

## **State of the Town Address**

by Ronald W. Nesbitt, Supervisor

2010 proved to be a very interesting year. Maybe interesting is not the proper word to use; unpredictable is a better choice. While some economists were predicting an improvement in the economy, the nation's jobless rate remained the highest it has been in decades while the stock market continued to fluctuate. While all of this was going on, the price of gasoline went over \$3.00 a gallon and continues to rise.

The situation on the federal and state government level was not that encouraging either.

In 2010 lawmakers in Washington, DC were unable to pass a federal budget. New York State's budget was late once again while the legislature and governor were embroiled in what best can be described as political chaos. While these soap operas were playing out in our nation's and state capitols, here in Webster the Town Board was able to pass a balanced budget, ahead of schedule, and keep the tax rate stable for the fourth year in a row. I have often wondered if the town should send our federal and state lawmakers a handbook detailing how we are able to produce balanced budgets on time without political infighting and deficit spending.

Instead of political turf-wars, the direct opposite is the standard operating procedure in Webster. Both the town and village governments have worked together on numerous projects and will continue to do so this year because it is not only good common sense, but more importantly it saves tax dollars. Just to mention one example: the Town Board and Village Board meets bi-monthly to discuss sharing personnel and services in the Highway Department, Sewer Department, and other departments.

One of the major obstacles facing the town's budget in 2011 will be the cost of health care. Webster was among several towns that joined the Finger Lakes Municipal Health Insurance Trust last year which did save the town a substantial amount of money in the 2011 budget. We expect to cap out at a 12% increase for 2012 and that number could be less based on our experience rating for 2011. However, 12% is still a hefty increase for taxpayers to absorb as part of the 2012 Budget.

As I have stated on numerous occasions, the three unions that represent town employees must be more flexible when it comes to negotiating health care costs. While the private sector has caught up with the times by making major changes to their respective health care policies, some government employees feel that the status quo is the best solution. It is not! The days of having an employer pick up 100 percent of an employee's health care coverage are over, and the sooner certain people understand that the quicker we can move forward and address this issue on a level playing field.

Now let's discuss taxes.

The 2011 town tax rate for residents living in the town (outside of the village) will remain the same as last year: \$ 4.33 per thousand of assessed valuation. The village tax rate also remains the same as in 2010 at \$ 3.75 per thousand. The sewer rate did decrease five cents to \$ 162.00 for 2011. The tax rate of \$ 4.33 will be the fourth year in a row the Town Board has kept the tax rate in Webster stable. Also note that there has been no town-wide reassessment since 2004, which means that your TOWN tax bill remains the same unless you added an addition to your home or work was performed that required a building permit.

It is also worth mentioning that Webster credit rating from Standard & Poor's remains at Double AA. This rating allows the town the ability to borrow money, if needed, at much lower rates. The town has very little debt to pay because the Town Board does not believe in mortgaging our future on the backs of our children and grandchildren. Our philosophy has always been a "check-book" policy; which means the ability to pay for everything, versus a "credit card" philosophy, where future generations are left holding the bag when it comes to paying off government debt. Not only does the Town Board believe in balanced budgets and stable tax rates, but also detests deficit spending.

In February, 2010 the town purchased 74.7 acres of land between Route 250 and Phillips Road from the Xerox Corporation for \$2 million. 53 acres of this land went to enlarging our open space plan, meaning that this land will never be developed but instead used by the community for trails and outdoor enjoyment. The extra 21 acres and fitness building owned by Xerox was turned into the Webster Recreation Center. In early June the Town Board authorized the spending of \$5.5 million to upgrade and enlarge this building for the future of numerous programs that will benefit residents of all ages in Webster. A bond payment to finance this project comes from monies already in the town budget, thus this project will not result in an increase in your tax rate in future years. The grand opening of the new facility is projected to take place sometime in October, 2011 because at the current time we are about four weeks ahead of schedule.

Commercial development in 2010 remains sluggish as a result of over-mounting concerns pertaining to the economy. Furthermore, the banks continue to maintain a tight grip when it comes to lending money. As of this time there are no commercial projects scheduled in Webster for 2011.

On the positive note, Canandaigua National Bank opened a new branch at Ridge and Jackson Roads late last fall. Kentucky Fried Chicken completed construction on their brand new building, which opened its doors to the public in early December on Ridge Road, and from all reports I have heard, KFC is doing quite well.

Housing starts were down again in 2010 while the real estate market seems poised to rebound; but only time, and the economy, will determine what happens.

The Town Board rezoned 81 acres of land on Phillips Road for the construction of 127 Patio homes that are expected to be built in the near future. These homes are designed for senior citizens or families where children have moved on and parents wish to downsize and stay in Webster where they have found friends and are comfortable living in a town Where Life is Worth Living.

Economic development continues to be a top priority of the Town Board in the Salt and Basket Road area. Mr. Glenn Cooke has been hired by the Town, Webster School District, Webster Village Board, Webster Chamber and the Webster Business Improvement District to help foster growth in moving forward on many economic issues in 2011.

The Highway Department was kept busy with re-milling and re-paving Hard Road plus putting in a four foot walking path from Klem Road to Publishers Parkway. Old Ridge Road got a new face lift with re-paving and new gutters. We also started, but have not completely finished, the sidewalk project that connects the Village of Webster and Town Center. This project will be completed this spring.

More homes were connected to sewer systems last year, while work continues on replacing of the outflow pipe into Lake Ontario that was damaged a couple of years ago.

The accredited Webster Police Department continues to serve and protect our community every single day. The officers and support personnel are highly trained and caring individuals who take their jobs very seriously. I would like to thank them for their continued service and pray they never come into harm's way.

The Webster Public Library continues to remain an invaluable asset to this community, especially during in these tough economic times. A number of residents who have lost their jobs have used the library as a way to conduct research when it comes to finding employment or even to retrain for a new career. The Webster Public Library continues to be the second busiest library in all of Monroe County. Patrons even come from neighboring Wayne County to use our library. The success of the Webster Library is due in large part to the excellent staff that serves the public.

In December of last year, the Town of Webster launched a brand new web site. This new web site offers more information when it comes to dates, times, locations and agendas of numerous town boards. We have tried to make it easier for people to navigate this site. Another new addition is the ability to view Town Board meetings via streaming audio. So if you either missed the last Town Board meeting, or do not have cable, you can see the meeting on the town's new web page. [www.ci.webster.ny.us](http://www.ci.webster.ny.us) An easier way to access our web site is just to use a search engine (Google or Yahoo) and type in Town of Webster, New York.

The new Web site is just another feature of "open government" here in the Town of Webster.

Unlike some other communities, Webster televises not only Town Board meetings, but also Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals meetings, which are held Tuesday nights starting at 7:00 p.m. (The Planning Board meets the first and third Tuesdays of the month while the Zoning Board of Appeals meets the second and fourth Tuesdays).

Another aspect of open government is my monthly Electronic Town Meetings on Cable Channel 12, which offers a different guest each month plus the opportunity for viewers to call-in near the conclusion of the program to ask questions of me or my guest.

The Town Times will continue to be published three times a year, updating the residents of this community on the workings of government that includes articles from different Department Heads.

I also plan to continue my weekly columns that appear in the *Webster Herald* newspaper, plus I am available most business hours here at Town Hall. You can contact my assistant, PattiAnn Schultz at (585) 872-7068 to set up an appointment. A faster way to reach me is via email. [supervisor@ci.webster.ny.us](mailto:supervisor@ci.webster.ny.us)

Let me conclude my State-of-the -Town presentation by reiterating my belief that imposing higher taxes and fees is not the answer to maintaining a balanced budget. The solution is controlling spending. At the state level, a property tax cap with a spending cap is the only answer. One without the other just will not work. Health care costs and retirement cost can not be exempt either.

The residents of Webster have my guarantee that the Town Board will do all it can to control spending; continue to build quality assets which will enhance our community; and provide the services residents have come to enjoy and expect. However, most importantly, we will continue to control the tax rate so you are not burdened by higher town taxes.

There is no doubt in my mind that 2011 will prove to be another challenging year for town government. However, I am confident that the Town Board is up to the challenges we may face. Our goal has, and always will be, to make Webster a place that people want to visit, shop, conduct business and call home.

Ronald W. Nesbitt  
Webster Town Supervisor  
1000 Ridge Road  
Webster, NY 14580  
(585) 872-7068  
[supervisor@ci.webster.ny.us](mailto:supervisor@ci.webster.ny.us)