



President's Corner
November 2019

The Board of Trustees is always busy this time of year, but this year especially so. In addition to the annual budget review and tax levy preparation, several other major issues are under consideration. A few of these items are summarized below:

Tax Levy:

The Village of Western Springs receives approximately 12% of total residential property tax revenue. By state statute, the Village can increase the levy by the lesser of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus new growth, determined by the Illinois Department of Revenue - or 5%. This year the CPI is 1.9%, plus new growth. The 2019 tax levy considered by the Village includes an increase of 7.35% that will be applied toward operations and debt service. Of the \$503,000 in expected additional generated revenue, 36% will go toward Police and IMRF pensions, 21% toward capital improvements, and 43% toward debt repayment of the 2019 bond issued for the Roadway Improvement Program, approved by residents in the 2016 referendum. Pension funding is required by the state, but board policy establishes a more aggressive schedule to fully fund our pension liability. The debt service is proscribed by the issuing bond covenants. Capital improvement funding will help defray the replacement cost of the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) required by the Department of Fire & EMS.

2020 Budget:

In August, staff began the annual budgetary process for 2020. Each committee has reviewed the associated departmental budget on several occasions, and the entire board will review the budget as a whole in the next month. Careful consideration has been given to growth and capital funding for the upcoming year. Besides a 2.5% salary increase, the budget keeps operational expenses flat from the previous year.

Well #4 Maintenance:

Well #4 is scheduled for routine maintenance in 2020. While staff and the board originally planned to delay that maintenance until after Well #5 was brought online, the board has determined that the prudent course of action is to bring Well #4 offline for maintenance in January. There are several factors driving this decision, including reduced efficiency of the Well #4 pump, increased wear and tear on the water plant's other equipment due to the decreased performance at Well #4, and the fact that water consumption is lowest in January/February. Absent a major water main break or a significant structure fire, residents should not notice a difference in water quality as a result of this proactive maintenance. To minimize the amount of time Well #4 is offline, the board has approved the pre-purchase of key equipment. Having the equipment on hand will save approximately 3-4 weeks of down time. Staff projects the Well will be offline for approximately 4 weeks, beginning on January 6. Please check the Village website news flashes and the Water Department's webpage during the maintenance cycle for frequent progress updates.

Tollway Pedestrian Overpass:

As part of the Tollway expansion project, the existing pedestrian bridge that connects Western Springs and Hinsdale, is being removed. The Tollway recently published a survey to determine whether Hinsdale and Western Springs residents would prefer the bridge to remain at the current site, or moved to alongside 47th street. In either location, the new bridge will meet pedestrian ADA accessibility standards.

The Village is considering several factors when determining the replacement bridge location, including impacts to adjacent property owners, use of the proposed bridge by the residents of Western Springs and Hinsdale, and community goals. The Villages of Western Springs and Hinsdale will review the results of the survey and collectively decide on a final location for the replacement bridge. The Properties and Recreation Committee will be considering this issue at their regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, December 2 at 6:15 pm at Village Hall. Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting and all committee and regular meetings of the Board of Trustees.

5G Small Cell Wireless:

A number of residents have expressed fundamental concerns regarding the implementation of 5G small cell wireless technology, in terms of both health and well-being, and the aesthetic appearance of the equipment boxes and poles in our community. In September 2018, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted the third in a series of orders which limit local municipalities' authority to regulate deployment of 5G wireless facilities. Together, these orders define situations in which the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-104) preempts state and local authority, sets time frames for local authorities to process 5G infrastructure applications, and excludes 5G implementation from normal reviews typically required under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In addition to federal limits, state law reinforces the FCC order by providing that local governments "...may not prohibit, regulate, or charge for the collocation of small wireless facilities", except under limited circumstances identified in the Act. 50 ILCS 840/15(b).

I recently sent letters of concern to the twelve Senate and state sponsors of the Bill, as well as to our four federal representatives, asking that the Federal Communications Act be amended to ensure municipalities have the authority to guide the deployment of 5G equipment in a way that best addresses resident concerns. I also requested national or international, health or regulatory agency materials that address our residents' public health concerns. Trustees Chen, Rudolph, and I recently attended a regional conference in DC and reiterated our concerns regarding 5G to our federal representatives. Congressman Lipinski's office advised that there have been two major lawsuits against the FCC. One case struck down the FCC's order that excludes NHPA and NEPA reviews. The other sued over restrictions on fees, conditions, and review timelines. We will closely monitor these proceedings, and continue to fight for greater control over the implementation of 5G in Western Springs. Residents can learn more about 5G at: <http://www.wsprings.com/5G>.

Recreational Marijuana:

The Public Health and Safety Committee has held many public meetings regarding the impending legalization of marijuana in Illinois. The committee recently recommended that the board adopt a moratorium on making a decision until after the November 2020 general election. This way, the board can study amendments to the legislation, thoroughly research the legislation and solicit resident input on this controversial issue by placing an advisory question on the November ballot.

New Residential Garbage and Recycling Provider:

As a reminder, Village Trustees have awarded a 5-year residential waste contract to Lakeshore Recycling Systems (LRS), beginning in January 2020. Residents should register for service and choose their garbage and recycling cart sizes by going to <https://www.lrsrecycles.com/westernsprings/>. Carts of various sizes are on display at Village Hall, the train station and the Recreation Center. **Please register by November 27. Those who do not make cart size selections by this date will be provided with the default 65-gallon carts, and billed accordingly.** Learn more about the new program in this month's Tower Topics newsletter at <http://wsprings.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/339> , and/or on the Village website at: <https://wsprings.com/127/Recycling-Refuse-Yard-Waste> .

While this edition of the President's Corner is lengthy, it represents just a snapshot of the multiple issues and priorities requiring planning and oversight by trustees and staff to ensure that the Village of Western Springs continues to be the best place to call home.

Wishing you and yours a very Happy Thanksgiving.

Alice Gallagher,
Village President