

**Local officials explain issues with school taxes**

by Rich Thomaselli

It has been one of the most debated topics of the summer and into the reopening of schools - on Facebook, on Twitter, on virtual board meetings, even over the dinner table.

*"Can we get a refund on school taxes if districts are going to remote learning and not using building facilities, not using utilities and not paying some employees?"*

We'll start with the short answer.

No.

No, you won't be getting any school tax refund. Not from last year, when the COVID-19 pandemic ended the in-person school year in March for virtually the entire country. And not from this year, as the virus is still prevalent enough so that the majority of Dutchess County schools have decided to start 2020-21 by having students stay home and learn remotely for at least a month - two months, in some cases.

Legally, the schools can't just give the money back in the simplest sense.

In an expanded, not-so-simple sense ... you're assuming there is money to give back.

"The WCSD has been carefully monitoring both revenues and expenses since the beginning of the pandemic in March. Because school was not in session did not mean that costs decreased in all areas," said Kristen Crandall, assistant superintendent of finance and business development for the Wappingers Central School District. "There were some savings, but there were also many additional expenses related to the pandemic."

For starters, there have been two expenses that simply won't change from year to year as being the two biggest expenses line items on any school budget - district salaries and health benefits. Then, factor in the

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**Stanford's resilience shines with Community Day events**



More than 2,900 American flags are part of the 9/11 memorial display on the hill in front of the Stanford Town Hall on Route 82. Individuals who attend the events of Stanford Community Day will have the opportunity to view the display, which was put together by the members of the Stanford Fire Company. Photo by Curtis Schmidt

by Curtis Schmidt

Community Day in the Town of Stanford will take on different views from uniquely different perspectives on Saturday, Sept. 19.

One view is the striking display of more than 2,900 American flags on the hill in front of Town Hall on Route 82. It

is a memorial to the victims of the 9/11/2001 attacks in New York City and was planned and constructed by members of the Stanford Fire Company.

The second view is from the members of the Stanford Grange #808, who are producing the 62nd edition of the annual event. While other towns in Dutchess County canceled their Community Days,

those who planned Stanford's event did not want to throw in the towel.

"We felt we had to do something to give our residents hope. Giving people hope was very important to us when we were making the difficult decisions of whether Community Day would happen

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**PV Library renovation nears fundraising goal**

by Jim Donick

With the second anniversary of the tragic library fire in Pleasant Valley coming up quickly, the Library Board is now

wrapping up all of the many elements of the rebuilding plan and finishing its multi-year fund raising program.

The officials of the board report that the funds needed to meet the \$3 million cost estimate are nearly in hand. This autumn kicks off the final phase to raise the last \$300,000, which means 90-percent of the funding is already assured.

Board president Joy Dyson said "With this final push, we have received a matching grant of \$150,000 from

the Dyson Foundation, who will match all donations for the next year up to that amount. Thus, if someone gives \$100, it automatically becomes \$200."

"It's been a busy two years since the fire. "We opened our temporary space thanks to the Redl family," said Dyson, "and added more than 25,000 donated items to help replace some of the 50,000 destroyed in the fire."

Additionally, there was much to be done in dealing with the economic impact of the fire.

There were months spent dealing with insurance issues. Once that was done, the question of how and specifically where

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Above is an architectural rendering of the proposed new library building in Pleasant Valley. Courtesy image

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# PV Library renovation nears fundraising goal

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Firefighters work in the foreground as the Pleasant Valley Free Library building is consumed in smoke in the background. Firefighters from nine area fire departments answered the call to the blaze on Nov. 6, 2018. Archive photo by Curtis Schmidt

on the site to rebuild took center stage.

While the library building was the property of the Library Board, the land it sits on was leased from the neighboring Presbyterian Church, which posed an additional level of complication.

"Then the opportunity came to buy the entire parcel for the renovation and we had a whole new possibility," said Dyson. "That took some time. But now we are moving right along."

One of the first steps in the expansion project was the drilling of a well for the library. That was accomplished a couple of months ago. Additionally, they have received conditional approval from the Town of Pleasant Valley for the site plan. They are now working with the Board of Health, the architects and the Library

Board's lawyer to finalize the details and make sure everything is ready to bid out to a construction firm.

It was important to be able to restore the historic library building, a critical piece of the Pleasant Valley Main Street's aesthetic value and an important piece of Town history.

The historic building will serve as the centerpiece of a vastly expanded library facility and will be able to meet the growing needs of the town.

The design is the work of the architects Butler Rowland and Mays, who specialize in designing libraries for the communities they serve. They spent time with the staff to discuss their daily functions within the library and then spoke to the board to discuss the exterior and budget

for the new building.

"They gave us a floor plan that allowed all the things we enjoy about the larger space we're in now, but kept the historic look and feel of the exterior," said Dyson.

"The two-year gift of a larger space from the Redl family gave us a phenomenal opportunity to evaluate what the community needs in a larger space," said Library Director Daniela Pulice. "The most important part of our expansion plan is the increase in public meeting and activity space."

She added, "During our time in the temporary space, our circulation and number of patron visits was much the same as in the library itself. The big difference is that our program activity simply exploded, because we had the space to accommodate it."

The new library plan includes larger meeting space that is accessible to all (ADA compliant). In the past, the program room was shared with the children's activity space and this made it impossible to accommodate both needs. The new community space is larger and can be used standalone. It can be closed off from the rest of the library and will have its own entrance so that the space can be used for meetings and programs even when the library is closed.

The renovated and expanded structure will operate as a one-level building to ensure access to all, so persons with disabilities may navigate the entire facility with greater ease.

In response to patron requests, there will be additional seating to allow for

quiet reading or for laptop use. The library also provides free Wi-Fi.

The main entrance will be moved to face the parking lot and additional parking spaces are being created that will be easily accessible from the community space, adding to convenience and security for those attending functions in the evening when the library might be closed.

"It's been a long road getting here," said Dyson, "but we've made tremendous progress. One of the most satisfying elements of the experience has been the community involvement in the project. From the moment of the fire when the whole town came together and the Pleasant Valley Volunteer Fire Department worked so hard to save the building and some of its treasures to the gift of space from the Redl family and the unimaginable support from community organizations and businesses, it's truly been a community effort."

Moving into the final phases and the construction offers another opportunity to memorialize all of the support from organizations and from individuals.

"There are a lot of naming opportunities in front of us, yet," said Dyson. "We can name rooms, offices, reading areas, bookshelves and other spaces for members of the community and supporters of the library. Anyone with an interest in this should call the library."

The library board expects to be announcing the date of their groundbreaking ceremony shortly. Once construction begins, the residents of Pleasant Valley can expect to be enjoying the new facility within about a year.

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