I would like to address the recent release of audio recordings associated with the IDEA Committee in response to a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request. The review of FOIL requests and responding to them is undertaken by Village staff and members of the Village Board are not involved in the process.

During the processing of this request, the recordings that were provided to the Village were released without a full understanding of their contents. This included the inadvertent release of an audio recording that was not a committee meeting; rather, it was a private conversation among three individuals. I recognize the concerns this has raised among committee members, residents, and Village staff, and I take those concerns seriously.

As a Village, we have an obligation to provide public access to government records, which include records created by committees undertaking work on behalf of the Village, while ensuring that information is appropriately reviewed and handled in accordance with the law. These responsibilities are not mutually exclusive.

Artificial intelligence is introducing new complexities into municipal records management. AI-powered meeting platforms can automatically record conversations, generate transcripts, and create summaries. This new technology creates new challenges in identifying, reviewing, and appropriately releasing government records. At the same time, municipalities throughout New York State, including Croton-on-Hudson, are receiving an increasing volume of FOIL requests, many of which are complex and require a significant investment of resources.

Moving forward, the Village will be reviewing our internal FOIL procedures, including how electronic files, audio recordings, and AI-generated materials are identified and evaluated before release, as well as developing a policy on the use of AI in the Village. Any proposed policy changes will be brought to the Village Board for consideration and committee members and members of the public will have the opportunity to provide comments.

The Village values our volunteer committee members and appreciates the time, energy, and dedication they bring to serving our community. As a Village, we remain committed to supporting their efforts and fostering an environment of mutual respect, collaboration, and trust.