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*The weekly forum dedicated to helping you better understand your government*

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***This week's question: "The cost of running the town affects my taxes. What is the town doing to save money and keep my taxes as low as possible?"***

Each year the Town Board must create a budget and then live within it, so we get to see firsthand, the financial impact of our decisions. This drives many initiatives aimed at saving taxpayers money. One opportunity we aggressively pursue is grant funding. Over the past 4 years, the town has received over \$1.5 million in grants to make several projects possible. The Town and Village governments also work together to consolidate services where it makes sense (Courts, Joint Maintenance Facility, etc.). This reduces the cost of government – one person or department services both town & village needs. Along those lines, many town employees “wear several different hats” and have been cross-trained, reducing the need to hire additional staff. Many employees are kept at part time status – another cost cutting effort. Over the past few years, health insurance benefits have also been revised, with employees continually contributing more towards their premiums. Over the past few years, the Town Board has unanimously refused raises, and has mandated that employees fulfill their training requirements locally to minimize travel expenses. When purchasing new items or services, we review multiple quotes, ensuring we get the best value for your dollar. One of the most important things we look to do is to reduce the tax rate after a revaluation. If we didn't do that & the rate remained the same as the previous year, your taxes would automatically increase. Before the reval in 2007 the tax rate was \$1.54/\$1000 of assessed property value. After that reval, the tax rate was reduced to \$1.32/\$1000. BUT (UhOh, here it comes), with all we do to try to keep costs down, there are areas that are tough to control: the cost of gas, salt, insurance, utilities (even though we team up with other towns in Erie County to negotiate better pricing) and unfunded mandates from the state (meaning we're required to conduct an activity but receive no money to pay for it). Be assured that we really are trying to do our best, in these times, to provide our residents the best value at the lowest cost. We invite your suggestions on how to improve the services you receive - You have a voice in your government.

***Next Week's Question: "A year in the life of a tax bill. What happens when."***

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