



VILLAGE OF PELHAM MANOR
WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NEW YORK

4 PENFIELD PLACE
PELHAM MANOR, N.Y. 10803-3298

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION 914-738-8820

Dear Pelham Manor Neighbor:

As I conclude my term as Mayor, I am pleased to report on the state of our Village. In spite of the severe fiscal crisis, our Village is well positioned to continue delivering excellent services in 2009 without an increase in our residential tax levy. As will be explained more thoroughly below, we are realizing the benefits of our long-term commitment to commercial development just when we need it the most.

This report will cover:

- budget and taxes
- progress in retail development
- public safety
- public works and public spaces
- inter-governmental relations
- priorities for the coming year

Some highlights are:

- The new Pelham Manor Shopping Plaza (Acadia) will open in early May with BJ's as its anchor. The increased commercial assessment from this development has shifted virtually all the increase in the tax levy for '09 to the commercial tax base.
- While the total tax levy will increase by 2.83% in FY'09 v. 3.8% in '08, the residential tax levy will be essentially flat (0.35%) in '09. The commercial tax levy for '09 will increase by 14.39%.
- Fairway Market will open at year-end at the Post Road Plaza (Levin/Kmart property), bringing a quality grocer to Pelham Manor and providing another significant increment to our commercial tax

base that will favorably impact next year's property taxes. (Budget year '10)

- We also rezoned the remainder of our Business District in March of '09 to encourage additional retail development and continue to grow our commercial tax base.
- The '09 budget maintains current service levels and equipment replacement schedules. Pelham Manor continues to be debt free.
- We successfully negotiated a 3-year agreement with the Fire Department in the summer of '08, but have not reached an agreement with the PBA. Arbitration is pending.
- In collaboration with the Junior League of Pelham, we revitalized Weihman Park.
- We installed security cameras in Shore Park, Weihman Park, the Recycling Center on Spring Road and at Four Corners to increase safety and productivity from our police spending. We also required the developers to install cameras at the two shopping centers.

Budget and Taxes

The tentative budget for '09 has a 2.8% increase in Appropriations (i.e. spending) v. 4.43% in fiscal year '08. Given that approximately 80% of our spending is for personnel costs for police, fire, DPW and administrative employees and most of these costs are subject to multi-year collective bargaining, this sub-3% increase budget reflects very disciplined spending but requires no reduction in services or staffing levels, deferral of equipment purchases or borrowing. Non-tax revenues, which include the County's per capital allocation of sales tax, recording taxes and fees, are projected to decrease by 2%, after growing rapidly in the recent past.

Pelham Manor controls costs by achieving "economies of scale" in various ways. We buy goods and services such as road salt, gasoline, computers, police cars, etc., at very favorable prices under Westchester County or New York State bulk contracts. These contracts enable Pelham Manor to buy at the same or better prices as the largest cities. We have increasingly

leveraged the private sector by shrinking our public works staff and “outsourcing” sidewalk replacement, seasonal leaf collection and street sweeping to private contractors through competitive bidding to reduce labor costs, overhead and capital equipment costs. By combining positions and eliminating extra fringe benefit costs, Pelham Manor delivers first class services with very low administrative costs. In fact, our administrative costs continue to be among the lowest in Westchester, below 14 other villages per the most recent statistics from the NYS Conference of Mayors.

Commercial Development

The development of the Pelham Manor Shopping Center (Acadia) occurred just in time to help manage the current fiscal crisis. The center was assessed at approximately 80% completion for the current ('09) tax year and will be considered fully completed for next year's tax assessment.

As a result, Pelham Manor's commercial property tax base increased by 15.46%, and this increase shifted the Base Proportions toward the Non-Homestead (commercial) tax base, the first time this has occurred in the 7 years since the market value assessment system was implemented Town-wide in Pelham. As a result, Non-Homestead (commercial) taxpayers will absorb virtually all of the 2.38% increase in total property taxes while Homestead (residential) taxpayers will see virtually no increase.

Non-Homestead (commercial)	\$201,787	14.39%
Homestead (residential)	\$ 28,749	0.35%
Total Tax Levy Increase	\$230,535	2.38%

Note that this increase to Pelham Manor's commercial tax base also helped to lessen the increase in School, Town and County taxes for all residential taxpayers in the Town of Pelham. Since Villages taxes are only about 22% of a resident's total property tax bill, the benefit from commercial development is even greater for the School, Town and County tax bill. The incremental effect on the Town-wide commercial property tax base is smaller but still significant at 8.4% and it moved the Town-wide Base Proportions by 0.91% toward the Non-Homestead class. This produced a \$530,000 savings in school taxes alone for residential taxpayers.

Our residents should also note that in the past eighteen months, there has been close to \$100 million in construction activity in our Business District

involving heavy equipment, demolition, excavation and trucking away several football fields worth of soil in large dump trucks. In spite of this enormous level of activity, there have been virtually no complaints from residents.

This excellent result is due to the hard work of our Planning Board. Under the guidance of Village Manager John Pierpont and our advisors, AKRF, a workable program was designed that limited noise and disruption and still permitted the work to proceed expeditiously. Strict supervision insured compliance. Never has it been truer that you are doing your job well when no one notices.

Public Safety

Fire

Our Fire Department, under the leadership of Chief Joseph Ruggiero, continued its excellent performance. The skill and dedication of our paid firefighters is evidenced by their on-the-job performance, low level of sick leave and minimal overtime expense. We are also blessed with a highly motivated and trained Volunteer Company. The National Fire Protection Association has recommended increased training requirements for Volunteers and our Volunteers have upgraded their skills. We appreciate their service and welcome new members.

Our paid and volunteer firefighters showed their skill on many occasions throughout the year, but their performance at a serious house fire on a frigid New Year's Eve stands out. Our firefighters, along with firefighters from the Village of Pelham, White Plains and Eastchester spent four hours in single digit temperatures and high winds fighting an advanced house fire. Although the fire was too far advanced to save the house, they were able to prevent the fire and burning embers from spreading to adjacent homes. This unfortunate incident did show the skill of our firefighters and their ability to work seamlessly with their counterparts in neighboring communities.

Police

The Pelham Manor Police Department plays a crucial role in our community. We are a tiny suburb surrounded by three large cities. Two major highways and the Boston Post Road run through our community. A visible and active police presence is important to maintain public safety.

With the increase in retail activity in Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle and soon in Pelham Manor, police services will be in even greater demand. Our highly trained police officers are often first on the scene in medical emergencies and are certified First Responders and certified annually in CPR.

Although Pelham Manor is generally quiet, our officers can find themselves in harm's way quite suddenly. We were reminded of this late last year when a car full of armed suspects fleeing the Pelham Village police nearly ran down Pelham Manor Officer Timothy DeSantola, who had left routine DWI checkpoint duty to provide assistance. Our officers, after some diligent investigative work, located the vehicle and arrested several of the suspects in the Bronx less than 24 hours later.

Increased traffic from retail development in Mt. Vernon and New Rochelle and soon to come from our own retail area, means more demand for police services. We have planned for this increase by working with the developers of our new centers and the use of new technology. Both the Levin and Acadia properties will have spaces for our Police Department to process minor offenses, such as shoplifting, on site. Previously, a suspect was brought to headquarters for processing, taking one or two officers off patrol. We have also required the developers to install multiple security cameras to fully cover their properties, enabling a rapid response and better intelligence for our officers. We have acquired two portable speed signs that have helped with traffic measurement and control. Finally, we have added video cameras at Shore Park, Spring Road Field/ Village Recycling Center (jointly paid for by the Town of Pelham), Four Corners across from Weihman Park near the police booth and at Weihman Park itself. These cameras, monitored by the desk officer, serve as a deterrent to bad behavior in our public spaces and ensure rapid response if it is observed. They also make our desk officer nearly equivalent to another patrol officer and increase the productivity of the desk officer and those on patrol. We have offered to monitor cameras at Siwanoy and Prospect Hill Schools if the Board of Education chooses to purchase them.

We participated once again with the Pelham Village police in an "Active Shooter" exercise at the High School/Middle School complex. We have purchased specialized equipment for this training and will continue to participate in this important annual exercise.

One disappointing fact is that, despite strenuous efforts by the Board, we have not been able to settle the PBA contract. The Board has tried multiple approaches, including mediation, in a dozen or more meetings over the past two years without success. The main sticking point continues to be the Village's share of payments for post-retirement health care. We were able to settle this matter with the firefighters union nearly three years ago, but, thus far, not with the PBA. Health care costs have been rising rapidly in the past decade and your Board will tightly manage this future cost just as carefully as we do current expenditures.

The arbitration panel for the contract period 6/06 – 6/08 has completed its work and could issue a decision in the near future. Once this decision has been reached, contract negotiations for the current period (6/08-6/10) will commence. We will, of course, keep our residents informed.

Teen Drinking

We have been very active in addressing the issue of teen drinking and the vandalism that frequently accompanies it. The Board has joined with PACT (Parents And Children Together), the Pelham Civic Association (PCA), the Board of Education, and the Village of Pelham to comprehensively address this problem. We supported PACT's successful multi-year grant application and the Trustees individually contributed to the successful "Make the PACT" decal program. Our police chief, Al Mosiello, and DARE Officer Ken Campion, have been featured participants at the excellent Pelham University programs sponsored by PACT and the PCA on this topic. We have executed joint enforcement operations with the Pelham Police Department on prom night for the past two years and recently against alcohol vendors. Our DARE officer creatively administers the community service requirements of youth offenders ordered by the Town Court. We have addressed this serious issue cooperatively and comprehensively, emphasizing education and awareness along with enforcement and consequences. We will continue to work with others in the community to ensure the health and safety of our children and residents.

Public Works and Public Spaces

The main highlight of this sector is the renovation of Weihman Park. This property has resulted in a beautiful, usable space at the crossroads of our Village. It has also been a highly successful public-private partnership

between the Junior League of Pelham (JLP) and the Village. The JLP conceived of the project, led the design effort with the guidance of Village Manager John Pierpont and raised nearly all the capital. The Village managed the work. After a public evaluation of the initial design and some modifications based on comments from neighbors, the project is nearing completion and remains on budget.

Pelham Manor highly values its stock of mature trees. They help define the character of our community. The Village has had a comprehensive tree plan for the past five years. There is a computerized database of all of our trees that includes size, type and condition and is updated annually. We have a long-term plan for replacement of diseased trees with a diversity of species. Our Village Manager John Pierpont, a Tree Steward certified by the Cornell University Cooperative Extension, conceived of, organized and maintains this effective program. We have also received advice from a landscape architect referred by the Pelham Preservation Association.

In recent years we have faced several challenges in maintaining our street trees. A severe wind and rainstorm two years ago knocked down a number of old-growth trees. In response to this storm, Con Edison adopted a new tree-trimming protocol that resulted in the removal of more trees and aggressive trimming of others. Finally, a significant number of maple trees that were planted as a "quick fix" for the loss of trees in the Dutch Elm disease blight in the 1930's have reached the end of their life span. The Village has responded to this challenge by accelerating the planting of diverse species of new trees and focusing on those areas which have been most affected, such as Pelhamdale Avenue near Four Corners. In addition, the Board is currently considering legislation to preserve our tree canopy on private property by requiring replacement planting if mature trees are removed.

The diamond-grinding project on Route 95 was completed in '08 and residents have noticed a marked decrease in road noise. We thank Assemblywoman Amy Paulin for her considerable efforts over many years to obtain sound barriers and diamond grinding of the roadbed on our behalf.

One aspect of public works is their environmental impact. Pelham Manor takes its environmental responsibilities very seriously. We increased our recycling volume in 2008 by 41% over the previous year. We have a creative program for leaf mulching that saves the Village approximately

\$30,000/year in tipping fees, avoids trucking leaves upstate and provides free mulch for our residents. We sponsored one of the first E-Waste Recycling Days in the County in November of '07, completed a second one in November of '08 and have a third scheduled for May 23rd. These widely advertised collection efforts have generated twice the tonnage expected and kept toxic materials out of landfills. We have also booked two more days for the County paper shredder. Shredding keeps papers out of landfills and protects information in sensitive documents. We have been dogged in our enforcement on storm water management. As residents of the Sound Shore we have a special stewardship obligation to monitor output to the Sound in addition to our obligations under State and county mandates.

Pelham Manor was an active participant in the Town-wide Earth Day Cleanup in partnership with the Village of Pelham, contributing safety vests and work gloves for all participants. The Village also provided recycling bins and pick up after the Pelham Civic Association's popular Summer Olympics event at Glover Field.

As most residents are aware, we were awarded a \$323,000 grant in '08 from the Safe Routes to School Program that will be used primarily for a pedestrian bumpout on Pelhamdale Avenue near Siwanoy School. This feature will slow traffic on Pelhamdale and improve pedestrian safety. We are working hard to obtain authorization from Albany to use our grant money but until we receive such authority we cannot let contracts and begin the work. We hope to receive such authorization and commence construction this year.

Inter-Governmental Relations

One of the truly bright highlights of the past two years has been the high degree of cooperation among the various local governmental entities and with community groups. This is a welcomed return to the cordial and cooperative relationships of past years. Your Board Members have been very active in working with their peers.

We have conducted several joint police training and enforcement activities with the Village of Pelham and the Villages are actively sharing best practices. Pelham Mayor Ed Hotchkiss has been an excellent partner. We have worked closely with the Town Board on many matters. We have provided temporary field space for Town soccer programs; we house the

Town Flycar in our garage; we shared the cost of a new video camera at Spring Road which we monitor and we permit Town vehicles to refuel at our gas and diesel pumps where they can share in the favorable prices we receive on petroleum products under bulk purchase contracts.

Last year, our Village Manager John Pierpont "rescued" a large quantity of granite slabs and curbstones during the demolition at the Acadia property and made them available at no cost to the Board of Education who installed them along school property at Prospect Hill School on Clay Avenue and Hudson St. These high quality materials were recycled at a substantial cost saving for the BoE and now prevent roadside erosion. We have also offered to permit BoE vehicles to refuel at our Village pumps at cost, as we do for the Town.

Priorities Going Forward

Commercial Development

We have completed the re-zoning of the balance of the former Business District and have met with the owners to encourage them to cooperate for the collective improvement of their properties. With the Acadia center opening in May and Fairway committed at the Levin property, we are optimistic that this section, which is bounded by the Acadia property, the water and the Hutchison River Parkway, will be developed for retail in the not too distant future. No doubt the economy and credit crisis will slow progress but we can look forward to more help with our taxes in the future from additional development.

The Acadia property will open in early May with BJs, Michaels, Vitamin Shoppe, Storage Post, Nuts About Candy and Hallmark. Acadia says that over 70% of the space is committed. Circuit City will not open but the owner is having discussions with other prospective tenants for this space.

Fairway Markets, an exciting grocer and purveyor of prepared food, will open a 75,000 sq. ft. store on the ground floor of the former Kmart store at the end of the year. Modells will return and occupy the balance of the ground floor and additional space above on the second floor. The presence of Fairway, BJs and other quality retailers validates the appeal of Pelham Manor's retail area and will attract additional quality merchandizers.

Stimulus Grants

Pelham Manor has submitted a request for a \$1 million grant to repair our sanitary and storm sewers. This request falls squarely in the mission of the stimulus: it is "shovel-ready", can be completed in the next 12 months and sewers are a specifically mentioned category.

We have also approached the Village of Pelham to submit a joint grant request for a new parking structure at the train station and they have agreed. While the structure would be in Pelham, the vast majority of users would be Manor residents, which makes it an appropriate joint request. We hope that the applications from both communities will make it stand out from the crowd. With a six-year waiting list for a parking spot at the train station this is clearly a community priority.

A Word of Thanks

We are grateful to our neighbors who volunteer their time and energies to serve on our Planning Board (Glenn Whitmore, Nancy Shea, Tom Middleton and Ray Vandenberg) and Zoning Board of Appeals (Lou Annunziata, Solveigh Marcks, Eric Munson, Paul Mottola and Greg Varone). Service on these boards involves a substantial time commitment and the often thankless task of making tough decisions affecting neighbors. We are also grateful for the professionalism and remarkable dedication of our Village Manager, John Pierpont, and his staff in handling the daily management of the Village's affairs. John's tireless efforts to help our residents with their building projects while maintaining our strict standards are greatly appreciated. He is an invaluable asset to our community. We are also grateful for the wise volunteer counsel of our Village Attorney, Neal Schwarzfeld. Finally, we want to express our appreciation to Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, State Senator Jeff Klein and their staffs and to County Legislator Jim Maisano for their advocacy at higher levels of government and their frequent presence at community events.

While we are proud of the strong state of our Village, we are, of course, aware that there are always ways to improve and welcome your suggestions. Please feel free to stop me or one of the Trustees in the neighborhood, at the

train station or drop us a letter, call or, better yet, attend one of our regular meetings. They are held on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 8:15 P.M. at Village Hall on Penfield Place or you can listen to a podcast of the most recent meeting on the Village website at any time.

I am personally confident that Pelham Manor will fare well in 2009 in spite of the troubled economy. Your Board is acutely aware of the difficulty many Pelham Manor families are facing. We will continue to budget and spend accordingly. Our Village will be in safe and sure hands in the next two years with Jay Hays as your new Mayor and my former colleague, Jim O'Connor, rejoining the Board to serve along with Trustees Mark Bruckmann, Chris Emerson and Randy Sellier.

Thank you for the privilege to serve our Village over the past many years, and best wishes for a better year in 2009.

Sincerely,

Thomas J.A. Lavin
Mayor

Trustees

Jay Hays

Mark Bruckmann

Chris Emerson

Randy Sellier

March 2009