



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Suzi Oppenheimer

Mayor Feinstein Announces New Revenue Source to Lessen Property Tax Burden on Residents and Businesses

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Joined by Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck) and Assemblyman George Latimer (D-Rye), Mayor Joan Feinstein today announced passage of legislation that will allow the Village of Rye Brook to alleviate the property tax burden on businesses and families through a new revenue source – an occupancy charge on Rye Brook hotel rooms.

While property taxes have reached a breaking point in Westchester County, community needs for police, fire, sanitation and other local services, as well as infrastructure maintenance, remain essential. Faced with declining state aid resulting from the economic downturn, villages, towns and municipalities have urgently sought alternatives to local property taxes to raise much needed revenues.

Earlier this year, the Village of Rye Brook made a home rule request to be granted the authority to impose a hotel occupancy tax. Rye Brook becomes the first village or town in the state to be given this authority, which has previously been extended to certain cities and counties. This alternative revenue source is expected to raise approximately \$400,000 annually for Rye Brook taxpayers. A local law to impose a 3% hotel occupancy tax will be introduced at the September 14, 2010 Rye Brook Board of Trustees meeting, and a public hearing on the proposed law will be scheduled for September 28, 2010.

"I am delighted that our legislators, Senator Suzi Oppenheimer and Assemblyman George Latimer, successfully advocated for passage of this legislation and recognized the need of municipalities such as Rye Brook to have alternate sources of non-property revenue to maintain essential services and programs" said Mayor Feinstein. "I applaud their efforts and understand the importance of Rye Brook being the first village in New York State to be given the authority to levy such a tax. At a time when we are working to keep taxes down, maintain essential services and undertake necessary capital projects, this revenue stream will significantly help us achieve these goals."

"We must reduce our reliance on property taxes to sustain vital local services," said Senator Oppenheimer, who sponsored the authorizing legislation in the Senate. "In this difficult economic environment, villages and towns, like other municipal entities, must be given added flexibility to raise non-property tax revenue. Here in Westchester, the cities of New Rochelle, Peekskill, Rye and White Plains have successfully used this alternative revenue

source to help keep property taxes in check.”

"People who live here expect quality local services- police protection, sanitation, snow removal" said Assemblyman George Latimer. "They also expect their property taxes to remain under control. This law allows both expectations of residents to met by the Village of Rye Brook."

Chuck Lesnick, President of the Westchester Municipal Officials Association (WMOA), applauded the new law, saying “this will save our local taxpayers money – at the slight expense of out of town visitors. We thank Senator Oppenheimer and Assemblyman Latimer and their respective houses, as well as the Governor, for working the WMOA to allow municipalities to utilize a revenue source that is an alternative to the property tax.”

"Giving the Village of Rye Brook the ability to generate a much needed source of non-property tax revenue demonstrates that Senator Oppenheimer and Assemblyman Latimer understand the fiscal challenges facing municipalities across the state,” said Peter Baynes, Executive Director of the New York Conference of Mayors. “Local governments are doing all they can to address the realities of the current economy, but they cannot do it alone. Actions such as this are essential to keeping our communities afloat and helping protect our residents from the burden of rising property taxes."

The Rye Brook legislation, S.1180/A.231, was signed into law by Governor Paterson on August 13, 2010.