



The Property Tax Cap and Croton

In June of this year, the New York State Legislature passed the Real Property Tax Levy Cap legislation. This law affects local governments (counties, towns, cities, villages, fire districts and special districts and school districts). At its simplest, the law says that, beginning with the fiscal year that begins 2012 (and lasting through at least June 15, 2016), no local government is authorized to increase its property tax levy by more than 2% or the rate of inflation (whichever is less); however, the permitted increase will not be less than 1%.

The intention of this tax cap is what everybody wants - protection from endless escalation of their property taxes. On the other hand, everyone has certain expectations that their property taxes will pay for a variety of services - many taken for granted or not thought much about.

What does this tax cap mean for Croton residents? Currently, the inflation rate is 1.6%. Using simplified rounded numbers, Croton raises about \$10,000,000 through its tax levy. A 2% increase would add \$200,000 and a 1.6% increase would add \$160,000 in this simplified example. Increases in expenses for energy and supplies alone may add up to more than \$200,000. Contractual salary increases and state mandated health and pension benefits will likely rise by well over \$200,000. (Last year's pension and benefits increased by over \$300,000.) An exemption in the law to the 2% limit on the levy increase allows benefit increases that exceed the 2% amount, \$200,000 in our simplified Croton example, to be exempted from the limit. For example, if benefit costs go up \$300,000 in Croton, then \$100,000 (excess over \$200,000 limit) or 1% could be added to the levy. In this case the tax levy could increase by 3%.

Assuming a 2% increase or a \$10,200,000

tax levy for the next fiscal year, if mandated costs and basic operational expenses amount to more than \$200,000 in total, the Village would have less money to support its programs and services. For example, if mandated increases amount to \$500,000, only \$9,700,000 of the tax levy would be available for its programs and services rather the \$10,000,000 of the prior year. This hypothetical example would require either cutting some services in the amount of \$300,000 or raising more revenue to cover the difference and maintain the same level of services as in the current year.

Every local government is faced with this dilemma including the school districts. Prior to the passage of this law, governments and school districts had strongly advocated for mandate relief from the State - primarily in the area of pensions and benefits, to help them maintain their level of services, with or without the tax cap. This did not happen. Although the Governor has established a Mandate Relief Council to identify unfunded mandates and to recommend changes to provide relief to the legislature, this is out in the future and is unlikely to occur in the next fiscal year.

While there is a provision for local governments to override the cap with a vote of 60% of the governing body, Croton as well as the other local governments affecting Croton residents - Town of Cortlandt and Westchester County - will be trying to abide by the law. This will almost definitely mean changes and cutbacks that will be liked by those who are not affected by them and disliked by others who are affected.

In the coming months, Manager Zambrano and Treasurer Bullock will begin making projections on next year's budget based on this year's year-to-date data and the new rules imposed by the tax cap. Based

September Calendar

- 5 Labor Day
- 6 & 19 Village Board Mtg.
- 13 & 27 Planning Bd. Mtg.
- 7 Cons. Advisory Comm.
- 13 Rec. Advisory Comm.
- 14 Zoning Bd. of Appeals
- 21 Visual Environ. Bd.
- 28 Trails Committee

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Duck Pond Update

During the summer months, the Duck Pond has undergone restoration work. The ad hoc Duck Pond Gorge Workgroup, appointed in 2010, had studied and recommended the work that was approved by the Board. Environmental consultant, Stephen Coleman, performed the analysis that led to the group's recommendations. A new aeration system was installed in late July to begin the process of adding oxygen to the water to reduce the formation of the green scum that



Duck Pond in June 2011

forms on the pond each summer. The aeration system consists of two compressor air lines and 4 diffusers located in the pond. At the same time, an initial skimming operation was carried out using an airboat to remove 7 to 8 cubic feet of coontail, water meal and duck weed. A biological treatment of bacteria and enzymes was also added to the pond. The work was done by LakeSavers, subcontractors to Aquatic Restorations LLC who were awarded the contract for the complete job and future maintenance. In mid-August, additional airboat skimming operations were carried out. By removing the coontail, duck weed and water meal, the aeration system can more easily keep the water in the pond clear. The aeration system will continue running through most months of the year but will be shut off during winter months to allow ice formation for ice skating.

While it is expected that the pond will be clearer and more attractive in the future, the work really addresses the symptoms of the problem not the cause.



Airboat skimming the Pond

The Duck Pond watershed encompasses a large area of upstream neighborhoods in the Harmon area. Chemicals from lawn and garden fertilizers used in these areas eventually flow through the storm water drains to the Duck Pond. This storm water runoff into the pond adds nutrients to the water which promote the growth of the weeds and algae. The ad hoc Duck Pond Gorge Workgroup is working on a long-range strategy for addressing this problem.

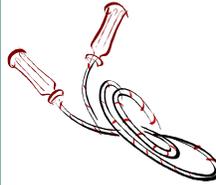
Fall Recreation Begins

This Fall, the Recreation Dept. will be offering some new programs. In addition to its full program of dance, yoga and exercise classes, sports, art classes and defensive driving, the following programs will be new:

Fundamentals of Photography will begin Sat., Sept. 24 and continue for 8 sessions. Taught by Ann Luisi and designed for students in grades 5 to 8, the hands-on classes will provide information and experience on the technical aspects of both 35mm and digital photography. Participants must have their own digital camera and the means to print their photographs. Memory cards are also required. Registration is due by Sept. 19. Fees are \$75/res. and \$90/non-res.



Body Back This is a results-based, high intensity, interval style workout designed specifically for Moms of any age. Interval training will use exercise bands, sliding discs, bosu balls and your own body as resistance. Classes are Mon. & Wed., beginning Sept 19 from 6 to 7 AM for 10 weeks.



Classes will take place at both Croton Landing and the Municipal Building. Sign-up by Sept. 15. Fees are \$269/res and \$299/nonres.

Be sure to look at the Fall Recreation brochure when it comes out this week for the full complement of autumn recreational programs.

Yacht Club Holds River Day 2011

The 3rd annual Croton Yacht Club "Hudson River Day" celebrations will be held on Sat., Sept., 10, from 11am to 4pm. The event promotes interest in the history and ecology of the river and as well as the enhancement and protection of river-related recreational resources.



There will be presentations and hands-on exhibits for both children and adults. A seining exhibit, viewing tanks, local Native American culture, boat manufacturing, current maritime research, toy sailboat making, fossil making and fish printing will be among the exhibits and activities. Food and beverages will be available (the Yacht Club boasts the best fish chowder on the Hudson). Admission is free. More information can be obtained by contacting Dennis Kooney at dennis@kooney.com or 907-3622.



Reminder!

**Village Offices will be closed
Monday, Sept. 5th for Labor Day!**



Croton EMS

In July, the Village Board approved a short-term Inter-municipal Agreement (IMS) with the Mid-Hudson EMS District to provide supplementary support to the Croton EMS volunteers. As a result of a recent decline in Croton EMS members able to respond to calls either because of personal or work commitments, the Village ensured that emergency medical service is available as needed.



The IMA with Mid-Hudson extends through October 31, 2011. It provides that a paid EMT is available at the Croton EMS headquarters at 44 Wayne St. to work in collaboration with volunteers. The EMT is on duty from 7am to 7 pm, Mon. through Fri. and provides Basic Life Support (BLS) on emergency calls.

The Village and its EMS are also preparing a Request For Proposal (RFP) to obtain BLS service on a permanent basis. It is expected that a long-range service contract will be in place by the end of October.

Volunteers needed. Croton EMS is currently developing a recruitment and retention program to attract more EMS volunteers. If you are interested in becoming an EMS member, please contact Mark Dickey at 862-1600 or leave a message at 271-4781. Training is provided. It is not necessary to be fully trained as an EMT before becoming an active volunteer. Newcomers may choose to be trained as "Drivers Only" giving them an opportunity to learn more about Croton EMS operations while providing valuable help to the community.

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on their projections, the Board and staff will start the process of prioritizing programs and services so that the tax cap can be achieved.

For Croton, this is not a new process however, as for much of the last decade, the Village has made finding efficiencies through reorganization, changes in suppliers, consolidations, sharing services and increased revenues its highest budget priority. Many changes have been made to good effect on the budget, but as a result, finding new and additional cuts is going to be a bigger challenge in the coming years.

Most residents can probably identify some service they think is less important than another. But not all will agree on any one of them. Balancing long-term Village interests with the requirements of the tax cap will be dominating fiscal planning for the coming years.

9/11 Remembrance Memorial

The Foundation of the Buchanan* Cortlandt* Croton-on-Hudson 9/11 Remembrance Memorial at Croton Landing (BCC 9/11 Memorial) plans to build a unique and lasting tribute to members of our community who gave their



lives on 9/11 as well as first and second responders and members of the military who answered the call of duty.

The memorial, entitled *Reaching Through The Shadow*, will also serve as a reminder to future generations that we must NEVER FORGET the tragic events of that day.

Reaching Through The Shadow

The memorial incorporates salvaged steel from the World Trade Center's North Tower. It will be situated at the northernmost point of Croton Landing Park.

To accomplish that goal, on Sun., Sept. 18, between 2 and 5 pm, the BCC 9/11 Memorial is hosting a wine tasting event at the newly-restored Monteverde at Old Stone Manor in Cortlandt Manor. Any merchandise or gift certificates would be appreciated for the silent auction and raffle that will be held as part of the fund raising for the construction and future endowment of the memorial.

More information on the event and the foundation can be viewed at www.9-11remembrance.com or find them on Facebook. Tickets in advance are \$100/person or \$150/couple. You may also consider making a monetary donation. Both ticket checks and donations may be sent to the BCC 9/11 Memorial at PO Box 153, Buchanan, NY 10511. For more information, contact Project Director Janet Mainiero at 271-8222. A silent auction and raffle will be held as part of the fund-raising event.

Seniors Say 'Goodbye' to Liz Thomas

Friday, August 12 was the last Senior meeting at which Senior Coordinator Liz Thomas was present. Seniors held a Going Away party to thank her for her service to the senior community over the past three years and to wish her good luck in her next endeavor.

Ms. Thomas is moving to a new, full-time, job in the Town of North Castle where she will be working with seniors and developing programs for them there.

The end of summer picnic will be held at Senasqua Park on September 9. Beginning the next week, the Senior Club will return to the Community Room in the Municipal Building for their fall meetings.

Membership is open to all residents and school district residents, 60 years and older. Meetings are on Fridays and begin at 11 am with coffee and rolls available. Annual membership is \$6/res. and \$12/nonres.

Published for the Residents of the Village of Croton-on-Hudson

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(914) 271-4781-2, www.crotononhudson-ny.gov

Sanitation Study Under Review

A study commissioned to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the current solid waste collection program is currently being reviewed by the Board and staff.

Undertaken by a division of Malcolm Pirnie, Inc. of White Plains, the study focused on: 1) whether changing collection routes for residential and commercial/institutional customers could achieve efficiencies; 2) whether creating a separate commercial/institutional route provides an opportunity for fee-based service; 3) whether equipment changes or methodology would improve efficiencies; and 4) evaluating staffing needs for any changes of the above possibilities.

While the study found the current collection of solid waste to be efficient, it recommended consideration of changes regarding commercial customers and their quantity of waste per pickup. The study determined that a fee-based system could be implemented for commercial/institutional customers without adversely affecting the efficiency of its current operations. Additional administrative recommendations were also included in the report.



When walking on a street or road with no sidewalks, what side should I be on? Is it the same for bicyclists? People who walk or run in a road or street with no sidewalks should always walk *facing* oncoming cars. Croton has several roads without sidewalks where people walk in the street. Parking enforcement personnel have observed that many people walking between Senasqua Park and Croton Landing Park are facing the wrong direction. This is especially dangerous where the roadway is quite narrow. Bicycles on the other hand, are considered vehicles and should be ridden in the same direction as cars on the road.

Croton Hosts Toughman Half Triathlon

For the 4th year, Croton is the home base for this event. Look for bikers and runners on the streets of Croton as they participate in this event. Over 750 participants will start the day with a 1.2 mile swim at Croton Point beach, followed by a 56-mile bike ride to Somers and back and then a 13.1 run—mostly through the Village. Cheer on these athletes as you see them pass!



Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

Volunteers are being sought for the NYS Long Term Care Ombudsman Program to be trained to help residents in long-term facilities, including nursing and adult homes, in Westchester County. Volunteer ombudsmen help to resolve complaints, monitor the quality of life, and help preserve the dignity of residents in these facilities.

The program is being run by the Mental Health Association of Westchester. Volunteers must be at least 21 years of age and complete a 36-hour training program to become a NYS Certified ombudsman. Ombudsmen volunteers are supervised and supported by two certified social workers with extensive experience and knowledge in the aging field, especially in long-term care.

Training takes place at the Mental Health Association headquarters in Tarrytown. For more information, call Program Director Margaret Hadad at 914-345-5900, ext. 7522 or visit their website at <http://www.mhawestchester.org/html/volunteering.html>

Noise and Seasonal Parking Public Hearings

On Tues., Sept. 6 at 8pm, the Village Board will conduct public hearings on proposed amendments to two local laws.

The proposed changes to Chapter 160-4 of the Noise Law would limit the hours during which motor-driven lawn and garden equipment can be used on Saturdays and Sundays. Under the proposed amendment, this type of equipment would not be able to be used after 6 pm in the evening on those days. The current law specifies 8 pm as the cut off for its use.

The proposed amendments to Chapter 215-29, Seasonal Parking affect those with special hardship permits allowing parking on streets during snow events of greater than 2" of snow. Under the proposal, certain streets would be prohibited from parking even with permits. All vehicles with permits would be required to be removed from the streets or designated lots within 12 hours of the end of the snow. This includes removal from the parking lots at the Municipal Building, Asbury Methodist Church, Holy Name of Mary and Benedict Blvd. lot. Establishing a fee for all such permits beginning at \$25 for those with no available parking is also being considered.