

## 2019 Budget Message

One of 2017's accomplishments was to appoint our local assessor, who has advanced NYS Certification, as sole appointed assessor and to appoint another of our local assessors as assessor clerk. The result of the hard work put forth by our assessor's office was over a THREE MILLION DOLLAR increase in assessed value that was positively reflected in your 2018 tax bill.

Last year's accomplishment is this year's folly. Three newly elected board members started the year by slashing the assessor budget and deleting the assessor clerk, further they demanded the assessor do twice the work for half the pay keeping the assessor's annual salary at a demeaning \$11,000. The lack of necessary resources with which to do the job resulted in a mere \$674,473.00 increase in assessed value that reflects negatively in your 2019 tax bill.

The 2019 budget was not adopted. A tentative budget was produced; three newly elected board members agreed to unexplained changes and it became the preliminary budget. A hearing was scheduled and the public was heard. After the hearing but before adoption final revisions to the budget may be made. I made two attempts to revise the budget after the hearing, the first revision included the remaining debt owed the bank for the water project but stayed under the tax cap. Then we paid off our debt so it did not need to be included in the budget. On November 20, 2018 (the day the budget must be adopted by) I called a special meeting to consider final revisions and then to adopt the 2019 budget. The revisions I was suggesting would have resulted in a lower tax rate than the preliminary budget's tax rate, saving you some money. Mrs. Harris and I were the only board members to come to the special meeting on the 20th; we did not constitute a quorum so the budget was not adopted. Therefore the preliminary budget with a higher tax rate stands as the budget for next year.

There are some problems with the preliminary budget. First the tentative and the 2 revised budgets that I promoted included salary increases for the highway department and all elected and appointed officials. Since in the last 11 years there have been only two 2% salary increases for elected and appointed officials I thought it was fair to include raises for them in the 2019 budget. The preliminary budget, the handiwork of one particular board member gave salary increases to 3 of the eight elected and appointed officials and gave NO salary increases to the other 6 officials. No reason was given for this blatant discrimination. Another problem is the budget for the assessor's office. The preliminary budget raises money for an assessor clerk that the board has made clear they will not hire and keeps the assessor at the menial salary of \$11,000 to do everything himself. If in the end the board continues to refuse to hire an assessor clerk and continues to keep the assessor's salary at \$11,000.00 they will effectively deny once again the resources needed in the assessor's office for the assessor to do the job of assessing. The result will be another year of difficulty in achieving an increase in assessed value which will reflect negatively in 2020. If renovations, improvements and new homes or buildings are not added to the assessment totals, then they are not being taxed, so everyone else is paying more than their fair share

Cynthia R. Hyde

