



Annual Address
December 2019/ January 2020

As I write this report, the board is preparing to vote on a number of issues, including a tax levy and annual budget for the upcoming year. As in previous years, the 2020 operating budget will be in excess of \$20 million. Beyond a 2.5% annual salary increase, the operational budget remains flat from 2019. The Village is apportioned approximately 12 cents of each property tax dollar. The proposed tax levy for 2020 includes a 7.35% increase of the Village portion of your property taxes.

Of the \$503,000 expected in additional generated revenue from the proposed levy, 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, and board policy establishes a more aggressive schedule than required to fully fund the pension liability by 2033. The debt service is proscribed by the issuing bond covenants. Capital improvement funding will help defray the replacement cost of new self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), a federal requirement for the protection of our firefighters.

The budget/levy process begins in August and culminates with the vote at the last scheduled meeting of the year. I am pleased to report the 2020 budget is aligned with the board's strategic goals, and provides a plan for high quality, cost effective services, and critical infrastructure improvements.

2019 Major Event Recap:

January/February

- As part of the \$4 billion Central Tri-State Tollway (I-294) Project, the Tollway released results of its noise study and made a presentation to the Board of Trustees to discuss the replacement of noisewalls in Western Springs. After receiving trustee and public input, the Tollway made the decision to extend the noisewall along the public works facility, providing a benefit to the Recreation Center.
- The Village hired Teska & Associates to research the viability of a north-side Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in Western Springs. The TIF does not increase property taxes. It is an economic tool that allocates a portion of property tax paid within the TIF district to be used to improve the area with new streetscape, underground utilities, sidewalks, and more.
- Drilling of Well #5 began at the Field Park site, with the goal of completion in late spring of 2020. This well will establish redundancy in the water production system and allow the permanent capping of the shallow Well #1.
- Law Enforcement Services implemented a new online crime reporting system that allows residents to register for vacation watch services and request overnight street parking (<https://www.frontlinepss.com/westernsprings>).
- After months of public concern regarding the health implications of ethylene oxide, the IEPA issued a temporary seal order for Sterigenics in Willowbrook.

- The Village published a “Water & Sewer Guide” to provide residents with information about the water and sewer rate, and the capital projects that are planned through 2021. It can be found online at: <http://wsprings.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/334>.

March/April

- The contract to complete routine maintenance of the Garden Market standpipe project was awarded, and maintenance took place as projected, in the fall of 2019.
- The board entered into an intergovernmental funding agreement with Metra regarding the proposed pedestrian underpass at the Central Avenue railroad crossing. This project will take place concurrent with the BNSF bridge expansion, scheduled to begin in late winter.
- The 34th annual “Neat Cleanup Day” took place in the Village, where families and community groups join to clean litter and debris from public areas in Western Springs. The board thanks the many tireless volunteers who help keep our public spaces beautiful.

May/June

- Trustees Berry Allen, Sheila Hansen, and Edward Tymick retired from the Board of Trustees. With over 20 collective years of service, the knowledge, common sense, and experience they each brought to the board is truly appreciated.
- New Trustees Nicole Chen, Alan Fink, and James John were sworn in, and former Trustee James Horvath was appointed as Interim Clerk. We welcome the fresh perspectives each new member brings to the board.
- Following significant public input and consultation, the board awarded a 5-year refuse and recycling contract to Lakeshore Recycling Services (LRS), effective January 2020.
- A total of eleven candidates, nine from the Western Springs Department of Fire & EMS, graduated from the fire training academy program after months of rigorous training.
- In addition to funding from Metra, the BNSF pedestrian underpass project received grants from the Illinois Commerce Commission and Cook County’s “Invest in Cook” program.

July/August

- The Western Springs Police Department earned first-place in the Illinois Traffic Safety Challenge for municipalities with 11-25 sworn officers.
- Homesnacks, an online resource that combines disparate data into popular ranking categories, rated Western Springs the #1 Place to Live in Illinois, and #2 in the 10 Best of the Best Places to Live in America for 2019.
- The Department of Fire & EMS celebrated 125 years of ‘Neighbors Protecting Neighbors’ with a parade and picnic on the Tower Green.
- The first annual “Touch-a-Truck” event was a big hit with our younger residents, despite the blistering hot July day.
- The Water Department hosted their annual Open House to discuss ongoing water infrastructure projects and water plant improvements.
- Well #3 required an emergency shut down after an electrical failure, and remained offline for a number of weeks to undergo repairs.
- Attorney Michael Marrs of Klein, Thorpe, and Jenkins LTD gave a presentation to the board on small cell wireless facilities. The Village continues to press state and federal representatives for greater municipal control over the placement of this technology.

- The first annual Youth Citizen Police Academy took place for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, introducing them to all aspects of police work.

September/October

- We thank Ray Jasica who retired after more than 20 years of dedicated service on the SEASPAR Board. The Village is a proud member of SEASPAR, a regional organization that provides recreational services to children and adults with special needs.
- The always popular annual Fire Department Open House took place as part of National Fire Prevention Week.
- In an agreement with the Western Springs Service Club, the Village secured overflow permit commuter and daily parking at the pool parking lot through May. This was necessary due to the loss of approximately 65 commuter parking spaces next to the Tollway's railroad bridge reconstruction project.
- The Board of Trustees reviewed and revised its strategic goals, in anticipation of aligning those goals with the 2020 budget.
- Residents breathed a sigh of relief as Sterigenics announced after months of being closed that they would not re-open the Willowbrook site.
- A public education campaign began in earnest to facilitate the transition to the new cart-based refuse and recycling service beginning at the first of the year.
- The Tollway surveyed residents of Western Springs and Hinsdale about the proposed locations for the pedestrian overpass, which will be removed during I-294 expansion. A decision was made by the trustees to recommend to the Tollway that the new pedestrian overpass be located at 47th Street.
- In partnership with the Green Team, the Village hosted a successful first annual "Pumpkin Smash" composting event. In addition, the Green Team continues to offer monthly Styrofoam recycling (on the first Saturday of each month in the Rec Center parking lot) and the annual holiday light recycling program (with drop off at Village Hall, Thomas Ford Library or Village True Value Hardware through January 31).

November/December

- Janine Jasica, former longtime Village Clerk, was named 2019 Senior Citizen of the Year by Congressman Daniel Lipinski, at an annual awards ceremony.
- Registration ended for the new refuse & recycling program, and Lakeshore Recycling Services (LRS) delivered carts to residents in mid-December. Cart size exchanges are possible through March 31 without penalty. Contact LRS for more information at: 773-685-8811.
- After many public meetings, the board adopted a moratorium on the question of whether to allow recreational marijuana retail stores in Western Springs. Delaying a vote on the issue allows the board to place an advisory question on the November 2020 ballot, to solicit resident feedback.

There were a number of retirements, and staffing changes in the Village last year:

- Department of Fire & EMS: Michael Kelly was promoted to the role of Deputy Chief. Captain Steve Heinzelman retired after 22 years of service, and Firefighter Paul Tegmeyer retired after 31 years of service. Jim Jagoda was promoted to Captain and Paula Tomczyk, Kevin Gay, and Karl Hammond were promoted to Lieutenant, and Stephanie Grimm was appointed as Fire Marshal.

- Department of Law Enforcement Services: Sergeant Joseph Rourke retired after 29 years of service and Sergeant Phil Lo Chirco retired after 19 years of service. Terry Madler and Dean Harrison were promoted to Sergeant. Adrian Breems joined the department as an Officer, and Susan Depner as Records Specialist.
- Village Senior Staff: Tracy Alden retired after being the Village's recreation director for 33 years, and Director Aleks Briedis was welcomed as his successor, and Mike Kenny as Recreation Supervisor for Athletics. Casey Biernacki was promoted to Assistant Director of Municipal Services, John Mastandona was hired as Assistant Director of Finance, Steve O'Hare as part-time Urban Planner, and Chris Breakey joined the staff as Superintendent of Public Works.

This year we also welcomed several new businesses to the Village of Western Springs, including: Deka Lash, F45, Guac N Tacos, Hashstacks, IJM Group Architects/Timberstone Design & Development, Skinovatio, and @properties. And, Kirschbaum's Bakery and Village True Value Hardware both celebrated their 65th Anniversary!

Our many advisory board and commission volunteers are owed a debt of gratitude for their dedication and service. In 2019 we welcomed new Commissioners Cindy Brankin to the Board of Zoning Appeals, Elizabeth Welsh to the Police Pension Board, Kevin Collins and Matt Pinkham to the Recreation Commission, and Dan Cieko and Thomas Mitoraj to the Infrastructure Commission. The board is grateful for the knowledge and expertise of each commissioner – both new and continuing.

Looking Ahead:

In 2020, we look forward to the completion of the Clausen Avenue sewer improvement and concrete roadway reconstruction from 41st Street to Hillgrove Avenue, and on Prospect Avenue from Walnut to Chestnut. Other planned road resurfacing projects include sections of 40th Street, Willow Street, and Reid Street. Water supply and distribution improvements include maintenance work on Well #4 in January, the completion of Well #5 in late spring, and maintenance on the Spring Rock elevated tank. Pedestrian and bicycle safety improvement projects include the BNSF underpass and the Bemis Woods bike path from Ogden and Wolf, north to the existing bike trail. As you can see, the board and staff are committed to critical infrastructure maintenance and improvements so that Western Springs remains the best place to call home.

To stay informed of projects, events, and issues in the Village, sign up for community alerts on the website at www.wsprings.com. Village board meetings are open to the public and televised. They are typically held on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 7 pm. Please check the website for the complete schedule at <http://wsprings.com/DocumentCenter/View/6734/Public-Meeting-Notice-2020>. The board is readily available by email, and I encourage you to follow the Village on Facebook and Instagram. I can be found at Village Hall most every Tuesday from 2-4 pm, beginning again on January 14.

On behalf of the Village board and staff, best wishes to you and yours for a healthy and happy New Year!

Sincerely,
Alice Gallagher