

## ***Tax Cap Not Without Challenges***

As Supervisor, I take very seriously the responsibility to provide the necessary programs and services to our community. I am also well aware of today's financial realities – more people are being forced to make tough decisions with their family budgets, finding ways to do “more with less.”

New York State has the highest local taxes in the nation and Monroe County property taxes are among the highest when compared to home values. This situation needs to be addressed and remedied for our residents. However, the state's recently adopted property tax cap legislation falls short of this effort. The tax cap limits increases in the total amount of property taxes collected each year to 2 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is less. The legislation did not include significant reforms sought for state mandates – the state-imposed, mandated local services which in many cases are under-funded or not funded at all by the state.

Each year we strive to keep Town costs down and increase efficiencies. But each year we are faced with significant state mandates along with inflation on many of our large expense items, which is making it harder and harder for us to maintain the high level of services we deliver and that our residents expect.

The Town Board and I have long used the rate of inflation as a measurement for our budgets. Since 2005, we have adopted seven straight budgets with a tax rate decrease. During this period the tax rate has decreased by more than 30 cents per thousand, reflecting a tax rate decrease of just over 10%. During this same period the property tax levy (the total amount of taxes collected) has increased just over 7%, significantly less than the 18% rate of inflation.

We are proud of our record of fiscal conservatism. Town taxes make up only 8¢ of your property tax dollar. We have one of the highest Moody ratings in New York State which recognizes the strength of our fiscal position.

Our past fiscal responsibility means we will weather the new tax cap legislation better than some other municipalities in the short term. However, if we don't receive true mandate relief the future holds even more difficult choices which may result in any combination of budget cuts, program cuts and tax increases. This scenario is ensured if the state of New York continues its propensity to spend our time and money, with little consideration of the increasing challenges it places on local municipalities. As always, feel free to share any comments with me at [bcarpenter@townofpittsford.org](mailto:bcarpenter@townofpittsford.org) or stop in and visit me at Town Hall.