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FROM THE MAYOR'S OFFICE
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By: Nicholas P. Episcopia

ATTACKS AND MISINFORMATION

I believe certain public statements made at our May 19th Trustees' meeting by paid firefighters, and in two letters from residents published in the May 20th edition of the *GC News,* require correction. Attacks and misinformation such as the following are unwarranted and will be answered whenever they occur.

MAY 19TH BOARD OF TRUSTEES' MEETING PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

During the public comment period at the May 19th Trustees' meeting, a paid firefighter accused the Board of spending an exorbitant amount of money to renovate the firehouse for the benefit of the volunteers. First, the firehouse has not had a renovation in many years. The condition of the second floor which is used by the volunteers - especially the lavatories, changing area, and kitchen - was abysmal. The fact is that in addition to the second floor volunteers' area, the first floor, which is used by the paid firefighters, has also been renovated to include the "bunk rooms" where they sleep, the hallway and the lavatory. Anyone who thinks our firehouse is extravagant should look at the firehouses in Garden City Park, New Hyde Park and many other fire districts to see that our facility is more than modest.

At the same May 19th meeting, a paid firefighter asserted that the Garden City Fire Department is having trouble recruiting volunteers. In truth, our Volunteer Chiefs have implemented a vigorous recruiting program and since the beginning of 2015, approximately 12 new people have joined our Volunteer Fire Department. The same paid firefighter also asserted that there are a number of paid NYC firefighters who live in Garden City but will not join our fire department and instead choose to volunteer in other communities. In reality, it's not a matter of choice: union rules prohibit these residents from serving as volunteers in their own Village because we have some paid firefighters in our Fire Department. However, they willingly serve in all-volunteer fire departments elsewhere.

MAY 20TH LETTER CONCERNING SENIOR CENTER/RESOURCE BUILDING:

The writer of this letter regarding the Senior Center and Community Resource Building asserts that I led an anti-senior citizen campaign and intensely "opposed and delayed" construction of the new Senior Center for the past several years...and further, that the Board of Trustees, encouraged by me no less, plans to charge a fee to individual senior citizens for using the building.

First, the accusation that I am against senior citizens is actually amusing – considering my own age. Yes, detailed due diligence on the builder was thoroughly complete before haphazardly going forward. This is what a responsible government does because spending your money is serious

business. Did this cause a delay? Yes, but only slightly – the project was done on time and within budget according to complete plans and specifications.

The writer also asserts that I led the Trustees into wanting to charge a fee to clubs and individuals who use the facility, and further, infers that our senior residents might personally be charged an annual fee of $100. This simply is not true. I discussed this with Kevin Ocker, chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Recreation and Cultural Affairs. The fact is that the Senior Advisory Committee discussed setting charges for certain activities and/or building use by clubs and other individuals.

The writer is clearly annoyed that we refer to the new facility as a "community resource." This Village-owned facility belongs to all of our residents and many residents of all ages certainly believe it is one to be proud of and a wonderful new resource for the Village. Furthermore, who's to say our senior citizens are not, themselves, a community resource?

MAY 20TH LETTER MENTIONING OUTSOURCING SANITATION SERVICES:

The writer of another letter insists that we are outsourcing residential garbage pickup and firing dedicated workers. It appears that no matter what we have said, and as it was reported in the May 13th issue of the *GC News*, this rumor persists – perpetuated by the May 20th Letter to the Editor, stated by residents at the May 19th Board of Trustees meeting and deliberately spread by some of our Village employees.

We are not outsourcing residential garbage pickup. The possibility of outsourcing commercial garbage pickup was simply discussed during our budget process in light of the NYS imposed tax cap. However, upon review, we abandoned the idea which had nothing to do with residential services. Be assured we are mindful of the municipal services our businesses and residents – including us - appreciate. After all, we are your neighbors and we live here too.

THIRD TRACK PROJECT

The Governor's team has been using the "carrot and stick" approach in dealing with the affected Villages by tying grade crossing eliminations to the third track project. It is clear that the grade crossings will not be eliminated unless the third track is constructed.

Trustees Bolebruch and Makrinos and I have attended several meetings with officials from other Villages and the Governor's team. At our last meeting on May 16th, the Governor's staff distributed a "Draft SEQRA Scoping Document" which is supposed to be an outline of the entire third track project but instead related only to grade crossing eliminations. The verbiage on the third track itself is essentially "hype" with no detail or supporting statistics, leaving serious unanswered questions. For example:

- Where will the third track project actually start?
- How many neighboring areas will be affected by construction at the same time?
- Where will the construction equipment staging areas be located?
- What provable tangible economic value will this bring to Central Nassau County?
- Will the work on the Ronkonkoma tracks, the Jamaica switches and Third Track start

simultaneously?

- Although they say no houses will be taken,where is the guarantee that will not change as construction goes forward to make room for the third track?

Scoping Sessions were held this week. Written comments can be submitted until 5:00 p.m. on June 13 which marks the close of the scoping period. All comments received will become part of the public record and will be considered as part of the project studies.

Written comments can be submitted via the project website at www.AModernLI.com or by mail to: Edward M. Dumas, Vice President, Market Development & Public Affairs, LIRR Expansion Project, MTA Long Island Railroad, MC 1131, Jamaica Station Building, Jamaica, NY 11435. I urge you to include your name and address on emails so that your message will not be discarded as "anonymous."

ANNUAL MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVANCE AND PARADE - MAY 30

On Monday, May 30, under the direction of the William Bradford Turner Post - American Legion, the annual Memorial Day observance in our Village will commence with the interdenominational memorial church services at 9:00 a.m. at the Cathedral of the Incarnation.

The traditional Memorial Day Parade will step off promptly at 10:00 a.m. at the intersection of Stewart and Cherry Valley Avenues. It will proceed north on Cherry Valley Avenue to Tenth Street, east on Tenth Street to Franklin Avenue, south on Franklin Avenue to Seventh Street, west on Seventh Street past the Reviewing Stand, which will be located at the Village's War Memorial, just west of the Library, where official ceremonies will take place. Residents are urged to honor the men and women who gave their lives for our country by attending these services.

Retail sales will be prohibited in the Village on May 30 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with certain exceptions. The Village ordinance, which follows closely to the State statute, provides that all trades, manufacturers, agricultural or technical employments are prohibited, as well as all manners of public sale or offering for sale of any property on Memorial Day between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Exceptions are restaurants, catering services, prepared items such as tobacco, bread, milk, eggs, and so forth, service station products, medicines, delicatessen items and alcoholic beverages.

Members of the William Bradford Turner Post, The American Legion Auxiliary and I look forward to seeing you at the gathering at the War Memorial at 11:00 a.m., for services that will begin following the parade.

MEMORIAL DAY INFORMATION

Village offices will be closed on Monday, May 30, 2016 in observance of Memorial Day and will reopen on Tuesday, May 31st at 8:30 a.m. For your convenience, correspondence for the Village may be placed in the "Letter" drop slot at the front door.

Residents are reminded that there will be no garbage or recycling pickup on Monday, May 30, 2016. Garbage will be collected Tuesday and Friday for the Western half and Wednesday and

Saturday for the Eastern half of the Village. Those scheduled for recycling are asked to put their recyclables out on Monday, June 6th. Rubbish collection for the entire Village will be on Thursday, June 2, 2016.

CSEA

Garden City's CSEA "Rank and File" employees have been working without a contract since May 31, 2013. The CSEA's bargaining unit and the Village have engaged in extensive negotiations since that time to come up with a suitable successor contract. Those negotiations, however, led to an impasse.

The New York State Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) appointed Stephen M. Bluth, an independent Fact Finder, to assist the Village and the CSEA bargaining unit in resolving the impasse. Mr. Bluth independently assessed facts presented by both parties and subsequently provided his recommendation for a new successor contract, which affects approximately 170 Village employees.

Because the CSEA rejected Mr. Bluth's Fact-Finding report in its entirety, the bargaining impasse process moved to its final stage, legislative imposition. A hearing was held May 4 at which time Village Administrator Ralph Suozzi presented the Village's case on my behalf. The CSEA, although present, did not substantively participate in the hearing.

On May 19, 2016 the Board adopted a post-hearing resolution to conclude the collective bargaining impasse between the Village and the CSEA "Rank-and-File bargaining unit by legislatively imposing terms and conditions of employment for the period June 1, 2013 - May 31, 2014 consistent with applicable law. I recused myself from voting but the Board voted 7-0 to declare no wage or compensation increase(s) for the time period June 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014 and that the terms of the Agreement between the parties shall be continued as they are for such year.

VILLAGE TAX BILLS

The Village mailed tax bills today to residents and their banks. The first half of Village taxes are due during the month of June and will be delinquent and subject to a penalty if payment is not made by July 1st. If you have a question, please call the Tax Department at Village Hall at 465-4156 between 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

ONLINE PAYMENT OPTION FOR VILLAGE TAX BILLS

As a reminder, as of June 1st, residents are able to pay their 2016/17 Village Tax Bill using the Village's online Bill Payment Center. As with the Village's existing Water Payment Center, you will have the option of paying with either a credit card (Visa, MasterCard or Discover) or Automated Clearing House (ACH) payment. (Additional fees to the credit card company may apply).

This option is located on the Home Page of the Village's website, www.gardencityny.net, (using the Bill Payment Center icon) or from the Village Tax Department Information Page by the orange "Piggy Bank."

Please note that you will still be able to pay your taxes/water bills in person at Village Hall by cash, check or money order or via mail. If you choose to mail your tax/water bills, mail them to 351 Stewart Avenue, Garden City and be sure to include the tax/water stub in the return envelope which is provided. We cannot process credit card payments at the Village counter for tax or water payments.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES' MEETINGS

The next meetings of the Board of Trustees will be on Thursday, June 2nd and on Thursday, June 16th at 8:00 p.m. I encourage all residents to attend Board of Trustees meetings so as to be thoroughly informed of Village issues from a first-hand perspective.