

Fishkill in need of a sound fiscal policy

By Bob LaColla

For many years now, the taxpayers of Fishkill were kept in the dark about the true condition of their town. Improper budget transfers were made to cover overspending. Individuals and organizations with business before the Town Board would convene in closed-door meetings. Town business was discussed by board members in closed-door "caucuses." While every other town in Dutchess County held meetings in the evening to allow for public participation, Fishkill held the Town Board meetings weekday mornings. Year after year, the town was building a growing budget deficit, yet no one knew. Town Board meetings end without a budget report. In fact, despite numerous demands, I have only seen one legitimate budget report since I took office in 2008. The most important function of a board is oversight and control of the town's finances. Yet since last November, our town supervisor has the authority to borrow millions without board approval! All this has gained Fishkill the status of having the third lowest bond rating of all New York state towns. We are currently one rating level away from "junk bond" status.

We need to get back to

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sound fiscal policy. To do so, we must immediately begin reporting the truth about our financial condition. We can no longer declare a "low tax rate" when, in fact, we are spending our children's tax money to do so.



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The way the current administration has increased our short-term debt year after year has had the same effect as running up our personal credit cards: soon all the money is going to the credit card company and there is no money for groceries.

We need to tend to the maintenance issues that have gone unfunded like roads, buildings, parks, water systems, drainage systems and highway equipment. There are grant dollars out there for many town needs. Unfortunately, many are matching or reimbursement grants that require the town to put up money first. I intend to put the town in a position to take advantage of those grants.

Currently, our failure to develop a plan has resulted in resources being "allocated by crisis," while essential buildings, equipment and in-

frastructure are neglected and deteriorate.

The taxpaying people of this town have the right to pay for only what they owe when it comes to special districts like water and sewer. They should not have to pay extra for tax money borrowed out of their special district account.

Take the case of the taxpayers in the Siscar development.

The residents there agreed to accept a zoning change to increase density and develop an adjacent property. This change would potentially negatively affect their property values. In turn, the developer gave the town \$758,000 to subsidize the construction of a new sewer district for Siscar. Then the money disappeared from the account. This government owes its taxpayers the knowledge that when it accepts money for building a new sewer district, that they will keep the money safe and ready to be used for its promised purpose.

The taxpaying people of this town expect their Town Board to stay within their budget authority and not, as happened in 2010, give a half million hard-earned taxpayer dollars to a law firm with virtually nothing to show for it.

We need to send a message to the bond rating companies that we have a strong

command of our finances in order for them to give us the bond rating that will lower our costs to borrow.

I intend to propose nighttime board meetings that will be streamed live on the Internet. I also understand that all initiatives must be passed by consensus of the entire Town Board. In fact, I see the collaboration of the board as a fantastic resource. We have the opportunity to put five good minds together to address the town's issues.

I intend to take a fresh look at the way the town is doing business. *We need to look at every process, every policy and every department.*

For instance, we know very little about who is taking advantage of our "affordable housing" program. I propose to provide a detailed analysis of the users to ensure that the program is meeting the obligations of its mission.

I want to restore complete integrity to the town hall and restore our resident's faith in their government. My campaign for Town of Fishkill supervisor is not about politics; it is about delivering sound, transparent, competent management.

Bob LaColla is running for supervisor of the Town of Fishkill. He is currently a member of the Town Board.

SEPTEMBER 13
VOTE LaCOLLA - Supervisor
Fishkill Primary