

MAYOR ASKS FOR INPUT FROM RESIDENTS

On March 20, 2009 Rye Brook Village Administrator Chris Bradbury will present a draft of his proposed 2009-2010 Village budget to the Rye Brook Board of Trustees for its review and eventual approval. Under Village law a budget must be approved by the Board prior to May 1 and normally the Board of Trustees approves a budget at its last regularly scheduled meeting in April, which this year is April 28th. From the time the Board receives the budget until the Board adopts its own budget, two public workshops and a minimum of one public hearing will be held. During the workshops the budget is reviewed on a line by line basis with Village staff. This in-depth review gives Board members an opportunity to make inquiries and suggest changes to the draft budget.

The tentative dates for the public workshops are Thursday, March 26th and Wednesday April 1, and the public hearing will take place on Tuesday, April 14th. All meetings will be held at 7:30 P.M. at Village Hall. Due to the global recession we all know that it is not business as usual. Thus, the Rye Brook Board of Trustees will certainly scrutinize the budget and all proposed revenues, including taxes, and expenditures will be carefully examined. It is possible that some programs and services may be reduced or curtailed in an effort to keep any tax levy increase as low as possible.

Since the onset of the economic downturn in the summer of 2008, the Board of Trustees quickly realized that the Village's projected revenues for the fiscal year ending May 31, 2009 with respect to the sales tax and mortgage recording tax might not meet the budgeted numbers. The Board has been proactive in reducing costs ever since. At a public meeting on October 14, 2008, I urged Village staff to review expenditures and make recommendations to the Board to reduce expenses. On October 28, 2008 the Village Board agreed to certain reductions in budgeted expenditures and subsequently added more reductions to the list. Following are some of the actions taken by the Board in consultation with Village staff that have resulted in a total savings of approximately \$258,000.00 for the current fiscal year:

<u>Action</u>	<u>Savings</u>
Comprehensive (Master) Plan Delayed	\$100,000.00
Vacancy in Highway Department not Filled	50,000.00
Reduction in Overtime for Leaf Removal	25,000.00
Capital Projects Deferred	43,000.00
Highway Garage Study Delayed	25,000.00
Mayoral Letters to Community Halted	4,000.00
Winter Recreation Brochure not Printed/Mailed	4,000.00
Miscellaneous Operating Budget Expenses	7,000.00

In addition to the savings set forth above, the Board has authorized the refinancing of long term debt incurred to cover the construction costs of Village Hall in the early 1990s. The projected savings to be realized over the next 7 years is \$125,000.00.

We know that non-property tax revenues for 2010 will be less than those for the current fiscal year. In an effort to minimize any tax increase, the Board will need to make significant policy decisions regarding the 2010 budget. These decisions may impact services provided to our residents. Our present sanitation contract with CRP expires on May 31. Under that contract we pay for “rear yard pickup” which allows residents to leave their garbage bins near their garages and not bring them to the curb for regular (not bulk or recycling) garbage pickup. The Village has recently gone out to bid regarding a new contract and has requested that there be two bids: one for rear yard pickup and the other for curb pickup. The bids are still being reviewed by Village staff and no recommendation has been made to the Board of Trustees as of this date. However, there may be a savings to our community to have curbside pickup and, if so, we will have to make a determination whether that savings outweighs the loss of convenience to our residents.

The Board may also examine the possibility of incurring additional debt for capital projects since interest rates are now relatively low and the cost of capital projects may be less due to the scarcity of projects and more competitive bidding. A further policy decision may be addressed concerning the extent to which the Village’s fund balance, the savings account that the Village maintains, should be used to offset expenditures.

Village residents must be aware of the issues facing your elected officials. Even though I have temporarily halted my quarterly mayoral letters to residents as a cost savings measure, in the future I will use this medium to highlight issues, accomplishments and matters of general interest relating to the Village. I will also have those letters posted on the Village’s website, www.ryebrook.org.

It is imperative that the Board receives public input at the upcoming budget workshops and I urge you to attend the workshops and the subsequent public hearing. I know we all have busy work schedules and numerous personal and family commitments. These responsibilities may preclude some residents from attending the budget workshops and public hearing. If you are not able to attend and you want the opportunity to offer your opinion on any issue, please call or e-mail me or any Board member so that your concerns can be taken into account.

I know this is a time of fiscal uncertainty and stress. Many of our residents have lost their jobs and many of us have suffered a decline in the value of our homes, our savings and retirements funds. Your Village Board is sensitive to these challenging times and will act accordingly when it formulates a budget for next year. We need and welcome your input and respectfully request that you contact any Village Board member with your suggestions, questions or comments.

Joan L. Feinstein
Mayor
Village of Rye Brook