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Page 4



Abby Luby Photo

New Castle Supervisor Barbara Gerrard in her office at Town Hall

Plenty on the Docket for New Castle's Gerrard in '09

By Abby Luby

It's not often that a new town board member is sworn into office by a U.S. senator and greeted by a former president, but Barbara Gerrard has the picture to prove that it happened to her.

On display in the supervisor's office at New Castle Town Hall is a picture of Gerrard being administered the oath by Hillary Clinton.

"That was when I was a board member," Gerrard said. "Bill (Clinton) was also there – they are both very gracious people."

She started her nearly decade long run on the board as a council member, served as deputy supervisor and was elected supervisor in 2007. Now, with just a little over a year into her two-year term, Gerrard has a longer lens to view past gains and future challenges.

Topping the town's list is an aggressive move towards environmental sustainability.

"The evidence is overwhelming that global warming is happening," said Gerrard. "That means that every elected official is obligated to reduce the carbon footprint and the contribution to greenhouse gases."

Locally, green initiatives have already begun she said. “There are very strict stormwater regulations and how to handle run off. By law we have to really adapt and be more careful about where we permit development and limiting development.”

The economical downturn has steered the town to put some projects on the back burner. “Our revenue is projected to be down about \$400,000. You have to weigh that in when planning,” said Gerrard.

The town is looking at what they can shear off the Chappaqua Hamlet Landscape Design Project.

“We may slow up the side walk installation in Chappaqua. Instead of doing the whole of the hamlet we may do a third,” Gerrard mentioned as one possible reduction. Recommendations from the Downtown Steering Committee are on the table for street lighting and new and improved crosswalks.

Work for lower King Street has a good chance of moving forward. “We would like to do something at the end of Lower King – like create a nice pocket park similar to what we did at the back of Citibank,” Gerrard said.

Continuing projects include rebuilding the Route 120 span into Chappaqua – the “lifeline” bridge – to maintain good traffic flow and sorting out the various parking quagmire.

One of the bigger, capital projects that will be reconsidered is burying electric lines underground. “This is an aesthetic consideration, the huge wires are unattractive,” said Gerrard. “It’s not dangerous but it will cost us at least \$1 million to put lines underground and that would be for just a couple of blocks. It’s something we need to put back on the table.”

A less favorable aspect of the sluggish economy is cutting town staff positions through attrition. “We have staff who will be retiring and we are looking very hard at whether or not we have to replace those staff members,” she said. “We are pretty lean anyway, but there’s room to make adjustments.”

Gerrard is so focused on this year’s challenges that she didn’t let on about may re-election plans.

“I have no idea if someone is planning on running against me, if I run. It’s such a strange economy and all predictions are off the table for everybody, everywhere.”