

State of the Village

Overview

The Village of Owego is in good condition despite state and federal economic problems. Police and Fire Departments effectively provide for the Public Safety at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer. Public Works and Sewer Departments have kept infrastructure in good repair and responsive to State and Federal Regulations while grants have kept cost to taxpayers low. Aggressive code enforcement is eliminating blight and increasing property values. The Clerk Treasurer's office continues to efficiently administer Village business and passed all state audits. Economic Development Initiatives are helping to build the Village tax base. Financially, the Village has moderate debt and tax increases for the last two years was 1.32% in 2008 and 3.42% in 2009.

Specific information on Village departments is as follows:

Federal and State Grants

The Village has received over 2 Million dollars in grants to improve economic health, support low to medium income home repair, refurbish village buildings, and stabilize the riverbank behind River row. Repaid State grant loan revenues have been used to set up a Fire Victims Fund, and an Emergency Home repair Fund.

Clerk Treasurer's Office

The Village financial management system has been updated to guarantee adherence to Federal and State Statutes. New York State Comptroller's Office conducted a Financial Risk Assessment Audit of the new system and found "No Problems".

Police Department

Eight full-time (two officers still out on sick leave) and nine part-time police officers responded to 4,620 calls for service from January to November 2009. Some of these include 938 traffic citations, 586 calls for assistance, 290 reports of dangerous or suspicious conditions, 179 disturbances, 173 motor vehicle accidents, 144 harassment complaints and 133 larceny complaints.

Fire Department

There are 70 active firefighters and 35 active EMS responders that are trained and equipped to assure public safety within the fire district. Active membership is slightly higher than a year ago. Fire calls have increased from 54 in 2007 to 65 in 2009. EMS calls have increased from 1,585 in 2007 to 1,714 in 2009. The recent termination of inactive members of the fire department has not affected public safety. The department still has the same number of qualified responders as it had before the terminations.

Village Attorney

Pursuant to NYS Labor Law, the Village Board adopted "Violence in the Workplace" policy addressing threats of violence, intimidation, all forms of harassment, and coercion or other threatening behavior in the workplace.

To help assure the safety of residents and visitors, the Village Board of Trustees adopted an amendment to Chapter 172 of the Village Code regarding the removal of snow and ice from sidewalks. The amended local law went into effect on December 29, 2009.

Sewer Department

A contract was awarded for the Depot Street/Spencer Avenue Sewer Rehabilitation Project. The project involves the slip-lining of 2100' of 24" sewer main, installation of 2 new manholes and the rehabilitation of 13 existing manholes. The project is being funded through a congressional appropriation of \$285,000.00.

A DEC required engineering study was completed to assess upgrades that will be required at the treatment plant to reduce the discharge of total nitrogen and total phosphorus into the Susquehanna River.

The collection system is under continuous evaluation for structural deficiencies and inflow/infiltration (I/I) problems. A Capital Improvement Fund was created to address problems on a pay-as-you-go basis without having to bond.

Economic Development

The Village helped to secure grants, and has approved a \$1 million expansion of the CPSI Biotech facility on the corner of Front and Court Streets. This renovated facility will add to the village tax base and provide new high tech jobs.

The Village worked with NYSDEC to remove the old Tioga Casting Facility from the Hazardous Waste Site Listing. This will allow the site to be returned to the tax rolls and sold for commercial use. Currently, there is a potential buyer interested in building on the site. The Village is working with the school district and the potential new owner of the old Owego Middle School to re-zone the property for business use. This will allow the property to return to the tax rolls.

The completed Riverwalk/Bank Stabilization Project will attract additional visitors and potential new residents to the Village. The project has also prevented additional riverbank erosion that threatened building foundations and the main village sewer interceptor line.

Public Works

9 streets were resurfaced, 211 catch basins were repaired or replaced, and a storm drain was installed on Montrose Turnpike. Owego River Walk/Bank Stabilization Project is under budget and ahead of schedule. A new ice skating rink was installed at Marvin Park, new lighting was installed at the tennis courts, and the swimming pool leak at Marvin Park was repaired.

A memorial for fallen Owego Police and Firefighters is being installed in Draper Park. Future plans are to install a memorial for other department's fallen employees.

Cemetery section 7 (near the Indian Girl Monument) is now open for burials and includes a Park.

Two new high efficiency furnaces have been installed at the Central Fire Station. These units should significantly reduce the heating cost for Central Fire Station.

Public Works Issues

The Village continues to work with DOT on existing and potential truck traffic issues in the central Village. Superior Wells has agreed to use the Talcott Street Bridge and Glen Mary Drive instead of West Avenue to travel to and from the well sites, except when traveling to Scott Smith to refuel.

A letter opposing the potential truck traffic on East Front Street due to the proposed Treatment Plant at the former Trabucco Auto Dealership was sent to the Town of Owego's Planning Board with copies to the county, state legislators and Governor Patterson.

"No Truck Route" signs were erected on Erie and other streets. The Village is working with other municipalities to create a Road Use Agreement which drilling companies will be asked to sign.

Code Enforcement

402 complaints were handled and 57 building permits were issued. Operating Permit inspections of business/commercial/places of assembly were conducted. Blighted buildings at 495 East Main Street, 42-44 Temple Street and 199 West Division Street were demolished. Rental Registrations were established for absentee landlords. A Neighborhood Improvement Committee was established to review present and future policies and laws.

Edward L Arrington, Mayor
Village of Owego