

# Village News



YOUR FRANKLIN PARK NEWSLETTER

JULY, 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

VILLAGE-WIDE GARAGE SALE  
JULY 15, 16, 17

CAR SHOW & STREET DANCE  
JULY 22

RELAY FOR LIFE  
JULY 29

## Becoming a Stronger, More Focused and More Responsive Village

I am pleased to be able to present our first Annual State of the Village Address. Though this is the first, it will not be the last. It is my pledge to continue to increase our communication and our dialogue and we plan to present an annual overview of the Village's finances, activities and goals.

It has been an honor to work with the trustees and staff these last two years as we strive to make Franklin Park a stable, safe and prosperous community. It is also a privilege to work closely with our residents, our business owners and operators and our colleagues at the Park District, the Library, our schools, Triton College and Leyden Township. We work together to secure and enhance the quality of life for all our citizens, and as I stand here this evening I can say that, thanks to the collaborative efforts of all concerned, the State of the Village of Franklin Park is good.

## Shining the Light on Our True Financial Picture

We entered office at a crossroads. We came to office in the midst of the worst recession our nation has endured since the Great Depression of the 1930's.

We also came to office where many issues, especially financial, remained unsettled. We inherited a \$5.9 million negative fund balance, vendors went unpaid and outdated recordkeeping and accounting practices made our true financial picture impossible to assess. It was critical to me that we regain the trust of our citizens by putting our financial house in order. Though still challenging, the Village's financial picture has improved over the past two years.

In the fiscal year just completed, we have reversed an over 11 year trend of declining general fund balances. We believe, and we will await the audit to verify, that we've cut our negative fund balance position by about a million dollars. We are overcoming a system that consistently overestimated revenue and consistently underestimated expenses. We demanded a

thorough, comprehensive, professional and independent audit. We are shining the light on our true financial picture. We may not always like what we see, but at least now we have a handle on our actual position and we can put the plans in motion to restore our financial health.

This year, we also saw an increase in our yearend cash balances of approximately two million dollars. This enhanced cash position will allow us to meet our ongoing obligations to vendors in a timelier manner.

We are working diligently to ensure that the Village's financial health continues to improve despite some issues over which we have no control. Chief among those is the national economy and its impact on income and sales taxes as well as building permit revenues. Until the economy experiences a robust recovery, we must be extremely conservative in our revenue projections.

An equal and increasing pressure is the growing obligation of police and fire pensions. Across the state, these obligations are growing and continue to take increasing amounts of Village operating revenues. Unfortunately, our situation was exacerbated, because we inherited a substantial deficit in the police and fire pension fund as the previous administration diverted these dedicated funds to other projects. In addition, over the past three years, Franklin Park has seen a 32.3% increase in our pension obligations rocketing to \$2.3 million last year. This represents more than 10% of the Village's general fund budget.

Workers compensation insurance premiums have skyrocketed and this year came in at just under one million dollars. We have no control over these insurance premiums that are based on injury claims for 2006, 2007, and 2008.

But we do have control over our workplace and we have undertaken extensive training, along with other initiatives, to make a safer workplace and to avoid injuries and reduce future workers compensation insurance premium

cost. These efforts will pay off, as we reduce future workers compensation costs, and, thanks to our safety initiatives, the number of workplace injuries in the first part of 2011 declined to 15 versus 36 in 2010.

Our budgets have been carefully prepared through the dedicated efforts of our Trustees, Department Heads and staff. We took extra care to make sure we present transparent budgets that accurately reflect our cash position and operating expenses in a clear and understandable manner.

I want to thank our staff for their involvement in this process. They have followed the Board's mandate to keep costs down. In every department, in every endeavor, we have sought to operate an extremely responsive, yet efficient, government. We have increased accountability and transparency and our budget and all accounts are open for review. We are centralizing our purchasing; reviewing expenditures in order to realize increased savings and any expense not budgeted is reviewed by executive staff before it can be appropriated. As I mentioned, we will stabilize our cash balances to be consistent with prudent financial management. We have also stopped the practice of budget transfers and inter-fund borrowing that served to obscure the actual financial picture and we have begun the process of repairing our balance sheet.

### Working to Run a Leaner, More Streamlined Operation

Since 2009, we have reduced full time staff by 13%. And we are endeavoring to run a leaner, more streamlined operation. We froze all open positions, and eliminated them through attrition. But we were mindful not to jeopardize public safety, cause undue hardship, or reduce critical services. This year we will continue to freeze all non-essential open positions.

Out of respect for the taxpayer, we worked to end estimated water bills and now everyone gets an accurate reading and accurate billing. In 2009, over 3000 bills were estimated; some had been estimated for over four years without ever getting an actual reading.

### OUR OTHER EFFORTS ARE SHOWING RESULTS:

By transferring the 911 Call Center to the Leyden Firehouse, we will be saving the taxpayers \$180,000 in the first year of the contract. In the second year we will save \$250,000 and in the third year we should realize savings of \$300,000. These substantial savings will allow us to add additional full time sworn police.

Through the consolidation of all computer, software and Village-wide related purchases we have saved \$85,000.

By replacing outdated Water Department equipment we realized \$9,000 in savings. We eliminated underutilized equipment, saving \$17,000 and saved \$85,000 by delaying the purchase of workstation and data communication equipment.

We have been innovative in our approach and we have been aggressive in our pursuit of state and federal funding to secure needed equipment and improvements without further burdening the taxpayer. We continue to seek state and federal grants available for workforce development, infrastructure improvements, quality of life enhancements and economic development.

We secured \$1.2 million in state funding to resurface Grand Avenue and \$367,440 in stimulus funds to resurface Franklin Avenue. We persuaded our state legislators to work with us to get the State to repave all of Fullerton Avenue, 25th Avenue from Belmont to Addison and Mannheim Road. We received \$950,000 in Federal Highway Administration Grant funds to rebuild Cherry and Birch and resurface Emerson, Hawthorne and Elder Lane from Pacific to Waveland.

We 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—changes that will also result in lower utility costs to the Village. We obtained a \$200,000 USEPA grant to clean up the dry cleaner site downtown as part of phase 2 of the crossings.

A FEMA grant for \$157,611 was awarded to purchase firefighter equipment. A new safety trailer and equipment for Village-wide emergencies was funded through a \$37,000 grant. To augment the safety of our officers, we secured a \$12,750 federal grant for purchase of ballistic vests.

IDOT awarded a \$19,800 grant to offset the cost of seatbelt and DUI enforcement during the holidays- and this resulted in increased safety and increased revenue. We also obtained a \$10,000 grant for rail road violation enforcement- also giving us the opportunity to increase safety and enhance revenue.

Our efforts at increasing efficiencies are most evident in the area of public safety. Applying best practices in police officer staffing, we saved \$800,000, while continuing to safeguard our community. Similarly, we increased efficiencies in firefighter staffing, saving the taxpayer \$500,000 annually while maintaining the highest quality of service.

All our newly hired firefighters are required to be certified as paramedics. Existing firefighters are now being cross

trained as well. We staff two state of the art ambulances, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with our in house paramedics. This innovative approach allowed us to eliminate a costly private ambulance contract, saving \$810,000.

Due to an increased police presence and a more aggressive enforcement effort, we have visibly less gang activity. That presence has also reduced graffiti and when graffiti does appear, our Public Works staff is doing a great job in rapidly removing it. Our Police Liaison program continues to show benefits and we experience very few incidents in our schools. Safety on our streets has also increased. We have seen a dramatic reduction in traffic crashes. We changed our squad cars to be black and white and this makes them more visible and serves as an added deterrent to both traffic violations and crime. Our Click It or Ticket Campaign has also made our streets safer. Over this past Memorial Day weekend we issued 141 citations from this program.



The Village staffs two state-of-the-art ambulances, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, using in house paramedics.

We also knew we had to realign our priorities with regard to our infrastructure; roofs, buildings, overall maintenance and machinery. In May of 2009, an unacceptable 2/3 of our streets were in poor or failing condition. Infrastructure, streets, curbs, sewers and sidewalks had all been neglected. Our Water Tower was deteriorating because there was no planned maintenance schedule. Ten years ago, the Village was told to replace two water pumps. In nine years, in better economic times, only one was replaced. Now, in tough economic times, we find ourselves having to replace or repair critical infrastructure that is failing.

### Assessing and Scheduling Infrastructure Repairs

To resolve these issues, we have undertaken a comprehensive, scientific and systematic assessment of our entire infrastructure. We are developing a schedule and a plan for restoration and repair.

Despite a very tight budget, we were able to replace the water main on Franklin Avenue from 25th to Ruby with Village water and sewer funds. We replaced the outdated, failing 8 inch water main

with a 16 inch main that is significantly improving the distribution of water to the western portion of our Village.

The recession hit our business community hard. Businesses have not been investing and expanding at the rate we would like. Attracting new tenants or owners is difficult when the streets and sewers are in disrepair. We believe reinvestment in our business areas will enhance property values, generate new revenues and increase employment opportunities for our residents. 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. Improving our infrastructure is one way we can attract new business and ease the flow of goods for our existing businesses.

### Franklin Park is Open for Business

Making it easier to do business with the Village is another way we can, and have, retained our business base. We streamlined our permit process and cut the red tape. We eliminated fees for construction or renovation projects under \$1000 unless you are in a special flood hazard area. And we made improved customer service our mission. Our administrative employees have undergone customer service training. You, the taxpayer, are our customer. And you deserve courtesy, clarity and promptness in all your dealings with the Village.

has helped businesses stay and grow. We have seen a steady increase in the number of applications for new business licenses; 120 new licenses in the last two years. And six of our major businesses have invested in expansions, including Hill Mechanical, Cortina Tool and Reebie Storage.

And these new businesses add to the fabric of our community. Among them are Royal Service Realty, Romano Brands, Master Food Brokers, Healthwise Healthcare and Everest Home Healthcare. A new truck driving school, Mega Driving School has chosen to call Franklin Park their business home.

The success that our business community enjoys will allow us to attract new businesses and investment and make companies from around the world know that Franklin Park is Open for Business.

We have created the Franklin Park Partnership. This public private partnership will be a business advisory board comprised of local business owners representing commercial, corporate and industrial interests. Our mission is to engage business owners and managers as well as finance experts, developers, real estate executives and developers in an informal dialogue with the Village in order to uncover any obstacles to success and to set a strategic vision for the future. We want to use their professional expertise and experienced opinions as we explore Franklin Park's strengths and weaknesses and any challenges and obstacles to long term success. This group will also guide us as we devise the best strategies and methods to revitalize, develop and promote our commercial strips. We also will focus on creating a downtown corridor and enhancing our variety of restaurant and entertainment offerings. This partnership, along with the work of our Economic Development Committee, and our staff will continue to make that goal a reality.

In the last two years, Franklin Park has added many new restaurants, including Romano's, Benvenuti, Il Sputino and Positano's.

### Elgin O'Hare Western Bypass to Provide Opportunities for Franklin Park

One of the biggest opportunities on the horizon for Franklin Park is the Construction of the Elgin O' Hare Western bypass. Yet in May 2009, the route of the southern ring road was still unsettled. The uncertainty regarding the placement of the ring road --the southern route of the Elgin O'Hare West Bypass made business attraction difficult for Franklin Park and difficult to engage in any long term planning.

It was my belief that the route that was chosen, benefits Franklin Park

and was better suited for the expansion of industry and would minimize displacement of existing businesses. This south bypass project would connect our industrial parks with the interstates and toll ways. The routing of this roadway through Franklin Park would give us a unique opportunity to revitalize our business parks and create jobs.

We took the initiative and entered into an agreement that would minimize land loss, yet offer Franklin Park all the advantages of the new highways. 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 greatly alleviate chronic flooding.

In September, I was appointed by Executive Order of the Governor to the Elgin O' Hare Western Bypass Advisory Council. The mission of this Council is to get this project completed and get it completed and financed in the most equitable and expeditious fashion possible. Now, Franklin Park has a seat at the table for the largest infrastructure project in a generation. Through our partnerships, we are moving this project, and the enormous benefits it has for our Village, forward.

Franklin Park is a village of neighbors. And even in these tough times it is important to offer safe, family friendly opportunities for neighbors to work and play together. Throughout the region, towns are canceling festivals or events or severely cutting back. We have been able to offer quality community events and festivals at less cost to the taxpayer by expanding on our partnerships with the private sector.

Railroad Daze secured more corporate sector sponsors in the last two years than ever before. We were able to deliver a safe family friendly carnival. Christmas at Hamill Square was possible because our staff worked to secure donated services. Our car show and street dance continues to be a fun event that draws visitors from around the region.

The goal of these events is to bring our community together. We watch neighbor work with neighbor in our community garden. We see residents and businesses volunteer together on our Green Team, planting flowers through the Village--along Franklin Avenue and cleaning and beautifying our commuter parking lot. And our Farmers Market sees neighbors enjoying the bounty of summer and exchanging healthy recipes. We encourage neighbors to hold block parties and the Village supports them. These events bring neighbors together. In communities where families know their neighbors, we see safer more stable neighborhoods.



Students from East Leyden High School volunteer their time and energy to help beautify our Village.

Good communication is the first step in keeping jobs in a community. Our Business Retention program takes us into our local businesses and allows us to have a candid dialogue with business owners and operators about their challenges. We want to know how we can help and what, if any, obstacles there may be to their growth and prosperity. Studies show that when a business relocates, a cordial and open relationship with local government is a deciding factor.

We meet with them and their members frequently. That partnership, and our new business friendly attitude,

Honoring those who built this community, we continue to support senior grass cutting and snow removal, despite budget limitations.

As we have worked to make our budget transparent, we are striving to increase our communication and our accessibility. We are revising our website, making more information available than ever before. We will be instituting a state of the art electronic Town Hall meeting program that will allow for more participation by letting citizens join the dialogue from home.

Through setting and sharing goals we are becoming a stronger, more focused and more responsive Village. And we have an ambitious agenda to make our Village more stable, more prosperous and safer and greener.

**Making Our Village More Stable, Prosperous, Safer and Greener**

First on my priorities is to continue to get our financial house in order. We have come a long way, but we must continue to be conservative in our approach in order to regain the confidence of the financial community. Our processes must be open and transparent and our true financial position must be clear. We owe the taxpayer nothing less. By stabilizing our financial position, we hope to be able to reduce the garbage fee. Residents can help in this effort by increasing recycling and reducing yard waste.

We must see that the Elgin-

O'Hare Western Bypass is built and we must remain at the table, working with our State and regional partners to ensure that the promises made by this massive infrastructure improvement are promises fulfilled. The completion of this roadway is essential to our economic development efforts.

We must utilize our new Franklin Park Partnership to actively pursue new investment and find compatible tenants and owners for vacant property.

We must continue our planned maintenance efforts and repair, restore or replace equipment and facilities that do not serve the needs of our citizens or the safety of our employees.

We must increase efficiency and productivity in all operations. We aim



Mayor Barrett Pedersen and Trustees Cheryl McLean and John Johnson enjoy the Village's Farmers Market on a Saturday morning.

to share resources with our neighbors whenever possible. It is also our goal to be the most transparent, open and accessible government possible. We will continually upgrade our new website with complete information and add processes that make it easier, more convenient and more economical to do business with the Village.

You have heard me use the word we frequently. That is because nothing that has been accomplished has been in a vacuum. We have built on the successes of the past, just as we had to overcome the mistakes of the past. Our success, and any future prosperity we may enjoy, will be the result of our shared effort. It is not just the tremendous efforts of the trustees and our staff. It is the effort and commitment of every resident, of every business owner, to work with us to fulfill our vision and achieve our goals.

Here, I wrote about the State of the Village as it is today. But I am passionate about working with everyone to shape the State of the Village for tomorrow. So to all our staff, all our elected officials and all businesses and residents, let's move forward, speak with one voice and become true partners in our future.

Thank you.

*Barrett F. Pedersen*  
**BARRETT F. PEDERSEN**

**Community Notes**

**Village-Wide Garage Sale** Register now to participate in the garage sale on July 15, 16 and 17, from 8AM to 7PM. Register with the Clerk's Office to have your address included on the participation list at Village Hall or by calling 847-671-8242. A list of participants will be available for pick-up in Village Hall on July 14 or via the website at [www.vofp.com](http://www.vofp.com). This sale is a bonus sale and not counted toward the two year limit.

**Clean out Manhole Covers** Residents are asked to remove debris and leaves from areas around manhole covers near their property to facilitate drainage and to help to alleviate flooding.

**Watering Restrictions** By ordinance, Franklin Park bans the use of lawn sprinkling or other landscaping use of water between the hours of 12:01PM and 6:00PM from May 1st to September 15th.

**Home Repair Fraud and Ruse Entry** Beware of con artists posing as contractors, repairmen and utility or Village workers who commit crimes of theft, burglary and home repair fraud on the elderly. They gain entry to homes and keep the victim occupied while a theft is committed. Also, be aware that if the price sounds too good to be true then it is usually a repair fraud. Contact the Police at 911 to report suspicious activity.

**Relay for Life – Walk with Us** The annual Relay for Life will be held at Hamill Square on July 29th starting at 6PM. The event will feature plenty of fun-filled activities including a DJ, contests, raffles and speeches. Teams of walkers will take turns in the relay to raise funds and awareness for the American Cancer Society, walking through the night, until 6AM the next morning. For more information, call Kitty Greenwood at 847-913-2864.

**Car Show and Street Dance – July 22** Plan to attend the 20th annual classic Car Show and Street Dance on July 22 from 6 PM – 10 PM on Franklin Ave., between 25th and Ruby. This year's event will feature a variety of local food vendors, music and a children's area with entertainment and crafts. Show your patriotic spirit and wear red, white and blue. For more information go to [www.vofp.com](http://www.vofp.com) or call 847-455-2852.



**Garbage Removal Survey - Coming Soon** The Village is exploring ways to reduce our garbage removal costs. In our effort to determine what is the most cost effective plan, we will soon be requesting your opinions on garbage removal options for our Village. We need your input! Watch for more details soon.