

# VILLAGE NEWS



## New Mayor, Trustees Take Their Oaths



After swearing in for another four-year term, Village Justice Allen S. Mathers administered the oaths of office to newly elected Garden City Mayor Brian C. Daughney, re-elected Trustees John A. DeMaro and Stephen S. Makrinos and newly elected Trustees Louis M. Minuto and Mark A. Hyer during the annual organizational meeting Monday, April 3, 2017.

Mayor Daughney had served as Trustee on behalf of the Estates Property Owners' Association since May 2010. In his opening remarks, he highlighted new procedures and practices that will be considered under his leadership, such as reorganizing Board members into teams versus liaisons to focus topically rather than departmentally.

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## Multi-Use Field Work Kicks Off at Community Park

Following the successful overhaul of Fields 3 and 4 at Community Park, work is underway to convert the existing soccer field into a synthetic turf surface lined for multiple sports. The Strategic Plan contemplated a conversion of that field to artificial turf, the installation of an under drain system and permanent lights. Subsequent to the publication of the Strategic Plan, however, representatives of a number of athletic organizations came forward to ask if the scope of the planned work could be expanded to turn the current field into a true multi-purpose facility, one which will be regulation size for multiple sports.

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# GC Pool To Feature New Indoor Dining Area



Pool improvements continue as Village maintenance staff converts the Game Room into an air-conditioned, indoor dining area for the 2017 Pool season, which kicks off Saturday, June 10.

Renovations include laminate flooring, a drop ceiling, air conditioning, fresh paint, French doors and ceiling fans. Quad and deuce seating/table areas will seat 50 people.



There will also be a seating area for 15-20 people that will be used for parties and can be used by the patrons when a group isn't renting the area.

Several more improvements will also debut in June, including an upper deck eating area and a shaded area by the Adult Pool, as well as an accessible gate for the mobility impaired.



Beer and wine will once again be available for purchase at the Snack Bar for members and guests aged 23 and older.

Registration is underway for the 2017 Pool season. Call the Garden City Pool at 483-1714 with questions or visit [www.gardencityrecreation.org](http://www.gardencityrecreation.org) to register.

## Board of Trustees Adopts Tax Cap-Compliant Budget

The Garden City Board of Trustees adopted a \$59 million General Fund operating budget for 2017-18 following an April 3, 2017 public hearing. Careful review of proposed department spending plans led to several revisions during March budget work sessions. The result is a spending plan that includes a tax levy revenue increase capped at 1.15 percent.

Overall, the proposed budget represents a 2.12 percent increase over last year, mostly due to an \$800,000 increase in the cash contribution to fund capital projects. Further, the amount of current year surplus carried forward and applied to 2017-18 has increased from the prior year to fund operating expenses as well as capital projects. Estimated non-property tax revenues increased 1.8 percent to \$7.8 million, according to Village Treasurer Irene Woo.

Reducing operating costs and/or increasing productivity by investing in new technologies, capital investments, subcontracting opportunities, reduction in workforce through attrition and reorganization/redistributing work are all continued goals executive staff members seek to achieve year-round. Referring to the New York State tax cap, Village Administrator Ralph Suozzi said, "We never know where the tax cap is going to end up. These goals are part of our mindset the entire year. We're always looking for ways to proactively address this reality."

For example, the LED lighting project has an anticipated reduction of \$147,000 in operating costs annually. New water meters have captured resident water usage more accurately. The Village has successfully subcontracted 90 acres of open space in the Parks Department as well. A reduction in the Village workforce has led to further savings. This is evident in the Parks Department where workforce reduction through retirements and natural attritions has occurred in three of the last four years, according to Mr. Suozzi. Department heads are also encouraged to seek out grant opportunities whenever possible to supplement, replace or reimburse existing capital funding sources. This is evident in the Police Department, which was awarded a \$10,000 Nassau County Traffic Safety Board Stop D.W.I. grant.

Expenses are increasing by 2.12 percent, mostly due to spikes in funding for capital projects (\$816,000) and health insurance costs (\$700,000). The major change in the 2017-18 General Fund proposed capital projects from the prior year's capital plan is mainly due to an increase in the Equipment category regarding the proposed purchase of a fire vehicle. These expense increases, however, are being offset by a decrease in expected judgements and claims (\$400,000).

On the revenue side, a reduction in special assessments (\$240,000) is offset by increases in state fines and fees as well as other fees. Overall, revenues are increasing slightly year over year. Major sources of revenue again come from State aid, Building Department fees and Recreation programs, fees and rentals. Further, all three Enterprise Funds - Pool, Tennis and Water - are forecasting to break even, with all three proposed budgets covering expenses, Ms. Woo noted.

Trustee Robert Bolebruch, who served as Finance Commissioner, praised the work of Ms. Woo and her colleague, Village Auditor Courtney Rosenblatt, as well as Trustees John Delany and Theresa Trouvé, the contributions of the Citizens Budget Review Advisory Committee and former Trustee Richard Silver, whom he said "definitely left his mark on the Department."

"I believe that this budget represents the evolution that our Finance Department has undertaken over the last four years. We have seen our Finance Department streamline their procedures, increase fiscal accountability and develop a program with our independent auditors to assist our Village Department heads with their budgets," he said. "The net effect of these changes will be positively felt in our Village for years to come."

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“The worst thing we can do is become complacent. We have to keep examining and assessing everything we do,” Mayor Daughney said. “Doing anything because it’s ‘always been done that way’ is not acceptable.”

Trustee Minuto, who was nominated by the Central Property Owners’ Association, replaces Richard V. Silver, who did not seek re-election. As a lifelong resident, Trustee

Minuto said he looks forward to the “preservation of both the Village’s unique visual aesthetic and the fiscal responsibility that all residents expect from Village leadership.”

Trustee Hyer replaces outgoing Mayor Nicholas Episcopia in the East. He is a 17-year resident and 13-year member of the Garden City Volunteer Fire Department. “I am ready and willing to undertake the extensive responsibility and time commitment necessary to serve as a Village Trustee,” he said.

Trustee Makrinos begins his second, two-year term representing the West while Trustee DeMaro is serving the remaining year of Mayor Daughney’s unexpired term. He was first elected Trustee in 2011.

“We are a Board, and we intend on working together to identify and solve, when we can, issues and problems. We may not all agree all the time but our goals are the same,” Mayor Daughney said. “The Mayor seat is an honor but we work together as a Board. There is no ‘I’ in Board of Trustees.”





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Work at the field is progressing well. According to Kevin Ocker, chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Cultural and Recreational Affairs, new light pole foundations are being delivered and the electrician is mobilizing and will be running new power to the new light poles. All materials and supply submittals have been approved so products required can be ordered. The engineering consultants are also coordinating and preparing the construction schedule, which will be updated weekly.

This multi-year capital investment program is designed to bring the Village's fields and facilities to the high standards residents have a right to expect in Garden City. To read more about Phase I of the Department of Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, visit [www.gardencityny.net](http://www.gardencityny.net).



## Firefighters Earn Unit Citation For Assistance at Derailment



On April 5, members of the Village of Garden City's Volunteer Fire Department were presented with a Nassau County Fire Commission Award, receiving a Unit Citation for their actions at the October 2016 Long Island Rail Road derailment approximately a half-mile east of the New Hyde Park station.

A Huntington-bound passenger train carrying approximately 600 passengers derailed and collided with a Long Island Rail Road work train, injuring

dozens. The Garden City Fire Department responded to the scene with heavy rescue to assist in removing passengers from the train.

Fire Commissioner Trustee Robert A. Bolebruch said it was an honor to attend the ceremony. "It makes you realize that everyday these volunteers put their lives on the line for their family and their community," he said. "They should always receive our respect and appreciation for what they do."



## Village's Two-Prong Approach to Third Track Expansion

The following is an update provided by the LIRR Third Track Committee regarding the proposed Third Track plan. In April, the MTA/LIRR released its Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) related to the plan, which can be viewed through a link on the Village website.

When the Plan was first proposed, the Board of Trustees determined a two-prong approach would be the wisest move with respect to the project.



The first prong relates to the formal review and analysis of the Plan. As you know, the Board of Trustees hired a law firm with expertise in environmental law and these types of large public projects. We joined with the Villages of New Hyde Park and Floral Park in this regard. We also approved of the hiring of an engineering expert (Vertex) to assist. Those two entities produced a well-drafted submission and the members of the Village's LIRR Third Track Committee assisted with the preparation of that submission. We included many comments we received from residents. We of course intend to review the Final EIS.

The second part of our approach relates to keeping an open dialogue with the MTA/LIRR. The Committee has been actively involved in this effort. Among other things, the Committee has met on several occasions with representatives from the MTA and Governor Cuomo's office. We believe that this dialogue will be helpful if the project is eventually funded and moves forward.

Our goal has been to minimize the Plan's potential negative impacts, should it occur, on the residents of Garden City. Why did we embark on a two-prong approach? Simple. There has been a lot of talk about lawsuits and injunctions regarding the Third Track Plan. The Board of Trustees continues to believe that placing all of our eggs in one basket is foolhardy. As Counsel has advised, the likelihood of stopping the project because of some litigation is unlikely. This is not a concession. We have to deal with realities.

Perhaps the project does not happen because of budget and capital plan issues. Budget and capital plan issues are not within the Village's power to determine or control. Budget and capital plan issues of the MTA/LIRR are completely separate from the Village commencing litigation claiming that the EIS failed to address this or that point as thoroughly as it should. And even if we were successful in such litigation, that still does not stop the project. The MTA/LIRR can go back and address the issue and revise the Plan.

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## **Myth #1: When Is Garden City Not Really Garden City?**

We thought it might be of interest from time to time to include some material for residents to mull over or laugh about regarding common myths and other misconceptions about our Village. This one involves the off cited but always incorrect reference by businesses and other institutions to being in Garden City when actually they are not.

Last week, [www.libn.com](http://www.libn.com) ran a news story about a potential takeover of publicly held Lifetime Brands. The article prominently started with "Garden City-based Lifetime..." Lifetime Brands - we would love to have you located in Garden City but you are not. For that matter, neither is the Long Island Children's Museum, the Aviation Museum nor Roosevelt Field Mall. Talk about alternative facts!

That is correct, folks. The Mall at Roosevelt Field is not in Garden City. Neiman Marcus - not in Garden City. Nordstrom - not in Garden City. The apartments on Stewart Avenue near the huge post office facility named "Avalon Bay Garden City" - not in Garden City either.

The Village receives no tax or other revenue from these entities. They apparently like the cache of saying they are in Garden City - but again, they are not. For that matter, the huge postal facility on Stewart Avenue - also not in Garden City. Some of these entities have the same postal zip code as Garden City, but postal zip codes are not confined to a set municipality.

More myths to follow.



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So where would that leave Garden City residents? The reality is that some people are in favor of the plan, some don't care, some care only if it negatively impacts them in some way and some are against it no matter what. That is true within and outside our Village. We propose for your consideration the following: if we ignore the MTA/LIRR and fight this tooth and nail, why would anyone then come back once the project gets the green light and give the residents of Garden City any protections?

Keeping an open dialogue is just good business sense. That is what businesses do all day long. Plan for alternatives. Most lawsuits, no matter how much each side believes they are legally and morally right - settle. It is compromise. But more importantly, our goal is to lessen the impact of the Third Track Plan, should it be approved, and to ensure, to the extent possible, the safety and health of our residents.

How would we all feel if we fight tooth and nail and lose and the MTA/LIRR does nothing to help us protect Garden City from any adverse impacts? Because of our efforts, the Plan already includes modifications or steps that we wanted to protect residents. For example, because we have an open dialogue with the MTA/LIRR, the current Third Track proposal includes:

- sound walls throughout much of the stretch of track in Garden City near houses and the Nassau Haven field at heights which will significantly lessen sound. To anyone who has stood with their kids playing baseball at Nassau Haven - is the current condition acceptable? At 6 o'clock at night there are already so many trains and so much noise it is nearly impossible to stand there. So this plan will actually benefit us there. Not only will trains no longer have to blow their horns to approach New Hyde Park Road, the sound walls will lessen the sound of the traveling trains and reduce their visual impact. Further, as part of the proposed project, vibration controls such as resilient fasteners, rail pads and concrete ties, are proposed for the new third track;

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- a completely modified and enhanced Merillon Avenue Station, designed in a manner the Village deemed appropriate;
- a Merillon Avenue Station with no overpowering, imposing elevated crossover because we requested the initial plan be re-designed;
- assurances to help us avoid an increase in truck traffic on Nassau Boulevard. We have also engaged with the Nassau County Department of Transportation to take steps to stop any potential increase for large truck traffic on Nassau Boulevard. We have gotten assurances from the MTA/LIRR and the County that increasing the height of the underpass is not part of a plan to get more commercial truck traffic on Nassau Boulevard, and they agreed not to change the grade under the bridge to further keep it difficult for large trucks to get under the bridge;
- a plan that doesn't include any increase of the width of the underpass on Denton Avenue/Tanners Pond Road, thereby insuring it does not become a commercial vehicle pass through. Why? Because we insisted it not be made wider. In fact, because of our dialogue, they refused requests from neighboring Villages to make it wider;
- a completely renovated Stewart Manor Station, including re-paving, at the LIRR's cost, of parking lots there;
- promises to undertake vigorous planting of new hedges and trees along the tracks on Main Avenue;
- no changes to the train schedule on the Hempstead line. In fact, the addition of the Third Track might help commuting on that track by removing barriers to track changes near Bellerose; and
- no plans to, as requested by a neighboring village, close Clinch Avenue access and provide for an elevated track five feet above grade level, ideas which we thought were far more harmful to Garden City.

We completely understand that the third track will disrupt portions of the Village while it is constructed, if it is approved. We submit, however, that no plan is perfect. No solution is perfect. In our opinion, however, doing nothing is not an option because there are some things in the plan that benefit all of us, such as getting rid of the cross over at New Hyde Park Road. That change will alleviate significant traffic issues at New Hyde Park Road and Clinch Avenue and, more importantly, stop the incessant horn blowing from passing trains in that neighborhood.

Commencing a lawsuit or fighting tooth and nail won't change those problems. We have pointed out to the MTA/LIRR that some of these problems can be solved through other means. They are demanding what would be, in their opinion, a more global solution to solve other issues that are important to other villages located along the Main Line. In our opinion, working with the MTA/LIRR is more likely to have positive results - not perfect results - but positive results that lessen the impact on our Village and our residents.