

THE TAX ATTACK

Chapter XVII

2010 will likely bring many changes to our lives. I hope that for you and our Village they are good changes. Under the best of circumstances the New Year will be one of challenges for all of us. Hopefully, we are up to those challenges.

In a nearby article in this edition of the Pink Sheet, Councilmember Will Barnes, has provided an excellent snapshot of Village Finances. As Chair of the Finance Committee he deserves our attention, support and feedback.

Having just assumed the additional responsibility of Village Treasurer, I have been thinking about the obligations each of us has to Gates Mills. Our Village has a long and rich tradition of volunteer engagement. In addition to Village Officials and committee members, we are fortunate to have numerous service organizations dedicated to enhance the Gates Mills experience.

Yet when you aggregate the list of volunteers you find a relative few attending to the service of the many. A similar look at voting participation by our citizenry reflects that many abdicate their franchise to direct our community to the few. While I have not gathered a wealth of data to support those conclusions and even though absentee voting rules in Ohio have been liberalized, it is apparent that a significant number of our friends and neighbors choose not to join those who express their interest and responsibility at the ballot box. That suggests that one of our treasured freedoms is the right not to vote or be engaged.

But too often we hear from those who trust the rest of us, that we are making a mistake. This frequently occurs just before an action is to be taken. The ability to impact a decision only comes through timely engagement and discussion not at the moment of decision, even when the course to be pursued may not be the best.

Our Village processes are open and intended to be transparent. Ohio statues require that condition. It does take some effort to attend committee and Council meetings and to talk to decision makers. The dates for all those meetings are available through the Pink Sheet, online at www.gatesmillsvillage.com, at the Post Office and at Village Hall. But there is no better way to know what's happening in Gates Mills and what changes are under consideration than participation. Department heads are accessible and forthcoming as are the volunteer leaders.

As we begin the New Year, promise yourself to be informed and get involved. The year ahead holds several particular challenges. Keep our elected officials informed of your opinions. There are ample opportunities to get involved. Try one. You will help make our Village a better place to live.

Bob Reitman
Treasurer and Tax Administrator