

A VIEW OF THE FALLS

Office of the Mayor - Richard B. Milne

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Property Tax Relief for New York's Citizens:

Excessive New York State property taxes have been a topic of conversation and a major deterrent to economic growth throughout the state for many years. While Governor Cuomo's efforts to actively attack this issue is appreciated, the target goal for success is being missed as cities and villages continue to bear the burden of this action.

The governor continues to exaggerate the number of local municipalities in New York State which in his opinion creates waste and duplication of services and thus is the reason for New York States high tax rate as stated during his 2014 re-election campaign. The governor continues to state that there are over 10,500 local governments in New York State. In reality, there are only 1,613 cities, villages, town and counties along with 715 school districts – a far cry from 10,500. The other approximately 8000 entities are primarily special districts created as a budget line to help apportion the cost of specific municipal services to those people that receive the services. (An example of this may be a special lighting district.) In New York State, there are 176 local governments per million residents, the national average is 287 local governments per million residents.

Cities and villages continue to hold the line on spending when in fact, support of general purpose state aid to cities and villages (AIM Funding) is down 14% since 2008; yet the overall cost of doing business is up significantly. While state aid is down and costs are up, the average percentage of budget spending increases in cities is approximately 1.4% and 0.8% overall for villages. This is compared to an average increase in state spending of approximately 2.1% during the same time frame.

Now on top of the Tax-Cap and Tax-Freeze plans, Governor Cuomo has proposed a conditional \$1.7 billion Real Property Rebate plan, tying this plan to local government performance. The governor stated in an address that "When you are in government, there's no incentive to save money". This is simply not true. Local governments are continually looking to save money, lower costs and do more with less. What the Governor needs to understand is that you simply cannot make governments a (one size fits all) entity. Communities are diverse and have different needs. Forcing all to act the same is not realistic.

Some examples of savings efforts the Village of Honeoye Falls has adopted (along with neighboring communities and our school district) are:

- The Village of Honeoye Falls entered into a shared services agreement with the Honeoye Falls-Lima Central School District for use of their fueling station for our Highway, Sewer, Fire and Ambulance Departments. The school district has a state of the art fueling station and the village did not have a sufficient fueling station. Entering into this agreement saved the village an estimated \$350,000 in long term debt and annual budget savings are approximately 1.5% over 20 years.
- The Village of Honeoye Falls entered into a shared services agreement with the Town and Village of Lima to share their building inspector. By sharing the building inspector position, the villages budgeted cost for this position has been reduced by \$30,000/annually.
- The Village of Honeoye Falls is a charter member of the Upstate New York Municipal Workers Compensation Program. Forming this group and becoming self-insured has saved the village over \$45,000/annually in our Workers Compensation cost. This is a 3% annual savings to the budget.
- The Village of Honeoye Falls entered into a shared service agreement with the Town of Mendon, Town and Village of Lima and the Honeoye Falls-Lima Central School district to create a summer recreation program (run by the school district) that is saving the village tax-payers approximately \$10,000/year.

These are but a few examples of the savings plans we continually look for to keep our costs down and thus spending down as well. Our neighbors throughout Monroe County and the state are doing the same.

We are not asking to be incentivized for sharing services and for keeping costs down, we do this every single day. We are asking Governor Cuomo to partner with us and not against us. Provide the mandate relief, which is the real driver of high taxes which was promised three years ago. Provide additional AIM funding to all our communities which will automatically help lower the tax burden. Let local government continue to do what it does best: provide essential municipal services in a cost-efficient manner. Let's stop pointing fingers, stop the "shell games" of property tax rebates, and stop disparaging local governments and the economic growth they help generate. Let's bring the state and local governments together to partner as one so that all will benefit in positive revitalization and economic growth.

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