

***Greenville letter
was disappointing***

To the Editor:

I was extremely disappointed to read a letter from Michael Golden, chairman of the Greenville Board of Fire Commissioners, declining to designate a member to the town commission studying the feasibility of consolidating the town's three career fire districts. Greenville's commissioners' reason for not doing so is, "because it seems to us extremely remote that consolidation will benefit the Edgemont community." This in itself is unfortunate since government, regardless of whether it is a city council, town board, village board of trustees or board of fire commissioners, should be exploring every potential for saving taxpayer dollars, regardless of how remote the possibility. This is especially true in this economy.

Commissioner Golden's correspondence reiterates previous concerns offered by other Edgemont residents that a consolidation of Greenburgh's three career fire districts would result in an increase in Greenville's fire taxes. I would not support any increase in Greenville's fire taxes as a result of consolidation. Greenville's fire commissioners are aware of a recently published study by Pace University's Michaelian Institute for Public Policy and Management on consolidating fire districts. By not participating on the town's commission they seem to have discounted the findings of the study and any potential for savings and increases in efficiency that might be realized through the consolidation of the town's three districts.

That study, which was commissioned by the Westchester County Career Fire Chiefs Association, concluded that consolidating the 10 fire districts studied, three of which were Fairview, Hartsdale and Greenville, could improve firefighting, make homes and businesses safer, and save homeowners and businesses \$47 million in fire insurance premiums, as well as reducing the costs to cities and towns.

Companies that provide fire insurance rely on fire department ratings provided by the Insurance Service Organization. This rating is on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the best and 10 assigned where there is no fire department. Fifty percent of this public protection classification rating is determined by the fire department's ability to respond to a fire call within a specific period of time with a certain number of personnel, while 40 percent of the rating is based on the water supply and 10 percent on communications.

When a department's PPC rating improves, the fire insurance rates paid by residents within a fire district are reduced. The Greenville Fire District has a PPC rating of 4, while Fairview is a 4 and Hartsdale has PPC ratings of 3. The Pace study found that the 10 district consolidation could improve Greenville's rating to 2, improving firefighting services and realizing a substantial savings to Greenville's residential and commercial residents. The study further found that, "it is conceivable to achieve an ISO (PPC) rating of 1 once a consolidated district is in effective operation for a period of time."

While these results are based on a 10-district consolidation, unless the potential for improvement and savings in a smaller three-district consolidation, which would be much easier to implement, is further studied, its viability will never be determined.

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