

State of the Town Address

January 20, 2010

Ronald Nesbitt

Webster Town Supervisor

2009 will be remembered as the year of bailouts, stimulus packages, higher fees, increasing health care costs and the middle class losing jobs, especially in manufacturing. Taxpayers have become owners of car companies, banking institutions and other organizations, yet we have yet to see the benefits of being "shareholders."

The lack of public confidence with elected officials at the state and federal levels in the way they are dealing with deficits, spending and unfunded mandates imposed on local governments will make the Town Board's job even more difficult in 2010.

The Health Care Debate in Washington will result in higher taxes and no real cost savings to occur until 2014, leaving the Town Board to deal with a 17 to 20 percent increase in health care costs in the next few years. This one item alone will have a tremendous impact on our town budget and the services we can provide.

Experts predict that the price of gasoline will once again average close to or over \$3.00 a gallon, resulting in a negative impact on the town's fuel budget for all our fleet trucks.

The Highway Department budget was impacted because lake-effect snow and arctic-like temperatures forced the town to conduct more salting and plow runs than we had anticipated. Hopefully, the rest of this winter will not be as harsh. The fewer runs by our plows will help off-set the costs resulting from this spate of winter weather.

Despite the uncertain economic times at both the state and federal levels, rest assured that your Town Board will continue to manage local taxpayer dollars in a sound and prudent fashion by only spending money needed to provide the labor and services required by Webster residents. Every town department head understands the need for purchasing goods and materials at the lowest cost possible, plus continuing the practice of bidding out projects in an effort to prevent deficit spending.

The 2010 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/town tax rate is two cents less than in 2009 at \$ 3.75 per thousand. The sewer rate did go up 5 cents per household to \$ 162.55 because of a decrease in the number of sewer units on line.

It is noteworthy to point out that Webster's 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; the largest being the \$5.9 million dollar bond (passed in the year 2000) for open space, which paid for the purchase of 1,033 acres of land that will never be developed and will be enjoyed by future generations.

As you may have heard by now, the Town of Webster and Xerox have entered into a

contract for the town to purchase 74.7 acres of land between Route 250 and Phillips Road. 53 acres will be used as part of our Open Space Plan to continue the trail system put in place a few years ago. The remaining 21 acres will become part of the Parks and Recreation Department offering more recreational and fitness opportunities for all Webster residents.

There were 67 new housing starts in 2009 compared to the 2008 figure of 96.

At this time, figures for commercial development are also down, with few projects planned. I am pleased to announce that there is a Kentucky Fried Chicken establishment planned to be constructed next to CVS on Ridge Road; Wendy's is working their traffic report out with the state Department of Transportation; and Canandaigua National Bank has started construction of a new bank at the corner of Jackson and Ridge Roads. While slower development is good, it also puts a burden on the 2011 budget by not providing the town board a small increase in assessment values to offset natural cost of living expenses.

When the new Town and County tax bills arrived in late December, I received phone calls and emails from residents claiming their assessments went up on their tax bills; nothing could be further from the truth.

The Town of Webster has not done a town-wide reassessment since 2004 and no resident's assessment has gone up since that time unless you took out a building permit to improve your property. The term "market value" on your Town and County tax bill does not mean that your assessment went up at all. It is an estimate at what your house assessment MIGHT be if the town did a revaluation sometime in the near future, which the town has no plans to do right now. I firmly believe that we should control spending within our budget and not rely on a reassessment to gather more money to pay our bills.

Coming this summer will be the re-milling and re-paving of Hard Road. We will also be putting in a four (4) foot walking path along side Hard Road for safe pedestrian travel. Now that we have cleared all the legal hurdles needed to put in a sidewalk along a State Road (Ridge Road), we plan on starting on that project in early spring with construction of the sidewalk connecting the Village and Town Center.

During these tough economic times the Webster Public Library has become a valuable asset in providing out-of work residents, and those looking to start up small businesses, with valuable reading materials and other sources of information as they attempt to re-establish or create new business careers.

Programs offered at our Parks and Recreation Department continue to grow in the summer months as parents are opting to stay closer to home rather than take out-of-state vacations, thus sending their children to the Parks and Recreation Center to participate in a variety of programs being offered. Such programs are featured in the winter edition of the Town Times. If you did not receive your copy of the Town Times in the mail, there are plenty available here at Town Hall.

The Ridgcrest Community Center on Ebner Drive remains a major focal point for the Town

Board as high energy and maintenance bills continue to pile up month after month. We cannot continue with this "band-aid" approach when it comes to fixing the numerous problems at Ridgecrest. In the winter, the temperature inside is so cold that employees are forced to use space heaters just to keep the thermostat near 60 degrees. In the summer, numerous air conditioners are running to keep the building open and to prevent heat stroke as temperatures inside become unbearable.

The public must remember that Ridgecrest was never designed to be a Community Center. It was built back in the 1950s, and is by no means energy-efficient. Dialogue continues on what options are open to the town. This is a subject that you can rest assured that I will be keeping the public updated on, plus all decisions the Town Board reaches regarding this building.

The Sewer Department will embark on a one million dollar project to re-build the out flow pipe into the lake that was damaged by ice last winter.

The Town of Webster's Assessing Department continues to process Basic STAR and Enhanced STAR exemption applications to reduce your school tax bills. This is what I call an unfunded state mandate; using town employees for another agency's benefit. The town's assessment roll holds over 10,000 Basic STAR exemptions and approximately 1,500 Enhanced STAR exemptions.

Mr. Glenn Cooke has been hired by the Webster Community Coalition for Economic Development to lead our development team in revitalization and development inside the Village and the Salt and Basket Road Industrial Zoned Areas. We have had good response from developers and others on Glenn's efforts to bring new development into Webster.

Since becoming Supervisor in 2006, the Town Board and the Village Board have been meeting on a bi-monthly basis to discuss ways that the town and village can save money by working together. We will continue to look at making purchases together, share equipment and labor, and explore any other cooperation between the town and village which will enhance the quality of life for all Webster residents.

I am extremely proud of our town employees and department heads for the outstanding job they do in helping our customers, you the taxpayers, on a daily basis.

As we venture forward in 2010, open government will remain a high priority in my administration. This is not a mandatory request but something that I expect from my department heads, employees, Town Board and especially myself.

Residents should have all the information they can about town government and how it functions. We will continue to televise each Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board meeting so that residents can see and hear for themselves what is going on in our town. I will continue to host my monthly Electronic Town Hall Meetings with a different guest each month and a call in session near the conclusion of the program so you may ask me any question on any topic about town government. We will continue to publish the Town Times

three times a year bringing you stories and activities about the town. Plus, as always, you can call me at 872-7068 and speak with me or set up an appointment with my assistant, PattiAnn Schultz, at any time I am available. Or if you prefer faster service, you can email me at supervisor@ci.webster.ny.us and I will get back to you promptly.

I remain optimistic that the federal and state governments will figure out a way to control spending and not continue to be "Big Brother" as we work our way out of this recession.

I remain firm in my belief that imposing higher taxes and fees is not the answer to the problem – controlling spending is.

You 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 services Webster 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 Webster town taxes.

2010 will prove to be another challenging year in Webster government but I am confident that the Town Board and my fellow co-workers will continue to do the best job possible to serve you, the residents of Webster.

Ronald Nesbitt
Webster Town Supervisor
1000 Ridge Rd.
Webster, NY 14580
(585) 872-7068
supervisor@ci.webster.ny.us