The New York State and Monroe County Boards of Elections are holding local voter registrations on Thursday, October 11, 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, October 13, 12:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Penfield Library, 1985 Baird Road. Many times I hear people ask, “Why should I vote? It really does not mean anything if I do!” My response is simple and consistent; by voting, you are exercising a right and privilege to select your leaders and make or change laws. Without votes, the only way our elected officials have of determining what decisions and changes their constituents’ desire is by counting complaints and toxic emails. Needless to say, this is not a productive way to manage the public’s business. Every few years we have the opportunity to let candidates know exactly what we think of them and their policies. If you are registered voter, thank you. If you are not, please consider registering and then exercise your right to vote in every election…it does make a difference! For more information, please visit www.monroecounty.gov/elections.

Last week the town board held a public hearing on the 2013 budget. I am happy to report that this budget holds the tax rate flat at $2.64 per thousand dollars of assessed value of your property. This is the fourth year the tax rate has been held at this level. I would like to recognize Town Comptroller Bob Beedon and all of the town’s department heads for their hard work to cut costs and reduce spending at a time when many residents are struggling with no pay increases, loss of jobs and high inflation. I would also like to thank the town board for their support, insight and guidance during the budget process.

While town and other local governments work hard to control and manage costs to meet the state’s mandatory tax cap, I question whether everyone in Albany understands and has received that same message. The Governor has made it a top priority to address out of control increases in property taxes; if that is the case I would challenge the Governor and all the legislators to meet the same two-percent tax cap that has been mandated to every level of government except the state. Pushing down increases to local governments—like a 21 percent jump in retirement, workers compensation costs increases of 15 percent, and overall health care up by more than 12%—says to me that the New York State Legislature still does not get it! The same hard decisions local governments are making about requiring employees to contribute to health care premiums, not replacing open positions one-for-one but rather reducing overall employment numbers, and cutting back on overall services MUST be done at the state level. Don’t be fooled by talk of on-time budgets; has Albany truly reduced costs, cut spending and reduced staffing? I have not seen it—all I see is a re-shuffle of the deck with the same lousy hand!

Next week is the annual Halloween Family Fun and dinner event, so mark your calendars for Friday, October 19, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Community Center. The Halloween Event is free with an optional dinner. This year’s dinner will feature a personal pizza and salad. The cost for dinner is $4 at the pre-sale rate or $5 the day of the event. Additionally, there will be games, trick-or-treat, crafts, hayrides and more. Also on the same night (with a rain date of October 20) will be the Historic Ghost walk at Oakwood Cemetery. The walk begins at 6:00 p.m. for those who do not prefer the dark and continues until 8:00 p.m. for some eerie historic fun learning about the spirits of Penfield’s past. Check out our web site at www.penfield.org for more details. I hope to see you there!

Last week we learned that Sergeant First Class Daniel Metcalfe was killed by small arms fire when his unit was attacked while on patrol in Afghanistan. Dan attended Penfield High School. On behalf of the entire Penfield Community, our thoughts and prayers go out to the entire Metcalfe family for their loss. Let us never forget his service to our country.

Until next week, be well and be safe!

Tony
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