Last week I visited the Penfield Community Center for “Art Day” at our Summer Day Camp program and watched several plays performed by the children. The energy and excitement filled the halls and gymnasium, and everyone participated in some way to make the day memorable. The Recreation Department conducted six sessions this year with more than 1,000 children who participated in sports, crafts, educational games and all-around fun. Day Camp is one of our most popular programs, and I would like to recognize all who participated. To all the kids involved, what a wonderful way to spend part of your summer enjoying a variety of opportunities and meeting new lifelong friends. To all the camp counselors and directors, thank you for keeping the kids entertained, engaged, and safe. And to the Recreation Department staff, congratulations on another very successful program. I am already looking forward to next year’s camps!

I want to remind everyone about some exciting hikes coming up in the Thousand Acre Swamp Sanctuary. Tuesday, August 12 at 8:00 p.m. – Perseid Meteor Shower Over the Swamp. Bring a flashlight and lawn chair, and dress for a cool evening. Friday, August 22 at 8:00 p.m. – Space Junk Over the Swamp. Friday, September 5 at 7:30 p.m. – Terminator Over the Swamp. Bring a flashlight for both programs. Leaders will provide telescopes, your own binoculars or telescope are welcome. Saturday, September 6 at 8:00 a.m. – Returning Migratory Birds. Binoculars will enhance your sightings. Saturday, September 13 at 10:00 a.m. – Fall Wildflowers. Hand lenses are helpful. All hikes are free and open to the public. Hikes begin in the sanctuary parking lot located at 1581 Jackson Road (between Atlantic Ave. and Plank Road, opposite Penfield Center Road. The driveway is adjacent to the Penfield Volunteer Ambulance.) To learn more call Marie Heerkens at (585) 773-8911. Private hikes for Scout groups, clubs, and other organizations are available. To schedule a private hike contact Sue Pixley at (585) 586-6677.

I like to remind residents from time to time about “ecopark” as I continue to be amazed at the number of people who do not know about this recycling facility. "ecopark" is a public/private partnership between Monroe County and Waste Management of NY to provide county residents with a central “one-stop drop-off” to manage certain difficult-to-handle material. The facility is located at 10 Avion Drive and operates Wednesday to Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (closed holidays). Our family (three households) makes a quarterly trip to drop off electronic waste, Styrofoam packing, fluorescent lights, document destruction, scrap metals, printer cartridges, sneakers, bulky plastic items, and more. Additionally, ecopark holds special collections for household hazardous waste (HHW) and pharmaceutical and medication disposal. For details log on to www.monroecounty.gov/ecopark.

As promised, here’s an update on the 2015 Town budget. Last week I met with Debbie Drawe, one of our two County Legislators, for coffee as I do quarterly to discuss county and town issues, projects and programs. As you may imagine, budgets were the main topic. Federal pushes to state, state pushes to county, and county pushes to town! However, I pointed out to Debbie, that our local residents see it more as federal, state, county, town and school districts pushing everything to them with no relief in sight.

All government entities need to look for ways to reduce spending and cut costs. Hard decisions need to be made and no one wants to be the “bad guy” by cutting programs, services, or in some cases, headcount. We cannot continue to run status quo and hope issues go away or get better. We need leaders who are willing to address waste, cut costs, and reduce spending on all fronts. Many leaders will say they can or will manage and cut costs, but rarely does it happen because there are so many special interests. I want to give a special thank you to everyone who stopped by to say hello to Debbie and me. Not one person said to us, “Please raise my taxes!” Instead, we were asked, “What are you doing to lower my taxes?” That was a great reminder for us as we are working on our respective 2015 budgets!

Until next week, I welcome your thoughts and ideas regarding the 2015 budget including ways to reduce costs, improve services, and address rising costs.