

# Blooming Grove Democratic Committee

P. O. Box 95, Blooming Grove, New York 10914

B.G. Democratic Committee meets 1st Wednesday of each month at 08:00 PM, Senior Center,

Website: [www.ocbgdems.com](http://www.ocbgdems.com), Phone #: 845-782-0622

Newsletter: March 2013

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## Introduction

The Democratic Committee of Blooming Grove thanks you for your support last year. We had some significant successes and are looking forward to 2013 with the opportunity to take control of the County legislature and the Town Government.

In 2012 the County Government showed just how dysfunctional it is with their actions on Valley View and the Government center. Their actions, on a smaller scale, are similar to those playing out in Washington DC where elected officials commit to represent their party's ideology and not us, their constituents.

We hope to change that in our County in 2013.

We are interested in your input. If you have a subject you are interested in, go to our website [www.ocbgdems.com](http://www.ocbgdems.com), and using the Contact Us tab, provide us with your comments and ideas.

### Topics:

- 2013 Town of Blooming Grove Election information.
- Blooming Grove voter participation in the 2012 Presidential Election
- 2013 Town of Blooming Grove Budget
- Does Orange County need changes to its Constitution (i.e., the Orange County Charter)
- Impact of Redistricting on Blooming Grove.

Sonia Ayala and Robert A. Fromaget

Co-Chairpersons

Blooming Grove Democratic Committee

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## 2013 Town of B.G. Election Information

The following elected offices are up for election in November 2013.

### Elected Positions:

- 1 Town Supervisor
- 1 Town Clerk
- 1 Town Tax Collector
- 2 Town Councilperson
- 1 Judge
- 1 Highway Superintendent

- 2 County Legislative seats

If you are interested in running for public office please go to our website (<http://ocbgdems.com/EndorseRqmts.html>) and complete and submit the endorsement request and Campaign Contact information forms.

We will contact you after receipt of the form and advise you of our interview process and schedule you accordingly.

## Blooming Grove voter participation in the 2012 Presidential Election

Blooming Grove has 11,506 registered voters on the Board of elections file as of January 2013. In the 2012 election the turnout was as follows:

Party	Total Reg. Voters	Total 2012 Voters	% of Reg Voters	Total who did not vote since 2007	last Vote between 2008 and 2011
Dem	3,884	2,828	73%	541	515
Rep	3,964	3,030	76%	730	204
Con	303	244	81%	39	20
Unaffiliated	2,630	1,584	60%	674	372
IND	546	342	63%	113	91
WOR & GRE	71	34	48%	23	14
Other	108	70	65%	25	13
<b>Total:</b>	<b>11,506</b>	<b>8,132</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>2,145</b>	<b>1,229</b>

This was an impressive turnout and we are optimistic that this will continue into 2013 for the Town and County Government elections.

Thank you for voting.

## 2013 Town of Blooming Grove Budget

The 2013 budget has been approved by our town board and the Times Herald Record reported that the Blooming Grove budget had the highest increase of all the municipalities in Orange County, a 4.45% increase. The 4.45% increase by the Blooming Grove Town Board is the highest budget increase in all Orange County. Only 4 towns exceed the 2%

cap and Blooming Grove taxpayers get hit with over double the 2%.

Town Supervisor justifies this huge increase, see the Times Herald Record article (Tax levy limit not necessarily a hard-and-fast rule, December 20, 2012), "... rather than make the politically popular move and spend down fund balances to keep taxes low, the town is trying to build up its fund balances and cash reserves."

### Increase Bond Rating:

So why should Blooming Grove hold a large surplus? Standard reason given is to improve its municipal bond rating to decrease the interest cost of borrowing. This shortchanges current taxpayers by requiring them to upfront pour more money into town coffers for future savings.

Future savings are miniscule. If the town borrows \$2 million at a 4% interest rate for 20 years the total interest and repayment of principal and interest is \$21. And this cost for each taxpayer decreases every year as number of residences increase. No matter how large the surplus the interest rate never goes below the 10 year United States Treasury bond.

### The 2013 Blooming Grove Budget

Some questions on the 2013 budget:

1. Since we lost \$400,000 in revenue and expenses due to the Village of South Blooming Grove (VSBG) discontinued town DPW services, was this included in the calculation of the 4.45% tax increase? If it was not then the actual increase is 9% and not 4.45%.
2. How is the current budget going to achieve its goal of increasing the surplus? Our review could not identify how this will be achieved. (To see the 2013 budget assessment detail – go to the BGNews tab on our website at [www.ocbgdems.com](http://www.ocbgdems.com).)

We will provide more information on the BG Town Budget in the next newsletter.

## The Orange County Sewer District and Kiryas Joel Sewer District remain an issue in Orange County

We are about to be required to spend tens of millions of dollars to upgrade a facility that is at or well above its capacity. Legislator Benton (R) has proposed that the OCSD users should pay approximately \$30 million to pipe OCSD effluence from the OCSD in Harriman to the Hudson River. Of course he has no constituents to hold him accountable for this proposal.

**Legislator Leigh Benton (R) has proposed that the OCSD users pay approximately \$30 million to pipe OCSD effluence from the OCSD in Harriman to the Hudson River.**

Recently Governor Cuomo awarded \$575 million to economic development projects and \$600,000 grant went to Kiryas Joel to enable them to do repairs on their Sewer District.

Based on the Inter-Municipal Agreement signed by Mr. Diana with Kiryas Joel the State grant money of \$600,000 should go to the OCSD and its users. According to this agreement the OCSD has paid Kiryas Joel \$3.1 MILLION from December 2009 to December 2012. These payments were to be split up as follows: \$1,233,997.65 for their debt service costs for their WWTP and paid an additional \$866,002.35 into an escrow fund to support Capital improvements and repairs. The \$1.1 million balance I assume was for Kiryas Joel.

The specific repairs that were to be done were:

1. Installation of a grinder vault at the pumping station as provided in the consent order dated June 10, 2005,
2. Channel Monster ACD2410-1500 Grinder/rag removal unit in the grinder vault
3. Approximately 120 feet of 24 inch main line sewer to connect to the East Branch Sewer to the 6" X 8" overflow division vault at the pump station
4. Any and all necessary structural repairs, replacements and/or improvements to the treatment facility's rotating biological contactor (RBC) units to maintain their full continuous duty operation
5. Upgrade of pumps, controls and mechanical piping to the sand filter backwash and thickener pump station.

The IMA further states that if these repairs/projects were not done then the County can do them and deduct those costs

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from their yearly payment. Based on what I have read from a recent foil request to the DEC it appears that they were not done and therefore I would suggest that the \$600,000 should be refunded to the OCSD user community because they have already paid \$866,002 for these repairs.

That same document also states that "This agreement is subject to the approval, if required, of the county legislature..." I guess that means it is optional but who decides? I am confident that the legislature never saw this document because there are no signatures by the County Legislature on this document nor were there any signatures of any of the locally elected officials. We are not surprised because the local elected officials are never consulted on any decisions made by the county on this facility.

When is the legislature going to give control of this facility back to the municipalities who use it? Since Legislator Benton has no constituents in the OCSD he cannot be held accountable by the users of that facility but the users of that facility will pay the price for his poor decisions.

We just completed a study on the OCSD Communities growth over the next 27 years. This was presented to the Orange County Legislature and we are awaiting their action. We will present the study in the next news letter. (This study can be found at this link – <http://ocbgdems.com/files/OCSDProjectandAssess2013.pdf>)

*A question that needs to be asked of our legislators, "What have you done to address the injustice that is being placed on the users of the Orange County Sewer District?"*

**A question that needs to be asked of our legislators, "What have you done to address the injustice that is being placed on the users of the Orange County Sewer District?"**

## **Does Orange County need changes to its Constitution (i.e., the Orange County Charter)**

Recently the O.C. Legislature, following our County's Constitution (i.e., the O.C. Charter) voted to override the County Executive's (CE) veto and appropriate funds to continue the operation of Valley View Nursing Home for another year. Thus, within the law, the Legislature rejected the CE's budget that planned on closing/selling that facility by end of January. However, our CE refused to respect the Legislature's override and he is continuing with his plan to close/sell our Nursing Home.

Mr. Diana is breaking the law and the only thing our legislature can do is go to court to stop him. Who will have to pay all the lawyer fees for this legal action, the taxpayers? Just like when the CE refused to testify before the Legislative Investigation committees for Valley View and the Government Center, the county taxpayers paid all of the legal fees to protect the CE and his direct reports from having to do their jobs and our legislators did nothing.

It is troubling that Mr. Diana can ignore the law that he swore to "uphold and protect" when he took the oath of office and there is nothing the Legislature or anyone else can do except go to court. I am also concerned that there is no interest by our legislator's to begin discussions on holding a constitutional convention (i.e., a citizen committee) to examine the Charter and recommend changes that would prevent this kind of conduct by our elected/appointed officials in the future.

**It is troubling that Mr. Diana can ignore the law that he swore to "uphold and protect" when he took the oath of office and there is nothing the Legislature or anyone else can do except go to court.**

The one change that would prevent the County Executive (CE) from doing this in the future is to divide the role of CE into two positions, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and a Chief Operations Officer (COO). Today the CE has both roles. What is happening today could not happen if the CFO role of financial planning, monitoring and reporting was separated from the COO role of spending and management of the delivery of county services. The COO would have his departments build their budget and he would consolidate them into his proposed budget. The CFO would then work with the COO's staff to understand what the county's goals are and compare the requested budget against past budgets and make recommendations to the COO for changes. Then the CFO would present the final budget to the County Legislature.

If the County had these separate roles today than when the Legislature voted to override the County Executives veto, the CFO would have changed the budget and the COO would then be responsible to execute the budget as approved by the County Legislature. No legal fees for the taxpayers.

These changes are necessary but not sufficient, there are many other changes needed and should be addressed by the proposed Citizen's Committee. These include:

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- Independent redistricting of County Legislative Districts.
- Define governance that gives the Orange County Sewer District users communities control over their sewer district.
- Campaign Finance reform laws to ensure that county vendors/contractors do not fund county wide campaigns.
- Expand on the Citizen committees to allow for representation on these committees by non-elected officials (i.e., citizens) and prohibit elected officials from chairing such committees.
- Define impeachment/disciplinary rules for all county wide officials who violate the law.
- Define how proposals for new services or changes to existing services need to be documented and the process for approval before being submitted to the Legislature.
- Establish a voting schedule for all elected officials that would have ½ of them elected every two years.

So why hasn't the legislature begun taking action? Could it be that many of them aspire to that job and they may not want the role diminished or the salary reduced consistent with the modified roles of each position? Let us hope not, let us demand change!

## Redistricting Orange County Style

Redistricting was done by Legislator Katie Bonelli (R, BG) and Legislative Chairman Michael Pillmeier (R, WAR) with the O.C. Planning Department. The process was done behind closed doors, and no input was solicited from the other Republican or Democratic legislators.

We are concerned that during a time when political pressure strongly supports a more independent approach to redistricting that we remain in the dark ages with backdoor politics controlling this very important decision.

## Impact of Redistricting on Blooming Grove

In addition to the loss of the 500 democrats to District 11 The new redistricting proposal changed one of the two Blooming Grove legislators and if approved we will have Legislator Matt Turnbull (D) as our **legislator**.

The new redistricting proposal changed one of the two Blooming Grove legislators and if approved we will have legislator Matt Turnbull (D) as one of our legislators. However, Matt's district will now have a 1,000 Republican to

Democratic registration disadvantage while there was only a 500 difference in his old district.

Matt is a builder who has worked hard for his community and 2 years ago won office in a predominantly Republican legislative district. Matt Turnbull has been a leader in the fight to renovate our Government Center and to save Valley View. His construction background was a key reason why our Government Center has not been demolished because he has the knowledge to address the **misinformation** that Mr. Diana and the Republican leadership have been spreading around.

Matt's presence in the Legislature has protected the taxpayers of this county by saving our government center from the wrecking ball, saving the taxpayers from the cost of building a new government center and defeating Mr. Diana's proposed budget for Valley View, a budget that would have closed that facility in January. Neither of these issues have been resolved yet as Valley View is now in court, and the Government Center is still exposed because the Republican leadership is still talking about demolition of 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of that building and building new.

Was this because the County Republicans want to replace Legislator Turnbull because of his background in construction? Are they preparing for the demolition of the Government Center under a new County Executive? It certainly appears that way because the announced Republican candidates have been quiet on their position on the Government Center.

We need to keep Legislator Turnbull in the legislature to continue the fight for the Taxpayer of Orange County. However, that is NOT what the legislative leadership, and their Republican Party donors – many of them in the construction and nursing care business, want. As a result they established a population difference between the two parties that is more than twice the size it was before his election two years ago.

Matt Turnbull deserves our support and I hope you will take the time to get to know him in the coming months and vote for **Legislator Matt Turnbull** in November of 2013.

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*If you have any questions or wish to discuss these articles feel free to give us a call at 1-845-494-9451*