

The Town of Pelham Report: 2013

Presented by Peter DiPaola, Supervisor
Town of Pelham

June 2013

I am happy to report on the state of our Town of Pelham, and tell you that our community is in very good shape, as we have been diligent in watching the financial health of our Town.

Last year the Board and I made a commitment to avoid putting our Town in the position of needing to pass a local law to exceed the 2% tax cap when budget time came around. In order to achieve this goal, the cooperation of the Town staff and each of our departments was required.

By monitoring our expenditures carefully we were able to provide the same excellent service that our Town residents have come to expect.

Here is an overview of our Town's department activities and accomplishments:

Town Administration

Our administrative offices have remained with the same personal except for our comptroller. After fourteen years of exemplary service, Mr. Anthony Barsanti retired from the comptroller's position. His replacement is Laura Vasami - a member of our community with many years of experience in the bookkeeping and auditing field. We greatly appreciate Mr. Barsanti's contributions to our Town, and are particularly grateful for his efforts in making certain that the transition in the comptroller's office was seamless.

Pelham Recreation Department

The Recreation Department has also had an excellent year and is headed toward another productive season. There has been an increase in both revenue, and in participation from all age groups in our community.

We improved our means of transportation for our seniors program so that recreation could increase the activities within the senior citizen program. In the previous years we have had to hire buses to transport those seniors attending shows or events outside our community. Many times we only partially filled these buses, but paid for a full vehicle. Having our own means of transportation has resulted in a huge savings for the Recreation Department. This new van has also helped us with other programs, such as Recreation-supervised Friday night program for Pelham's youth at the New Rochelle YMCA. Participation in our special Friday night programs has been on the increase and having a passenger vehicle has been an asset.

We have also made registering for activities at the Recreation Department easier and more efficient by accepting credit cards for signing up for various programs. This helps parents in a world where some of us don't carry cash anymore.

Fred "Doc" Fiorito, Recreation Supervisor and his staff have been doing an outstanding job in the Recreation Department and, my sincere gratitude goes to the Pelham Recreation Commission for their tirelessly volunteer work for the benefit of the youth and adults in our community.

The Town of Pelham Library

This year we efficiently spent time and money improving the Town of Pelham Library. Fortunately the money was from a WLS grant secured by the Library Board and the other grant was secured from our State Assemblywoman Amy Paulin by our Town Board. This acquisition of funds afforded Pelham the ability to install on our Library a classic Vermont slate roof, which should serve the community for many years to come. The previous roof was over 60 years old and needed replacement.

Most importantly, the Library is seeing an increase in usage. They have instituted a number of interesting and creative programs, lectures, and activities for all age groups. The Library has been tracking usage, and yes, the increase is mostly from Pelham residents.

The Judicial Courts

Our courts are running extremely well under the leadership of our two new Justices, John DiChiario and John Gardner. Traffic Court is held during the day on Wednesday and Criminal Court is held Thursday evenings.

In an effort to make our courts safer and more efficient, the Town Board moved all court activity to the Daronco Town House a few years ago, in addition we moved the holding cells and metal detector to an area that would isolate prisoners from the general public and the Town Offices.

We are now going into a second phase to make our courtroom even safer for our judges, clerks, and the viewing public. In planning this project, we submitted an application for a Justice Department grant for courtroom safety, and I am proud to say that we were just notified that we have received the grant! We are currently finalizing plans to begin construction of the new court design. In preparation we have already secured additional equipment for the court clerks and are converting to a credit card system for secure and quicker reception of fines.

Buildings and Grounds

I am happy to report that we are finally moving forward with the redesign of Trotta Park (the former "Brick Park"). We have settled on a proven architectural design firm that has already designed parks for our community. I will be asking this firm to also give us suggestions for the Gazebo Park upgrades as a separate project from the Trotta Park improvement. We have already seeded the park and trimmed the tree canopy in preparation for the "Concerts in

Dog Licensing

About a year ago, The previous Village of Pelham Board of Trustees decided to cease in providing the service of dog licensing to their residents. As a result, our Pelham Town Board was required to take over the service. The State Department of Farm and Agriculture informed our Deputy Town Clerk what we required to provide for animal control. After months of investigation and interviewing animal shelters, we were able to negotiate a deal that is very favorable to the residents who are required to pay for the service they are receiving. Whenever a Town is required to perform a service that is relinquished by a Village, the Town is required to collect from the residents of only that particular village the cost of the services relinquished to the Town. The Town Clerk is encouraging all residents to license their pets. This will be helpful in the event a dog runs away and is retrieved by the Humane Society or police, the authorities will be able to identify the pet and return the dog to it's owner.

Pelham Children's Center

I am happy to say that the Town Board and the Pelham Children's Center have signed a new 3-½ year lease that is agreeable to both sides. I stressed to the leaders of the Children's Center that they were secure in having a home all through the negotiations as long as they were dealing with this Board. I am very pleased with the outcome and everyone's cooperation and community spirit. We are also assisting the Children's Center in improving security at the facility.

Ambulance Protocol Meetings

This year after hearing about some minor logistic situations with our ambulance program, I instituted a schedule of Protocol Meetings between Empress Ambulance and representatives from the Town, both Village Fire and Police Departments and representatives of the Mayors. At these meetings we would trouble shoot potential problems before they would interfere with ambulance performance, such as staging locations, or communication difficulties. We continue to review our services each month.

As a result of these meetings we were already prepared for staging an, Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulance, in our community the night before "Super Storm Sandy" hit our area. The ambulance was in addition to our EMT manned "fly car". The ambulance remained for a number of days in Pelham and was instrumental in getting residents to the hospital in a timely manner. This eliminated dealing with the flooding that occurs on the Hutchinson River Parkway and backed up traffic on the Cross County, that can delay the arrival of emergency vehicles.

Super-Storm Sandy

This devastating storm certainly put our community to the test, and we can proudly say that we came through it quite well. As the Town government, we anticipated that there was a good chance this storm would at least match the predicted severity, so we began our shelter preparations. We made sure that the provisions stockpiled in the Town House were sufficient. We also set up a schedule to make certain that the shelter was protected, so we enlisted the Town of Pelham Constables to man the Town House twenty-four hours, seven days a week for

over two weeks. The shelter became a place not only to spend the night, but many residents used it for a charging station for their electrical devices, a warm place to stay during the day, a public access to wireless internet service, and a place to stay in contact with their business associates. To say the least, this storm was extremely challenging. It was almost two solid weeks of communicating twice daily with the Westchester County Office of Emergency Management, the Con Edison daily updates or negotiating with the Con Ed field liaisons to bring our residents on line with electricity. (I am quite sure that the staff at Town Hall was happy to see me go home.)

Our evaluation of what transpired during Sandy has not come to a halt yet. The Board and I are working towards a preparedness plan from the perspective of the Town Government. We have already developed and are putting into service our Residents Emergency Assistance List, also known as our R.E.A.L database. R.E.A.L is made up of residents who may be in need of additional assistance due to age, mobility or need for special life support equipment. The Town Senior Advocate's office will work with both Village of Pelham and Village of Pelham Manor emergency services to administer the program. We need to be ready in the event our community is struck by another catastrophic event such as Super-Storm Sandy. We must continue to be aware of our neighbors who are in need of care, and find a means to communicate and give them the assistance they need.

We discovered that in storms of the magnitude of Sandy a community has to be creative in their means of communications. Cellular phones and the internet are not always available when the electricity is not available for prolonged periods of time. We are already working on innovative ways of communicating with our residents to get important messages out to them. In order to insure the Daronco Town House would remain open as a shelter, we searched for, and rented a generator so that even if we would lose Con Ed power we could still remain open to serve the community. As a result of this we are now seeking a grant to help us secure a permanent generator for the Town House.

In conclusion, we are confident that with the continued support of our community, the Town Board will continue to work hard to maintain the quality of service that our residents of the Town of Pelham have come to expect. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted.

Peter M. DiPaola, Supervisor
Town of Pelham