



December Calendar

- 5 Village Board Mtg.
- 13 & 27 Planning Bd. Mtg.
- 1 Cons. Advisory Comm.
- 13 Rec. Advisory Comm.
- 14 Zoning Bd. Of Appeals
- 21 Visual Environ. Bd.
- 25 **Christmas Day**
- 28 Trails Comm.

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Village Begins Early Budget Process

Even as the mid-term Budget review process for fiscal year 2011/2012 is completing, the Village Treasurer and Village Manager are already beginning work on the budget for fiscal year 2012/2013.



The outcome of their work will be presented by the Village Manager in late March in the form of their budget recommendations.

The 2012/2013 Village budget will be the first one under the new New York State law imposing a 2% maximum increase on the Village's tax levy.

With large amounts of mandated Village obligations, such as pension and health benefits and workman's compensation not being exempted, or only partially exempted, from the tax levy cap, the coming budget will have less money to spend on services than in the past. Recent years have seen a steady whittling away of budget items and expenses not deemed crucial to Village operations as well as an increase in coordination and sharing of expenses with other entities. Maintaining services is a key goal in the development of the 2012/2013 budget. Beginning the process earlier will provide more time and opportunity for the Manager, Treasurer and Department heads to explore ways of achieving this

goal. The current budget year had a \$10,431,064.73 tax levy on a total budget appropriation of \$16,971,891. A 2% increase allowed under the new law would allow the levy to rise by \$208,620.

As an illustration, the pension benefits for the 2011/2012 year rose \$314,877 over the prior year. Such an increase, if required again for 2012/2013 would more than utilize the entire 2% tax levy increase allowed. While pension increases that exceed the 2% cap can be exempted from the cap, it still means that the entire 2% allowable increase is used up before any departmental budgeting occurs. Pension benefits are only one of many mandated expenses that are part of the Village budget and these expenses must also be accounted for within the allowable cap. As a result, the discretionary expenses that the Village actually controls, primarily those associated with Village services to residents, will be even more carefully scrutinized and prioritized than ever before. To that end, the Manager and Treasurer have asked that preliminary departmental budgets be provided early this month for review and discussion.

The Mid-year Budget review being prepared by the Treasurer, showing current revenues and expenses as compared with what was budgeted for the current year, is another tool that will be used in conjunction with the departmental budgets in identifying ways to stay under the tax levy cap for next year.

FEMA Reimbursement for Irene

The aftermath of Hurricane Irene in late-August left much damage throughout the Village and the need for a lot of expensive repairs. With this area being designated as a Disaster area, the Village became eligible for relief funds through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Village officials have been meeting with FEMA representatives to seek financial reimbursement for some 28 individual projects which resulted from the storm.

Cont'd on page 4

Birnbaum enters Hall of Fame

Croton resident, Annette Birnbaum, has been selected to be in the Westchester County 2011 Senior Hall of Fame. Ms. Birnbaum was nominated by the Croton Seniors Club in recognition of her volunteerism over many years.

Now in her eighties, Ms. Birnbaum has volunteered with the Croton Blood Bank for forty-one years and continues to be active in supporting it. She also spent twenty years as a volunteer at Skyview Nursing Home reading and leading discussions with its residents.

The 29th Annual Hall of Fame Recognition luncheon at which Ms. Birnbaum will be inducted is on Friday, Dec. 2 at the Westchester Marriott in Tarrytown. This year there will be 43 inductees from across the County.

EMT Contract Signed

A contract for Emergency Medical Technician services has been signed with the Mid-Hudson Ambulance District. The EMT services will supplement the volunteers in Croton's EMS organization. The contract is for one year with provision for up to three one-year renewals. Mid-Hudson Ambulance District also provides ambulance service for the Town and Village of Ossining and the Town of New Castle.

Earlier in the year, Croton contracted with Mid-Hudson Ambulance for a few months while the Village prepared a Request For Proposal (RFP) for long-term service. Two proposals were received with Mid-Hudson Ambulance District being the lowest. They will provide an Emergency Medical Technician for twenty-four hour coverage, seven days a week to supplement Croton's emergency responders. The EMT rate is \$17.26/hour for regular and holiday hours and \$24.75/hour for regular and Holiday overtime hours. Croton EMS's ability to bill for ambulance services is expected to provide the funding for the paid EMT personnel.

Croton's volunteer EMS organization receives over 850 calls a year and is staffed with highly trained and capable members who will continue to respond to calls. However, due to the heavy demand for their services, professional and personal commitments, and a reduction in their numbers, a contract EMT will help maintain critical response time for emergencies.



Text-A-Tip Reminder

The Police Department has been able to receive texted messages at its Text-A-Tip cell phone since early summer. It is still possible to phone in tips verbally to the Police Dept. at 271-5177 but it is hoped that the Text-A-Tip ability will encourage more people to help the police by providing potentially important information. The number of the Text-A-Tip cell phone is 271-0706.

The Text-A-Tip phone is not for reporting a crime in progress as it is not manned all the time. To report a crime, dial 911 or call 271-5177.

High Street Improvements

The completion of the High Street Improvement project has moved closer to completion with its recent paving. A small portion at its western end remains to be paved due to work needing to be completed there.



High St. looking west

The water mains on High Street were one hundred years old and in need of replacement. The work was coordinated with sanitary sewer replacement work and streetscape improvements including complete storm sewer replacement, water main replacement, new sidewalks and road repaving. The project was partially funded through a CDBG grant in the amount of \$256,000.

High School Snowboard/Ski Program

The popular snowboard/ski program is being offered again by the Recreation Dept. with trips to Mountain Creek Park in Vernon, New Jersey. Students in grades 8 to 12 can join the fun. There are four trips scheduled for Saturdays, Jan. 7, Jan. 21, Feb. 4 and Feb. 11. Bus tickets



can be purchased at the Recreation Office for \$25 for each date or \$85 for all four dates (no refunds). Daily ski tickets for Mountain Creek may also be purchased at the Recreation Dept. for \$40.

The Village is partnering with Briarcliff Manor and the Town of New Castle to ensure larger participation. The bus will depart from the Municipal Building and return to the same location. Details on the times and more information can be obtained by calling 271-3006.



Reminder!

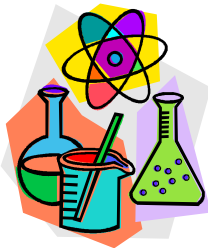
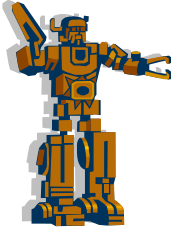
**Village Offices will be closed Fri., Dec. 23 and Mon. Dec. 26
for Christmas observances
and Mon. Jan. 2 for New Year's Day Holiday.**



Winter Holiday Recreation Programs

The Recreation Dept. is offering three separate days of fun-filled, daylong programs over the December school break. Children in grades 2 through 6 are eligible to enroll. The hours for each program are 9:00 am to 3:00 pm in the Municipal Building Community Room. The cost of each program is \$70/res and \$85/nonres. The registration deadline for all three programs is December 23.

Battle-Bot Build-A-Thon Participants will construct a complex Battle-Bot robot from a large modular ROBOTIX collection and everyone will take home a robot. This program gives students a chance to build and create using their imagination. This program is on Tues., Dec. 27th.



Chemical Magic For those who like to experiment, this program is a magical laboratory experience Harry Potter style! Students will make, and take home, Flubber, a Mushroom Monster, Silly Putty, and much more. In addition to their projects, students will take

home a recipe book and a mini-chemistry kit. The Chemical Magic program is on Wed., Dec. 28th.

Lego Star Wars & More Lego lovers will have a great time in this program designed for those who like to build. Choose from a huge selection of Legos. All students will take home a Lego project. The Lego program will be held on Thurs., Dec. 29th.



Water Bills

Semi-annual utility bills will be sent out on December 15th. The water rate is \$4.500 per 100 cubic feet of usage. The sewer rate is \$0.4139 per 100 cubic feet of water consumption. The bill includes both the water and the sewer fee. The bill is payable January 15, 2012. Thereafter, penalties will apply on a monthly basis.



Arboretum Damage

Due to heavy damage from the October 29 snow storm, the Jane Lytle Arboretum located off of Fox Road has been closed.

Fallen trees and hanging branches have caused safety concerns for visitors. Once the debris is cleaned up and removed, and trail damage is repaired, the Arboretum will announce its reopening to the public.

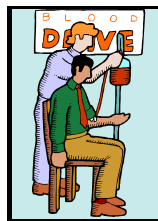
Tax Assessment Exemptions

Village property tax exemptions are available for income-qualified seniors, people with disabilities, volunteer fire personnel and armed service veterans. Applications for Village exemptions can be made at the Village Engineering Office in the Municipal Building, no later than Friday, December 30, 2011.

Allowable income levels for partial real estate exemptions are set by New York State for persons age 65 years or older. Exemption percentages vary from 5% on a total income range of \$36,500 to \$37,399 and up to 50% on a total income of less than \$29,000.

Veteran exemptions vary according to time period served, disabilities, etc. Since 2010, property assessment reductions have been made available to veterans who have served during the Cold War periods. This exemption is limited to ten years in duration.

Questions on eligibility or how to file for an exemption should be directed to Joe Sperber, Village Assessor, at 271-4783.



Blood Drive Reminder

The next Community Blood Drive is set for Sun., December 4th from 9am to 3pm at Croton-Harmon High School. To make an appointment or for information, call 271-7645 or 271-8449 or send an email to communityblooddrive@gmail.com.

Santa Letters

On Dec. 1st, Santa's elves will put special mailboxes at the Municipal Building and Save Mor in Croton Commons. Letters to Santa that are dropped in these mailboxes before Dec. 9th are guaranteed an answer. No postage is required but a return name and address must be included.



Holiday Tree and Menorah Lighting



The Village will hold its annual holiday tree lighting on Thursday, Dec. 1 at 5 pm in Vassallo Park. There will be light refreshments available during the event. The Village's Menorah will have its first candle lit on Tuesday,

Dec. 20 at sunset and continue on subsequent nights until the end of Hanukkah. The Menorah will be located at the corner of Benedict Blvd, and South Riverside.



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

Leo A. W. Wiegman, Mayor, Ann H. Gallelli, Trustee, Ian Murtaugh, Trustee, Casey Raskob, Trustee, Gregory Schmidt, Trustee

Abraham J. Zambrano, Village Manager

Stanley H. Kellerhouse Municipal Building, One Van Wyck Street

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

FAVOR Program for Veterans

The County-sponsored FAVOR program (Find and Assist Veterans of Record) asks businesses to show support for veterans by offering discounts of their own choosing on their goods and services. Active, reservists and retired military are eligible to get a County-issued ID at multiple locations. Locally the picture ID can be obtained at the administration office at Croton Point Park or at any county golf course (through December). To receive a FAVOR ID card, discharge papers (DD-214), a VA card or Military ID must be presented.

A list of the participating merchants may be obtained at www.westchestergov.com/favor. The County's Veterans Services Agency sees this as an opportunity to show support for US military as well as providing a small economic boost for their own businesses by bringing new customers to participating merchants.

FEMA Cont'd.

Among the costs submitted to FEMA are those associated with debris removal, overtime related to public safety, culvert repairs, rebuilding of roads due to wash-outs, rebuilding of drainage culverts, repairing erosion along streets and river fronts, the loss of the Silver Lake beach, equipment losses and building damage, and the loss of the Fire Dept. rescue boat. These costs are estimated to be in excess of \$200,000. Additional work to repair the Black Rock Park dam and the Silver Lake dam has yet to be determined and will be added to the final FEMA list.

FEMA will reimburse up to 75% of the approved projects needing repair or replacement. SEMO, the State Emergency Management Office) will reimburse up to 12.5% leaving the Village to absorb the remaining 12.5% in storm damage costs.

Got a Question?



The appearance of the Duck Pond has certainly improved this summer. What was done to make this happen?

The Duck Pond has improved significantly since June. As shown in the picture below, the pond was completely



covered with a heavy green algae early in the summer. After the installation of a new aeration system in late July, followed by two skimming operations to remove pond vegetation, the pond is now clear as shown in the picture to the right.

The Ad Hoc Duck Pond Gorge Neighbors committee, consisting of interested residents, performed the research and analysis of the pond conditions that led to their recommendation to hire Aquatic Restorations LLC to perform the needed work. The results so far have greatly improved the pond's appearance.

The Duck Pond committee is also charged with developing a long-range strategy to address the underlying causes for the high phosphorous levels in the pond. The large number of homes and streets that make up the Duck

Pond Gorge watershed are the biggest contributors to the problem due to runoff from the use of lawn fertilizers and residues of motor oil on the streets which feed directly into the Duck Pond.



The aeration system will be discontinued in the winter months to enable ice skating as the pond will not freeze while it is operating. The return of warm weather next summer, and the amount of new vegetation growth in the pond, will determine whether another skimming operation is needed to maintain the current improved appearance.

Drug Take-Back Day Success

Drug Take-Back day held on October 29 was a huge success. In spite of the onset of a huge snow storm, volunteers from the Croton Community Coalition collected 202.3 pounds of unused prescription drugs from area residents. Detective Sergeant Nikitopoulos and Detective Gabrielsen of the Croton Police Dept. participated in the event which was nationally sponsored by the Drug Enforcement Administration.