

Ken-Ton Bee Article

November, 2011

Anthony F. Caruana, Supervisor

Town of Tonawanda

Some Reasons for Giving Thanks

As supervisor and chief fiscal and budget officer of the Town of Tonawanda, it is my responsibility under state law to prepare the 2012 tentative budget. It has been filed with the Clerk's Office, reviewed and analyzed by the Town Board, and now will be presented as the preliminary budget to be discussed at a public hearing November 10.

Considering the significant challenges facing the nation, state, county and local governments and a New York State 2% tax cap on municipalities, with the help of our department heads, our Town Board and our town employees, through a rigorous process that started in January, we have managed to reduce operations costs through some consolidation, elimination of waste and inefficiency, and not filling some vacated positions, to arrive at the lowest tax levy in 11 years, 0.8%. The daily cost for town government for a typical home owner will be \$3.27, an increase of 4 cents per day for a home with a market value of approximately \$107,000, again the lowest increase in 11 years.

The main reasons for the operating cost increase are primarily due to increased costs for hospital and medical insurance for employees and retirees, wage increases for employees and other fringe benefits including retirement and workers' compensation insurance and increase in debt payments related to several new capital projects.

Due to our town's fiscally conservative budgeting, our ability to establish a four-year financial plan and re-establish and maintain our fund balance at the NY State Comptrollers suggested levels, Moody's Investors Services of NY City awarded us our highest bond rating ever, resulting in our ability to bond at extremely low interest rates thereby saving our taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars in interest costs over the bonding period.

Some additional good news, Unifrax, with over 100 employees already here in our town, will be moving its worldwide headquarters here along with 95 employees and another 15 new jobs to be added. Also HDM Hydraulics is in the process of purchasing surplus town land for expansion and adding 20 more jobs to its current staff. All more good news for the Town as we work with our business leaders who continue investing in our community helping to expand economic development and create jobs.

November is a time to remember and give thanks. This year we have two of the "greatest generation" warriors from World War II, and a more recent one to be guest speakers at our Annual Veterans Day program at 11:00 A.M., November 11 at our Municipal Building. Retired Army Colonels Earl Kramer and Joseph Varga will join Air Force Master Sergeant Phyllis DePronio during our special program hosted this year by the Crosby American Legion Post, and in conjunction with the Brounshidle VFW Post and our Town. Please join us as we pay tribute to and thank our veterans, past and present, and remember that our freedom is not free. It was paid for with the time, sweat, sacrifice, blood and lives of millions of men and women who have worn and currently wear the uniforms of our nation's military services. Keep them all in your prayers and remember them on Thanksgiving Day as well. Happy Thanksgiving to all.