures in the highway department including review of repair costs/needs resulting in more efficient repair schedules.
- Completed an inventory of the highway garage and maintenance of computerized recordkeeping of inventory, enabling better cost accountability.
- Delayed filling vacant positions in the Highway Department and in Town Hall, resulting in cost savings to the Town.
- Signed an agreement for sewer to Ontario Heights Sewer District which will allow for increased development within the Town.
- Completed purchase of a Community Center and set aside reserve funds for this purpose.
- Invested NonExpendible Trust Funds, resulting in increased revenues to the Town.

Other projects currently in process:

- ❖ Implementing review of the Town's Comprehensive Plan
- ❖ Signed an intermunicipal agreement to allow the Town to have better control of repairs and improvements with the Sleepy Hollow Sewer District.
- ❖ Started engineer review of two bridges flagged by NYS DOT as needing repair, and begun working on efforts to reduce the costs of repair to these bridges.
- ❖ In negotiations to convert street lighting to LED, which will result in cost savings for the Town.
- ❖ Sought quotes for alternative health care costs and working to reduce Town expenditure for legacy costs.
- ❖ Continuing training of Highway Department and Town Hall personnel to enable better and more cost effective provision of services.

There are a number of other items being investigated in efforts to reduce costs or to increase revenues to the Town. In today's world, it is not enough simply to reduce expenditures in order to maintain low tax rates. It is necessary to bring in additional revenue and to broaden the tax base so individual homeowners aren't solely bearing the tax burden. As a result, we have been working to increase commercial development within the Town. Some evidence of this is the

likely addition of a student housing project within the Town. This appears to be a positive development and will increase revenues, and will allow for the provision of other improvements within the Town. The Town is also actively working with other local businesses in efforts to increase their presence within the Town or develop projects in the Town.

Hopefully the sum of these efforts will provide for a solid foundation for the positive future of the Town of Oswego.