

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why does my 2005 tax bill look different from prior bills?**

The ad valorem charges and the front footage charges were combined into a single total on the tax bills for 2004 and prior due to constraints in the NYS-mandated assessment software. The tax bill did not show the assessed value or the tax rate, even though that information was used to calculate the rates. Starting with the 2005 bills, these two lines have been listed individually, thanks to new capabilities in the Town's tax billing software. This added detail is provided to make your bill easier to understand.

### **Why were sewer usage charges removed from the tax bill?**

Effective with the 2005 property tax bills, sewer charges will no longer be included on the annual tax bills. These charges will now be billed on a quarterly basis, in accordance with the water billing schedule, and will appear as a second line item on the quarterly bills. Note that the 2005 rate will remain unchanged, keeping it at the 2004 level, equal to \$1.9377 per hundred cubic feet (ccf). Your quarterly bill will still include a line for the water charge, as it always has. This change was made to achieve greater efficiencies in how bills were processed, and to conform to standard practice in municipal billing of usage charges.

### **What if I deducted my usage charges as a tax?**

Some residents have questioned the tax deductibility of the sewer usage charges, having previously deducted the items as a tax since the charges had been on the tax bill. Each individual's tax situation is unique and the Town cannot express an opinion as to your personal deductions; however, as a general matter, usage charges are not deductible as a tax, regardless of how they are billed. For additional information, you may refer to IRS Publication 17 which provides further details on the deductibility of these types of charges.

### **How can I estimate my 2005 sewer charges?**

If you look at your January 2004 property tax bill, you will see a description of "Bethlehem Sewer". An annual consumption figure appears to the right of this (note that it is a number that is different from your assessed value). As of January 2005, these same charges will continue; however, they will be billed on a quarterly basis, at the rate of \$1.9377/ccf, instead of appearing on your tax bill. To estimate your quarterly sewer charge, you can take the 2004 charge off your tax bill, and divide it by four. Assuming your consumption stays fairly consistent, that amount should roughly equal the new charge amount appearing on your quarterly water/sewer bill.

### **Whom may I call if I have questions?**

If you have any questions on your bill, please contact the Department of Public Works, at 439-2125.