

Village News



YOUR FRANKLIN PARK NEWSLETTER

MARCH, 2011



Mayor's Desk

FROM MAYOR BARRETT F. PEDERSEN

The Village of FRANKLIN PARK

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VILLAGE HALL HOURS
Mon. Tues. Thurs. Fri.
8-4:30 pm
Wed. 8 - 6 pm
Sat. 9-12 pm

TOWN HALL
March 14, 7 - 8:30PM
at Centre at North Park

COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVE
March 18, 3 - 7PM
at Park District

One of the first orders of business of my new administration was to get a handle on the Village's finances. I knew that, particularly in the middle of a recession, we had to get a realistic picture of our financial standing. Unfortunately, what we discovered made that impossible, as the information necessary to assess our finances was unreliable and proved substantially inaccurate.

Though we had the most recent audit for the fiscal year ended April 30, 2008, the numbers simply did not add up. Additionally, there was no management letter accompanying that audit nor had one apparently been issued with any of the audits that had been performed over the last 31 years. The lack of a management letter, a key document that informs management of deficiencies in its financial management controls, processes and procedures, is unheard of in the accounting industry. Moreover, the poor accounting and recording measures of the past made it difficult to obtain an actual accounting of the Village's finances.

We hired Crowe Horwath, a respected independent audit firm, to perform the 2009 audit and to give us a true picture of our financial landscape. Crowe Horwath found it difficult to complete a comprehensive audit in light of many fundamental accounting and bookkeeping inadequacies. The audit performed found numerous material weaknesses, which are deficiencies so severe that serious misstatements in the financial information could occur and not be detected or corrected by management in a timely manner.

Among the weaknesses found were a lack of bookkeeping controls, possible fraud risks, failure to use standard industry checklists, lack of reviews or reconciliations among ledgers, and no secure system for holding checks, fees and permits. They also noted there were not adequate checks and balances, there was no formal investment policy, no regular review of fund balances

and accounts payable were incorrectly posted.

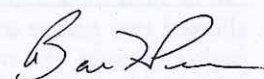
These substandard accounting procedures obscured the Village's actual financial position. When the previous administration took office, the Village had a \$14 million surplus in reserve funds. By May of 2009, the Village had more than depleted these reserves. In essence, the Village had been 'borrowing', through interfund transfers, to create the illusion that the budget was balanced. The audit stated that several material misstatements, both from prior periods and fiscal 2009 were noted and that management was using information that was materially incorrect.

The findings were disturbing. But it is now the responsibility of this administration to address these issues, restore our balance sheet, restructure our finances and move forward serving our taxpayers during these tough economic times.

We have begun taking the necessary steps to reverse this situation. We have adhered, and will continue to adhere, to standard and accepted accounting principles. We are energetically pursuing a reform agenda and we will continue with comprehensive reform and unequal transparency.

We have reorganized and restructured. We continually review our policies and procedures and all departments are adhering to best practices in their disciplines. We are following the recommendations of the independent auditors and we are implementing the required procedures and controls and adding the appropriate safeguards.

I hope you will attend our Town Hall meeting on March 14th at which the representatives from Crowe Horwath will review the audit and accompanying management letter and present their findings.


BARRETT F. PEDERSEN



Village Responds Quickly to Historic Snow Storm

The Village of Franklin Park was applauded by members of the public and the private sector for a quick and thorough response to the massive storm that dumped more than 20 inches of snow on the area on Tuesday, February 1. As a result, streets were passable, garbage was picked-up on schedule and School District 84 was able to reopen sooner than other area school districts.

Street department staff, the Village Police and Fire chiefs, and key department heads met with the Mayor early well in advance of the storm to devise a plan of action for how to handle the impending blizzard. Village officials also reached out early, to partner organizations and key private sector companies to update them on road conditions and to garner input for the action plan. As a result, the community pulled together to coordinate a well-planned and executed snow removal strategy that got Franklin Park businesses and residents moving around sooner than their counterparts in neighboring towns.

"Our Streets Department worked around the clock to clear our 76 miles of streets and roads and 18.9 miles of alleys after the massive storm that resulted in the third largest snowfall in history," stated Mayor Barrett Pedersen. "We react the same way in any emergency situation, including snow, flooding or other weather-related emergencies. We work to get out ahead

of the situation and we pride ourselves on being well-prepared and well-organized to face emergencies."

The Mayor reports that he has received numerous phone calls from residents who were pleased with the quick and efficient response by the Village to the storm, one noting that this was the best response she has ever seen. One business owner even stopped in Village Hall to thank the Mayor for making it possible for him to open his business quickly, indicating that the surrounding towns he had to travel through were still in poor condition.

"I received a call from the owner at Enger-Vavra, a Franklin Park construction firm on Martens Street, who complimented us for doing a great job of cleaning the streets," said Pedersen. "It's great to get such positive feedback from the community. I am proud to work with such dedicated and committed staff."

Much of the metropolitan area remained closed down on Thursday because municipalities were not able to keep up with the heavy snowfall. Because the streets were clear and deemed safe for passage in Franklin Park, the Superintendent of District 84 made the decision to reopen the schools even though Chicago and other neighboring suburbs including Schiller Park, River Grove, Northlake and Melrose Park remained closed.

"I always boast to my fellow superintendents that Franklin Park has the best streets department in the Chicago area," David R. Nemeč, Superintendent Franklin Park School District 84. "They proved it once again."



Mayor Pedersen digs out Village Hall (top left and above right) and Village officials plan out a strategy to deal with the snow storm.

Time to Plan for Garage Sales

Soon, the cold and snow will be gone and it will be garage sale time! Residents must register with the Village to hold a sale at 847-671-8242. There is no cost to register and garage or yard sale signs can only be placed on your property. Sales can be held for a maximum of 30 hours within a three day period. Residents are allowed two garage or yard sales per 12-month period, with at least a 3-month period between the two sales. Sale hours must be no earlier than 8:00 AM and must end by 7:00 PM.



New Businesses Add to Village's Industrial Base

In the last two years, 184 businesses have applied for a license to relocate to or expand in Franklin Park, bringing sorely-needed jobs to our community during this economic downturn. In fact, 90 of these, are new businesses to our Village. Most of these businesses are industrial and on average, they have added four new employees, with an average salary of \$45,000. The business community has recognized that Franklin Park is "Open for Business" and committed to improving our customer service, streamlining our processes and dedicated to supporting the growth and expansion of our business base.

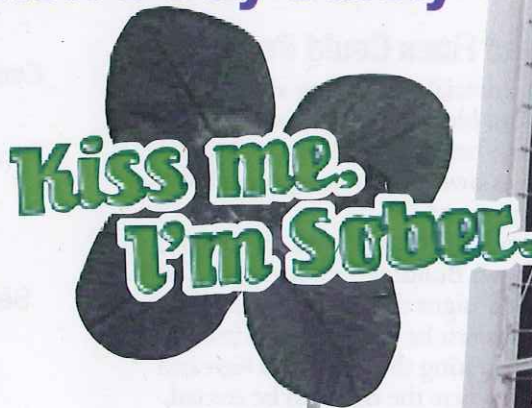
New EDC Appointments

Recently, Mayor Pedersen made two new appointments to the Economic Development Commission (EDC) which is charged with advising on the local business issues, reviewing industrial revenue bond requests and making recommendations for 6B or other local business incentives. Bill Geary is President of Nelson Steel, which specializes in the production of cold carbon and alloy steel bars and is a company that prides itself in being a good neighbor and exemplary citizen of our community. Kirk Allen is President of Sloan Valve, a global leader in providing smart, clean, and healthy restroom solutions and a firm that is passionate in its mission to preserve our environment. Both of these local business leaders will provide valuable insight on enhancing our business climate and promoting business expansion in our town.

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day Safely

The Franklin Park Police Department is committed to keeping drivers in the community safe this St. Patrick's Day by stepping-up law enforcement activities throughout the Village on March 11 - 20, between 11PM and 6AM, with particular attention to night time seat belt use and impaired drivers. Officers will stop motorists long enough to determine that they are not intoxicated, and verify they possess a valid driver's license and are wearing their seatbelts.

Please remember to always buckle up and designate a sober driver to safely celebrate the luck of the Irish!



Designate a sober driver this St. Patrick's Day.



YOUR FRANKLIN PARK NEWSLETTER



Doing More with Less - By the Numbers

In the last two years, Franklin Park officials and staff have worked hard to implement critical cost-savings measures, which have kept us safer in our homes and on our streets, provided Village-wide improvements and have saved taxpayers' money.

- Secured **\$1.2 million** in state funding to resurface Grand Avenue and **\$367,440** in stimulus funds to resurface Franklin Avenue.
- Obtained a Cook County Energy Efficiency Grant for **\$75,000** to make energy-efficiency upgrades in village buildings and convert 114 street lights to LED lights.
- Increased efficiencies in police officer staffing, while providing adequate street patrols and saving **\$700,000**.
- Eliminated private ambulance contract, saving **\$810,000**.
- Reduced costs by purchasing DEMO model ambulances saving over **\$100,000**.
- Increased efficiencies in firefighter staffing, resulting in **\$500,000** savings, while maintaining quality service.
- Consolidated all computer, software and Village-wide related purchases saving **\$85,000**.
- Replaced outdated Water Dept. equipment resulting in a **\$9,000** savings.
- Eliminated underutilized data equipment, saving **\$17,000**.
- Secured FEMA grant for **\$157,611** to purchase equipment, allowing our firefighters to do their job better, while keeping them safer.
- Obtained IPRF grant for **\$33,700** to purchase new safety trailer for Village-wide emergencies and fleet maintenance equipment.
- Awarded **\$19,800** IDOT grant for seatbelt and DUI enforcement during the holidays.
- Obtained **\$12,750** federal grant for purchase of ballistic vests.
- Transferred the 911 Call Center to Leyden Firehouse saving **\$180,000**.
- Obtained a **\$10,000** grant for rail road violation enforcement and education.
- Secured **\$6,000** grant to preserve our trees.

Upcoming Meetings

March 14

Town Hall – 7:00 - 8:30PM

March 18

Adjudication Court – 10AM

March 21

Board of Trustees – 7PM

March 22

Park District Board – 7PM

March 23

Plan Commission – 7PM

March 24

Economic Dev Commission – 8AM

April 4

Police and Fire Commission - 6PM
Board of Trustees - 7PM

April 7

Adjudication Court - 10AM
Senior Citizen Commission - 6PM

April 12

ETS 911 Board - 9AM
Library Board - 7:30PM

April 13

Zoning Board of Appeals - 7PM

Improper Signage is Dangerous and Fines Could Be Costly

Excessive or improperly displayed commercial advertising signage can be a danger to the general public because it can block sight lines or can cause excessive distraction. Accordingly, the Village has instituted signage regulations to insure that all property and business owners can comply and also help create a more attractive and safer environment.

Prior to erecting a sign of any type, both permanent and temporary, you must obtain a sign permit from the Village's Building Department. The only signs exempt are "For Sale" or "For Rent" signs that are no larger than six square feet. Applications for a sign permit must be complete and include a scaled drawing of the proposed sign demonstrating the size of the sign and a drawing or picture of the property indicating where the sign is to be erected.

Complete regulations and information about the types of signs prohibited in commercial zoning districts are available on the Village website at www.vofp.com. If you have questions, please contact the Village Zoning Administrator at 847-671-8792. Properties in violation may be cited to appear in court and could be fined up to \$750 per day per violation.