The Town Hall was full of energy and excitement this past week when more than 100 students and teachers from Harris Hill’s fifth grade class came in to listen and learn how Penfield Government operates. I had the pleasure of co-hosting this event with Councilwoman Paula Metzler and members of our staff from Public Works, Planning, Building, Sewer, and the Town Clerk. This program has been going on for more than 10 years and is a wonderful opportunity for our future leaders to learn about the community in which they live and attend school.

We are fortunate to have the relationship with both the Penfield and Webster School Districts to conduct and support these types of programs for the students. Not only is it a learning experience for students, it is a great opportunity for staff to hear what they think about their town and to share ideas on how to improve it for the future generations.

As you read this week’s column, we are in the middle of Fall Drop-Off which runs from Thursday, October 14 to Saturday, October 16 at the Highway Garage on Jackson Road. I am pleased to announce that the Volunteers of America (VOA) will join the Drop-off on the 15th and 16th from 8:30AM – 4:00PM so our residents have a one-stop opportunity to donate and dispose of household goods. This is a great opportunity to clear out your homes of those items you no longer have a need for so they may be used by someone less fortunate. For details on items the VOA is interested in receiving, please log on to www.voawny.org. Additionally, for a list of items that are permitted or not permitted at Drop-off, please log on to www.penfield.org.

I spent my lunch break at Legacy at Willow Pond the other day to view all of the wonderful art on display for the sixth annual Penfield Art Association Show and Sale. More than 150 pieces are on display throughout the facility. The show runs through Friday, October 22, ending with the “Meet and Greet Artists Reception” and award ceremony the evening of the 22nd from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. Ribbons and monetary awards are contributed by the Legacy and the Penfield Art Association. This is a delightful setting and the residents and staff have been a great host for this show.

The Town Board held a public hearing on the Preliminary Budget last week with several members of the community present to listen to the presentation and offer up their thoughts and comments. The Board has been, and continues to be, committed to reducing costs and cutting spending. This budget holds the tax rate at $2.64 per thousand of assessed valuation, while absorbing increased costs in retirement and health care and reduced revenue in mortgage tax and other local income. The Town Board plans to adopt the Final Budget on October 20.

Some good news on the health care front: I mentioned in my column several months ago that Penfield was one of thirteen Towns/Villages to form a Health Care Consortium to help control and reduce costs. This effort has paid off with the recent quotes we received for the 2011–2013 premiums. We are working on final details and I will share that information and detail over the next few weeks. This effort will help to keep increases below the double-digit jumps we have seen over the last several budget cycles.

Last week the Penfield Central School District held a Grand Opening Celebration to mark the official opening of school facilities after two years of construction and renovation. The event was tied in with the annual Homecoming Festivities. Tours of the High School and Bay Trail Middle School were conducted; there was a dedication of the Chiefs Sign; a community picnic sponsored by the Penfield Boosters Club; a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the stadium field; recognition of Senior Athletes; and a homecoming game. I would like to congratulate Superintendent of Schools John Carlevatti and the Penfield Central School District on their celebration of the completed work.

Until next week, be well and be safe!

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