



Supervisor Virginia Stern's Newsletter

February 2011

Phone: (845) 868-1310

It is my pleasure to be able to produce and mail this newsletter at my own personal expense. No public monies are involved and, of course, I take complete responsibility for the content.

Looking forward to 2011 (*Supervisor's comments at January 2011 Town Board Meeting*)

At the start of the New Year, I am filled with renewed energy and hope. There is a pride and spirit in the people of Stanford that, and it is this spirit that has prevailed and will continue to be the basis of our resolve. Residents, town employees and the people who serve in public office, pulled together in 2010 to focus on the challenges we face to make this place a better place to live and raise our families. This spirit continues. *We don't quit. And I don't quit.*

As Town Supervisor, I'd like to take a couple of minutes to talk to you tonight about my vision for 2011 which is in keeping with the Stanford spirit to succeed. It is a vision that will **not** allow petty partisanship to interfere with problem solving. As uncomfortable and contentious as the debates may become while we explore issues, my administration is serious about solving the problems that may hamper our progress. It is important that there be no gridlock in Stanford in 2011. Working together we can do a lot.

It is time to set some new goals. I ran for office to preserve the quality of life of Stanford's residents. I want to assure you that my administration will seize every opportunity to accomplish that.

The following is my overall vision for the New Year:

- My first priority is money management and efficiency as I continue to maintain fiscal oversight and responsibility. One of the first actions in 2011 will be to upgrade our lighting system through a Central Hudson Efficiency Grant. This will result in a savings of nearly \$3000 annually.

- I will invite our business leaders to meet with me. These *Business Development Sessions* will be held to generate ideas and activities which will support our business community. Central to the objective will be how the Town can support the businesses in our community, with a "shop local" campaign and other promotional efforts. I will establish realistic goals for increased uses of technology. There have been questions about whether in this tough economy we can afford changes that modernization requires. The reality is that there are some changes we **cannot** afford **NOT** to make. With smart investing in technology we can bring Stanford into the 21st century. Resulting in increased efficiency and cost savings. All of this will be done in consideration of taxpayer money. Once we get rid of waste, we will be able to grow our services for the community in new areas.

- I will seek continue to new grant opportunities for the Town. For instance, I hope to identify a funding stream to help us make improvements to the Town's recreation facilities and public spaces.

- I want you to feel safe when you and your children are walking or driving on our streets. I have worked with the State to have clearly marked crosswalk on Route 82. And I am working with the County to find ways to slow down traffic on county roads as well. Traffic must slow down. My administration will work to ensure that we improve road safety with both the County and State Highway Management.

- It's important for the Town to be prepared for a fire response crisis. Councilwoman Shafer and the Fire Commissioner are working together to identify all water sources that can be used in fire response. This type of preparation will help improve response time and effectiveness if and when a crisis arises.

- Completion of the Master Plan is a priority. I will continue to support all time and energy needed to ensure that the vision of our town is properly developed. And we need to have zoning that will support and protect our vision of the future of this town. We need to guide growth and development in keeping with our residents' wishes. Controlled growth is essential to a healthy town.

- I am planning a series of public events to celebrate our spirit and pride in our community. These will be public events which will bring people together will be free to residents and will offer entertainment for children and adults and enhance the sense of community. I'm drawing on the success of Stanford History Day 2010 which brought many neighbors together and was the work of many volunteers demonstrating the spirit of Stanford..

- Budgetary restraint will continue. Your Town Board passed a budget with a **zero percent** tax increase. But, to do that we tapped into our reserve accounts. Just as in our own households, we must also be careful when we are forced to do that. Believe me we will be very careful this year. We will analyze the budget on zero based budgeting. Instead of looking at past expenditures, we will look line by line at the budget to figure out how to eliminate spending we don't need and programs that don't work. I hope the Town Board will embrace the spirit of cooperation as we work to keep costs down and spend smartly.

New Highway Garage Update:

Our plans for the long-awaited highway garage are finally completed and will be going out for bids soon. Monies to cover half of the estimated cost have been set aside from the Town's General Fund Balance, and research to accomplish funding the remaining construction costs will take place as soon as we have a clear estimate of the total costs. At that time, all funding possibilities will be researched, and there will be a public hearing to discuss the borrowing options.

I want to underscore that the new structure will result in savings to our Town in distinct ways. Among them:

- 1) The structure will house all of the Town's costly trucks and equipment, protecting them (as they are currently not being protected) from the hazards of weather;
- 2) Keeping in mind that extending the life of these valuable vehicles depends on their being as free as possible from corrosive road salt, snow, mud and other pollutants, trucks will, once the garage is completed, be washed inside the building where they can dry completely;
- 3) Highway employees will no longer be asked to work in shoddy and unhealthy conditions;
- 4) Run-off from trucks will be collected and treated in an oil-water separator prior to being discharged into a storm water quality pond for further treatment prior to release;
- 5) Waste oil will be gathered for safe disposal; and,
- 6) Solar panels will be installed in order to cover most, if not all, of the electricity needs of the building.

You are urged to inspect the plans which are on file in the Clerk's office.

Town Master Plan Update: Please plan to attend your Master Plan Committee's public updating on Saturday, February 26th from 10am to 1pm.

You will have your chance to hear first-hand what your Master Plan Committee has been doing with an opportunity to register your thoughts and opinions on how you would like the future of your Town to be.

The Master Plan Committee has been reviewing proposed updates to the old 1980 Plan. They have elicited extended visions from town committees and boards, along with those of the Stanford Historical Society and our town businesses.

Now it's YOUR turn. In order to be relevant and complete, your input is vital.

Once the Master Plan is completed, your Town's zoning regulations will be amended to support the new vision. Your presence at the February 26 forum is necessary so that the Master Plan will be reflective of and finally shaped by the wishes and needs of the residents who live here.

Town of Stanford Operational Budget 2011

The following is a breakdown of the operational budget for 2011. The official budget is available upon request in the Town Clerk's office. Many residents have asked, "What does the Town do with the tax money it receives?" The following details summarize how we collect the money and how we spend it.

The purpose of this document is to share with you where your money is being spent. We have diligently worked to keep costs down and eliminate waste. There were no salary increases for 2011. The Town will not pay for any employee training that is not State mandated. There were no extra hours granted to part time employees and no additional employees were hired.

The State and County contributions to our budget have decreased this year, yet mandated expenses have increased. Given these conditions and the commitment to no property tax hikes, the Town experienced a \$117,000 budget shortfall for 2011. To cover the shortfall, we were forced to draw the funds from the Town's General Fund Balance. This is like taking money out of your savings account to cover expenses. While we have achieved our goal for this year, it is obvious the 2012 budget will present additional challenges to keep expenses in line while we maintain services.

When the Town's revenues, other than the Property Tax, do not cover the costs, it is the residents' property taxes that are needed to make up the difference.

When the 2011 working Budget was brought down as low as possible, the tax rate increase would have been about 5.5%. That would have meant about a \$32 increase for the average home worth \$320,000. For houses assessed at less than \$320,000, the tax increase would have been less than \$32. To offset this and bring the level to a 0% tax increase for residents, about \$117,000 was taken out of the Fund Balance. (Again, it's like taking money out of your savings to cover expenses.) When we commence work on the 2012 budget, the Town Board will have to find a way to make up this difference.

The Town's total adopted budget for 2011 is \$2,599,054

Our revenue sources and the % they represent of the total revenue are as follows:

1. Property Taxes 53% (2010 Property Taxes were approximately \$36,000 less than 2009)
2. Mortgage Taxes 3%
3. Sales Taxes 4%
4. New York State Revenue Sharing less than 1%
5. Cablevision Franchise Fees. 2%
6. Court Fines and Fees. 12%
7. CHIPS Revenue 4% (for Highway infrastructure)
Transfer Station 3%

Our expenses are divided into 3 segments. Those segments and the % they represent of the total Town budget are listed.

1. General Budget @ \$1,223,317 (47%) To run your Town government in 2010, despite the rising cost of running services, we were able to contain the increases in expenses.
2. Highway Budget @ \$1,375,054 (53%) Remember that the costs for Snow Removal are consistently rising every year. In 2010 the cost to run your highway department amounted to \$834,421; employee benefits (including State Retirement, Social Security, Workers' Comp; and Health Insurance) amounted to \$164,562. These total costs for 2010 were less than the total for 2009.

There are also 3 separate tax districts that are funded by taxpayer dollars but are separate from the town budgets. These are the Stanford Fire District @ \$292,500, Stanford Free Library @\$123,000, Stanford Street Lighting @ \$ 9,000

The expenses included in the General budget and the % of the total operational budget include.

1. Salaries for Town employees. Including Town and Highway - 35%
2. Department costs for running the business of the Town - 9%
3. Committee and Board costs for providing services of planning, conservation and recreation for all residents - 3%
4. Health Benefits for full time employees - 8%
5. Retirement contribution for full time employees - 2%
6. Election costs paid to the county to fund the County Board of Elections. Less than 1%

I encourage you to attend the meetings of the Town Board to voice your welcomed opinion.

If you have any questions or comments, please call me at **868-1310** or email me at supervisor@townofstanford.org. or just stop by my office.

You have entrusted me with a formidable task. It has been my pleasure and reward to work in your behalf. You have my pledge that as your Supervisor my work will focus on:

Financial management
Your safety
Appropriate community development and,
Smart upgrades of technology

All of this will continue to be conducted with integrity and devoid of partisan rivalry. But, I cannot do it alone. *Join me with your commitment to this community.* The spirit of Stanford is alive and well and together we are poised to face the challenges of 2011.

Town Board Accomplishments in 2010

This is an overview of what your Town Board accomplished in 2010.

Government upgrades

1. The Master Plan Committee has been moved forward with expectations that the Town's Master Plan will be updated and finalized by the end of 2011. This most important achievement will form the foundation for preserving our Town according to the residents' visions and wants.
2. The Town now has two grant writers on tap to keep us informed about what grant opportunities are available to the Town – and provide the expertise in writing the grant proposals.
3. The Ethics Law and the Ethics Board will be made more effective at tonight's meeting. In keeping with the New York Association of Towns guidelines, the number of members of the Board has been increased and to ensure complete impartiality, elected or appointed officials and town employees will not be allowed to serve on the Ethics Board.
4. We have submitted a grant to the Greenway Program to help defray some of the costs of the Master Plan Committee. We will be hearing from them in mid-January.

Fiscal Planning and Restraint

5. The Town's phone system was switched to Cablevision/Optimum resulting in a savings of about \$2000 per year.
6. The Town has had energy audits by both NYSEERDA (NYS Energy Research and Development Authority) and Central Hudson.
Your own Board will be taking advantage of a Central Hudson grant program that will upgrade the Town Hall's and the Highway Garage's lighting fixtures and will save the Town about \$3000 yearly in lighting costs.
7. The provider for the mobile communications system for the Highway Department was changed resulting in an annual savings of \$10,800.
8. And the budget for 2011 presented a 0% tax increase.

Continuing Increased Access for the Public

9. The Town's website has been improved – and is still in process of being improved – to provide information in a user-friendly and attractive way.
10. Public access to information has been continually increased. Town Board meetings are aired on Cablevision Channel 21 two times a week, DVD's are in the Stanford Free Library and our meetings will be able to be viewed from the Town's website as well.
11. I have continued my Supervisor Saturdays one Saturday morning each month – sometimes with a program and sometimes just to be available to meet with any resident who comes in to talk. The Saturdays have provided time for exchanges of questions, opinions and ideas.

12. The Clerk's Office has also been open one Saturday a month – allowing people with busy weekday schedules to have access to the Clerk's services.

Sense of Community and Neighborliness

13. Stanford had its first Stanford History Day. It was a wonderful celebration of Stanford's History, with exhibits from the Town's archives on the railroads that were the lifeblood of the town years ago, on the changing farms, commercial establishments, schools. L There were Civil War re-enactors and balladeers, a Harriet Tubman performance, old-time games for children and old fashioned food to eat.
14. At Community Day, some of our Town's artists displayed their works to inspire us and to bring their vibrant creativity into the light of the community.
15. I plan to continue in 2011 with more public events that can serve to bring us all together in a spirit of neighborliness. The first of these events will be a free movie evening in Town Hall – on 22 January at 5 o'clock. A glorious color version of The Wizard of Oz will be shown – complete with free popcorn. It will be a time to share some fun with our neighbors and dispel some of the grey dreariness of winter.

So –2010 was an eventful year. I enjoyed working hard to make government work for you.

Greenway Comes Through

In my first ever grant application, the Hudson River Greenway Counsel awarded the Town \$5,000 for a Community Grant for updating the Town of Stanford's 1980 Master Plan. I was quoted in the press release by the Mid-Hudson Radio.Com as saying that "The Greenway continues to provide resources and guidance to all Hudson River Valley municipalities that enable us to preserve our precious natural beauty, our wildlife and natural resources while making room for our residential and commercial communities."

Stirring the embers of possible funds it is good to note that this grant was one of only two awarded in Dutchess County. The Greenway Grant programs are competitive with all applications evaluated on the basis on how well they advance the Greenway Criteria in the areas of community planning, economic development, natural resource protection, cultural resource protection, scenic resource protection, and open space protection community planning, economic development, and the protection of natural resources. . The amount of the grant award is contingent on funding availability.

I might add that winning the day required leaving no stone unturned in exploring each detail on the grant application. The Town's Master Plan will provide the foundation upon which protecting the rural quality of life here will be built.

Central Hudson lighting efficiency grant

Always on the lookout for grant monies to help fund important projects, I found the opportunity that Central Hudson was offering grants to upgrade inefficient lighting in municipal buildings.

I just want to give you the good news that the Town of Stanford has been fully qualified and approved for a grant to upgrade all the lighting fixtures in Town Hall and the Highway Garage. Having the old lighting fixtures replaced by new, efficient ones will save the Town an estimated \$3225 annually.

Because the contracting company has taken advantage of new governmental incentives for efficiency upgrades for municipalities, they have rescinded all of the fees that they were to charge – or have charged - to towns. That means that the upgrades are being done at absolutely no cost to Stanford.

Whoever said you never get something for nothing?

And beyond the cost savings, the switch to more efficient fixtures will mean your government buildings will reduce air pollution significantly. The numbers, per year, are:

CO2 (Carbon Dioxide) will be reduced by 36,000 lbs

NO2 (Nitrous Oxide) reduced by 69 lbs.

SO2 (Sulfur Dioxide) reduced by 139 lbs.

This is equivalent to not burning 17,216 lbs of coal and planting 7 acres of trees.

You can take pride in how your government buildings are helping to create a cleaner world and saving you money at the same time.

297 Market Lane
Clinton Corners, NY 12514

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NEWSLETTER from Town Supervisor Virginia Stern

YOU Make Government Work

Abe Lincoln cautioned that elected officials are hardly able to do their jobs without the guidance of those they govern. Dialogue between taxpayers and officeholders is at the hub of democracy.

At the foundation of any responsive local government are its citizens. If you are to be represented, it becomes your obligation to convey your views and sentiments to those you have elected.

I need to hear from you, as does each member of your Town Board. Knowing residents' needs and opinions is at the heart and soul of my job as Supervisor

I hope by now all residents of Stanford know that I am hardly in an ivory tower. My Town Hall door is always open and welcoming. And I am always available by phone (868-1310) or email (supervisor@townofstanford.org).

So - make an appointment – or just stop in – it will be good to see each of you, any of you, to answer questions, listen to complaints, help solve problems or just talk.

Watch Town Board Meeting Videos on the Town's website: www.townofstanford.org