



President's Corner
July/August 2020

I hope you enjoyed a healthy and safe Independence Day celebration. It's hard to believe that half of 2020 is already behind us. Normally, a recap of the year's events is published in January of the following year. But there is nothing normal about this year, so it's worthwhile to pause and reflect on the events of 2020 thus far.

Of course, the Coronavirus pandemic superseded all other matters by the time the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a pandemic on March 11, and Governor Pritzker issued a disaster proclamation for the entire state. At that time, your Board and staff reaffirmed that our first priority is ensuring the welfare of our community, and committed to safeguarding this principle throughout the crisis. Our staff is to be commended in meeting the extraordinary challenges the COVID-19 outbreak presented, and adapting early on to nearly constant updates, conflicting information, and new guidelines, to provide consistent and quality services to our residents. Our community as a whole is to be commended in strictly following public health guidelines to keep the greatest number of residents safe from infection.

Please continue to exercise caution as we navigate Phase 4 of the Governor's Restore Illinois Plan. With Phase 4, larger groups may gather and there are more opportunities to be social and active across all age groups. With the relaxing of some restrictions in this phase, a slight increase in positive cases is expected, and this has been the case in Western Springs. The recent increase in cases are notable in that the majority of new cases is with the under 30 population. Youth are just as likely to contract and spread the virus as are adults. We ask everyone to take this risk seriously. Since day one, the Village has strictly followed the rules and guidelines promulgated by the Governor's office, the IDPH, and the CDC. We will continue to strictly adhere to all public health guidelines in Phase 4. You can do your part by social distancing, and adhering to guidelines. Enjoy your summer, but please do so in a caring and responsible manner.

Even before the pandemic hit, 2020 started out as an unusual and unpredictable year. The Board's first meeting of the year was attended by residents concerned about the impact of 5G small cell wireless facilities in Western Springs. Rollout of 5G, or fifth-generation cellular wireless, is controlled by state statute and federal regulations. All local governments, including Western Springs, have very little input in the implementation and regulation of these small cell facilities. To address that lack of oversight, the Board tasked our attorneys with drafting an amendment to the state act that would give monitoring control back to municipalities and ensure that a community's aesthetics are not unduly infringed upon.

Currently, State Senator Suzy Glowiak-Hilton and State Representative Deanne Mazzochi are sponsoring this legislation in Springfield. While the Illinois General Assembly is not scheduled to

meet again in regular session until November, we thank our representatives for their support of this important amendment that returns some local control to municipalities. All 5G news and/or permit applications can be found at: <http://www.wsprings.com/5G>.

In March, our friend and colleague, Trustee Bill Siffermann, unexpectedly passed away. Bill was the consummate public servant, devoted to this Village where he and his wife, Pat, raised their 8 children. His passing was a deep loss to our Board and to the Village as a whole. Bill joined the Board in 2017, where his vast knowledge and experience on public safety matters were valuable assets not only to the Board, but to the Department of Law Enforcement Services and the Department of Fire & EMS, as well. Always a voice of reason, Bill provided sound advice on complex matters before the Board. His selflessness and leadership, so beneficial to our Village, is greatly missed. I will forever recall his booming voice and collegial reports with great fondness. It was a privilege to serve with Bill, and to count him as a friend.

In other sad news, former Village President Saranne Milano passed away on June 11. Saranne, too, was a devoted public servant and her passion for our community showed in everything she did. She was the first female President of Western Springs, having served in that role from 1997-2001. During her term, Saranne led several vital projects, including construction of the east pedestrian underpass. Her contributions to the Village were many, and extend beyond her service on the Village Board. A tireless volunteer, Saranne was chosen as Western Springs Citizen of the Year and, more recently was recognized as the 2018 Senior Citizen of the Year for the 3rd Congressional District. She was a vivacious, caring, and generous person. Her passing is a true loss for our community, and she will be dearly missed.

In early May, at a special meeting of the Board of Trustees, Scott Lewis was sworn in as a Village Trustee. Mr. Lewis's term will run through May 2021. Prior to his appointment, Scott served on the Infrastructure Commission. He is currently retired, but previously worked for Nicor as VP of Governmental Relations. In that role, he provided executive oversight and coordination of all governmental and regulatory affairs. In addition to his regulatory experience, Scott oversaw Nicor's community relations directors. He earned an MBA from DePaul University in Chicago and also has a degree in Journalism. Scott and his wife, Ann, have lived in Field Park for 25 years, where they raised their two daughters. While Bill can never be replaced, Scott has already proven his worth through his insight and common sense on challenging issues.

In the aftermath of widespread public outcry following George Floyd's murder, two peaceful demonstrations have been held in Western Springs. The organizers worked closely with our Police Department to ensure the events remained orderly. While nationally some communities are calling for sweeping police reform, please know that your Police Department already exercises established best practices. The Western Springs Police Department is nationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) - one of 39 accredited Illinois municipal law enforcement agencies out of approximately 875 such agencies in our state. As an accredited agency, the Department meets or exceeds law enforcement national standards and best practices, and adheres to all guidelines and

mandates set forth by the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board. In short, the Western Springs Department of Law Enforcement Services is a model agency, nationally recognized for its long-standing policies to incorporate best practices that reflect community expectations.

What were once labeled '100 year storms' are happening annually, if not more frequently. Recent summer storms left some residents dealing with catastrophic flooding and costly remediation, only to have their homes flood again a short time later. While there are multiple reasons for this flooding, the solutions are complex and costly. Nonetheless, the Board has taken the first steps to identify the sources and solutions to excessive flooding within the Village. More information on the studies, causes, and recommended solutions for flooding in Ridgewood and Springdale can be found on our website.

Despite the many impediments to the smooth execution of day-to-day operations this year, the customary work of the Village continues unabated. Construction of Well #5 is complete. Construction of the electrical house will begin this month, and Well #5 is expected to be brought online in the early fall. Rehabilitation of the Ridgewood Oaks detention pond is scheduled to begin in August. Reconstruction of Prospect Avenue has begun, and the Clausen Avenue water main replacement and reconstruction is scheduled to begin this month. Other annual roadway and sidewalk replacement projects are underway. The Tollway is making progress on its expansion of the BNSF bridge over I-294, the proposed west pedestrian underpass project went out to bid in mid-June, and the Village is awaiting final authorization from IDOT to proceed with construction this fall. An electric vehicle charging station and new bike shelter was installed on Burlington Avenue at Grand Avenue. The Public Works Department recently oversaw an inventory of trees located in Village right-of-way as part of an urban forestry grant received for this purpose. For more detailed information about many of these projects, visit our website at wsprings.com.

Summer is upon us, and the Sunday French Market is underway. Be sure to stop by the Tower Green on Sundays between 9 am – 1 pm. Looking ahead to the second half of the year, we are hopeful that the Western Springs Business Association will be able to proceed with plans for the annual Gathering on the Green event in September. Your Board of Trustees will continue to face expected and unexpected challenges while demonstrating diligence and transparency. Together with senior staff, and acknowledging anticipated lost revenue in light of the fallout from the COVID-19 crisis, we will revisit and reprioritize short-term strategic goals. Rest assured, your Board of Trustees is comprised of intelligent, dedicated, and resourceful women and men who are committed to ensuring that Western Springs continues to be the best place to call home.

Sincerely,

Alice Gallagher,
President