



Did you know?

Only 17% of the property taxes that you pay actually go to the Town of Westfield. That's just 17¢ of each dollar. Where does all the rest go? Please read on...

Dear Neighbor:

Consistent with my pledge for transparency, I am including the following information with your property tax statement so that you, the taxpayer, have a clear picture of where your tax dollars go.

While the Westfield Town government is charged with the responsibility of collecting property taxes, the Town of Westfield keeps only 17% of what it collects, or just 17¢ of each dollar, to pay for municipal operations. Simply put, the Town Council and I manage only 17% of the total taxes listed on your enclosed statement.

What happens to the property taxes the Town retains? With the 17% share of the property taxes collected, the Town of Westfield provides a wealth of services to its residents, including, but certainly not limited to:

- police department
- fire department
- library
- senior transportation services
- 10 municipal parks
- municipal court
- public health services
- maintenance of 380 roads
- leaf collection and disposal
- snow plowing
- school crossing guards
- conservation center
- recreational programs and facilities
- curbside recycling
- sewage and wastewater management
- electricity for street lighting
- pressurized fire hydrants
- administrative functions such as tax collection, tax assessment, engineering, surveying, building inspection and zoning.

The Town Council and I are committed to providing all of these services in the most cost-effective manner possible. To control costs, staffing levels have again been reduced through attrition and redistribution of the workload. Constructive negotiations with three of our labor unions contributed to limiting the increase in health insurance costs to a low 4.8%. Aggregate salaries are up a mere 1.9%. Efficiencies have been implemented at every level and all departments are operating under the principle of "doing more with less." There are some costs, however, that are predetermined or set by other authorities that the Council must include in the annual operating budget. These include State mandates, such as funding for the Westfield Memorial Library (up 12.4%, or \$258,842), and other non-discretionary costs, such as the increase in the Rahway Valley Sewage Authority assessment resulting from a Superior Court order (up 11.1%, or \$221,300). We will continue to investigate revenue enhancements to offset increased costs.

Despite the challenges ahead, there is lots of good news. The Town's 2007 budget has provisions for all municipal services to continue, keeping a constant eye towards efficiencies and customer service. In addition, several improvements to facilities and services have been achieved. For example, all but one of the public playgrounds around Town has been completely rebuilt, with new equipment and new ground cover installed. The State of New Jersey, as part of the Uniform Construction Code, mandated that all playground elements be upgraded by October 18, 2007. Through effective planning, the Town met the



mandate 6 months ahead of the deadline and within budget. We have also been working very hard to provide more programming for TV36 viewers. The Town, which shares the station with the Westfield Board of Education and broadcasts on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and a portion of each Sunday, has added several community-minded shows to its schedule, such as *Kidz Korner*, *Senior Spotlight* and *Affairs of the Heart*. Further, the quality of the sound and signal has been optimized through recently implemented technological advances at no additional cost to the taxpayers, an exemplary example of “doing more with less.” The Town’s website (www.westfieldnj.gov) continues to evolve, and now many TV36 broadcasts can be viewed over the Internet via the site. A new contractor has been awarded the 2007 recycling contract, which has resulted in reduced costs, expanded collection areas, and improved service standards.

Finally, to answer the question posed at the beginning of this letter, the Town of Westfield retains the least amount of the property taxes it collects, only 17%. The remainder goes to the County of Union (21%) and the Board of Education (62%).

I hope this brief explanation is helpful in understanding where your tax dollars go and the municipal services that the Town’s 17% portion provides. You may wish to visit the Town’s website (www.westfieldnj.gov) for more detailed information about the municipal budget process. For those property owners who pay their taxes directly, you may also wish to sign up for “E-Alert” reminders on the website. Select “E-Alert E-Mail Updates” and enter your preferences. In addition, I would like to alert all Veterans, Veterans’ survivors, senior citizens and disabled persons that they may qualify for a \$250 property tax credit administered through the Tax Assessor’s Office. Please call (908) 789-4055 for income limits and eligibility requirements. The State of New Jersey also offers Property Tax Relief Programs. Information about the State programs is posted on the State’s website. Go to www.state.nj.us/treasury/people.html and select “Property Tax Relief Programs” under “Tax Publications.”

Throughout the year, please keep in mind that I am available to meet with residents to discuss any matter within the Council’s purview during my “Coffee with the Mayor” sessions on Saturday mornings. To arrange an appointment, please call my office (908.789.4041) and speak to my Executive Assistant, Joan. Thank you for your time and I hope you and your loved ones are enjoying a happy and healthy summer.

Sincerely,



Andrew K. Skibitsky

Where does your tax dollar go?



17¢ to the Town of Westfield

17% of the property taxes collected are retained by the Town of Westfield to provide municipal services.



21¢ to the County of Union

21% of the property taxes are sent to the County of Union. This part of your tax bill is controlled by your elected representatives on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.



62¢ to the Westfield School District

62% of the property taxes collected are sent to the Westfield School District. This part of your tax bill is managed by the Board of Education. The school tax levy is submitted to the voters for approval every April. On April 10, 2007, Westfield voters approved the 2007-2008 School Budget.