



President's Corner
January 2019

Dear Residents,

Downtown Western Springs is a special place during the holidays: it comes alive with festive lights, decorations, and bustling activity. Please remember to take time to check on those who may need a helping hand during the winter months.

The Village Board and staff have been hard at work this past year. Strategic planning, begun in 2017, was completed, and aligns staff plans with Board objectives. Topics range from infrastructure, to the downtown streetscape; from succession planning, to enhancing communication. Multi-year projects are underway, but first, a brief look at 2018:

- Foxford Station is anticipated to open in the second quarter of 2019. To date, nearly half of the 28 condos have sold.
- Several new businesses and services opened this past year, including: Body in Balance, Elite Fitness (new location), My Yoga, Old Town Red Hots, Salon 811, Smallcakes, Spring Orthodontics, Springdale Eye Care, Stelmack Pinpoint Health Care, Treadfit, Western Springs Animal Hospital.
- 2018 was a busy construction year. The east train platform renovation is part of the long-term plan to revitalize the downtown sector, and an example of the Board's continuing commitment to the central commercial district. Johnson and Lawn Avenues were reconstructed in concrete, including pedestrian-friendly improvements at Lawn/Burlington, installation of new pavement, curb/gutters, and repairs to existing sewer mains. The Board appreciates the patience of commuters, residents and businesses during these lengthy projects.
- An aging and inaccessible water main was replaced within the Village public right of way on Rose and Garden Avenues. This project was a joint undertaking between the Village and each homeowner to improve water delivery to these residences. Flagg Creek also received vital water main improvements as part of this project.
- 2018 welcomed two new members to our Police Department: Officers Taylor Ficke and Joseph Haas. The Police force is now fully staffed at 21 officers. We welcomed a number of new staff to the Village this past year, and wish those retiring in 2018 all the best in their future endeavors!
- In May, the Board revisited the Cook County Minimum Wage and Paid Sick Leave Ordinances, and voted to opt in to both.

- Village staff and Board continue to closely monitor the Tollway's I-294 expansion project. Tollway and Village representatives have met with residential groups most impacted by the project, held regular staff meetings, meetings with state and federal representatives, and hosted public meetings. Staff and the Village Board will continue to advocate on behalf of our residents to minimize disruption, as much as possible.
- As part of the Tollway project, the BNSF railroad bridge will be reconstructed to accommodate the widening of the expressway. Western Springs will lose approximately 75 parking spots during this multi-year project, and the Village is working to create temporary parking during construction. Train bridge work is estimated to begin in the fall of 2019 and completed in 2022.
- Each Village department plays a vital role in providing quality services to residents. Police and Fire held joint exercises to improve coordinated response to a large-scale emergency, the Recreation Department provides varied programs for all ages (have you tried pickle ball yet?). Administrative/Financial Services aim to improve communications and make it possible for you to pay your bills online. Public Works staff provide leaf pick-up, seasonal decorations, plowed streets, and storm water management - often working behind the scenes in severe conditions. Water main breaks caused by record-breaking cold in 2018 required around the clock repairs in bitter conditions. Please remember to thank the men and women who provide exemplary municipal services.
- In February the Village hosted a celebration of the Board Commissioners/Members who donate their time and talent to our community. There are currently 10 active Boards/Commissions in the Village that research issues and recommend action to the Village Board. Public participation in this process is vital. For more information, or to volunteer, please visit the Village website.
- Residents are asking for greener alternatives to blue bags! In 2019 the Board aims to make positive changes in refuse collection. Did you know the Village now endorses a monthly Styrofoam recycling program? The Green Team volunteers collect Styrofoam at the Recreation Center from 9am – noon, the first Saturday of each month, diverting it from landfill. Please also look for labeled boxes at Village True Value, Thomas Ford Memorial Library, and Village Hall, to recycle broken holiday lights, through January 15th.
- At the 41st annual Tower Trot, the Village partnered with the Healing Hearts for Ashley Foundation, a non-profit organization honoring Ashley Jurjovec, a Western Springs middle school teacher who passed away suddenly from a genetic heart condition. This year there were 1,250 runners and nearly \$30,000 was raised for the foundation.
- The Western Springs Taxi Coupon Program was phased out in 2018. Any unused coupons will be honored through 2019.
- The Village plans to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to Bemis Woods at Ogden Avenue. The new path crosses Ogden at Wolf and continues north to the existing trail. The Woodland crossing will be shut down. This project is anticipated to begin in spring of 2019.

- Additional improvements are planned for the Village train platforms, including a covered bike rack and EV charging stations at Burlington and Grand Avenues. Much of this project has been funded through a grant from the West Suburban Mass Transit District.
- The Village has received grants, and is working to secure additional funding for a west side pedestrian underpass, similar to the Lipinski underpass at Clausen Avenue. The new underpass is intended to replace the current at-grade crossing at Central Avenue, with a much safer and aesthetically pleasing alternative. Construction of the underpass will occur concurrently with BNSF railroad bridge work.
- Clausen Avenue from Ogden to 41st will receive an upgraded water main (from 4" to 8") and will be reconstructed in concrete. Well #5 construction on the Ellington right of way at Field Park will begin early 2019, and projected to be online by the end of 2019.
- Roadway referendum projects include the concrete reconstruction of portions of Clausen and Lawn, and asphalt resurfacing of portions of 39th Street, Maple, Grand, Johnson, Dierks Drive, and Howard.
- In December, the Board approved a tax levy increase for 2019, which will increase municipal revenue by \$265,000 over the previous year. Of that amount, approximately \$115,000 is earmarked for the police pension fund. Besides cost of living raises and contributions to the police pension fund, the operating budget remains relatively flat from 2018.
- As detailed in my December President's Corner message on the Village website, a water/sewer rate increase goes into effect this month. In order to responsibly meet the costs of maintaining and improving the Village's water sourcing and distribution, and aging sewer systems, the Board approved an increase in water rate to \$14/1000 gals and a \$2.50 capital maintenance fee increase per bi-monthly bill. Please look for a separate Tower Topics devoted to the subject of water and sewer funding, operations and maintenance, later in January.
- As part of an ongoing effort to improve communications with our residents we have created pages on the Village website for specific projects, issues, and updates (Roadway Construction, quarterly Water Newsletter, Sterigenics, monthly President's Corner). Police Chief Budds held several informal 'meet and greets' with residents, and the Fire Department had a successful local recruitment drive for paid on-call personnel. Village Board meetings are open to the public and televised, or feel free to contact the Board by email. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for the latest happenings, and consider registering for important news notifications (by text or email) on the Village website, by clicking on the "Stay Informed" icon. I can be found at Village Hall every Tuesday from 2 – 4 pm, please stop in.

On behalf of the Board and staff, best wishes for a healthy and happy New Year!

Sincerely,
 Alice Gallagher
 Village President