



# Village of Flower Hill Newsletter

## Fall 2011

### HURRICANE IRENE AFTERMATH

Flower Hill, along with the rest of the Island, was hit hard. The biggest problem for our Village was the loss of power. Most of the Village was affected, some of you for up to a week. Mayor Weiss and Village staff were on the phones to LIPA for hours each day trying to get crews to come in and remove trees from transformers so restoration work could begin. Our Village Highway crew did an outstanding job of removing trees from the roadway immediately after the storm; however, neither they (nor any tree removal company) can touch trees on transformers or wires because of the danger of live current. We tried to get information on a timeline for repair work so we could at least inform residents as to how long they could expect to be without power. LIPA was unable or unwilling to give us any information about whether outages had been reported or were scheduled to be dispatched.

Our Village officials have gotten together with other Mayors and the Town Supervisor to hold LIPA accountable. Their response to this disaster was unacceptable. They must do a much better job of communicating with us as civic leaders and you as customers. We are trying to get a representative from LIPA to come to the Village Hall to answer your questions and let us know how they plan to improve their emergency response. Trustee Tab Hauser, who has been our emergency management expert on the Board, is in contact with LIPA officials and hopes to be able to schedule a meeting with them in the near future.

We would like to thank Trustee Hauser for his efforts to get LIPA, Cablevision and Verizon services back to the Village as well as our Highway Dept. staff, who left their homes and families to be on call here in the Village during the storm.

### FALL LEAF PICK UP SCHEDULE

For residents who have garbage pickup on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays: **Friday, November 4, 11, 18, 25, December 2, 9**

For residents with garbage pickup Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays: **Saturday, November 5, 12, 19, 26, December 3, 10**

**Please call Meadow Carting if you are planning to put out a large item such as furniture or old appliances. They will let you know when they will be able to arrange pick up.**

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL MEADOW CARTING 338-0121**

### WINTERIZING YOUR SWIMMING POOL

**It is illegal to discharge swimming pool water into the street. As you prepare your pool for the winter, make sure you or your swimming pool contractor DO NOT allow the water to empty into the public roadway. All swimming pool water must discharge into a drywell on your property. It is illegal and an environmental hazard for chlorinated water to be discharged into storm sewers which lead to Long Island Sound. Such discharge is subject to a fine of up to \$5000 and is a very serious source of pollution that is harmful to fish and wildlife dependent on the Sound.**

## WHY THE NY STATE LEGISLATURE'S 2% REAL PROPERTY TAX CAP WILL NOT WORK

While the Village of Flower Hill has taken many cost cutting measures such as salary freezes and required contribution by employees toward health insurance costs, it may not be enough to maintain the level of services in our Village while also complying with State mandates. The following are excerpts from a report from the New York Conference of Mayor's Mayoral Task Force on Mandate and Property Tax Relief which explains why the tax cap will not work.

Local governments across the state are facing unprecedented fiscal challenges. Rapidly rising expenses largely beyond a mayor's control, such as pensions and health insurance, are devouring municipal budgets and threatening the ability to provide essential services at a cost affordable to taxpayers. Additionally, local governments' already limited non-property tax revenues are stagnant or in decline, and state aid meant to provide municipal property tax relief – the AIM program – has been cut.

At the same time, there is a growing sense that a property tax cap may be the singular answer to New York's property tax woes. While it may provide political appeal in its simplicity, a property tax cap without specific exclusions (such as costs associated with health care, pensions, extraordinary capital expenditures and reductions in state aid) and relief from state mandates will result in destructive local budget deficits, decimated municipal work forces and a dangerous reduction in the essential services provided by local governments.



What has become readily apparent to local officials all across the state is that their residents do, in fact, want the essential services that municipalities provide, they just want them provided more cost-effectively. In order to do this and truly achieve property tax relief, we must first reform the cost drivers that lead to high property taxes in New York.

Furthermore, while the emphasis on government consolidation continues to be a popular theme among public officials and the media, it is essential that the state repeal the many mandates that not only inflate the cost of municipal operations, but also act as barriers to ongoing efforts by local government officials to work cooperatively. Eliminating local governments is not the answer. Doing so decreases the connection between "local" government and its citizens, while failing to reduce the underlying causes of overly expensive government in New York. Instead, ensuring that existing local governments have the ability to effectuate the consolidation and sharing of services – and deliver all municipal services cost-effectively – is the best way to maximize efficiency and minimize property taxes. Finally, it should be noted that many of the recommendations that follow are not new ideas, and the mandates with which they are associated have been repeatedly identified by mayors, county executives, town supervisors, and school officials as the ones most in need of reform. The state's perennial unwillingness to address these cost drivers has clearly exacerbated the challenges facing municipalities, as the cumulative financial impacts of these legal constraints have resulted not only in excessive property tax levels, but, through the financial pressures they generate, a reduction in municipal services and the workforce necessary to deliver that which taxpayers have paid for. Consequently, with or without a property tax cap, significant, enduring fiscal relief is essential – and long overdue.

### SCHOOL IS OPEN, DRIVE WITH CARE

As we head into the 2011—2012 school year we want to remind you to exercise extra caution while driving on our residential streets. Please follow the following AAA safety rules for drivers and walkers:

- Slow down near schools, bus stops and playgrounds.
- Obey lower speed limits around school zones.
- Stop for school buses with flashing red lights and extended arms.
- Never use a hand held cell phone while driving, it's against the law.
- Drive carefully in bad weather.
- While walking, watch for cars pulling into and backing out of driveways.
- Walk on the left side facing traffic if there are no sidewalks.
- When crossing watch for turning cars.
- Look all ways before crossing and only cross if cars are at least a block away or more.

### NY DEPT. OF STATE NEWS

Gov. Cuomo's plan is to restore credibility to government by ensuring that it truly works for the people. This is exemplified by the New York Department of State's publication, "The People's Quarterly Report".

The Dept. of State has many functions that affect the quality of life of all New Yorkers every-day. In its efforts to ensure the health and life safety of all residents, the Department oversees the enforcement practices of local governments in matters pertaining to building construction, fire prevention, and energy conservation. It also promotes business growth and oversees the licensing of 29 professional occupations from hair stylists to real estate brokers, handles corporate filings, and regulates the state's not-for-profit cemeteries.

Through its newly acquired Division of Consumer Protection, the Department serves as the state's top watchdog and think tank on a wide range of consumer issues from investigating questionable business practices, to product recalls, to helping citizens mitigate the consequences of identity theft.

To subscribe to the newsletter go to [LGEprogram@dos.state.ny.us](mailto:LGEprogram@dos.state.ny.us) or visit their web site at [www.dos.ny.gov](http://www.dos.ny.gov)

### PLAYGROUND OPENS IN VILLAGE PARK

Over the past few years we have received numerous requests by residents for a playground to be located in the Village. At long last parents and children will no longer have to travel to Port Washington or to Plandome Road in Manhasset to enjoy a well designed playground in a beautiful setting. The Village has constructed a playground along the Stonytown Road side of Flower Hill Park. The playground is primarily designed for children ages 2 through 5 but older children are always welcome too! The location is ideal as it is in a shady spot that always feels cool even on the warmest days. The playground is fenced for safety and benches are provided for caregivers. Parking for access to the playground is permitted along the park side of Stonytown Road as well as in the Village Hall parking lot.

We are especially grateful to our Nassau County Legislator Wayne Wink and his staff who were instrumental in obtaining a grant from the County for the cost of the equipment. This grant enabled us to complete the rest of the playground solely with funds from the park budget. Thanks also to Trustee Norman Glavas who did the architectural design and drawings, Deputy Mayor Bill Clemency and Trustee Aviva Pinto who served on the committee that made this into a reality.

### **Make Friends With Your Cesspool!**

By Eric Swenson, Executive Director of the Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee (August 2011)

OK.....maybe the title is a little far-fetched but seriously, how else could I get you to read an article about septic system maintenance? I'll try to make this fun to read and interesting but trust me, it really is important so please read on. You may even decide that your cesspool *is* a friend!

You may not realize it, but with cooking, clothes washing, showering, gardening, swimming using pools or hot tubs, each of us uses on average over 100 gallons of water a day and it all has to go somewhere. In areas without sewers, all of this wastewater needs to go into cesspools or septic systems. From there it goes into the ground and ultimately into the groundwater. In Sea Cliff, the groundwater ends up in Hempstead Harbor so your wastewater *will* eventually make its way to the harbor. Multiply that by thousands of homes and you can see the cause for concern.

If properly designed, constructed and maintained, your septic system can provide effective and safe treatment of household wastewater for decades. However, if not maintained, you could incur thousands of dollars in costs, cause environmental problems, incur legal liability, and cause great inconvenience and odors for yourself and your neighbors.

Typical pollutants in household wastewater are nitrogen, phosphorus, and disease-causing bacteria and viruses. A malfunctioning system can cause pathogens to enter Hempstead Harbor and cause beach closures and/or shellfish closures. A poorly maintained system also increases the chance of swimmers contracting a variety of infectious diseases. These range from eye and ear infections to acute gastrointestinal illness and diseases like hepatitis.

While water quality in the outer part of Hempstead Harbor has improved so much that the DEC has recently re-opened it to shellfish harvesting after more than 40 years, the middle and lower portions of the harbor still have elevated bacteria levels that require those areas to be closed to shellfishing at this point. While there are many sources of this bacteria including pet waste and wildlife, the fact that the Sea Cliff area has many aging septic systems leads us to believe that malfunctioning systems may well be contributing to these bacteria levels. You can thus play an important role in restoring the rest of the harbor. Here is what you need to know and do:

**Know how it works:** It helps to think of your septic system as a machine – like your car. Imagine buying a car and then never checking the fluids or servicing it? Before long it would start to run poorly. Ultimately you would need to replace the car long before you normally would have had you maintained it all along. It is the exact same thing with septic systems. They are, in effect, underground machines with little microbes digesting the solids in your wastewater. You need to keep that little colony of microorganisms thriving so that they can do their job. In essence, and in reality, you have billions or trillions of little servants quietly working for you underground to safely process all that wastewater that you generate. You need them as much as they need you. They are your friends.

**Inspect and pump:** by the time you can smell or see a septic system problem, it might be too late and the damage might already be done. Therefore, experts recommend that you have your system inspected at least every 3 years by a professional and your tank or cesspool pumped as recommended by the inspector (generally every 3 to 5 years). Alternative systems with electrical float switches, pumps, or mechanical components need to be inspected more often, generally once a year. Your service provider should inspect for leaks and look at the scum and sludge layers in your septic tank. If the bottom of the scum layer is within 6 inches of the bottom of the outlet tee or the top of the sludge layer is within 12 inches of the outlet tee, your tank needs to be pumped. Remember to note the sludge and scum levels determined by your service provider in your operation and maintenance records. This information will help you decide how often pumping is necessary. Four major factors influence the frequency of pumping: the number of people in your household, the amount of wastewater generated (based on the number of people in the household and the amount of water used), the volume of solids in the wastewater, and septic tank size.

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Some makers of septic tank additives claim that their products break down the sludge in septic tanks so the tanks never need to be pumped. Not everyone agrees on the effectiveness of these additives. In fact, septic tanks already contain the microbes they need for effective treatment. Periodic pumping is a much better way to ensure that septic systems work properly and provide many years of service. Regardless, every septic tank requires periodic pumping. In the service report, the pumper should note any repairs completed and whether the tank is in good condition. If the pumper recommends additional repairs he or she can't perform, hire someone to make the repairs as soon as possible.

**Use water efficiently:** by limiting your water use, you can reduce the amount of wastewater your system must treat, thus improving its efficiency and reducing the risk of failure. Leaky toilets can waste as much as 200 gallons each day. Toilet use accounts for 25 to 30 percent of household water use. Do you know how many gallons of water your toilet uses to empty the bowl? Most older homes have toilets with 3.5- to 5-gallon reservoirs, while newer high-efficiency toilets use 1.6 gallons of water or less per flush. If you have problems with your septic system being flooded with household water, consider reducing the volume of water in the toilet tank if you don't have a high-efficiency model or replacing your existing toilets with high-efficiency models.

Faucet aerators help reduce water use and the volume of water entering your septic system. High-efficiency showerheads or shower flow restrictors also reduce water use.

Check to make sure your toilet's reservoir isn't leaking into the bowl. Add five drops of liquid food coloring to the reservoir before bed. If the dye is in the bowl the next morning, the reservoir is leaking and repairs are needed. A small drip from a faucet adds many gallons of unnecessary water to your system every day. To see how much a leak adds to your water usage, place a cup under the drip for 10 minutes. Multiply the amount of water in the cup by 144 (the number of minutes in 24 hours, divided by 10). This is the total amount of clean water traveling to your septic system each day from that little leak.

**Watch what you pour:** what goes down the drain can have a major impact on how well your septic system works. What shouldn't you flush down your toilet? Dental floss, feminine hygiene products, condoms, diapers, cotton swabs, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, cat litter, paper towels, and other kitchen and bathroom items that can clog and potentially damage septic system components if they become trapped. Flushing household chemicals, gasoline, oil, pesticides, antifreeze, and paint can stress or destroy the biological treatment taking place in the system or might contaminate surface waters and groundwater. If your septic tank pumper is concerned about quickly accumulating scum layers, reduce the flow of floatable materials like fats, oils, and grease into your tank or be prepared to pay for more frequent inspections and pumping.

**Washing your clothes:** by selecting the proper load size, you'll reduce water waste. Washing small loads of laundry on the large-load cycle wastes precious water and energy. If you can't select load size, run only full loads of laundry. Doing all the household laundry in one day might seem like a time-saver, but it could be harmful to your septic system. Doing load after load does not allow your septic tank time to adequately treat wastes. You could be flooding your drainfield without allowing sufficient recovery time. Try to spread water usage throughout the week. A new EnergyStar-rated washer uses 35 percent less energy and 50 percent less water than a standard model. These are mostly the front-loading washers.

**Protect your cesspool or septic tank:** plant only grass over and near your septic system. Roots from nearby trees or shrubs might clog and damage the system. Don't drive or park vehicles on any part of your septic system. Doing so can compact the soil in your drainfield or damage the pipes, tank, or other septic system components. Keep roof drains, basement sump pump drains, and other rainwater or surface water drainage systems away from the drainfield. Flooding the drainfield with excessive water slows down or stops treatment processes and can cause plumbing fixtures to back up. You can divert your gutters to a rain barrel or rain garden. The Nassau County Soil and Water Conservation District ((516)364-5860) can help you design such a system.

**Know the symptoms of failure:** the most obvious septic system failures are easy to spot. Check for pooling

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water or muddy soil around your septic system or in your basement. Notice whether your toilet or sink backs up when you flush or do laundry. You might also notice strips of bright green grass over the drainfield. Septic systems also fail when partially treated wastewater comes into contact with groundwater. This type of failure is not easy to detect, but it can result in the pollution of wells, nearby streams, or other bodies of water. Check with a septic system professional if you suspect such a failure.

**Know the causes of failure:** household toxics and cleaners can wreak havoc on the living organisms that are trying to digest your wastewater. Do you use the utility sink to clean out paint rollers or flush toxic cleaners? Oil-based paints, solvents, and large volumes of toxic cleaners should not enter your septic system. Even latex paint cleanup waste should be minimized. Instead, squeeze all excess paint and stain from brushes and rollers on several layers of newspaper before rinsing. Leftover paints and wood stains should be taken to your local S.T.O.P. (Stop Throwing Out Pollutants) Program. Sea Cliff residents can take part in any of the Town of Oyster Bay's S.T.O.P. Programs (not just the one held each July on Altamont Avenue).

For the most part, your septic system's bacteria should recover quickly after small amounts of household cleaning products have entered the system. Of course, some cleaning products are less toxic to your system than others. Labels can help key you into the potential toxicity of various products. The word "Danger" or "Poison" on a label indicates that the product is highly hazardous. "Warning" tells you the product is moderately hazardous. "Caution" means the product is slightly hazardous. ("Nontoxic" and "Septic Safe" are terms created by advertisers to sell products.) Regardless of the type of product, use it only in the amounts shown on the label instructions and minimize the amount discharged into your septic system.

Hot tubs are a great way to relax. Unfortunately, your septic system was not designed to handle large quantities of water from your hot tub. Emptying hot tub water into your septic system stirs the solids in the tank and pushes them out into the drainfield, causing it to clog and fail. Draining your hot tub into a septic system or over the drainfield can overload the system. Instead, drain cooled hot tub water onto turf or landscaped areas well away from the septic tank and drainfield, and in accordance with local regulations. Use the same caution when draining your swimming pool.

**Where to go for more information:** there are plenty of sources for more information, including the U.S. EPA ([www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)) which provided much of the information used in this article. Useful links can be found on the Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee (HIPC) website ([www.HempsteadHarbor.org](http://www.HempsteadHarbor.org))

## 2012 VILLAGE MEETING DATES

Board of Trustees Monthly Meeting	Board Work Sessions (held as needed)	Zoning Board of Appeals	Building Permit Review	Court
9-Jan MON	30-Jan MON	18-Jan WED	23-Jan MON	25-Jan WED
6-Feb MON	27-Feb MON	15-Feb WED	21-Feb MON	22-Feb WED
5-Mar MON	26-Mar MON	21-Mar WED	26-Mar MON	28-Mar WED
2-Apr MON	30-Apr MON	18-Apr WED	23-Apr MON	25-Apr WED
7-May MON	21-May MON	16-May WED	21-May MON	23-May WED
4-Jun MON	25-Jun MON	20-Jun WED	25-Jun MON	27-Jun WED
2-Jul MON	30-Jul MON	18-Jul WED	23-Jul MON	25-Jul WED
6-Aug MON	27-Aug MON	15-Aug WED	20-Aug MON	29-Aug WED
4-Sep TUES	24-Sep MON	19-Sep WED	24-Sep MON	19-Sep WED
1-Oct MON	29-Oct MON	17-Oct WED	22-Oct MON	24-Oct WED
5-Nov MON	26-Nov MON	14-Nov WED	19-Nov MON	28-Nov WED
3-Dec MON	17-Dec MON	19-Dec WED	NO DEC. MEETING	12-Dec WED