

Village News



YOUR FRANKLIN PARK NEWSLETTER

AUGUST, 2012



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

Farmers Market
Saturday, August 11 & 25
8 AM to 1 PM

Fighting for the Elgin O'Hare Western Access Project

Our on-going work with our partners in state and federal government has helped Franklin Park win grants and projects that have advanced our community. No project is more important to our long term economic development than the construction of the Elgin O'Hare Western Access.

Last month, I visited Washington DC to meet with our Congressional delegation and with Secretary of Transportation Ray La Hood to urge for the passage of a new Federal Transportation Reauthorization bill. I was joined by Mayor Soto of Bensenville, Mayor Sherwin of Northlake and Mayor Moylan of Des Plaines. It is critical to the mayors of our region that the construction of the Elgin-O'Hare Western Access, the tollway around and into the western side of O'Hare International Airport, be included in the legislation as a project of regional and national significance.

This roadway project is a game changer for our community. Diversification and modernization of the local economy will revitalize the region's industrial and commercial corridors. The opening of Western Access to O'Hare International Terminal will support new levels of interaction and connectivity, retaining the region's preeminence as a transportation hub. Suburbs west of the airport will be able to realize the benefits that suburbs east of the airport have long enjoyed. Franklin Park will be able to attract even more 21st century jobs and investment.

We met with Senator Durbin to thank him for his on-going support for the project and to request federal funding. Though the Tollway Authority will build the \$3.4 billion project, revenue from tolls will produce only about \$3.1 billion leaving a \$300 million funding gap. Kristi LaFleur, Executive Director of the Illinois Tollway, joined us and explained to the Senator that not all of

that gap need be funded right now. If the project could realize \$40-50 million under this reauthorization bill, we could request additional funding in two years as construction continues.

We met at length with Congressmen Mike Quigley and Peter Roskam, both of whom represent communities along the corridor, to make sure that this project remained as one of national significance and therefore be eligible for federal funding.

When we arrived in Washington there was no consensus on the bill. There was talk of only re-authorizing the current bill for 30-90 days. This lack of certainty would make it difficult for transportation and transit agencies to plan and to budget. Additionally, there was a sentiment that projects of national significance no longer be included in the legislation. This would have made it very difficult to get funding for the Elgin O'Hare.

After endless meetings and deliberation, we left Washington with a 27 month Federal Highway Reauthorization Bill that includes a \$500 million appropriation for projects of national significance.

The Elgin O'Hare Western Access project sits at the crossroads of the nation's transportation system. We received excellent advice from Secretary LaHood on ways our coalition can make a strong case for the gap funding needed. We believe through a committed coalition of elected officials and community, labor and business leaders, we will receive the federal support this project deserves.

Next month I will update you on the plans and progress of our coalition.

◀ Mayor Pedersen thanks US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood for his support of the Elgin-O' Hare Western Bypass.

▶ Mayor Pedersen and Mayors Soto, Moylan and Sherwin meet with Congressman Peter Roskam to help shape the Federal Transportation Reauthorization bill.



FRANKLIN PARK STATE OF THE VILLAGE ADDRESS 2012

It is my, and the Board of Trustees, continuing pledge to increase our communication and transparency and to enhance our dialogue with our residents and businesses. To that end, we present an annual overview, our State of the Village address, to you, our stakeholders.

I am pleased to say that the State of Franklin Park is strong.

It is strong, because of the cooperative working relationships we have forged with our residents, our business owners and operators. It is strong, because of our partnerships with our colleagues at the Park District, the Library, our schools, Triton College and Leyden Township. It is strong, because we share a collaborative vision for a prosperous future. Thanks to these efforts, and the dedication of our professional staff, the State of the Village of Franklin Park is strong.

Village Is On Solid Financial Footing Through Good Management

We have worked tirelessly to stabilize our finances and to correct the financial crisis we inherited. Our commitment to budget discipline and fiscal responsibility has paid off.

For the first time, the Village has been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association. Additionally, Standard and Poor's issued an investment grade bond rating to the Village, making it the first time in Franklin Park's history that the Village's finances received an investment grade rating on its own and without credit enhancement. Standard & Poor's cited the Village's efforts at professionalizing our financial management, streamlining our operations and stabilizing our budgets as the reasons for the upgrade. This new rating allowed us to insure and issue bonds for the police station at a substantial cost savings, between \$2-3 million over the life of the bonds.

We will continue to work to solidify the Village's financial health despite pressing issues over which we have no control. Though we are seeing some signs of an economic upswing, that will result in increased income and sales tax revenue, we are far from a robust recovery. We must continue our conservative revenue projections and disciplined budgeting in order to protect our taxpayers.

Throughout the state, pension obligations continue to take increasing amounts of Village revenues. The prior administration left a substantial deficit in the pension fund. We must fulfill our contractual obligations, but we are also working closely with our partners in state government to structure future pension programs that are fair, yet conscious of taxpayer burden.

Fulfilling Our Pledge to Increase Communication

We all know how important it is to stay informed and connected. We have expanded our website to include meeting agendas and minutes from our Village Board Meetings. What we like is that we hear from you as well. What we hear is overwhelmingly positive, but we also get legitimate concerns, issues and questions. It is our goal to answer those quickly. If we are not, let us know. That is how we can keep meeting your needs and improving our service and procedures.

We have also begun an electronic newsletter and email blasts to keep you in the know on events, festivals and meetings, Village programs and even street closures and flooding. If you are not currently on our email list, sign up on our website.

One of our most exciting innovations to help foster greater participation in Village government, is our Telephone Town Hall meeting. We call Franklin Park residents and ask if they would like to stay on the line to participate in a Town Hall. Residents are able to join without leaving home or interrupting their busy

routine. It isn't easy to just stop what you are doing and drive to a meeting. This allows greater participation and fits everyone's busy lifestyle. If you want to participate and do not have a currently listed phone number, call Village Hall, go on our website or write your phone number on the return portion of your water bill.

Getting your responses to our programs and policies is important to us. Over 44% of our residents responded to our trash survey. You gave us definitive results and allowed the Board to move forward to negotiate a trash removal contract that met your needs and lowered costs. We learned that you are satisfied with the current service and wished to continue with unlimited trash, removed weekly, including yard waste and bulk items. Because YOU participated, we were able to lower costs, address service issues and improve our community. Most importantly, because we were able to negotiate a contract that lowers prices, our seniors will no longer pay for trash removal.

In another innovation aimed at saving money, you supported the referendum authorizing the Village to shop for better prices for residents and small businesses by combining electrical service for all individual customers into a single bid. As a result, of this electrical aggregation process, Franklin Park could now see approximately 10-14% savings on their monthly ComEd bill. The Village has entered into an agreement with Integrys Energy Services to supply our electricity at a greatly reduced price.

Our Shared Commitment to Sustainability

It is no secret that I am committed to sustainability. It is my goal, supported by our Board of Trustees, to make Franklin Park the premier economic and environmentally sustainable village in Illinois and to serve as a model for other cities.

To that end, we have undertaken a variety of initiatives, including utilizing natural lawn-care on Village property, installed charging stations for electric cars and will be purchasing electric vehicles for our Building Department. We have an Integrated Pest Management policy that emphasizes simple, inexpensive prevention practices eliminating the cause of pests by minimizing access to food, water, and hiding places. In addition, our new police station will incorporate high performance lighting and energy efficient systems to keep energy costs down. The Village is utilizing recycled materials in the design and construction of the building to reduce pollutants and includes paving materials that reduce flooding.

Public Safety is a Top Priority

The first obligation of government is to safeguard the public. I want to thank the leadership of Police Chief Mike Witz and all the brave men and women who serve with him for securing the safety of our families and our neighborhoods every day. This year we have seen noticeably less gang activity and a reduction in graffiti. Our schools are safe with very few incidents.

We broke ground in March for this new state of the art facility on the site of the former Unilever, which will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our police department. Cutting-edge technology will allow our officers to stop crime and vandalism before it happens. It is critical that we ensure that those who risk their lives daily have every resource possible to guarantee their safety. The Franklin Park Police Station will also serve as a regional center; collaborating with police departments in neighboring communities on area-wide task forces and implementing new crime prevention programs.

This year, our Police Department was awarded a grant from the Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System to provide technical support for cameras as well as license plate recognition software to monitor the Intermodal Train Yard. The grant will also provide training to our officers for train yard incidents.

Fire Department Committed to Providing Quality Services

Fire Chief Steve Iovinelli and his committed team of firefighters and paramedics also put themselves in harm's way for all of us. We all owe them a debt of gratitude. The Fire Department is committed to offering the highest quality of services at the lowest effective costs. The Board has mandated that we run streamlined operations and exercise fiscal discipline.

The Fire Department, rather than disposing of outdated equipment, found a way to sell an older model fire truck to a village in California for \$21,600. Also, FEMA awarded our Fire Department with a \$333,000 grant to purchase a new fire engine. This high-tech fire truck includes safety features that will help protect our firefighters and will allow us to better serve our community during emergencies. Given our proximity to O'Hare International Airport, and being one of the largest industrial districts in Illinois, it is critical that we have the very best firefighting equipment available. Winning this grant helps us tremendously in this effort.

A Village of Neighbors

Even though safety is foremost, and flood prevention and infrastructure are important, we are after all, a Village of Neighbors. We are a Village of all ages, interests and backgrounds, who make their homes here in order to enjoy a high quality of life.

Thanks to the Let's Move Initiative, which we began last year, we are becoming a healthier and more connected community. Let's Move establishes guidelines to create a healthy start for children, empower parents and caregivers, provide healthy food in schools, improve access to healthy, affordable foods and increase physical activity.

One of the greatest benefits of the program is that it brings the community together. The Park District expanded their Community Gardens and added a Mini Mile Race for children during the Annual 5K Fun Run/Walk. The Village established a Farmers Market, that is now expanding in its second year. District 84 applied for a Safe Routes to School grant and is adding school gardens and gardening club. The schools continued their support for daily exercise for children. In addition, the Library displayed books and developed a reading list for nutrition and exercise.

It is working together that keeps us strong and now is keeping us healthy. Throughout the summer, our residents join together in our community garden, volunteer to plant flowers along Franklin Avenue, and pitch in to clean and beautify our Metra Station. This is a Village of Neighbors and we encourage people to enjoy our festivals, our Farmer's Market and to hold block parties with their neighbors. These types of activities bring neighbors together and in communities where families know their neighbors, we see safer and more vibrant communities.

Honoring those who built this community, we continue to fulfill our commitment to provide low cost grass cutting and snow removal services for our seniors.

Partnering With Our Schools

We also are increasing our partnership with local schools and this year we did so through a Vehicle Sticker Design Contest. The art students at East Leyden High School were challenged to create a design based on the Let's Move Initiative. The winning design was submitted by Alex Mennella and is featured on this year's sticker.

We also asked third, fourth and fifth grade students from District 84 schools to tell us what, if they were Mayor for a Day, they would do to make a positive difference in our community and to sustain our earth. The writing contest resulted in dozens of essays that had excellent ideas, but the winning essay came from Kamila Trela of Passow School who suggested that our residents use timers in their homes to save on energy costs.

Our Family-Focused Festivals Are Thriving

Railroad Daze is a time honored tradition in our community. But tight budgets and recessionary times have caused many communities to cancel or scale back festivals. We solicited sufficient corporate sponsorships to support Railroad Daze and make the event revenue neutral. This great family outing has been preserved through working together with our business community to support our quality of life. Again, by working together, we were able to sustain our annual Holiday Tree Lighting ceremony. The children in our town look forward to this yearly event and thanks to Nestle, a donated tree from a resident and many other donations, we were able to stage a great event and purchase new decorations for the Village which will be used for years to come.

Working together, sharing goals, sharing a vision, is what will allow all of us to share in a more vital, prosperous Village.

Grants to Upgrade Infrastructure

Out of respect for the taxpayer, we have continued our successful pursuit of state and federal funding to purchase needed equipment and improve our streets, sewers, curbs and other community assets. Improving our infrastructure makes our residential neighborhoods more desirable, helps alleviate flooding and makes us more attractive to new businesses.

We received a grant for over \$400,000 to resurface 12 blocks of residential streets along Emerson, Hawthorne and Elder from Waveland to Pacific. Reeves Court and Pearl Street from Belmont to King Street will be completely rebuilt using a Surface Transportation Grant.

The four-block reconstruction and resurfacing of Cherry and Birch was entirely funded by a \$600,000 grant from the Federal Highway Administration. Our new 150 horsepower motor for the King Street pumping station, which will reduce energy consumption, was funded by a \$94,000 grant from the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and a \$13,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, requiring only \$30,000 of Village funds for this major improvement.

Thanks to grants from the Department of Commerce and the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, the Village was able to replace, at NO cost to the taxpayer, inefficient lighting with high efficiency T-8 lamps, saving the Village almost \$50,000 a year. These grants also provided for upgrades to LED street lighting, deterring crime and providing cleaner, cheaper energy.

A \$200,000 grant was used to remediate the site of the Crossings Two on Franklin Avenue at 25th Street. This will allow us to be turn-key ready as the economy improves and investors show interest in the site. In addition, we continue to reinvest in our infrastructure and prioritized projects in the Irving Park / Mannheim Railroad Yard area, including sewer upgrades and sidewalk improvements to increase the attractiveness to industrial users.

It is our partnerships with our State legislators, and our working relationships with our Congressional representatives that have enabled us to secure these many grants. I want to thank Senator Don Harmon, Representative Skip Saviano and Congressman Mike Quigley for their dedication to the people of Franklin Park.

We also have two very hard working lobbying firms, one in Springfield and one in DC, that spend countless hours uncovering opportunities and advocating for Franklin Park. It is because of their hard work that we are outpacing many of our neighbors in grant awards and being able to restore aging infrastructure at a faster pace.

Increased Business Activity in Franklin Park

Our vigorous reinvestment in our business areas is showing dividends. Though the recession continues to affect business expansion and growth, we are seeing increased activity and investment in Franklin Park.

Our staff has an active Business Visitation Program that works closely with our businesses to uncover any obstacles to their growth and prosperity and to encourage their expansion and re-investment in Franklin Park. We want to make sure that high quality, sustainable jobs stay in our Village.

We are retaining and expanding existing business. Interplex Daystar sits directly on the site line of the proposed Elgin-O'Hare expansion project. We worked closely with the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Illinois Tollway to facilitate a fair and swift purchase of their 52,000 square foot facility and Interplex has expanded into an 112,000 square foot facility in our community, saving over 70 jobs and adding numerous new jobs in the future. Had the Village not acted swiftly, they would have moved out of state.

Businesses expansions are continuing too. We are pleased Reebie Storage and Moving, Swissport Cargo Services and Wein Baur are all expanding in Franklin Park. Midwest Can will be adding over 100 jobs when it opens next month. PNC Bank is taking over the old Blockbuster space, building a larger branch with a convenient drive thru. Chicago Records Management has made a significant investment and expanded into the former Luxury Motors and creating over 100 construction jobs. Multi-group Logistics is growing and is now leasing parking space to accommodate their expanded fleet.

Most importantly, the revitalization of our industrial parks and commercial corridors will increase revenue to the Village from business and lower the tax burden on the homeowner.

We are welcoming more new businesses than ever before, who have chosen to make Franklin Park their business address. We are also seeing vitality in our commercial corridors in the last few months, with several new retail additions. And, we are working to encourage and sustain our commercial enterprises as well.

But we know we need to do more. We need vital commercial corridors. We need national and local retailers to offer a variety of goods and services in order to satisfy local consumers. We need a strong retail presence to increase our tax base, so that less property tax is paid by the homeowner. We are conducting a market analysis of our retail areas. We will focus on creating a downtown corridor and enhancing our variety of restaurant and entertainment offerings. We will establish a roadmap to success- identifying our retail potential and attracting the right mix of compatible retail and service businesses.

Our Partnership with Business

The Franklin Park Partnership, our business advisory board, continues to work closely with the Village on economic

development issues to keep our current businesses thriving and to help us attract new investment and opportunity. The Partnership told us that there was a lack of trained workers to fulfill existing jobs. In this difficult economy, it was important to learn that there are good paying jobs out there – but that there are not always enough skilled workers to fill them.

We engaged with Triton College and Leyden High School to develop ways that our educators can more directly meet the needs of our businesses. We have been participating in their career days and we are developing curricula to meet worker demand now and in the future.

Workforce issues and education were the topics at our annual Business Appreciation Lunch with over 150 Franklin Park business people attending. Chairman of the Illinois Board of Education, Gery Chico, discussed the state wide challenge to improve the quality of education for all Illinois students and make education at all levels meaningful and relevant. Mr. Chico praised our efforts at increasing our dialogue with the business community and the academic community and for more deeply engaging our business community in curriculum development.

Advocating for Completion of the Elgin O'Hare Western Bypass

This vitally important project will do more than just provide and a western entrance into the airport. The south bypass will connect our industrial parks with the interstates and toll ways and give us a unique opportunity to revitalize our business parks and create jobs. Besides securing an interchange that would benefit our industrial park and the advantage of revitalizing our business parks and attracting new jobs and investments, we also will gain significant stormwater detention that will help alleviate chronic flooding. This is a critical project for our community and will allow us to expand our industrial base as this intermodal access increases.

Working Together to Create a Vital Community

Working together. It is a theme repeated over and over in this address. That's because it is important. That's because it is the cornerstone of how we get things done. That's because it is how we will, together, forge a prosperous future.

It is not just the tremendous efforts of our Board of Trustees and our staff. It is all of us, working together, that will bring about the brightest future. I look forward to working with our residents, who share the vision that this is our home and that we should nurture and cherish our neighborhoods and our families.


BARRETT F. PEDERSEN, MAYOR



Mayor Barrett Pedersen is joined by Village Trustees Cheryl McLean, Tom Brimie and John Johnson and executives from Digital Realty to cut the ribbon at their grand opening.