

***February 15, 2009***

**First Annual Floral Park Restaurant Week**

It was a meeting of the minds when Robert Sullivan, owner of Jameson's on Tulip Avenue, conceived the idea that was quickly and happily adopted by the Floral Park Chamber of Commerce, Con-Kel Landscaping and Design, C & J Quality Food Distributors and Capital One Bank.

Like many good ideas, the concept is straightforward and simple: From Friday, February 20 through Sunday, March 1 a total of 11 restaurants in Floral Park will participate in Restaurant Week that will include a three-course prix-fixe dinner, including appetizer, entrée and dessert. These dinners will be served on Friday and Saturday until 7 PM.

Among its many other assets, Floral Park does not lack for good restaurants. Traveling throughout the county, restaurants are often a topic of conversation for those who have visited and dined in our community. Good food knows no boundaries and fortunately every one of our avenues and turnpikes leads to a good restaurant in our village.

Almost 20 years ago an elderly gentleman who was worldly, urbane and broad in his interests, tastes and sympathies confided to me over lunch that one of the great pleasures of life is dining out at good restaurants and I should afford myself the luxury of taking advantage of it at every convenient opportunity.

It was the kind of counsel that I have made a habit to savor in more ways than one. A good-humored stomach, it's been said, makes one feel more charitable toward the world than a good sermon. So treat yourself during "Restaurant Week" where we can all be gourmands dining leisurely, delectably but also remembering to pass the sauce.

**Covert Avenue Chamber of Commerce News**

At last month's Covert Avenue Chamber of Commerce meeting, a new board was unanimously appointed. Cathy Grasman of Jo-Mar Grooming and Boarding assumed the position of President while Anne Musso of Sewanhaka Travel and Anna McCarthy of the Gateway were appointed co-Vice Presidents. I'm blessed to know all three ladies well and as a package of charm, charisma and pure panache this glorious triumvirate is bound to make history. They are exuberant and enterprising and their every endeavor will be adorned with a grace and affability that is singularly their own.

We also congratulate Dr. Jay Piskin who will continue in his position as Treasurer and warmly welcome Stephanie Larkin of Red Penguin Web Solutions who will serve as Secretary. Covert Avenue is uniquely positioned between Floral Park and the Village of Stewart Manor. Under the Chamber's leadership, Covert Avenue will continue to be a special preserve of business and community.

## **MTA/LIRR: Comings and Goings**

The Long Island Rail Road has been cutting trees along their right of way because leaves that fall on the tracks create an oily residue that is a slipping hazard for the trains. In our village, this denuding of trees has occurred along Terrace Avenue creating a barren and lifeless landscape along the embankment.

While safety for LIRR passengers is paramount, we are encouraging LIRR officials to find another natural barrier. Trees are an essential part of our village's natural environment. It is our hope that this embankment will be seeded for grass in the spring and that the LIRR embarks on a replanting effort to beautify and shield residents from noise and unsightly conditions.

In addition, the LIRR Capital Program is installing CC TV cameras at 5 stations, including Country Life Press, Garden City, Nassau Blvd. and Stewart Manor. The installation includes monitoring equipment, recorders and power supplies. For security and informational purposes, installing these cameras is wise. Our question is why aren't they being installed at the Floral Park Station, which is an active and busy station. The LIRR should place monitors at Floral Park not only for security, but to enable our commuters to see the progress of trains on the Hempstead line. This would enable commuters to have the benefit of knowing if trains were on time or delayed; they would know how many cars on the train and if the train from Stewart Manor was on the east or west platform. We strongly urge the LIRR to give immediate and serious consideration for these cameras to be installed at the Floral Park Station.

## **The Stimulus: For the last time**

Now that the stimulus plan has passed, local officials, including New York's Governor, are ecstatic over their respective share of the \$789 billion. I wish I could share their enthusiasm. The money is not free since the stimulus involves borrowing by the federal government to give states some \$170 billion for education and health care costs. Borrowing money so that states and cities can pay operating expenses is bad policy and would never be a budgetary practice in this village although it is exactly what New York City did in the early 70's with the great metropolis ending up on life support.

Borrowing from Washington is still borrowing and the indebtedness incurred will surely result in elevated municipal bond interest rates making it more expensive to borrow. As for the \$37 billion that the stimulus will give states for roads, bridges and transit, the effect, I believe, will be more of a palliative than a panacea, more likely supporting jobs than creating them. Things might hum for a little while but there will be no lingering melody.

Meanwhile, very little of the stimulus addresses private investment nor anything about short circuiting toxic assets from bad loans that have poisoned the bloodstream of banks now being propped up by the government despite their fundamental insolvency. Either the U.S. Government has to embark on continual transfusions of cash to keep these banks

viable (like Japan did in the 90's leaving them economically comatose) or let them go bust, which will clear the deck. In a fragile economic environment this would be hazardous. Bankrupt banks that are too big and interconnected to fail should have the government absorb their toxic assets. I favor breaking them up so either they are small enough to fail or their assets are sold off. This is quasi-nationalization, but stabilization is essential otherwise the banks will be more of an anchor dragging the economy down than a life preserver keeping it afloat.