



HICKSVILLE WATER DISTRICT WATER~GRAM

Zero Tax Increase for Third Year

The Hicksville Water District is pleased to announce that, despite escalating costs, it has adopted a 2008 budget that mirrors the tax rate from 2005, marking the third consecutive year with no increase. This can be attributed to the board of water commissioner's commitment to fiscal responsibility, best-government practices and zero-based budgeting.

"When you review the more recent improvements to our plants and distribution system, it is quite an accomplishment to hold the line on taxes again in 2008. We had a series of major million-dollar capital improvement projects that needed to be addressed in recent years, so that the district could continue to meet strict government standards and provide a quality product to the public," explained Water Commissioner and Board Chair-man Richard

Humann. "Additionally, there are a handful of projects currently underway and others in the planning stages."

Projects undertaken in 2007 as well as those planned or being con-

sidered for 2008 – each of which can be costly and oftentimes exceed \$1 million – are listed on the inside pages of this publication. breaks down to just 42¢ per day for the average homeowner, we are aware that there are many individuals struggling to make ends meet," Commissioner Human continued. "We work together as a board to keep costs down wherever possible without sacrificing good service or the quality and quantity of the drinking water.

"At a time when the price of fuel and other consumer products has skyrocketed, in addition to the usual cost-of-living increases, the district has been determined in its efforts to hold the line on taxes. In fact, we are likely one of the few municipalities in this marketplace to not increase taxes," Commissioner Humann concluded.

The Hicksville Water District comprises less than 3 percent of the residential tax bill, which amounts to about \$154 annually or 42¢ daily for the average homeowner.

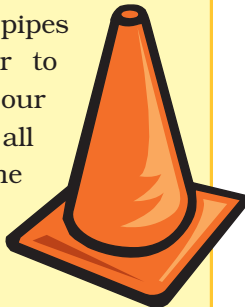
Although Hicksville Water District's residential tax rate

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Word from Superintendent page 2
- Hydrant Replacement Ongoing page 2
- Consolidation Has Drawbacks page 3
- Looking Back at 2007 page 4
- District Overviews County Audit. page 5
- Monitoring Guages Add Protection page 6

Road Crews

Water main breaks are one of the drawbacks of the winter season. As the earth freezes and thaws, the soil shifts and causes the underground pipes that carry our drinking water to break. Please be mindful of our work crews, who are out during all hours of the day or night, for the protection of their safety as well as your own.





Superintendent Bill Schuckmann

Bill Payment Made Easier



Consumers are reminded that the district offers a convenient direct-payment option, so water bills can be paid right from your back account, eliminating the hassle of writing checks and worrying about meeting deadlines. The necessary forms for direct-payment can be picked up at the water dis-

trict administration office at 4 Dean Street or downloaded off the district's website at hicksvillewater.org. Please call the district at (516) 931-0184 if you require assistance.

For those who choose to pay their bills in person, a drop box is located outside the administration office, on the left hand side as you enter the property. Those paying cash should enter the building, so they can be issued a receipt.

Keep Hydrants Clear



In addition to parking vehicles the proper distance away from fire hydrants at all times, the hydrants should also be kept clear of snow during the winter season. Now is a good time to note the location of the hydrant nearest your home, so you can dig it out after the snow plows have come through your neighborhood. Remember, a few minutes saved during a fire emergency can make a difference in the outcome of a situation.

Hydrant Replacement Program Continues

In 2007, the district continued with its 60-month plan to change out approximately 135 of the more than 1,600 fire hydrants it maintains to assist area firefighters with protecting the community. The program calls for replacing some of the district's older two-spudded hydrants, which are equipped with two nozzles, with a more modern apparatus that houses an additional larger 5" steamer connection on the front of the hydrant. The hydrants are connected to water mains buried under or near the streets throughout the district's service area, which covers nearly 8 square miles.

With the 5" steamer connection on the equipment, it will no longer be necessary for volunteers to hook an

adaptor to the smaller side hose nozzles, saving precious time during a fire situation. The equipment will also provide improved water flow and increased pressure. Additionally, if the apparatus is accidentally struck by a vehicle, the new hydrant breaks away more easily than the older version, causing much less damage to the car.



When the district conducted a leak-detection survey last spring, it was discovered that 16 hydrants are leaking. Those have been moved closer to the top of the priority list in the replacement program schedule. With 18 to 20 new hydrants being installed each year, the hydrant project, which began in 2005, is expected to be completed sometime in 2009.

"For the safety of the public as well as our volunteer firefighters, we make it a priority to maintain the hydrants in good working order," explained Hicksville Water District Superintendent William Schuckmann, who is also a member of the department. "We ask the public to never try to operate this equipment and to call the water district if they notice anyone using a hydrant or if one appears to be tampered with."

► **Nicholas Brigandi was re-elected** by voters this past August to serve another three-year term on the Hicksville Water District's Board of Commissioners.

A Hicksville native, Brigandi has served the water district for 27 years and is a member of the Chamber of Commerce, the Sons of Italy and the Knights of Columbus, as well as a director of the Community Council.

Brigandi has been a volunteer firefighter with the fire department's Engine Company # 7 for nearly 40 years and has served on various department committees. He is also past-president of the Volunteer Exempt Benevolent Association, where he is a trustee.

County's Consolidation Effort Veiled

With promises of rectifying the county's ongoing struggle to balance its budget, Nassau's elected officials are deceiving the public by portraying the public water industry as part of the problem. In the past year, Nassau County has been working tirelessly to convince residents that the consolidation of hometown water districts will alleviate high property tax burdens, when in fact, the contrary is far closer to the truth.

With water taxes currently comprising less than three percent of the annual residential tax bill, it is speculated among professionals in the public drinking water industry that the county's agenda has less to do with cost and more to do with control.

If the county is successful with eliminating hometown rule, Nassau will have the power to manage the revenue collected by the special districts and control the public land that houses the infrastructure, as well as the employment opportunities the utilities provide.

"As commissioners, we ask the public to elect us to oversee the water district because we care about our community," Hicksville resident and Water Commissioner Karl Schweitzer said. "The responsibility of managing the budget as well as the quality and quantity of our drinking water is not something we take lightly.

"Entrusting a county that already has trouble managing its \$2.35 billion budget with control of the public water is not something I feel comfortable about

out of concern for public health and safety, which no one can put a price on," Commissioner Schweitzer expressed. "Our board is committed to practicing responsible fiscal prudence and careful zero-based budgeting while keeping costs down without sacrificing water quality or public health. At the same time, the district has continually met strict government water quality standards and maintains an efficient distribution system that provides ample water for drinking and firefighting—without interruption."

The Hicksville Water District staff, which includes water servicers, a superintendent, plant operators and administrators live in the area with their families and are intimately involved in local issues. In addition, many of them serve the community as volunteer members of the fire department, which is a testament to their dedication to hometown public service.

"I resent that local water districts are being made out to be scapegoats by a county that is millions of dollars in debt," Commissioner Schweitzer said. "I'm all for saving taxpayer money, but the water district makes up less than three percent of the tax bill, so I'm not sure exactly how much room there is to save.

"Currently, all of the money collected by the water district goes right back into the expenses of keeping the water clean and safe," added Commissioner Schweitzer. "If the county takes control of the district, there is no guarantee that the money will not be put to other use, causing service to suffer in Hicksville as well as the upkeep of the water distribution system."

Hometown Commissioner Run

- 87 years of experience managing a public water system.
- Good working relationship with residents, community groups and neighboring water districts.
- Employees care deeply about local concerns as they live in the district with their families and drink the same water provided to consumers.
- Staff has intimate knowledge of Hicksville community and its history.
- Service crews consistently provide quick response to consumer inquiries.
- Commissioners are held accountable for decisions and are easily accessible.
- Revenue returned directly to consumers within the district in the form of superior service, reliable distribution system and quality product.
- Budget is prioritized to meet specific needs of district and funds spent on issues relevant to Hicksville Water.
- County and town resources available, if needed.

Nassau County Run

- No experience managing a public water system.
- Consumers will lose ability to elect area residents to manage the budget.
- Consumers will lose voice in how water taxes and usage fees are disbursed.
- Monies collected in Hicksville will likely be disbursed to other areas.
- Lacks intimate knowledge of Hicksville's history.
- Individuals living outside the area will make decisions affecting Hicksville's drinking water.
- Mom-and-pop service philosophy will likely be dissolved and response times will deteriorate.
- Hicksville will not be a priority with a countywide system.

2007 Year in Review

Successes



Consulting Engineer John Molloy, P.E. (third from left) reviews master plan materials with Water Commissioners Karl Schweitzer, Richard Humann and Nicholas Brigandi.

● **Plant 1 Rehabilitation:** The district completed a \$1.7 million project to refurbish its 1.25 million-gallon elevated water storage tank on Bethpage Road, which was last rehabilitated in 1992. The work was done according to strict regulations established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the New York State (NYS) Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and enforced by the Nassau County Department of Health (DOH).

● **Interconnection Improvements:** Through effective inter-municipal cooperation, the Hicksville Water District saw a significant savings by sharing the costs with neighboring public water suppliers to upgrade the valves located between the connected distribution systems. The effort was achieved with the cooperation of the Bethpage, Plainview and Jericho Water Districts as well as the Town of Hempstead's Bowling Green and Levittown Water Districts.

● **Leak Detection Program:** In its continuing effort to conserve water whenever possible and in response to the Nassau County DOH's requirement that public water suppliers be accountable for the water pumped, the Hicksville Water District embarked on a leak detection program. Some 31 leaks were identified throughout the utility's massive distribution system and it was determined that some 285,000 gallons of water were being lost each day. Efforts to repair the leaks are ongoing.

● **Fire Hydrant Replacement:** The water district continued with its ongoing project to upgrade approximately 135 of the 1,600 fire hydrants it maintains. See more details on page 2 of this publication.

● **Nitrate Treatment:** Throughout the last several years, the district has kept a watchful eye on the nitrate concentrations at Plant 8, which have been trending upward. An ion exchange filtering system and associated regeneration equipment have been proposed as a solution. Costs are estimated at \$3.1 million for the treatment equipment and additional work that is necessary at this plant site.

● **Master Plan Revisions:** With unexpected issues surfacing at several plant sites throughout the past year, it was necessary for the district to make adjustments to its 15 year master plan, which is not an unusual occurrence in the drinking water industry where priorities are adjusted often in the interest of public health and safety.

Continuing Challenges

● **Plant 7 Nitrates:** In recent years, nitrates have been detected at this well site and the district anticipates the need to drill a new well, at the cost of approximately \$2.7 million. Following the expense of a test-well, it was discovered that the water quality did not change, thus mothballing this well site. The board must decide the well's fate when discussing the future plan of Plant 7.

● **Plant 3 Treatment:** Without the use of Plant 3, the southeastern section of the district has experienced low water pressure in recent years. It will cost some \$3.6 million to reactivate this well site and bring the plant back on line. The project will include a new well site as well as a Granular Activated Carbon treatment

facility to treat for nitrates and VOC's. In 2007, the board had to realign the district's priorities and has proposed to bond this project after the Plant 8 enhancements, which must be completed as a first priority.

● **Plant 11 Contamination:** When high concentrations of tetrachloroethylene (PCE) were detected at this well site in November 2006, it was removed from the district's distribution system. Since then, the district has been aggressively looking to pinpoint the source of the contamination. The NYS DEC has agreed to begin an investigation this spring. The district has determined that a treatment facility will be needed to get the plant back on line.

Officials Address County Audit at Community Meeting

Earlier this year, Hicksville Water District Commissioners Richard Humann, Nick Brigandi and Karl Schweitzer enthusiastically accepted an invitation from the Citizens for Informed Hicksville (CIH) to attend an open forum to review the recent audit performed by the Nassau County comptroller's office and to answer questions from the audience.

Commissioner Richard Humann, who serves as chairman, opened the presentation with assurances that, first and foremost, the county audit found no evidence of violations of laws or regulations, nor did it uncover fraud or abuse of taxpayer funds. The commissioners pointed out that an effective audit should ultimately be used as a learning tool. They also expressed their disappointment that the county audit did not provide an independent, fair and objective appraisal of the effectiveness of the district's financial systems and operational procedures in accordance with applicable laws and financial controls.

The commissioners stated that, to the contrary, the Hicksville Water District has provided both internal and external audits of its finances as a normal course of business practice for many years.

Throughout the community meeting, which was hosted by CIH, audience members demonstrated their support of the commissioners, who were each elected by the public to serve a three-year term. Those in attendance expressed a clear vote of confidence in the commissioners' abilities to operate Hicksville's public water utility. In fact, some residents specifically asked CIH to send letters to the local paper and the county reiterating the community's support and sentiments.

The commissioners noted that, although the three-month audit began in March of 2006, it took the county comptroller's office more than 14 months to release the draft findings to the district. Although the district provided responses to several revised versions of the audit, only some adjustments were made to the final version, despite objec-

tions by the Hicksville Water District.

The commissioners went on to explain that the district made adjustments to its business practices prior to the final audit being released, which addressed about 90 percent of the

findings cited by the comptroller. Although the district has respectfully disagreed on the remaining points, it is still considering additional changes.

District officials explained that since the completion of the audit, they have applied the county's recommendations to daily operations to assist in the management of one of the largest districts in Nassau County. The commissioners assured the public that they will continue to work with the water district's internal staff to improve financial procedures and practices. Based on the suggestions of the audit, every local government should seek to continuously improve its practices.

Although there were several questions from the audience during the meeting related to the county audit, additional questions were asked regarding the county's consolidation efforts as well as the possibility of a single voting day being established.

The commissioners emphasized that they pride themselves on maintaining consumers' confidence in their ability to manage the district and will continue to make themselves available to the public by attending the meetings of Hicksville's many community groups and willingly answer any questions that may arise.

A complete list of the questions and answers covered at the October 2007 meeting are available on the Hicksville Water District's website at www.hicksvillewater.org.

Requesting Proposals for Professional Services

In 2008, the district will engage in a competitive procurement process to ensure that it receives at or below-market rates for services by qualified professionals. While not required by law to select service providers offering the lowest price, the district makes an effort to reduce costs by engaging in a competitive process, which includes issuing requests for proposals, in the interest of prudent stewardship of taxpayer funds.

"We will evaluate proposals for engineering, lab services, accounting, public relations and computer services by obtaining the best possible price for the highest possible quality of work," explained Water Commissioner Karl Schweitzer. "Engaging in this process will guard against any perception of favoritism in the selection of professional advisors," added Schweitzer.

The board is of the belief that procurement of professional consultants should be based upon the firm's skills, experience and knowledge in the area of water supply and environmental issues. The selection should not be based only on the price offered.

Ahead of the Curve with Gauges



The Hicksville Water District has installed monitoring gauges at various plant sites to serve as an added measure of precaution in ensuring that the water reaching consumers' taps meets the strict quality standards set by the government.

Nitrate gauges were recently installed at four district plant sites where low levels of the chemical, most often used in fertilizers, were previously detected. If the nitrate reading at any of those wells goes above a specified level, which is still below the level allowable by the state and county health departments, the well will shut down automatically. If that occurs, an emergency message will automatically be forwarded through the district's computer SCADA system to the water district's on-call team. This way, the district can stay ahead of the problem, prevent a contamination issue and address the situation before any public health violations occur.

Additionally, the district will continue to monitor these and all its well sites for nitrates, which are allowable up to 10 parts-per-million, as well as 135 other parameters, to ensure that it continues delivering drinking water that is of the highest quality.

Gauges have also been installed at four plants to

help ensure that the proper pH level is maintained by district.

This is achieved by adding caustic soda (sodium hydroxide) to the water to reduce its corrosive qualities and protect the water mains and home plumbing. The chemical is pumped automatically into the distribution system in liquid form. Although plant operators take manual readings daily and calibrate the automatic system for accuracy, the gauges act as an added precaution against any malfunction that could take place. Should the levels go too high, the gauges will shut the wells down prior to any contamination occurring and an alert message will be sent through the district's SCADA system.

"Although our current sampling and monitoring procedures are thorough, as new technology becomes available we are able to incorporate added layers of protection to help ensure the quality of the product we deliver," explained Hicksville Water Commissioner Nick Brigandi. "Utilizing gauges that can be adjusted to read levels that are below the standards we are required to meet will enable us to stay ahead of any problems that may arise down the road."

Produced by Ryan & Ryan Public Relations, Farmingdale, NY 11735

YOUR HICKSVILLE WATER DISTRICT

4 Dean Street
Hicksville, New York 11801

(516) 931-0184
(516) 931-6506 (fax)
www.hicksvillewater.org

Board Meetings

Second and Fourth Tuesday of the month at 5 p.m.
at the district office, unless otherwise announced.

Business Hours

8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Weekdays

Public Forum

*"Bonding For
Capital Projects"*

Wed, Feb. 20 at 7:30 p.m.
Hicksville Public Library

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 1039
Hicksville, NY 11802