



# Watergram

Westbury Water District

Fall 2009

## Threat of Dissolution Still Looms

In the summer of 2009, a bill called the New York Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act, which allows for the dissolution or consolidation of special government districts in New York State, was passed by lawmakers in Albany and signed by the governor. Westbury Water District officials and many public water professionals throughout Long Island feel that the legislation contains some serious flaws that should be reviewed and amended before it becomes effective in March 2010.

As currently outlined in the new bill, the consolidation of dissolution of a special district can be initiated in three ways — by a county, by the special district or by a petition of registered voters within the special district. At a meeting of the Long Island Special District Association, of which the Westbury Water District is a member, the following amendments were suggested:

When a dissolution or consolidation is recommended by a county, the referendum vote by the public should not be countywide, as will be required, but limited to those living in the affected special districts.

Require a threshold of 25 percent of registered voters, a more reasonable representation of those affected, rather than the signatures of 10 percent of voter turnout in the last election as the legislation now requires.

Place a time limit on how long petitions can be gathered, as is required for all other forms of petitioning local governments (e.g. seeking election to a public office).

Only those living within the special district should be allowed to circulate petitions to gather signatures.

In situations where the criteria for consolidation or dissolution are met, a public vote should be required to approve the final plans.

“We feel strongly that these amendments are necessary to ensure that those who benefit from services provided by special districts will be given a chance to take an active part in any decisions being made about dissolution or consolidation,” said Westbury Water Commissioner and Chairman William C. Olson. “The new legislation gives those living outside the special districts the power to affect the outcome of such a decision. This defeats the reason special districts were formed in the first place — to provide hometown rule to those living within their boundaries.”

For the convenience of water district consumers who would like to reach out to the governor and the state lawmakers that represent the area served by the Westbury Water District, below is the contact information.

**Governor David A. Paterson**

State Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224  
518-474-8390  
[www.state.ny.us/governor/contact/index.html](http://www.state.ny.us/governor/contact/index.html)

**Senator Carl L. Marcellino**

District Office  
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**Senator Kemp Hannon**

New York State Senate  
224 Seventh Street Floor 2  
Garden City, NY 11530

**Senator Craig M. Johnson**

New York State Senate  
151 Herricks Road  
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Garden City, NY 11040

**Assemblyman Charles D. Lavine**

70 Glen Street, Suite 100  
Glen Cove, New York 11542  
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[LavineC@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:LavineC@assembly.state.ny.us)

**Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel**

11 Middle Neck Rd.  
Suite 200  
Great Neck, NY 11021

**Assemblyman Rob Walker**

111 Levittown Parkway  
Hicksville, New York 11801  
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**Assemblyman Tom McKeivitt**

224 Seventh Street  
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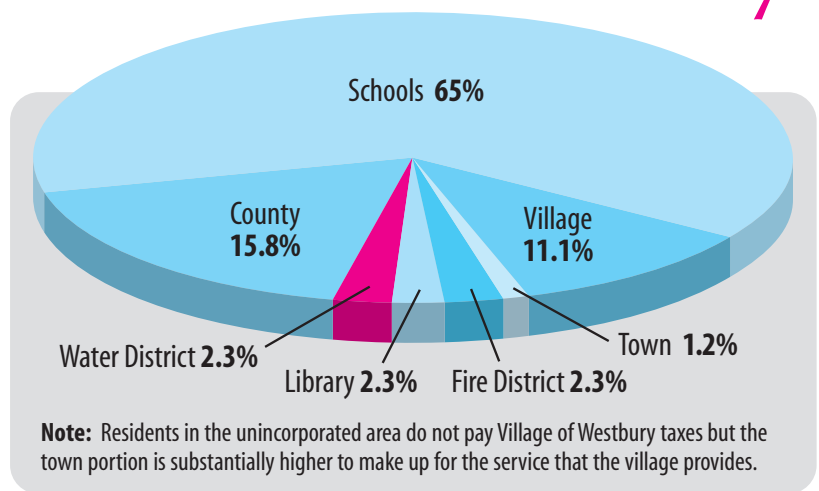
[www.westburywaterdistrict.com](http://www.westburywaterdistrict.com)

# Drinking Water Costs Steady

The price of tap water for Westbury Water District customers has remained steady, with no increase in water rates and virtually no increase in water taxes, despite a 20 percent cost of living increase since 2002. The district is also pleased to report that once again it is holding the line on rates and has reduced its operating budget for 2010 by 2 percent.

“The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Consumer Price Index inflation calculator shows that household items purchased in 2009 cost an average of 20 percent more than items bought in 2002,” explained Westbury Water Commissioner and Treasurer Vincent Abbatiello. “Keep in mind that the water district was faced with similar increases in goods and services purchased, yet the board has been able to hold the line on fees charged to consumers.

“We attribute this to careful fiscal management and zero-based budgeting,” he added, “yet we never compromised on our commitment to good service



while providing the public with an adequate supply of potable water for domestic use and fire protection—around the clock with no interruption.”

In recent years, the water utility has completed capital improvement projects that cost millions of dollars, including upgrading and refurbishing well sites; introduction of chlorine into the distribution system; installation of nine secondary containment structures; rehabilitation of a water storage tank; and water main repairs and replacement. It also adhered to its maintenance schedule at its well sites where more than one billion gallons of water are pumped each year to serve a population of more than 20,000 throughout five square miles. All the while, the district has continued to repay a \$4 million capital improvement bond from 2002.

“With today’s stringent environmental regulations in place, it is costly to maintain our infrastructure while meeting drinking water standards,” Commissioner Abbatiello concluded. “We are proud of our track record of holding the line on taxes as well as water rates, while meeting the requirements of the county and state health departments.”

The average homeowner pays \$220 in water taxes, which amounts to 60 cents per day and makes up less than three percent of the average residential tax bill. For this, they are provided with drinking water that meets stringent federal, state and county regulations 24/7. Additionally, the water district is held responsible for meeting consumer demand for water as well and providing an adequate supply for firefighting purposes.

## Operating Budget Steady

With an operating budget that has seen only one slight increase that fell well below inflation rates, consumers have benefited from the careful fiscal management practices of the board of water commissioners in Westbury.

The water district has reduced budgeted expenses by \$226,245 over the last five years and the amount to be raised by taxes over the same period has gone up only \$52,745 or 2.1%.



## Early Water Pipes

**I**n the United States, since early settlers knew nothing of lead or iron, but only to build with the country's bounty of wood, the first water pipes were constructed from fire-charred bored logs, preferably from felled hemlock or elm trees. The trees were cut into lengths of seven to nine feet, with trunks typically nine to 10 inches thick.

Settlers would situate the logs, using tar to caulk the joints, to cause the water to flow downhill. The log pipe began at a spring or stream on high ground and ended at a house or farm on a lower plain where the water would empty into a catch basin. This system is similar to the one used on Long Island today, where water is often stored by utilities in above ground tanks and carried to the tap by the force of gravity.

In 1652, the country's first waterworks was incorporated in Boston, Massachusetts to provide water for firefighting and domestic use. At that time, wood-framed structures and chimneys posed a common fire hazard, requiring water to be readily available. More than 150 years passed before Philadelphia earned the distinction as the first U.S. city to use a cast iron pipe for its water mains in 1804.

## 5 Cents Adds Up

**W**ith the nickel deposit law for each bottle of water sold in New York in effect since November 1, 2009, here are some interesting facts:

- **Ten other states require a bottled-water deposit.**
- **The new law raises the handling fee collection centers take from distributors to 3.5 cents from 2 cents a bottle, which could be passed on to consumers.**
- **New York will now take 80 percent of unclaimed deposits from the bottling companies, estimated at \$87 million in the fiscal year ending in March.**
- **It is estimated that NY bottlers have collected some \$2 billion in unclaimed deposits since the original deposit bill was passed 25 years ago.**
- **The Clean Air Council believes Americans put an estimated 60 million bottles in the trash each day.**

In response to the recession, consumers are returning to tap water to help cut household expenses, causing the \$11 billion bottled-water industry to experience two years of lackluster sales after a decade of double-digit growth.

(source: Wall Street Journal MarketWatch 10/30/09)



## Managing Rusty Water

**A**lthough rusty water can be aesthetically displeasing and wreak havoc on a load of white wash, it does not pose a health risk. Our drinking water, which is situated hundreds of feet below the surface of the earth, picks up iron as it moves through the soil. When water travels through the water distribution system, an iron residue often builds up inside the pipes. When the pipes are flushed, the iron becomes loose and is carried through the tap, creating brown water.

Rusty or brown water is often caused by a water main break or hydrant flushing in the immediate area. Consumers should pay attention to reverse 911 telephone notifications from the water district when routine water main flushing is scheduled. During this time, it is recommended that you refrain from running the washing machine. If rust or iron should appear on your recently washed clothing, a

free stain remover is available at the water district office. If brown water is present at the tap, simply run the cold water slowly for a few minutes until it clears.

Water main breaks can be harder to combat. "On a rare occasion, when there is a water main break, it may not be possible for the district to notify homeowners nearby as breaks cannot be predicted and oftentimes happen during the night," said Water Commissioner and Secretary Kenneth Jones. "Under those unusual circumstances, consumers are asked to bear with any inconvenience that may occur."

If brown water is present only when the hot valve is open, particularly after the tap has not been run for several hours, the hot water heater should be checked, as it may be rusting and in need of repair or replacement.

[www.westburywaterdistrict.com](http://www.westburywaterdistrict.com)

**Superintendent**  
John R. Ingram

**Chairman**  
William C. Olson, Chairman  
Kenneth O. Jones, Secretary  
Vincent Abbatiello, Treasurer

**Board of Commissioners**

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Westbury, NY 11590-3037  
(516) 333-0427  
**Westbury Water District**

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## Conserve Energy & Save Money

As consumers look for ways to cut spending wherever possible, they are reminded to insulate hot water pipes in areas that tend to be drafty and cool, such as attics, crawl spaces and exterior walls. Consideration should also be given to adding an insulation cover to the hot water heater.

Taking these steps will require less energy to heat water and will result in hot water reaching the faucet sooner. It will also avoid frozen and broken pipes, thereby conserving water, saving money and avoiding damage caused by flooding.

## Pay Bill Online

Westbury Water District consumers are now able to pay their water bill online at [westburywaterdistrict.com](http://westburywaterdistrict.com). Utilizing the link recently added to the top of the website's home page and following the prompts provided by Xpress-Pay, allows customers to locate as well as pay their bills conveniently from their home computers. To make navigation simpler, Xpress Pay has added a frequently asked questions (FAQ) link to provide assistance. A service fee of 2.6% will be passed onto charge and debit card users, along with \$.60 for each transaction. E-check users will be charged \$1.75 for the first bill and \$1.00 for each additional bill in the cart. These Xpress Pay service fees are not shared by the district.

Westbury Water District customers are billed twice a year, using a step rate system. This requires consumers to pay more as water usage increases, encouraging conservation of a precious natural resource for the benefit of future generations.