

## *Have You Been To The Bird House?*

At long last, the Incorporated Village of Baxter Estates is the owner of its Village Hall!

For many years the Village was fortunate to be able to occupy office space at a local bank that had an excess room and was willing to rent it to us for a nominal sum. The space was inadequate, but the price was right, so the Village staff muddled through. But several years ago, the bank was acquired by a larger one and the building was sold. The new landlord, not having the luxury of forgoing a reasonable rent, slowly increased the rental charge until it was at “market rates.” At the same time increasing responsibilities were being devolved from the state level to the local level, requiring more activities and record-keeping. It was time to look for larger space.

The Village Board of Trustees and staff considered many alternatives, exploring virtually every realistic venue that became available. We considered building a facility on Village land, we looked at several rentals on Main Street. Nothing really filled the bill. Then suddenly, we learned that the Port Washington Water Pollution Control District (PWWPCD) was interested in selling a building in our village that it no longer needed.

After multiple on-site visits, consultation with real estate and building professionals, a thorough financial analysis, as well as internal office-needs scrutiny, it was concluded that the PWWPCD’s building would meet the Village’s needs for some time to come and would result in significant savings to Village residents in the long run. Extensive negotiations began and in 2010 the Village entered into a “lease-with-option-to-purchase” arrangement with the PWWPCD, paying a below-market-rate rent for three years with the option to buy the property at any point up through the third year. The rental payments would be considered as principal payments if the Village exercised its option to purchase.

Finally, on Tuesday, July 30, 2013, the second-to-last day that the option was valid, the Village closed on the purchase of 315 Main Street, also known as “The Bird House,” a well-maintained “colonial-revival” frame dwelling on historical lower Main Street, with views of Manhasset Bay. The house was built in c1913 for Captain John J. Bird by his widowed mother, who had remarried to Allen H. Baxter. And, yes, Mrs. Baxter was the wife of a descendent of the original Baxter family for whom the Village is named. So we now own a bit of history as well as a wonderful Village Hall.

Since the Village presently needs only the first floor of the two-story structure, we have leased the second floor to two tenants, an architectural firm and a psychologist. The rental income will cover utilities and maintenance and even help defray the financing cost.

Financing of the purchase included the Village’s first-ever issuance of a municipal bond, which was effected the week before the closing. The Village borrowed \$420,000 in the form of serial bonds with the last one maturing in 2018; we were able to secure the funds at an interest rate of approximately 1.85%.

This purchase provides a handsome, appropriate and cost-efficient permanent home for Baxter Estates’ Village Hall and Justice Court.

If you haven’t had occasion to stop by the Bird House yet, you might want to put a visit on your to do list. You’ll even be greeted by Captain Bird, in an original photo, as you enter the reception lobby (Captain Bird’s front hall). The office is open 9:00 to 1:00 weekdays. Or come to a Board of Trustees meeting (7:30 PM on the first Thursday of each month (though because of the Rosh Hashanah religious holiday the September 2013 meeting will be on Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup>).