

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE OF BRONXVILLE
HELD ON MARCH 7, 2005 AT VILLAGE HALL, 200 PONDFIELD ROAD, BRONXVILLE, N.Y.

PRESENT:	Nancy D. Hand	Mayor
	Thomas M. Leslie	
	Frank V. Sica	
	Mary C. Marvin	
	Glenn D. Bellitto	Trustees
ALSO PRESENT:	James F. Hayden	Deputy Village Counsel
	Harold Porr III	Village Administrator
	Rocco Circosta	Superintendent of Public Works
	Brian M. Downey	Chief of Police
	Vincent Pici, P.E.	Superintendent of Buildings
	Robert J. Fels	Village Treasurer
	William J. Murphy	Parking Commissioner
	Jane Marino	Library Director

Mayor Hand called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m. The mayor called for a motion to go into executive session to discuss litigation and personnel issues. A motion was made by Trustee Marvin, seconded by Trustee Bellitto, and approved unanimously to go into executive session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

(In attendance: Mayor and Trustees, Village Administrator and Deputy Village Counsel.) A motion was made to come out of executive session at 8:00 p.m., moved by Trustee Marvin, seconded by Trustee Sica and approved unanimously.

Mayor Hand opened the regular monthly meeting of the Village Board of Trustees at 8:00 p.m. The meeting began with special presentations from three groups who are represented in the Village budget.

YOUTH COUNCIL

Jill Rappaport, parent advisor to the Youth Council, said they very much appreciate the support of the Village. She said the Youth Council was not asking for an increase in funding from the Village for next year. This school year there are more students involved than other years – more than 120 students from all four grades – boys, girls, athletes and artists, there's something that appeals to everyone. She said they are also doing a better job this year in working with other organizations. Nick Pohl, the director, also works at Concordia College, and they have added activities they can do on the college campus. They have asked each of their twelve student officers to take on one or two activities that they are totally in charge of. These activities include the Midnight Run and the Halloween Parade.

Kelly Cassidy, Co-President of the Youth Council, reported that the Halloween Parade had one of the biggest turnouts ever. She said they are continuing this year with more cleanups, cleaning the fields in town. They continue with Meals-on-Wheels once a month, and acting as chaperones to the middle school teen center.

Mayor Hand said we feel the Youth Council is an important organization. She said it's probably because of the way they combine contribution to community and also have some fun while doing it.

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SENIOR CITIZENS

Sherrie Sorenson, Chairwoman of the Senior Citizens Council, thanked the Board for inviting them and for their support. She said the Senior Citizens Council is the parent organization that oversees the senior centers in Bronxville and Tuckahoe. She particularly wanted to thank Mayor Hand for being a true friend to the seniors during her twelve years as mayor.

Kathy Studwell, Director of the Bronxville Seniors, said Senior Citizens of Bronxville is thriving and has over 450 members. She spoke about the increasing number of older residents, many of whom live alone and need assistance. The need for custodial care in the home is acute with families scattered around the country. This is where Senior Services plays a major role. Senior Services continues to offer advice, care and concern. Programs cover a vast spectrum of interest to a population of vastly diverse interests. Members also participate in community service projects. Ms. Studwell said so much of what they do is made possible because of the support of the Village, without which Senior Citizens of Bronxville would not be what it is today. She said that one person who has been so dynamic for the past twelve years was Mayor Nancy Hand and it has meant a great deal to the seniors.

Mayor Hand stated that Senior Citizens of Bronxville means so much to all of us. So many seniors are choosing to stay in Bronxville and it adds an important dimension to our community. Mayor Hand said we are so thankful to Kathy Studwell because of what she does for the seniors.

BRONXVILLE LIBRARY REPORT

Jane Marino, Library Director, said they are approaching the 4th anniversary of the Library renovations. She said the wonderful new rooms have added so much for the public and the staff and they are happy to work in such a wonderful place. She said it's a very busy library and she spoke about some of the programs. Ms. Marino extended thanks to the wonderful Library Board of Trustees, past president Eloise Morgan and current president Maryann Maher. She added a special thanks to Jane Warman, former board member and art historian. She said the Friends of the Library continue to be a wonderful source of programming and they have done some wonderful musical programs. The Yeager Room continues to be the center of activity for community groups. George and Barbara Yeager continue their support of the Yeager Room. She said it's a wonderful room and they are especially lucky to have a cable room there. She thanked Steve Lysohir, one of their board members and also the Cable TV Committee Chairman. Ms. Marino said they are fortunate to be part of a community like Bronxville with wonderful organizations who support them. She thanked Mayor Hand for her years of service to the Village of Bronxville, the Board of Trustees, and Village Department Heads for all their help. Ms. Marino said her vision of the Library is a wonderful place to take out a book and enjoy some peace and quiet.

Mayor Hand said we really appreciate all the work Ms. Marino does at the Library. She said she should be proud and the Library Board should be proud.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion of Trustee Bellitto, seconded by Trustee Marvin, the Board approved the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 14, 2005 and the Grievance Hearing of February 16, 2005, as drafted.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Department reports were presented by Chief of Police Downey, Superintendent of Buildings Pici, Superintendent of Public Works Circosta, Village Treasurer Fels, Parking Commissioner Murphy and Village Administrator Porr.

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RESOLUTION – Library Fund Budget Transfer

Village Treasurer Fels stated that on February 25, 2005, Jane Marino requested that he transfer \$6,000 from the Library's Building Cleaning account (L.7410432) to its Part-time Clerical account (L.7410110). Therefore he recommended that the following resolution be adopted.

On motion of Trustee Sica, seconded by Trustee Marvin, and unanimously carried, the following resolution was adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees authorizes the Village Treasurer to amend the Library's 2004/2005 Operating Budget as follows:

Decrease:	L.7410432 Building Cleaning	<u>\$6,000.00</u>
Increase:	L.7410110 Part-Time Clerical	<u>\$6,000.00</u>

RESOLUTION – Capital Project Authorization

Village Treasurer Fels noted that on July 12, 2004 the Board of Trustees passed a resolution authorizing the issuance of a serial bond in the amount of \$5,000,000 for the renovation of Village Hall. At this time the Village's fiscal agents, Capital Market Advisers, LLC are in the process of preparing the Official Statement for the upcoming bond issue. As such, he said the Village must adopt a resolution establishing a capital project for the renovation work.

On motion of Trustee Sica, seconded by Trustee Leslie, and unanimously carried, the following resolution was adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees authorizes the Village Treasurer to establish project # 20042005-0043-1620 Renovation of Village Hall, in the amount of \$5,000,000.00 to be funded from the proceeds of the bond sale authorized on July 12, 2004.

Mayor Hand noted that the architects made a presentation of the renovation plans for Village Hall a few meetings ago. She said residents will be receiving a flyer in the mail describing the plans for Village Hall.

Village Treasurer Fels said that as a result of the timing of the bond sale in June 2005, the Village will be able to structure the repayment schedule so that residents will not feel the effect of debt service costs until the June 2006-07 budget. He noted that the Village's debt margin is one of the lowest in New York State, and at the present time is less than 10%. At the present time, the Village has identified several revenue sources other than property taxes that will relieve some of the burden.

RESOLUTION – United Water Rate Increase Challenge

Village Administrator Porr stated that New Rochelle Water has notified us that they are substantially increasing their water rates. Instead of challenging the proposed increases on our own, it would be more cost effective for the Village to join with other municipalities in Westchester to challenge this rate increase.

On motion of Trustee Marvin, seconded by Trustee Bellitto, and unanimously carried, the following resolution was adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED the Board of Trustees authorizes the Village of Bronxville to join with several Westchester County municipalities to challenge the proposed increases in water and hydrant service by United Water Company. This resolution will allow for an

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expenditure of village funds, not to exceed \$2,500, to share in the cost of a specialized legal representative and expert witnesses to assist the municipal group in the proposed rate increase challenge.

RESOLUTION – To Expand the Job Duties of the Village Treasurer

On motion of Trustee Bellitto, seconded by Trustee Sica, and unanimously carried, the following resolution was adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED the Village of Bronxville Board of Trustees expands the duties of the Village Treasurer to include responsibilities related to the administration of the Village of Bronxville Parking Violations Bureau should the Village Judge so desire to designate the Village Treasurer to be in charge of the bureau as outlined in Village Code Section 290-4.

RESOLUTION – Public Hearing - 2005-2006 Operating Budget

On motion of Trustee Bellitto, seconded by Trustee Sica, and unanimously carried, the following resolution was adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED the Board of Trustees schedules the public hearing for the 2005-2006 fiscal year operating budget for Monday, April 11, 2005 in Village Hall at 8:00 p.m.

BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS

On motion of Trustee Sica, seconded by Trustee Leslie, and unanimously carried, the following resolution was adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED the Board of Trustees, acting as the Board of Police Commissioners, approves the request of the Bronxville Policemen's Benevolent Association, Inc. to sell tickets and solicit door prizes for the PBA's annual spring dance in 2005 subject to the following conditions:

1. All solicitations must be conducted off duty.
2. Solicitations shall not be conducted in uniform.
3. Raffle chances are to be sold at the dance only.

RESOLUTION - Board of Assessment Review

On motion of Trustee Sica, seconded by Trustee Leslie, and unanimously carried, the following resolution was adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED the Board of Assessment Review will meet on Monday, March 21, 2005 at 7:00 p.m. in Village Hall.

**RESOLUTION – New York State Quality Communities Program
2004 - 2005 Grant Application**

Superintendent of Public Works Rocco Circosta stated that the Village of Tuckahoe contacted him with regards to participating in a N.Y. State Quality Communities Grant Program. The grant application is seeking approximately \$197,863.76 for the Villages of Tuckahoe and Bronxville and the Town of Eastchester. The grant is for GIS/GPS mapping and has no monetary contribution or match. The grant will allow the three communities to develop and implement GPS mapping in conjunction with GIS information for its planning and utility information. Based upon his review of the grant application and discussions with Bob Mascianica of the Village of Tuckahoe (the lead municipality), Mr. Circosta recommended that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution.

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On motion of Trustee Leslie, seconded by Trustee Sica and unanimously carried, the following resolution was adopted:

WHEREAS, the Village of Bronxville is a co-applicant with the Village of Tuckahoe and the Town of Eastchester in the submission of a joint grant application to the New York Department of State for the purpose of developing a comprehensive GIS (Geographical Information System) mapping project for the three communities, and

WHEREAS, the Village of Bronxville Board of Trustees is in support of such application which will assist the three communities in their efforts to provide accurate mapping and information, all of which will improve the operations of their respective communities;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Village of Bronxville Board of Trustees authorizes the submission of this grant application under the Quality Communities Grant Program, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Village Board of Trustees supports the efforts of all the applicants in seeking, obtaining and implementing a comprehensive GIS mapping program.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Hand addressed an issue that had been raised recently by two Bronxville residents with regard to tax assessments in the Village. She said that although the Board does not approve of the tactics employed and some of the accusations made really do not characterize Bronxville's assessment practices, there have been some valid issues raised. She said we will be taking some steps in the next few weeks to address the issue. The first thing we have done was to have meetings with individual residents. We had several of those. She said we are now in the process of preparing an informational brochure addressing some of the issues. Part of the problem, she said, is that there is a lot of misinformation out there. The brochure will explain some of the specific terms. It is expected that it will be completed by the beginning of April, and will be mailed to every household in the Village. The other thing the Village is doing is organizing a community meeting with a panel of experts, including someone from the New York State Office of Real Property Services, someone from the Tax Office of Westchester County, and our Village tax assessor. We are aiming for sometime in April. In addition, Mayor Hand said that with the full support of our village assessor, we are asking an outside assessor to review our tax roll. She said that because of the issues that have been raised, we will also be looking at what happens in Eastchester with their regard to their tax roll. She said we intend to have a solid discussion about our valuation and what the pros and cons are concerning reassessment, and come up with the best solution for the Village.

Mayor Hand noted that this was her last meeting as Mayor after twelve years. She said it's a little unique because it is a volunteer job. Although everyone who sits on the Board of Trustees was elected, in many ways they are not politicians but are really public servants. She said she enjoyed working with the existing board as well as former board members. All have been so capable, bringing an incredible amount of knowledge to the board. She said we are proud of the many things we have accomplished over the years. She recognized Trustee Leslie who was stepping down, and said she especially appreciated his wonderful advice and counsel. She said she didn't know of another trustee in the recent past who served longer, and unofficially proclaimed Tom Leslie "the longest serving Trustee", having served for ten years on the board.

TRUSTEE REPORTS

Trustee Bellitto said one of the best things working on the board for the past two years was working with Mayor Hand and Trustee Leslie. He said he looked to Tom Leslie for his good judgment and compassion and said he will miss him. Trustee Bellitto said he learned so much just by watching Mayor Hand at these meetings.

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Trustee Marvin said that as we embark on a thorough review of the property tax issue, she is committed to set a new tone in the discussion of property taxes. She called upon the Huttons to remove all the unfounded attacks directed at her colleagues from their website, as well as its inclusion in the New York Times. Personal attacks do nothing, she said, to advance the cause of working towards a common goal. She said, "I believe we should discuss things in a fair and collegial way."

Trustee Marvin said it has been a privilege serving with Mayor Hand and Trustee Leslie, and said they will be sorely missed.

Trustee Leslie said he would be remiss if he didn't specifically thank every one of the department heads and Village Administrator Porr. He said the only reason he is the longest serving Trustee is because of Mayor Hand, and said she has made a difference in the Village.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Stephen Littman, 321 Pondfield Road, said his assessment increased when his house was renovated a few years ago. He said he feels treated unfairly by something that isn't working properly. He said that as a homeowner when you open a newspaper to see a situation where 800 homes were renovated since 1996, and 621 were reassessed by Eastchester while in Bronxville only 37 were reassessed, he felt he was treated unfairly. He said he was just interested in this issue being dealt with fairly.

A resident asked what the total debt of the Village was and what was the debt for the School.

Mayor Hand asked Village Treasurer Fels to respond. Mr. Fels said he didn't have the exact figures at hand, but the Village's debt as of May 31, 2004, he guessed was somewhere around \$6 million.

The same resident said he heard stories that the Bronxville School is \$50 million in debt. He said if the School is in debt for \$50 million and the Village is in debt for \$6 million, and we're doing a renovation of Village Hall for \$5 million, someone has to pay for that. He said he was curious where those funds are going to come from.

Mayor Hand said she didn't know the exact number for the School but believes it is in the range of \$50 million. She said the Village of Bronxville has made an effort to keep tax increases to a minimum. In recent years taxes have been at or about the level of inflation. Last year there was an 8% increase and that was because of an increase in pension costs. She said we have been very careful over the years to control the level of our tax increases in the Village portion of the tax bill. She noted that the taxes this year in the new budget for 2005/2006 will not be increased due to the bond issue. She said there will be an increase in the 2006/2007 budget with regard to the renovation. We know we have \$900,000 in the bank and we have additional revenue sources coming to us, to put towards the renovation project.

Trustee Sica pointed out that the revenues for the Village come only half from taxes, the other revenue comes from other sources including parking and building fees. He noted that we have \$300,000 from the forfeited deposit for a failed Kensington Road project. He said if the new project goes well we will have about \$3 million in terms of both purchase price and parking fees from that project. In the meantime, he said we are paying off some of the debt that we have. So the total debt picture is not going to go over \$10 million and will continue to decrease as we pay off the old debt. He said we are borrowing the money now to take advantage of low interest rates. He said we are trying to manage the Village finances so that we minimize the tax increases.

The resident asked if the board was saying there will be no increase in property taxes for the fiscal year 2006.

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Mayor Hand said no, she was not saying there will be no increase in property taxes. She said there will be no increase due to the bond issue. She said she was fairly sure there will be an increase in property taxes. The only time since she has been mayor that there were no property tax increases was during the Centennial year when it was zero.

Thomas Wolff, a resident, said as of June 30th, according to the outside auditors for , there is approximately \$50 million that has to be paid back in principal and interest on bonds that the School has to pay back over the next sixteen years, or about \$3 million a year in principal and interest. He said the Village of Bronxville has done a much better job of managing their financial affairs than the school district.

Josette Polzella, President of the Westchester County Chapter of the New York State Assessors Association, who is also the Town of Ossining assessor, said she was here this evening along with members of the association. She said the purpose of their association is to promote fair assessment practices throughout the county. She said she received calls from reporters about Bronxville's assessment practices. She said they were ~~here~~ tonight because there was some misinformation out there and she wanted to set the record straight. She said that local tax reassessments do not affect county taxes. She said that physical changes like the upgrading of a home should be captured. She said that the Assessors Association would like to help the village on the panel of experts.

Noreen Whitty, assessor for the City of Rye and Vice President of the Westchester Chapter of New York State Assessors, spoke about assessments. She said Jim Timmings, assessor for the Town of Mount Pleasant was also present. She said she had read some things citing a tax case in the City of Rye and said she was the assessor when that case was tried. She said the gist of the outcome of that case was you cannot reassess based on sale price alone but it in no way prohibits reassessment on improvements.

Mark Winston asked about the renovation of Village Hall. He asked if it was absolutely imperative that we do it now with everything that's going on with the school.

Mayor Hand said that we put off renovation of Village Hall a long time and it's long overdue. The building needs repairs from the roof down, all the systems are falling apart, and we are not ADA compliant. She said we have been operating in a 1942 building without any renovation. A few years ago we talked about replacing the roof and making the building ADA compliant. She said it was decided that instead of doing the job piecemeal, this was the best way to handle it. We have come to a point where the work has to be done, and we want to be able to serve the community in an updated manner.

Trustee Sica stressed that the building is not ADA compliant. He said we are hoping to get additional revenue from the lease of the Kensington property and additional parking spaces. He said three elements will ameliorate the expense of the renovation project – increased taxes, parking fees and payment for the land. He said, as you can see from the floor of this room, the building is in need or repairs. He said we have been talking about renovations for years and you have to "bite the bullet" at some point.

Mr. Winston said he understood. He asked about how the Village interacts with the School regarding the huge deficit that the School is running.

Mayor Hand said the School Board is a separate entity. She said we do keep in contact with the School Board. We are kept abreast on a regular basis in terms of what's going on. In recent years the Village Board had some concerns about school finances and had a meeting with the School Board. She said the Trustees had some real concern about the money that the school borrowed. She noted that the Village portion of the tax bill is only 16 ½% and 83 ½ goes to the School. She said we are well aware of the debt and it is a concern. She said Village officials are in ongoing dialogue with School officials.

Commenting on the renovations, Trustee Sica said that what we are trying to do is recreate the team that renovated the Library. That project came in pretty much on time and on budget. He said we take this very seriously and we believe we have a controlled project.

Mayor Hand said we have said from the beginning, all of us are committed to the fact that we have a certain amount of money to spend. If the project comes in for more than we planned, she said, we are going to have to cut it.

Steve Howard, 23 Homestead Road, said he and his wife Elizabeth were one of the 37 properties that were reassessed after capital improvements a couple of years ago. They thought the percentage level increase was appropriate. He thanked Mayor Hand and Trustee Marvin for spending over three hours last week with him and his wife going over assessments. Unfortunately, he said, as a result of that meeting as many questions arose in his mind as were resolved. He thought it was important to have open discussion about some of the key issues that have been circulating in the press recently and bad information that's being presented that is either incomplete or just not accurate on both sides of the issue. He questioned the impact reassessment would have on county taxes. He said there were a lot of people here this evening who are very concerned about this issue.

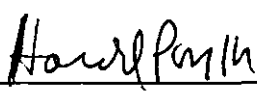
Mayor Hand thanked the residents for their comments and said that the discussion this evening goes a long way toward starting a dialogue.

Mayor Hand asked for a motion to go back into executive session to discuss contracts and personnel matters at 10:05 p.m. A motion was made by Trustee Leslie, seconded by Trustee Bellitto, to go into executive session and approved unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

(In attendance: Mayor and Trustees, Village Administrator, Deputy Village Counsel, and Labor Attorney Terence O'Neil.) A motion was made by Trustee Leslie, seconded by Trustee Marvin, and unanimously approved, to close executive session at 11:30 p.m.

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Harold Porr III, Village Clerk