

## Message from the Mayor

**Kenneth C. Riscica**  
 Mayor

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 Board, Chair



**September 15** – It's my pleasure to report to you on events, activities, progress and plans in our Village. Things are well!

First, let me acknowledge and welcome the many new families that have moved into the Village

recently. We welcome you to enjoy all that our Village has to offer including our fabulous Women's Club, our great Civic Association and the many volunteer opportunities to serve the Village. Our residents and volunteers make our Village a great place to live. And this "cycle of renewal" keeps us vibrant.

In March, I reported that we were advised that our two Road Grants, totaling \$225,000, are at risk. Bringing clarity to that important resource has been a high priority for me. After much effort, in late August, we received some clarity. The news is "mixed" but I choose to view it as "good news" because it appears that we are on a path toward \$175,000 of grants toward a nearly \$400,000 capital project. More on that inside.

Residents, volunteers and our staff have been enjoying the fruits of the investment we made in the "makeover" of Village Hall. We have achieved improved productivity, greater comfort and more pleasant surroundings. By staying in our current location, we saved over \$140,000 (over seven years) so we invested in making the old space better.



Also in March, we submitted our 2019 – 2020 Budget within our Tax Cap. Our tax increase, \$37/home, yields us an approximately 1.5% annual rate of increase over the last nine years. In fact, our taxes are 2.5% lower than in 2010.

In April, we hosted a meeting of the 9 Manhasset/Port Washington Mayors with Assemblyman Tony D'Urso. My report is inside. Also in April, the North Shore Mayors met with Congressman Tom Suozzi to discuss federal issues including aircraft and helicopter noise and the proposed Throgs Neck Storm Surge Gates and other matters. More inside.

In June I was invited by Public Access TV to be interviewed for 30 minutes on matters of interest to the Village. It was fun and the informative video is on our website.

In July, we completed the independent audit of our fiscal May 31, 2019 financial statements and we reported them, on time, to NY State. We had a higher than expected surplus of approximately \$73,000 which is discussed inside.

Also in July we hosted a meeting of the Manhasset Mayors with the Acting Police Commander, Hodge Begis to discuss community policing priorities. U-Turns at Summit Drive, STOP signs on Webster and Bournedale North were topics, among other matters.

So, it remains pretty busy in the Village. My focus going forward is on (1) pushing forward on our road grants, (2) upgrading our Information Technology and (3) exploring LED lighting. Our Tech volunteers are critical to the IT upgrade which I hope to complete in the Fall; the LED lighting is exploratory at this stage.

It is a privilege to serve as your Mayor. Questions, comments and complaints are cheerfully accepted at Mayor@PlandomeHeights-NY.Gov.

*Kenneth C. Riscica,*

Mayor

## 10-Year Capital Plan and Resources – Some Clarity on Road Grants

Our 10-Year Capital Plan calls for \$1.15 million in spending on infrastructure over 10 years. We have spent (including grants) \$625,000 of that so far and have \$525,000 to go. The largest piece of that (nearly \$400,000) is road resurfacing in the Bournedales. We have been counting on two NY State road grants to fund part of that work. One grant was initiated by Sen. Martins late in 2016 (\$100,000) and one grant was initiated by Sen. Phillips in August 2018 (\$125,000).

In early 2019, Sen. Anna Kaplan advised us that such grants are at risk. If we lost both grants, this would be a big change in our resources. So, it has been a high priority to work with the Senator’s staff to get clarity on our grants.

In late August, we received some clarity. The news is “mixed.” After extensive study, it was determined that the \$100,000 grant from 2016, never matured and State funds may never have been allocated to our project. In short, that \$100,000 grant is lost. We are told that the \$125,000 grant from 2018 is “being handled by the NYS DOT” and we are “waiting on information on when such funding will be

processed.” So that 2018 grant *seems to be* moving forward. In addition, and importantly, Sen. Kaplan has recommended the Village for a new, 2019, road grant for \$50,000.

I choose to look at this as good news.

Yes, we *lost* a \$100,000 grant, but our 2018, \$125,000 grant *seems to be moving ahead* and we have a *new* 2019, \$50,000 grant. So, instead of \$225,000 of pending grants, we are now looking at \$175,000 of pending grants. I will take that as good news.

But remember, a road grant is not done until it is issued by the State and the State moves slowly. So, it will be some time until we have certainty on these resources. So, we need to, and are, adjusting our plans accordingly. For example, in the Spring, we did road repairs in the Bournedales aimed at extending the life of those roads until our grants mature.

We greatly appreciate Sen. Kaplan’s effort on our behalf.

## Best Practices Continue to Yield Best Results in Finance

We use “Best Practices” for governments in our budgeting, financial controls, performance vs. budget, “Planning Beyond One Year” and our 10-Year Capital Plan. Results include: (1) moderate, stable taxes that are *1/3 lower than outside the Village* (about \$535 less per household each year) and (2) building capital reserves to support our 10-Year Capital Plan.

Fiscal Year May 31, 2019 Ends in Surplus - In July, we reported our results for the 2019 fiscal year to NY State. We had a very successful year. A mild winter resulted in much lower spending on snow removal and road repairs. These cost savings, coupled with higher building fee income from the recent subdivision, yield a \$73,000 surplus, our 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of surplus. We set aside the surplus to fund our 10-year Capital Plan. Our financial statements are audited by the Village’s independent CPA firm and we received a “clean” audit report. A summary of the financial results is at right and further detail is on our website.

Financial Trends - A rare subdivision, resulting in two new homes, is driving a temporary increase in building fees in 2019 and 2020. We have earned more interest income on higher interest rates, but rates are now on a downward track. Our Budget for 2020 reflects our intent to stay within our Tax Cap.

<u>Year ended May 31, 2019:</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Better (Worse)</u>	
<b><u>Income:</u></b>				
Real Property Taxes	337,000	337,000	-	
Building related fees	84,000	53,000	31,000	a
Other earnings	47,000	42,000	5,000	b
Grants and aid	35,000	35,000	-	
Total Revenue	503,000	467,000	36,000	
<b><u>Expense:</u></b>				
General Gov. Support	180,000	204,000	24,000	c
Public Safety	46,000	44,000	(2,000)	
Transportation	35,000	55,000	20,000	d
Parks	12,000	16,000	4,000	
Community Service	157,000	148,000	(9,000)	a
Total Expense	430,000	467,000	37,000	
Surplus (Deficit)	73,000	-	73,000	
<b><u>Notes:</u></b>				
a. Largely due to subdivision building fees and related costs.				
b. Higher interest earnings.				
c. Staffing shortage/transition and unused contingency.				
d. Mild winter effect on snow plowing and road repair.				

## Manhasset Chamber’s Elizabeth Johnson Interviews our Mayor for PATV



In June, Elizabeth Johnson of the Manhasset Chamber of Commerce interviewed Mayor

Riscica as part of Public Access TV’s program, “From the Source.” The interview focused on issues in and around the Village including the Webster Ave. Bridge, cell nodes, taxes, capital plans, grant money, financial controls, & other matters. You can view this 30-minute interview on our website.

## Enjoying our Village Hall Makeover

Our volunteers, board members, staff and residents seem to be enjoying our new Village Hall since its recent makeover.



We creatively reconfigured the space by purchasing storage

space and removing tons of material from Village Hall. Then we added a new, high-tech, “short-throw” overhead projector in order to give more meeting space by eliminating manual presentation easels. A new quiet cool a/c system and new comfortable seating was added. The space is now “virtually larger,” more productive and more comfortable.

By staying put at Orchard Street, we avoided about \$20,000/year in additional rent (over \$140,000 for the 7 years of our lease), plus move costs, that we would have incurred for the more space that we need (See Newsletter, March 15, 2019). We spent about \$20,000 on the improvements that was funded with grants and capital funds, not a tax increase.

## Maintaining a Technology Advantage

Municipalities across the country have been victims of ransomware and hacking. In our Village, we are facing some IT challenges. Our computers operate on a Windows 7 platform and that platform will no longer be supported after January 14, 2020. Our hardware is past or approaching the 5-year useful life assumed for computer hardware. Further, we are experiencing “anomalies” that impact daily productivity and security. So, we need to make changes.

Based on advice of our tech team, and input from an IT consultant we hired, we have concluded to take the following actions to improve our IT: (1) replace our 3 computer stations with new, latest generation, Intel processor computers, (2)

install the Windows 10 operating system and “Office 2019” productivity tools on those computers, (3) install a new high capacity “shared” network drive and (4) upgrade our existing “cloud backup” systems.

These moves will bring our IT systems and software up to the latest standards, will be more resistant to attack and will enhance the productivity tools available to us.

We expect to spend less than \$10,000 on the project (hardware, software and implementation resources) which we will draw from existing capital funds and therefore, not increase your taxes.

## Good Relationships Matter

As a small village, we try to maintain good relationships with other local governments. We do this in meetings with the Port/Manhasset Mayors as well as in meetings with local officials. Some of recent meetings are discussed below. Others include a Sept. meeting with Town Supervisor Bosworth, Councilwoman DeGiorgio and local Mayors on airplane/helicopter noise.

Assemblyman D’Urso– In April we hosted a meeting of the Port/Manhasset Mayors with Assemblyman Tony D’Urso.

D’Urso is now on the “Local Government” subcommittee so he is important to issues that affect Villages. We spoke with D’Urso about road grants, restoring our Aid and Incentives for



Municipalities (“AIM”) money and other statewide matters.

the reopened 6<sup>th</sup> Precinct. We spoke about local “community policing” priorities in each of our Villages and in downtown.

Congressman Suozzi – In April, North Shore Mayors met



with Congressman Tom Suozzi to discuss issues of national and local importance. Items discussed included aircraft and helicopter noise, the proposed Throgs Neck Storm Gates and

Nassau County Police – In July we hosted the Manhasset Mayors in meeting with Hodge Begis, Acting Commander of



the political climate in Washington. The Throgs Neck Storm Gates are aimed at protecting NYC from storm surge with “induced flooding” in the western LI Sound. This is very concerning. A Public Meeting for residents to discuss the impacts of induced flooding and other aspects is scheduled for October 24 at the Great Neck Hotel between 5:30 – 8:00.

**New County Assessment System** – Taxes under the new County Assessment System will be reflected for the first time in School Tax bills received by residents this Fall. Significant changes to tax bills are expected, particularly for those who have successfully grieved their taxes under the old system. Since the Village uses the County Assessment to levy its taxes, this change will be reflected in the June 2020 Village tax bill.

**Webster Avenue Bridge** – We have been in regular contact with LIRR officials about the situation with the Webster Avenue Bridge. Extensive repairs have been made for this 120 year-old bridge and both LIRR and NYS DOT have been involved. The bridge is being scheduled for replacement in the 2020 – 24 LIRR capital program.

**Sign up for North Shore Alerts** – Our emergency notification system is [www.NorthShoreAlert.org](http://www.NorthShoreAlert.org) . We use it for emergency notifications such as power outage status and street closings, please sign-up.

**Please Curb Your Dog** – We are receiving complaints about the failure of pet owners to pick up their dog waste. Please follow the law and pick up and dispose of your dog waste.

**\$250 Tag Sale Signs Available** – When residents tape “tag sale” signs to our white decorative street name signs, the glue from the tape leaves a residue that becomes an unsightly black streak. The fine is \$250 fine per offense. Please, don’t do this.

## Clerk’s Corner

As a reminder, we pay for side-yard pick-up so it is not necessary to put your trash at the curb.

We remind residents that overnight parking on Village streets is prohibited. Contact us if you need to park overnight.

Village code restricts contractor work to 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday – Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday. No work is permitted on Sundays or Federal holidays.

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**Incorporated Village of  
PLANDOME HEIGHTS**  
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## NEWSLETTER – FALL 2019

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Sign up for **Village Emergency Notifications** at [www.northshorealert.org](http://www.northshorealert.org)