

Mayor's Report March 19th 2024

The Request for Proposal from engineering firms to create a complete redesign of the seawall and restoration of the beach in front of it was published on February 15th. On the 29th approximately 13 firms came to the Village to attend a site visit. Many of the firms have a very reputable reputation for working on projects similar to this one. The bid will be awarded later in the spring. This project will be paid for by a \$1,000,000 Hazard Mitigation Grant that the Village secured. This grant carries a maximum matching share of \$107,600. Although the Village has sufficient reserve funds to cover the local share, it will negotiate with the Town of Huntington and our NY State elected officials to seek assistance in paying for the local share. Once the Village has a comprehensive plan in place it can seek the major funding that will be required to restore the seawall area.

I also spent significant time working on securing the funds from the \$1,000,000 earmark that Senator Schumer got for the Village to rebuild the most compromised section of the seawall. I expect that this reconstruction will secure the damaged section of the seawall until the full reconstruction can be done. The obstacle to securing the funds is getting the Federal Highway Administration and the NYS Department of Transportation to agree to the Village's proposed use of the money. To try to resolve this problem, I wrote directly to the Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg last week.

During the month the bid packages for repaving Bevin Road and Asharoken Avenue (from Bevin Road to approximately 561 Asharoken Avenue) were completed. The bids will be awarded at the end of March. The Bevin Road project will be paid for by a \$100,000 DASNY grant, CHIPS money, and, if there is a balance, the Village Highway capital reserve account. The Asharoken Avenue project will be reimbursed to the Village by PSEG.

I signed onto a letter that the New York Conference of Mayors submitted to Governor Hochul requesting an increase in AIM funding. AIM funding is assistance the Village gets from the State annually and has not increased in 15 years. Every increase in outside funding the Village receives helps keep our taxes lower.

This afternoon the Board of Trustees held a work session to review the tentative budget. After a thorough review, I am pleased to report that the BOT agreed to accept the tentative budget with a 2.06% tax increase and a tax levy of \$8566 below the NYS 2% tax cap limit. The tax increase is primarily caused by large increases in some of the Village's biggest expense categories over which it has no control. Over the twelve years that I have been mayor, the Village has averaged an annual .969% tax increase and for seven of those years, there was no increase. A public hearing will be held at the April 9th BOT meeting before the adoption of the budget. On March 26th the detailed budget will be sent to everyone on the Village email list and available for review on the Village website, Asharoken.com, and at Village Hall. The BOT looks forward to your comments.

The Assessment Review Board met on Monday, March 18th. Twenty-four requests for reductions of property assessments were considered. All twenty-four were denied due to lack of sufficient supporting documentation.

Sadly, I have to mention the passing of long-time resident Barry Bradley. I posted a eulogy of Barry on the Village website shortly after his passing in early February which I encourage you to read. I once again extend my deepest condolences to his wife Catherine, his daughter Landregan, his son Brad, and the extended family. Barry was truly one of a kind and we will all miss him greatly.

In conclusion, multiple residents saw Bald Eagles in the Village during the last three weeks. On Sunday alone I saw three different eagles, two juvenile and one adult. Keep your eyes open and you may be fortunate to see these magnificent birds yourself. No sign of the Ospreys yet but they should be here any day now.