

Introduction

The Democratic Committee of Blooming Grove would like to thank you for your support in our annual fund drive. This money will be used to support our website, provide you with updates on the political activities in our Villages, Town and County, and offer to support our candidates.

To those who took the time to vote we thank you. This was an important election and we lost Representative John Hall. We will miss him.

We are interested in your input so if you have a subject you are interested in, go to our website and provide us with your comments and ideas using the Contact Us tab.

This edition of the BG Democrat Newsletter contains the following:

Updates:

- Camp LaGuardia

New Topics:

- Another reason Orange County needs an Independent Comptroller/Inspector General.
- A Resident speaks out on the Village of South Blooming Grove Budget, by *Kirsten Santer*
- Valley View, a History of Our County Senior Residential Facility, by *Vanessa Bisone*
- The Orange County legislature has approved the demolition of the Parry Building at Valley View and the construction of a new building.
- The Orange County Sewer District is an example of "Taxation without Representation?"
- Should the Taxpayers have to pay for a New Government Center?
- A Letter to our New Governor. (Pension reform)
- Candidate search is under way for the November 2011 election.

Sonia Ayala and Robert A. Fromaget
Co-Chairpersons
Blooming Grove Democratic Committee

Website: www.ocbgdems.com

An Update on Camp LaGuardia

A town official has advised us that we have no new developments concerning the county's sale of Camp LaGuardia to MountCo.

What we were able to find out is that MountCo is working with the Town of Chester Supervisor on negotiating sewer and water capacity and has not been communicating with the Town of Blooming Grove.

We have not been able to find out what the next milestone is, based on the last extension agreement.

Another Reason Orange County Needs an Independent Comptroller/Inspector General.

The leadership positions and non-union employees in the county reported significant salary increases in the 2011 budget for 2009. Those positions received increases ranging from 3% to over 35% from 2001 to 2008. However, in 2009 there were a number of increases that exceeded what would be prudent given the economic conditions that exist today and their prior salary adjustment history.

- 17 positions had increases in excess of 30%
- 39 positions had increases over 20%
- 15 positions had increases over 15%
- 53 positions had increases over 7%

These increases were on top of the raises that these positions received from 2001 through 2008.

All of this in an Election year!

In 2006 there were positions that appeared to get significant bonuses like the:

- Commissioner of Parks received a 38% increase in 2006.
- Central Services, Director Park Const. & Maint. Received a 23% increase in 2006.

Then there was the discrepancy between the Budget summary page and the detailed pages where the County Budget reported a summary expense for

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- 2006 of \$611.3 million and detail for only \$584 million, a difference of \$27.3 million
- 2007 of \$753.6 million and detail for only \$619.2 million, a difference of \$134.4 million
- 2008 of \$749.0 million and detail for only \$640.5 million, a difference of \$108.4 million
- 2009 of \$664.0 million and detail for only 656.7 million, a difference of \$7.2 million.

This problem exists because there are no operational checks and balances in the Orange County Budget process. The budget layout does not present the Plan and Actual data for the same year in any document that it produces. Thus the legislators have to use both the current year's budget and the prior year's budget to understand what actually happens in any year.

Since the County Legislative Chairman has committed to helping Mr. Diana to implement his programs, who is providing the "checks and balances" on this county government?

These are some of the many reasons we need an independent Comptroller.

Resident speaks out on the Village of South Blooming Grove's Budget.

(By Kristen Santer, candidate for Village of South Blooming Grove Trustee)

I would like to express my concern over the direction the Village of South Blooming Grove seems to be taking towards independence from the Town of Blooming Grove. It appears by recent purchases and resolutions passed by the Village that the Village is considering discontinuing its future relationship with the Town of Blooming Grove for services such as Building Inspection and Highway Maintenance.

As a taxpayer to both entities, I find this deeply troubling. Studies have shown that duplication of services in local municipalities is not cost effective. NYS feels so strongly about this that it offers grants to local municipalities to combine services. And while consolidation of services is the trend in this difficult economic climate, it seems the Town and Village are embarking in the opposite direction.

While it may appear to the Village that it will be cost effective to enlist these services on their own, the long term ramifications of this decision seem to be negative. Support staff will need to be hired for these services, legal advice obtained, storage costs considered and NYS pension dollars paid for these new hires. Additionally,

while even under the best case scenario of saving the Village a bit of money in the short term, it is likely that our Town taxes would increase to account for the lost revenue from the Village. And while the Town and Village may not be concerned with the negative tax consequences to the other's municipality, the truth is that Village residents are taxpayers to both and are the real ones paying the price for the split no matter whose tax bill the increase shows up on.

I hope the Town and Village can put past differences aside and work together in the best interest of the Blooming Grove/Village of South Blooming Grove taxpayer.

Valley View, a History of Our Senior Residential Facility

(By Vanessa Bisone, County Employee and CSEA member)

The Valley View Center for Nursing Care and Rehabilitation has been dubbed "the jewel of Orange County" by Orange County Executive, Ed Diana. This county owned health care facility sits in a picturesque farm setting in the town of Goshen. It has 160 acres of bucolic views. There are presently 360 residents that call this facility home. This facility provides quality services to all ages of residents although it mainly serves our elderly and veterans who reside in Orange County.

The Valley View, or as it may be better known to long time Orange county residents as Orange Farms, provides short term rehabilitation, long term care, Alzheimer care, palliative care and respite care. These services are available for all residents of this county regardless of the ability to pay.

In 1839 the land was deeded to Orange county for the use to house those that could not afford to pay for health care. This facility, though going through many physical changes, has for the past nearly 200 years held the same mission statement; to provide care for those that are in need, no matter the ability to pay for it. This facility has existed with this mission statement through all the economic pitfalls that our society has endured. It has sustained through the Great Depression of the late 1920's to early 1930's, which was the worst economic climate that this country has ever seen. It has gone through the 1970's economy and yet still the county has continued to operate this nursing home.

In May of 2010 the Chairman of the Legislature, Michael Pillmeier (R,C) and Woodbury legislator Michael Amo (I, R), put forth a resolution to the full legislature to hire an

independent consulting firm to perform a feasibility study on whether Orange county should continue to own and operate the nursing home. The county executive, Ed Diana has hired the Center for Governmental Research to study the facility for the county's continued ownership and operation of Valley View as a public nursing home.

The study began in the middle of December. To date the firm performing the study has been to Valley View to interview personnel. They have requested financial data from the county with the final study report due to the legislature in June of this year.

The Orange County legislature has approved the demolition of the Parry Building at Valley View and the construction of a new building.

At the November County Legislative meeting the county legislators approved the county executive's request to demolish the Parry building at Valley View and to replace it with a new building estimated to cost \$7.8 million.

During the legislative meeting the legislators also approved a bond that is valued at \$7.8 million without knowing if the county taxpayers would be reimbursed by the state as agreed when the county committed to reduce the number of beds available at Valley View by 160.

The Parry building is only 30 years old and raises the question, "why not renovate the building?" The county could use this building space to expand its available office space and still have room to create the 30 ventilator beds and to create the senior day care facility agreed to in the Berger Commission study.

Finally, this decision was made one month after the County Legislature approved the funds to complete a study to determine what should happen with Valley View. Should Valley View continue to be managed by the county or should we outsource or sell it?

So are the taxpayers going to fund this building so the county can sell Valley View? Is this a fiscally responsible decision?

The Orange County Sewer District is an example of "Taxation without Representation?"

For the Blooming Grove residents in the Orange County Sewer District there is the added tax burden of paying for the continuous upgrading of that facility. This is due to fact that the County Legislature approved the Amended Final Environmental Impact Statement (AFEIS) for that sewer district. Then we add the burden of the extension of the OCSD to include the Camp LaGuardia property, and the impact of the precedent that was set by this resolution.

In the December meeting the County legislature approved a resolution that allowed the county executive to sell \$1.2 million in bonds to support additional improvements to the sewer district. They were advised that the sewer district has a current surplus of over \$4.0 million and these costs should be covered from that surplus. The legislature approved this bond along with an increase in the fees to the users of that district to cover the cost of repayment. At no time has the county executive or the county legislature solicited input from the local elected officials who represent the users of that facility.

All costs for this district are passed on to the residents within that sewer district, regardless of whether they are actually users of the facility or have septic tanks to process their wastewater. This truly is "Taxation without representation" because 16 of the Legislators who approved this amendment, and the sale of the bond, do not represent any of the users of that facility.

The County Legislators are the same people who talk about smaller government, talk about how bad taxes are in Orange County and how they need to be reduced, while blindly approving whatever the County Executive wants regardless of the impact on our taxes.

Should the Taxpayers have to pay for a New Government Center?

In the presentation that the County Executive used to justify the new government center he highlighted a number of supporting issues that do not hold up under careful scrutiny.

Mr. Diana has stated that the building has required enormous amounts of money to maintain and is in need of

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replacing the aging equipment. Yet over the past 9 years the Capital Plan shows that the county has spent \$15,150 on repairs for the leaky roof and nothing on repairs for the building itself. The Capital plan has authorized \$5.4 million on replacing the building equipment but only \$1.4 million of that has been spent as of the 2011 Capital plan.

The County Executive said the county building has high energy costs but has excluded it from the current energy audit being done by Honeywell. This study could have been used to support the county's claim that the building has high energy costs. Now we will never know.

The county says we will get greater efficiency with the co-location of many departments. However, when comparing the budget staffing levels with the number of people being co-located only about 55% of these departments will be located in the new building.

Finally, there was no estimate to show the cost of demolishing the current Government Center. We were told that because the current building is concrete it will be very expensive to tear down and dispose of the debris. The fact that the demolition will only occur after the employees move into the new building raises concerns about safety and additional cost impacts that have not been documented.

In summary, the justification provided by the County Executive in his own words was "hastily put together" and thus flawed, yet the County Legislature has agreed to let the process continue by approving a resolution for \$200,000 to fund a study to evaluate the options for a NEW County Government Center.

With a target date of April for the completed bids to be submitted to Mr. Pillmeier, no one has yet explained why this project is so urgent that it needs to be done this year.

A Letter to our New Governor

(By Larry DeLarose, Former Candidate for State Senate.)

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Congratulations on your inauguration as Governor of New York. I am sure I am joined by millions of New Yorkers who wish you every success over the next four years.

I am also writing you to bring to your attention a situation which I and many other New Yorkers find difficult to comprehend in these difficult financial times.

Apparently, if you are an elected state legislator and have reached the age of 65 you can draw a full state retirement pension and still continue to serve as a legislator with full pay and benefits (i.e. State Senator William Larkin and Assemblywoman Nancy Calhoun).

I would respectfully request that you have your staff explore this situation and also recommend that you do whatever is in your power to see that this kind of "double-dipping" is stopped as soon as possible.

Respectfully,
Lawrence M. Delarose

Town of Blooming Grove 2011 Candidate Search.

The following elected offices are up for election in November of 2011.

Elected Positions and Salaries:

- Town Supervisor - \$55,167
- Town Clerk - \$55,289
- Town Tax Collector - \$55,289
- 2 Town Councilpersons – 9,040
- 1 Judge – \$19,676
- 1 Highway Superintendent - \$65,030

If you are interested in running for one of the open town elected position 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 your eligibility, our interview process and schedule you accordingly.

A note on Voter Turnout:

Democratic turnout in the 2009 was 26% compared to 41% for the Republicans Party, and in 2010 Democratic turnout was 50% versus 60% for the Republican Party.

If you received this newsletter then according to the BOE you are a frequent voter and we thank you.

We ask you to pass this newsletter on to your friends and family and ask them to vote in 2011. Orange County is important to us and our families and change will not happen unless we vote. Thank you again.