

MAYOR'S NEWLETTER
AUGUST 2008

In serving as an elected official, the most important function is approving the budget. This process started back in May with the Council retreat and will end at the September Council meeting with the approval of the budget and setting the tax rate for next year.

As a part of that process, City Council recently completed a review of the 2008-2009 budget analysis and made recommendations about the needs and desires of the Village. The budget is made of fifteen different funds; by law, some enterprise funds are required to be separated and other funds are created to simplify the accounting.

The good news is that the City has excess reserves in the general fund this year of over \$1.5 million. We have a healthy reserve and a great credit rating. Both of these things were important earlier this year when we purchased bonds for the street and drainage projects. This is a good thing, however, since the City has a few outstanding projects needed in the near future.

The Police Department is severely cramped, having run out of space several years ago. Having studied various options to alleviate the problem, Council has determined that the best option is to expand the police building as soon as possible. Council is also considering the purchase of a fire truck to replace the 1978 truck that needs constant repair and does not meet the minimum codes. Who would think that one truck could cost a half million dollars?

Another major project is the replacement of our City Hall buildings, which are fifty years old and deteriorating rapidly. Citizens who have visited City Hall recently will agree that the buildings are in bad condition and do not represent a positive image of Jersey Village. Council envisions a new, modern facility that will be a source of pride in our community, but that project will be expensive so the City should start setting money aside. The plan is to build the City's reserve to a significant level in order to pay for this replacement without having to go further in debt.

I recently read a biography written by a famous politician who stated that the main job of an elected official is to "establish the budget and the rest of it is just fluff." As I write this, I have already skimmed, read and studied the first draft of the budget, a 500 page document which I and the other Council members received about two weeks ago. There are two scheduled public meetings at which Council will discuss the intricacies of the budget and to listen to input from citizens and staff. I invite all citizens to come to these public hearings which are scheduled for August 18 and September 15.

Russell Hamley