

Solving Villages' Sales Tax Woes: Back To Square One

By BOB HAGYARD

Village of Altamont property taxes may go up 79 percent because a change in the sales tax law passed by the State Legislature earlier this year was never presented to Gov. Hugh L. Carey for his signature.

The amendment would have

required Albany County to distribute revenue from its 3 percent sales tax to the village on the basis of population rather than property value. From 1967 until last April, tax receipts had been allocated to the county's villages by the population method in violation of the present law.

Because the amendment wasn't enacted, Altamont will lose \$35,000 in revenue for its current 1980-81 fiscal year, according to Village Mayor William Aylward. On top of that, village officials expect a 7 percent increase in the cost of providing village services next year, and losses in per-capita state and federal revenue-sharing aid caused by the village's decline in population.

All told, village revenue losses may mean a property tax increase from \$49.75 to \$88.85 per thousand assessed valuation, according to Aylward.

The county's violation of the law escaped the State Department of Audit and Control's notice for 12 years until a special audit last spring, prompted by inquiries by a citizen interested in the incorpora-

tion of McKownville as a village. The county was then told to distribute sales tax receipts by comparing total real property value in villages with that of the towns of which they are a part.

Altamont officials quickly recognized that although their village contains 7 percent of the Town of Guiderland's population, it has only 3½ percent of its real property valuation — implying a drop in receipts of about 50 percent.

Elsewhere in the county, a similar shortfall for the Village of Ravena was evident. For Voorheesville, however, a relatively insignificant loss was indicated and for the Village of Menands, compliance with state law meant a doubling of receipts.

Officials of the towns and villages affected met several times

last spring at Assemblyman Michael Hoblock's office to discuss a way out of the problem on a town-by-town basis.

On its part, the Guiderland Town Board passed a resolution supporting legalization of the way the county has distributed the sales tax money the past 12 years — which was incorporated into a bill introduced by Hoblock in the closing days of the spring legislative session. It passed both houses.

"At that point," Hoblock noted, "the bill sat. There's no clear explanation why — except that the Town of Coeymans objected. So right now, we're back to square one."

So, how can the former way of distributing the sales tax be

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Fire District Elections Held Tuesday

Results of Tuesday's elections in local fire districts:

Berne: With 219 voters participating, Carl Warner was re-elected commissioner for a five-year term and Raymond H. Shultes to a four-year term. Walter Ebel was elected district treasurer for a

three-year term. Last month's decision by the Berne commissioners not to permit a fire truck to be used at the funeral of Kyle Crosier was responsible for Kenneth Northrup's candidacy for the five-year seat and Richard Guilz's for the four-year commissioners' seat. No vote totals for candidates are available.

McKownville: Stanley F. Gece-

Tree Lighting

Back To Square One . . .

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restored?

"Two things will have to happen," Hoblock commented. "First, Albany County must take a leadership role in solving the problem. Up until now they have not done anything, choosing to play its usual 'I'll go along if you go along,' Pontius Pilate role.

"Second," he continued, "the Town of Coeymans must cooperate, or all other municipalities are going to suffer." Coeymans town officials, he added, "did not participate in the meetings" leading to last spring's bill and "gave us no cooperation whatsoever."

The Village of Ravena, which would be a major winner through any change in the present law, is located in the Town of Coeymans.

"As far as I'm concerned," Hoblock continued, "there would

have been a consensus months ago had these two factors been present."

The assemblyman said he will attempt to set up another meeting of officials from affected towns and villages sometime before Jan. 1.

Should Coeymans again fail to see the light, Hoblock also said, "it would be conceivable for me to draft a bill affecting the Town of Guilderland and Village of Altamont only. But I'm not so sure it can be done."

Annual Club Show This Weekend At Frederick House

The Guilderland Garden Club will host its annual Christmas open house this weekend at the Myn-derse-Frederick House, Route 146.