

## 2011 in Review. An Historic Year for the Town of Owego

From: Donald Castellucci, Jr., Town of Owego Supervisor

The last of quarter of 2011 will define the next decade for the Town of Owego. The historic flood changed lives forever. The financial and more importantly emotional effects on the residents will be forever etched in their minds. With every cloud there is a silver lining. During this catastrophic event, I was never prouder to be a part of this community. To watch people helping others, even when they were in a worse situation, witness all the assistance pour in from other communities and to see the resilience of the community restore, the best they could, a semblance of what once was in such a short period of time was remarkable. While the road to healing and recovery is up hill, I am confident the community will rise to the occasion and continue to prosper.

Having said that, the road to recovery will not be easy. I want to share some numbers from the 2006 flood for the Town, outside of the Village. I think this will put into perspective just how severe this event was. Also recall there was prior flash flooding causing much damage to Hickories Park and our highway infrastructure in April of 2011. The 2006 numbers were taken from a previously written review.

In 2006 six structures were damaged to the point they could not be reoccupied. Occupants of thirty-one structures had to leave their homes on a temporary basis due to damage. There were one hundred fifteen structures with minor damage. The initial estimates of damage to homes was approximately 5.5 million dollars.

In 2011, two hundred thirty structures received major damage, seventy two structures with moderate damage, one hundred twenty structures with minor damage, two structures destroyed by fire and 6 structures that are structurally damaged and cannot be occupied. Seventy of these structures suffered substantial damage and must be brought in to compliance with floodplain regulations.

In 2006 the Towns infrastructure suffered three hundred sixty four thousand dollars in damage to highway roads, culverts, highway office and debris removal costs. In 2011, to date, 1,504,950 dollars in costs plus three hundred fifty thousand dollars to replace two trucks lost in the flood.

In 2006 Hickories Park and Campville Commons suffered seventy-five thousand dollars in damage. In 2011 we have expended one hundred thirty thousand dollars to date. In 2012 we have anticipated expenses of one million dollars to bring the park up to the level of service residents are accustomed to. A majority of this cost includes the entrance to the park and electrical repair and replacement. We also lost revenue of \$11,745 in returned fees as well as the anticipated revenue that we were not able to realize due to both floods. We are in the process of accessing the overall picture of the park and the best approach to proceed with. We will be taking reservations for the Hickories pavilions as usual but the first **tentative** date for rental is June 1, 2012. We will keep the public updated as we move forward.

In 2006 our Utilities Department suffered 500,000 dollars in damage to the Apalachin sewage treatment plant as well as 50,000 dollars in sewer infrastructure damage. In 2011 we sustained 3.8 million dollars in damage. In 2006 the water distribution system sustained five hundred fifty thousand dollars and 2011 sustained approximately five hundred thousand dollars.

Those are the numbers; the impacts will not become clear for a couple of years. We are currently studying the impact on assessments, long term mitigations projects, property acquisition and programs for residents to mitigate the home losses based on benefit cost analysis. Now that the State has released the details of these programs, we anticipate making decisions by the end of January. If you questions and have not already done so, please call our Planning and Zoning Department and Assessment Department for further clarification.

Despite all of the costs incurred and costs that we continue to incur we were able to keep the tax increase low. If you are a Village taxpayer with an average assessment of 65,700 your tax bill increased \$6.53 **for the year**. If you live outside the Village with an average assessment of 101,800 you tax bill increased \$19.60 **for the year**. The water rate increased .09 cents per thousand gallons of water and sewer rate increased .10 cents per thousand gallons of water used. I want to personally thank all involved in the budget process for assisting in creating a budget that is always on time, sustainable and affordable during these troubled economic times. We will have many challenges to overcome the next few years. Residents can be confident that we are working diligently to keep costs down and maintain the services you are accustomed to receiving.

If a picture paints a thousand words, these numbers are the captions. They are a sobering review of where we are as a Town and the challenges we face. I am confident that the community as a whole will recover with hard work and dedication. The Town realizes most of its revenues from sales tax and the Hickories Park. Help local business and you help yourself: Shop locally! I would like to thank all the of town employees and the Town Board for the efforts during these trying times. I would also like to thank all of the agencies, businesses and individuals who took the time to assist the Town and its residents during this catastrophic event. I look forward to serving you over the next year and wish everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year.