

GATES AT A GLANCE

SUPERVISOR RALPH J. ESPOSITO

The 2009 Tentative Town Budget for Gates is out and I am very proud that it contains a real property tax decrease for 2009. I like to remind my skeptical critics that a few years ago I promised the residents of Gates that our financial difficulties would soon be a thing of the past. This budget is certainly proof of that fact.

The average residential taxpayer in Gates currently pays \$671 per year in town taxes. This new budget will mean that the average taxpayer will pay \$665 per year in town taxes for 2009, and yet continue to receive the same outstanding services that the public requires. It is extremely important to remember that the average taxpayer will only pay approximately \$1.82 per day for these services. Keep in mind also that the average tax payer in Gates already pays the LOWEST real property taxes of any town with a police force.

A few years back I told you why it was so difficult to cut real property taxes. "One of the most important problems is our size. We are the smallest of the 19 towns in Monroe County in terms of area. We are already densely populated and developed, since we are the 9th largest town in terms of population. We have little room to develop an expanding tax base and it severely hurts us. Our costs rise, and taxes go up because there are not enough revenues to apply to the tax rate. The town has a difficult time avoiding deficits and tax increases, because there are no new taxpayers to help spread the cost. This means that current taxpayers must see an increase in their taxes. The problem is intensified when you consider that we lost 20% of our total tax revenues when Kodak left. Think about the magnitude of that loss, and you can begin to imagine how difficult the last few years have been as we try to recover." These things are still true so any tax decrease is a very positive sign.

We have taken a number of corrective measures in the past few years which have included a bonding freeze, a hiring freeze, no salary increases, more employee contributions for health benefits, aggressive pursuit of revenues and tax increases. These measures have worked. The bottom line is that we continue to provide outstanding levels of service at an extremely reasonable cost to taxpayers.
