



## Croton Accepts Open Space from CCNS

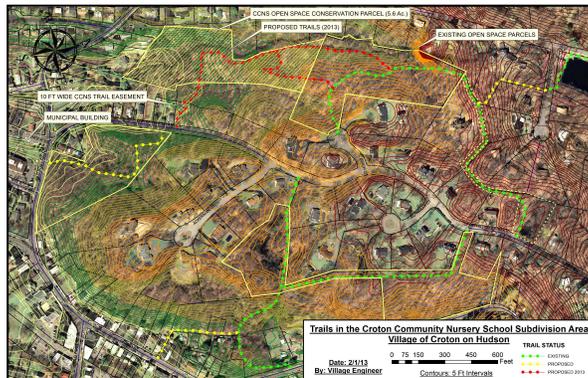
At its February 4 meeting, the Village acknowledged and thanked the Croton Community Nursery School (CCNS) for its donation to the Village of a 5.6 acre parcel of open space land. The Village had previously accepted the gift in September 2012. However, due to procedural requirements related to it being a non-profit educational organization, it was also necessary to gain approval from the NYS Dept. of Education, the NYS Attorney General's office and the NYS Supreme Court. The actual transfer was not finalized until late January of this year.

The parcel was carved from a larger parcel owned by CCNS which was subdivided into three residential lots in September of 2012. The parcel was initially identified for protection by the Planning Board during its subdivision review process as having significant conservation value. A review by the Westchester Land Trust (WLT) indicated that the proposed open space parcel was an important drainage area for an intermittent stream and wetlands flowing to the Hudson River and for the protection of a section of old growth woodland.

WLT also cited its value for the preservation of wildlife habitat and for its recreational potential as part of the Village's Trail System.

The 5.6 acre parcel will be accessed through a ten-foot wide trail easement from Lower North Highland Place. The Village also acquired a storm water easement over the three lots which will help protect water quality and reduce downstream flooding.

The parcel is particularly valuable for the Trail System as it is adjacent to Village-



**New open space parcel and proposed trail**

owned land resulting from the River Landing subdivision. The Trails Committee has already mapped out future trails through the new parcel to connect with existing trails in the River Landing

subdivision open space.

In the map shown above, the red dotted line represents the proposed .5 miles of new trail segments within the 5.6 acre parcel to be added to Village's existing thirteen-mile trail system. The new trail segment is proposed to be named to appropriately reflect CCNS as its donor.

### March Calendar

- 4 & 18 Village Board Mtg.
- 12 & 26 Planning Bd. Mtg.
- 13 Zoning Board Mtg.
- 5 Bike/Ped Comm.
- 5 Cons. Adv. Comm.
- 12 Rec. Advisory Comm.
- 20 Visual Environ. Bd.
- 27 Trails Comm.
- 29 **Good Friday**

### In this issue

- Silver Lake Signage 2
- Village Joins EIC 2
- Croton Seniors 2
- Board of Boards 3
- March Recreation 3
- Parking Lot Map Online 3
- Equalization Rate 3
- Fields Closed Reminder 3
- Assessment Rolls Online 4
- Summer Employment 4
- Daylight Savings Time 4
- Got a Question? 4

## Budget Calendar

Village Manager Zambrano will file the tentative budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2013/2014 on Wed., March 20. There after the Village Board will meet with department heads in multiple work sessions to review the individual budgets. Work sessions are open to the public to attend. They are a good way of learning about the details of each department and what's involved in its operation. A public hearing on the budget will also be held with final budget adoption scheduled for April 29. The schedule of work sessions



## New Signage for Silver Lake

The Visual Environment Board (VEB) has proposed new signage for the Silver Lake Park area. After many months of examination of current signage and design and refinement of new signage for the area, the VEB presented their recommendations to the Village Board at a

work session in January.

The VEB took on this project as part of a plan to improve signage throughout the Village. The Silver Lake Park area was selected as a starting point due to the proliferation of signs in the Silver Lake area, some of which were confusing and contradictory as well as the lack of cohesion in

their appearance. The new signage will include the two shown and also new Way Finding signs to the beach and trail, parking signage and regulations and one for the community garden located in that area.

The Village Board approved the signage and the new signs should be in place in time for the summer season.



## Croton Seniors

Croton Seniors are looking forward to their annual St. Patrick's Day luncheon and a trip to Mount Airy Casino. The club is open to all Village and school district residents over 60. Come to a regular Friday meeting at 11:30 am in the Community room and join the fun.

## Budget Calendar cont'd.

to be held in the Municipal Building, is as follows:

Filing of tentative budget: Wed., March 20

DPW, Water, Sewer budgets: Wed., March 27, 7:30 pm.

Police, Fire and EMS budgets: Sat., April 6, 1:00 pm.

Public Hearing: Mon., April 8, 7:30 pm

Recreation budget: Mon., April 8 - follows public hearing.

Court, Parking, Administration and Capital budgets:

Wed., April 10, 7:30 pm.

Budget finalization (if needed): Mon., April 22, 7:30 pm.

Budget Adoption: Mon., April 29, 7:30 pm.

## Village Joins Municipal Energy Group

A local law adopted in February enabled the Village of Croton-on-Hudson to establish a sustainable energy loan program. To implement this program, the Village has also applied to become a member of the Energy Improvement Corporation (EIC), a recently formed, local non-profit development corporation. The EIC, whose membership is made up of municipalities who have qualified to join it, will act on behalf of the Village to make funds available to qualified property owners for energy-related improvements. These funds will be repaid by those property owners through charges on the properties that benefit from the energy improvements made with the funds. For property owners participating in the program, the charges (loan repayments) will appear as a separate line on their Village property tax bill.

The New York State Energy and Research Authority (NYSERDA) program, under which EIC will act on behalf of member municipalities, is known as Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program. Property owners who apply for funding are subject to a strict set of rules to determine eligibility for funding through EIC. Currently, EIC funding is available only to commercial properties, including 2 to 4-family houses, owned by a corporation or other commercial entity.

Membership in EIC is limited to municipal entities which are also taxing entities, such as the Village of Croton. Memberships include Orange County, Town of Ossining, City of Peekskill, Town of Bedford, and the City of White Plains with more municipal applications in process.

Information regarding eligibility requirements for financing and how to apply for the PACE loans can be found at: <http://energyimprovementcorp.org>.

In a separate step related to establishing energy sustainability, the Village Board in February also endorsed a regional plan to provide for a common framework for all counties, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, businesses, nonprofits and residents to help implement sustainable development. The plan, known as the Mid-Hudson Sustainability Plan, is the first step in making this region eligible to compete for funds for specific energy projects. The NYS Cleaner, Greener Communities program will ultimately award \$100 million for programs to achieve sustainable communities. The Hudson River Region, one of 7 NYS economic development regions established by the Governor in 2011, includes 7 counties north of NYC and contains 198 municipalities.



## **Board of Boards**

On January 30, the volunteer members of all the boards and committees in the Village were invited to meet with each other and the Village administration. This was the fourth annual Board of Boards meeting. Residents who volunteer for service on Croton's multiple committees and boards, perform much of the background work that results in many important Village-wide initiatives. They make recommendations on proposals sent to them and also initiate proposals on projects they would like to promote.

Each board or committee provided a short overview of their accomplishments in 2012 and their expectations for 2013. They also identified areas where they felt the Village Board or the administration should consider taking action.

This annual meeting of all volunteers has resulted in each group having a better understanding of what is occurring village-wide and how their work fits into it. Connections are made between groups whose projects overlap so they benefit from each other's perspectives going forward.

## **What is the Equalization Rate?**

The NYS Office of Real Property Services (ORPS) administers a program that seeks to assure equitable property tax allocation among the state's nearly 1200 assessing units. Equalization seeks to measure the relationship of locally assessed values to an ever-changing real estate market. ORPS annually calculates an equalization rate for each assessing unit.

Equalization is necessary because: 1) there is no fixed percentage at which property must be assessed across NYS; 2) not all municipalities assess property at the same percentage of market value; and 3) taxing jurisdictions, such as school districts, may not share the same taxing boundaries as the municipalities that do the assessing.

The equalization rate is the ratio of total assessed value (AV) to the total market value (MV). The municipality sets the AV and the ORPS estimates the MV. The formula is  $AV / MV = \text{equalization rate}$ . An equalization rate of 100 means that property is assessed at 100% of market value. A rate of less than 100 means that municipalities total market value is greater than its assessed value. A falling equalization rate means that market values are rising faster than assessed values. In Croton, the equalization rate has increased from 3.30 in 2010 to the current 3.80 reflecting a decrease in market values relative to assessed values. These rates are also used by NYS to determine distribution of education aid, level of STAR exemptions and apportioning of sales tax revenue.

## **March Recreation Events**

Two annual Spring events for family fun are coming up in March.



**Spring Window Painting.** Windows in businesses all over the Village are available to be painted. This is not a contest but just an opportunity for family fun and creativity. Flyers will be available in businesses to register for this event and the Recreation Dept. will assign the windows. Painting of windows may begin on March 25 and must be completed by March 29.

**Lunch With the Bunny** is scheduled for Sat., March 23 in the Community Room in the Municipal Building. Due to limited space, pre-registration is required not later than March 21. The fee is \$15/res and \$20/nonres.



**Camp Forms** The Day Camp and Tiny Tots camp forms will be available at the Municipal Building and the Library starting March 1st. Slots in the camps are selected by lottery. The deadline for submission of camp applications is April 17th at 12 noon. Completed forms must be filed in the Recreation office and paid in full to be included in the camp lottery.

**Spring/Summer Recreation Brochure** will be available online on April 1st. The brochure will be offering many great programs, classes and special events for youths to seniors.

**Reminder!** Entries for the Build-A-Snowman contest must be submitted by March 15th.

## **Parking Lot Map Online**

A map of the Village's train station parking lot is available online to help users identify the parking areas and their restrictions.

The interactive map may be accessed from the menu on the Village's Homepage: [www.crotononhudson-ny.gov](http://www.crotononhudson-ny.gov), click on Train Station Parking from the left menu and then 'Map of the Train Station' in the middle of the next page. By moving your cursor over each parking lot section, a pop-up will identify the rules applying to that section, rates, method of payment and number of spaces.

## **Fields Closed Reminder!**

With nice weather coming, please remember that Village playing fields remain closed until their protective covers are removed. This ensures a better surface in the warm months ahead.

## Published for the Residents of the Village of Croton-on-Hudson

Leo A. W. Wiegman, Mayor, Kevin Davis, Trustee, Ann H. Gallelli, Trustee, Ian Murtaugh, Trustee, Casey Raskob, Trustee

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### **Grievance Day and Assessment Roll**

On February 19, the Board of Trustees, acting as the Board of Assessors, reviewed 55 applications from Village property owners seeking to reduce their tax assessment. Both commercial and residential requests were reviewed. Commercial property assessments undergo a multi-year process in reaching a determination while residential requests are determined during the Grievance review.

The decisions on assessment reductions must be reflected in the Village's Final Assessment Roll by April 1, 2013 in order for the Village property tax rate to be accurately set prior to sending the tax bills on June 1. This year, for the first time, the Village's Tentative Assessment Roll is available on the Village's website. When the Assessor completes amendments to it, based on Grievance Day decisions, the Final Assessment Roll will also be posted on the website. From the Home page, click on Departments and then click on Assessor's Office. The roll is in sequence by Section, Lot and Block numbers.

### **Daylight Savings Time Coming Soon!**



Daylight Savings Time (DST) resumes on Sunday, March 10 when clocks will need to be set ahead one hour. DST will last for eight months, ending on November 3 of this year. Daylight Savings Time dates were established by the federal 2005 Energy Policy Act.

### **Summer Employment**

The Recreation and Parks Dept. offers opportunities for paid summer employment for youths 16 years and older. Jobs are available in the Day Camp and Tiny Tots Camp, lifeguarding at Silver Lake, park gate attendants and parks maintenance.



Applications should be submitted by March 22. Further information and applications are available in the Recreation Dept. or by calling 271-3006.

## Got a Question?



### **Are there any updates or changes in Verizon's plans to not enter into new franchises for FIOS television service?**

Ever since Verizon ended its negotiations with the Village in March 2010, there has continued to be speculation that Verizon might eventually resume negotiations and provide FIOS service in the Village. Croton, which had originally invited Verizon to negotiate a franchise in 2008, and had hired a telecommunications law firm to handle the talks, is one of a large number of municipal entities that Verizon abandoned in its decision to not continue its FIOS build-out.

At the same time that Verizon is continuing to promote its FIOS service in advertising, Verizon officials continue to affirm that, aside from fulfilling its existing contractual obligations, there will be no more FIOS franchises.

Most recently, at a Goldman Sachs Communications Conference in September 2012, Verizon Chief Financial Officer, Fran Shammo, told investors that Verizon intends to wind down FIOS expansion once its current contractual obligations to state and local authorities are met.

"At this point we won't build beyond that because at this point we have to capitalize on what we have invested",

From 2014 going forward, Verizon plans to substantially decrease capital investments in its wired networks and to continue to shift its spending to Verizon Wireless. This means they will only expand FIOS where it has previously assigned agreements. In the northeast, this includes New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, DC. It excludes the city of Boston, suburban Washington and a multitude of other municipalities of all sizes and populations, including Croton, which are not going to get the FIOS service. Verizon has stated that it considers the FIOS network too expensive to expand further.

One of the confusing aspects to local people who are not currently served by FIOS, is that they continue to get promotional advertising in the mail. Verizon is continuing to promote its FIOS service where it already exists. In this area, the Town of Cortlandt has a FIOS franchise agreement. Croton residents continue to receive these promotions as the Village is in the Town of Cortlandt and the promotional mailings and advertisements have likely not been refined enough to exclude the Village residents.