

**VILLAGE PRESIDENT**

**FINAL**

Welcome to the Annual State of the Village Address. This year's presentation is being presented virtually due to the pandemic. While the coronavirus has impacted every aspect of our everyday lives, the Village continues to provide the necessary services for the residents, businesses and visitors of La Grange Park.

For all of us, this past year is one we will never forget. In this time of difficult uncertainty, the Village forged ahead in the care of our community and took steps to ensure our capacity to respond to ever changing situations. This year we: (1) issued our first disaster declaration for the protection of our community, (2) made adjustments in services out of concern of our first responders and all of our essential workers ensuring the continuation of services (3) we assisted our neighboring communities with peaceful protests, (4) we responded to a serious flooding event where we met with residents who sustained damage and met with legislators, (5) we made adjustments to our Budget and applied for numerous grants. And today we remain steadfast in our commitment to serve as we progress forward in sustaining a strong and resilient community.

The State of the Village address presents an overview of the Village’s accomplishments over the past year. Each of the Village’s Department Managers will take a few moments to share with you the items of interest in their respective departments. We will also have an opportunity to hear from the La Grange Park Chamber of Commerce and from our partner taxing bodies, the La Grange Park Public Library District and the Community Park District of La Grange Park. It is my pleasure to be a part of this presentation and provide the opening and closing remarks – because I am so proud of the work we do – and we do it for the best possible reasons – for the care of our residents. So, thanks for joining us – let’s get started - and at this point, I would like to introduce our Village Manager, Julia Cedillo.

### **VILLAGE MANAGER**

Thank you Mr. President. It’s an honor to serve as Village Manager where I am responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the Village and executing the policies and the vision as set forth by the Village Board and President. As President Discipio mentioned, this has been a time like no other and we have worked hard to meet the challenges at every turn.

With the onset of the pandemic in early spring, the Village managed a balancing act of information overload, understanding mandates, and modifying protocols. Covid-19 continues to be a very fluid situation and we learned early on that we must adapt quickly. Staying informed continues to be our best tool in managing the impacts of covid.

At the start of the pandemic, oftentimes there was little information available to us. As a result, we strengthened our connections with neighboring towns as well as with our community partners, and other taxing bodies. I would like to thank the Park District and Library & schools for their help in sharing resources and information. It is very reassuring to know that we have such great partners with whom we can collaborate – so that no organization is alone in responding to a crisis of this magnitude.

Last spring as covid intensified and the state began to issue positivity numbers for communities, the Village wanted the community to be as prepared and informed as possible. Staff issued daily covid updates through email, the website and Facebook. We created resource pages,

a business edition of Rose Clippings, and a list of links to monitor the COVID-19 situation. We shared local stories, and we posted a number of videos on a number of topics. We implemented an Older Adult Outreach Program to check up on our more vulnerable population and maintained outreach to our Older Adult Communities.

It is important to note that the Village monitors both the hospital numbers and the covid positivity rates and we do notice that we have the lowest rate of all area communities. But we must remain vigilant in our actions to mitigate the spread to keep families healthy and not overwhelm area hospitals to ensure that people get the treatment they need.

Understanding the impacts of covid onto homeowners, we made adjustments to our transactions and timelines and we modified service protocols. We closed village hall to foot traffic, made some building modifications to enhance safety, re-opened and closed again. It is important to note that all Village employees continue to report

onsite to work, but to ensure continuity of services, we are still closed to foot traffic. We are here, so if you need anything call or email.

The Village is keenly aware of its responsibility to manage crisis, and I would like to say some comments of thanks in that regard. First, I would like to mention the dedication and time spent by the Village President and Board of Trustees during covid. They have worked hard in discussing and implementing measures to prepare the Village for emergency response – by approving emergency code amendments, emergency ordinances, temporary approvals for businesses, to re-evaluating and re-reviewing this year’s budget in light of the potential financial impacts. Your tireless work is greatly appreciated.

I’d also like to thank the Village’s department heads for their work this year. In the first couple of months of covid, they met every day to solve issues and assist in communications to the public and to the Village Board. For these gentlemen (and Emily), it did not matter

what you threw at them, they worked it through and responded quickly – day after day. They, along with all of the Village’s staff (41 FT and 80 PT), here they all are – all work each day (and through covid) in the delivery of services to our residents. So thank you to all 121 employees.

The work the Village does starts with residents in mind, our job is to care for residents. We answer questions and handle concerns from the public. Staff executes and enforced policies, as directed by the Village Board. We remain committed to customer services, and we add in training for increased capacity in response. We communicate information to residents, stakeholders to make sure that anyone to wants to be involved, can be involved. We have our work cut out for us, but it is work for which we are passionate. As you will see later in this presentation, this year, despite covid, the Village forged ahead with its planned projects, implemented measures to ensure resiliency while continuing to focus on modernizing and improving our services and processes. All of this while remaining steadfast in our commitment to caring for residents.

I want to close my remarks with two special thank yous – first to our first responders and health care workers for putting yourselves at the front lines in some of the most difficult situations during this pandemic. Thanks to our businesses and essential workers for the grit, ingenuity and strength to push forward and carry on. I'll talk once more a little later but for now, I'll turn it over to Larry Noller, Finance Director.

### **FINANCE DIRECTOR**

One of the primary responsibilities of the Finance Department is preparing and monitoring the village budget. The budget process begins in the fall and culminates in the approval of a final budget by the village board each April. As always, the challenge is balancing the cost of providing core Village services against limited revenues. The Village's current budget was nearly complete when the COVID-19 pandemic introduced enormous uncertainty into the process. The Village immediately re-examined its revenue forecasts and reduced several planned expenditures to accommodate an anticipated decline in resources.

Due to the high degree of uncertainty at the time, it was decided that the Village Board would review the budget after three months to determine if further modifications were needed due to the pandemic. Since then, the Village Board has reviewed the budget twice. No budget modifications have been necessary because Village revenues continue to perform at or better than projected. Furthermore, the Village recently received over \$300K in CARES Act funding and anticipates additional grant funding through FEMA to assist with the costs of responding to COVID-19.

Additional COVID-19 responses.

- No change or increase in water and sewer rates.
- Three-month suspension of late fees and shut offs.
- Increased online payment processing

The Finance Department experienced significant personnel changes this past year.

- Retirement of 40-year employee, Sue Bluhm
- Promotion of Ana Slejza to Accounting Specialist
- New part time fiscal assistants, Kelly Rafferty and Carol Marczuk

I would like to thank the entire finance team, all of whom excel at providing great customer service to residents. If you have a question, a concern or a bill to pay, it is very likely you will start with our customer service desk located in the center of Village Hall. The front desk staff answer the Village's main phone line and assist walk-in customers. And they receive numerous calls and visits each day covering a wide variety of topics. Most of the time they will have an answer for you right away, otherwise they will likely know where to get it.

The Finance Department completed a conversion to new financial software this year. The new software replaced a system originally installed in 1992 and has resulted in more efficient processes and improved data security. The new system will also allow us to provide additional online services to residents over the next year.

Converting to a new software system would be a challenge for staff in any year. The pandemic only added to the challenge as it was necessary for the vendor to do the entire project remotely. I would like to thank all Village departments for their dedication to the project and particularly Allison Chorley and Ana Slejza for leading the way.

Finally, 2020 was the third year the Village received the Government Finance Officers Association's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. The award program recognizes local governments that meet the high standards necessary to produce a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. Commonly referred to as a CAFR, this document contains much more than the statutorily required audit report and includes additional financial and statistical information about the Village. A CAFR is considered one of the highest quality financial reports a local government can issue. Less than 6% of cities nationwide receive the GFOA's CAFR award. The current CAFR is available on the Village's website along with prior years. I will now turn it over to Rick Radde, Director of Public Works

## **PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR**

Good Evening. I am Rick Radde, the Director of Public Works. This Department maintains five core Village functions:

- Streets – including the right of ways
- Our urban forest
- Water distribution & sewer conveyance
- Fleet services
- And oversight of Capital Projects

Each year, our Department provides seasonal services for the residents, such as brush pickup, curbside leaf pickup, and snow and ice management.

If you have noticed white strips on the roads during the winter months – then you have witnessed our new snow and ice management in action with a technique called Anti-Icing. Last winter, Public Works began a pilot program to experiment with this technique. Anti-icing is the method of applying a liquid de-icer to the pavement up to five days before a winter event. The liquid is 70% salt brine, 20% a carbohydrate or beet juice, and 10% calcium chloride. After the liquid is applied, the water evaporates, and the remaining ingredients stick to the pavement. Anti-Icing works in two ways. First, the product can melt either trace amounts of snow or ice and secondly, prevent accumulating snow from bonding to the roads, allowing the snow plows to scrape down to bare pavement. In both outcomes, applying liquids is much safer for our environment and more cost-effective than traditional road salt. The Public Works Department will continue this pilot program into this upcoming winter season.

In April of 2016, voters approved a ten million dollar bond referendum to improve our deteriorated roads. Initially, the Village was hopeful of repaving roughly nine or ten miles, but with competitive pricing from contractors, the Village managed to complete a total of 11.26 miles, stretching taxpayer dollars. 2020 marked the final year of the program with Meadowcrest between 31st Street and Jackson and Garfield between La Grange Road and Community. In addition, this last Spring, the Village completed the reconstruction of two alleys just north of 31st Street between Raymond and Alima Terrace. The newly constructed alleys are composed with concrete to create positive drainage to the nearby roadways and provide a long lasting surface.

Also this past spring, the Village constructed seven new off-street parking spaces with a red, antique brick style, stamped concrete. New sidewalks and landscaping complimented this project.

In May, the Village experienced substantial flooding within our community. Rain fell over four days leading up to a significant flooding event on May 17th. That evening, our sewer systems and nearby Salt Creek were already at full capacity when an additional 4

inches of rain fell in a short time frame preventing efficient drainage. This event impacted many homes – some experienced backups in basements from surcharged systems while overland flooding and sizable roadway flooding, impacted homes in the central area of town. The Village surveyed sites near the Homestead and Monroe intersection to learn how homes flooded in this area. The data received was used to apply for two grants. The Village did not receive the first grant submission from the Rebuild Illinois Initiative, which would separate stormwater directing it into Salt Creek. However, the second grant to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District for a green infrastructure project was reviewed and accepted. This grant will reduce stormwater runoff by creating water-absorbing permeable pavers at three intersections east of La Grange Road on Monroe. The Village recently heard through the grapevine that this grant was awarded to La Grange Park – but we have no official word. Cross your fingers. MWRD has chosen to partner with our Green Infrastructure project estimated at \$450,000. The Village's obligation is 20% or \$90,000. More information about the project will be released in the near future. Concurrently, the Village will continue its

planning for a stormwater relief project for the central area, for future construction when funding becomes available.

This past summer, the Village completed a significant water main replacement project along 31st Street. The original water main under the pavement on 31st Street was nearly 100 years old and caused several serious water main breaks in the past few years. A new 12" main installed under the North sidewalk included new cross mains at each intersection, new fire hydrants, isolation valves, and copper water services. The increased pipe size will improve water flow for firefighting purposes and provide greater resilience to the immediate area's pipe network. The Village's Engineering firm is presently designing the replacement of the of the Park Ave water main from Ogden to Harding. We are hopeful that this project begins in the near future, possibly next season. At the same time, the Village continues its plans for water main replacement at La Grange Road and 31<sup>st</sup> Street which has some location challenges we are working through. We are hoping to begin construction next year. Some folks may recall that the Village completed a water and sewer study a couple of years ago. The study identified capital needs and the fee structure to maintain our aging systems. The new water and sewer fee plan

ensure that the water projects move forward and that portions of our sewers are lined every year, instead of every other year, which was what we were limited to in past years.

This Fall, the Village entered into a new alternate energy provider that supplies the power for our water pumping stations and streetlights. Not only will the Village see an estimated savings of nearly \$20,000, but the power is backed by 100% green renewal certificates. This combined with the Village's residential aggregation program, also backed by 100% green renewal certificates, helped place La Grange Park as #2 with the EPA Green Power Community national rankings.

After 21 years, the Public Works Department will say goodbye to our current John Deere Backhoe. The replacement, a 2021 Caterpillar backhoe, will arrive after the New Year.

In 2019 the Village of Westchester began a sanitary sewer replacement project installed in Edgewood Lane just south of 31st (Salt Creek Bike Trail). The project also encompassed the bike path extension from Brainard and Jackson. Once the project came closer to becoming finalized, and the spring rains were upon us, it was

evident that the trail just east of the bridge was acting differently than in the past. The trail is knowingly in a flood plain (BY DESIGN), but ponding water lasted longer than expected. Elevation grades were taken and verified two areas affecting positive drainage. First, the path was reconstructed 3" lower than the original grade. Secondly, the ditches next to the trail needed additional grading and drainage control. After much collaboration between Village staff, the Forest Preserve District, and the Village of Westchester, the contractor completed all deficiencies. While the path will continue to flood during wet weather conditions, it is now demonstrating that it will subside quickly.

In conclusion, I'm excited to announce that the Village recently added geospatial technology to its list of tools and capabilities. The Village became a member of the Geographical Information System Consortium this past summer, which is comprised of over 40 municipalities in the Chicagoland area. GIS has been around for at least two decades but not until recently was the Village able to resource this valuable tool. The benefit of GIS is that we will be able to store and retrieve data more efficiently. GIS typically includes data associated with land parcels, such as parcel information, address,

dimensions, land use, zoning, structure footprint, property photos, and utilities (such as water and sewer). GIS puts geographic data into a format that allows the data to create visual representations of infrastructure, community assets, and service needs. It also offers a way to view and analyze dynamic maps to enhance daily operations, improve decision making, and effectively respond to customer requests.

I want to thank all the men and women at Public Works for their continued support, dedication, and hard work this past year, especially given the pandemic, and to the Village Board that supports all we do. Thank You. I will turn it over to Police Chief Tim Contois.

## **POLICE CHIEF**

Good Evening, my name is Tim Contois and I proudly serve as the Chief of Police for the Village of La Grange Park. I have been serving this exceptional village as a member of the police department since 2002. In keeping with La Grange Park's rich tradition of providing a high quality of life for its residents, I am proud to report that our community has been recognized for the fifth consecutive year as the

8th safest city in Illinois by Safewise, a well-respected, nationally-recognized home security company.

In 2020, our department welcomed 1 new addition to our police team, Denisa Gargovic. Probationary officer Gargovic graduated from the University of Illinois Police Training Institute's Police Academy in October and is in the process of completing our 12-week Field Training Program with Field Training Officer's Wilk, Rackow and Hon.

I am proud to share that Police Officer Frank Slabenak, a 4-year veteran of the La Grange Park Police Department, has been accepted into the DRE school (Drug Recognition Expert) which focuses on drug impaired drivers. I know I speak for the entire community when I thank Ofc Slabenak for his dedication to removing impaired drivers off of the road.

The Police Department's commitment to community outreach looked a little different in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic required us to change the way we conducted community outreach. Along with the Fire Department and Department of Public Works, the Police

Department took part in a birthday wish drive by program for children. Much effort was put into weekly safety briefs along with social media messages and videos.

While the Citizen Police Academy was put on hold because of COVID-19, we are looking forward to providing that program once again when it is safe to do so. Unfortunately, the annual National Night Out event was cancelled for 2020 but were able to present an award for 1<sup>st</sup> Place in Illinois in our category and 7<sup>th</sup> Place in the Nation for 2019 to President Discipio this year at a Village Board Meeting. This award is a true testament to the dedication our Village has to this event.

The COVID-19 pandemic also required us to modify activities and response procedures. While the level of service did not change, the practice of taking non-emergency or delayed reports in person changed to taking phone reports. Our goal of community safety remained a priority and we felt modifying this procedure followed that goal.

While the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging, it gave us an opportunity to focus on technology improvements that would better

streamline our agency while maintaining the same level of service. As an agency, we streamlined to electronic ticketing which included the purchased of software and in car printers. We also transitioned to a web based scheduling software along with a web based vacation watch program and a new emergency notification system (RAVE/Smart 911).

In conjunction with the Lyons Township Area Communications Center (LTACC), the police department transitioned to a new mobile communications platform. STARCOM went live in May, enhancing radio communications significantly along with allowing for statewide coverage when needed. With the transition to STARCOM came the joining of the Countryside Police Department to LTACC. Countryside PD joined LTACC in August and has become a great asset to the center.

We continue to participate in the National Drug Take Back initiative provided in conjunction with the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Partnership for a Drug Free Lyons Township. Additionally, the Department maintains a drug drop off box in the lobby in which unused medications may be deposited for proper and safe disposal.

In October, we turned over to the DEA approximately 200 pounds of prescription and over the counter medication.

Expounding on the partnership aspect of the police department and community, the police department is continuing to be involved with the Shop with a Cop program. This program provides our staff with a deeply-meaningful opportunity to provide gifts and resources for economically disadvantaged families that would otherwise go without during the holiday season.

We continue to encourage the community to remain informed and connected with the Police Department through the Police Departments page on the Village Website. New additions to the page include a community relations page which focuses on departmental training, the law enforcement code of ethics, the department's mission statement along with the adoption of the ten shared principles. The police department believes that it is imperative to remain transparent with the community at all times.

In addition to the above, the police department has transitioned to a new policy manual with the assistance of Lexipol. With the new policy

manual comes daily web based training that focuses on all aspects of the policy manual. In addition to the daily training bulletins, all sworn members of the agency partake in monthly web based training by the Police Law Institute (PLI).

With the transition to Lexipol, the Police Department was able to apply and receive a 3 year use of force certification through the U.S. Department of Justice. This certification allows for the police department to apply for and receive federal discretionary grants. The standards for this certification were published on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and we received certification in mid-November.

2021 promises to be another proactive year for the Police Department. Staff have begun working with an outside vendor on administering a patrol officer eligibility list. In addition, we continue to research the viability of reintroducing local administrative adjudication. A multitude of officers have completed Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training and we continue to enroll those who are not yet certified.

In closing, the men and women of the La Grange Park Police Department look forward to building on community relationships throughout 2021. Thank you, I will now turn it over to Fire Chief Dean Maggos.

### **DIRECTOR OF FIRE & BUILDING**

For over 19 years now, I have had the wonderful opportunity and pleasure to lead our Village's Fire Department as Fire Chief, and I consider it an honor to do so. And, I think I can speak for each of our firefighters, EMT's and paramedics, that they also consider it an honor to serve our Village.

As you are well aware, COVID also affected the Fire Department in many ways, taking up a great amount of time in planning and changing our operations to ensure safe response. Staff initially participated in near daily conference calls and webinars with neighboring communities, our hospital systems, and state EMS and government officials, among others. Staff worked to secure Personal Protective Equipment from various resources such as the Cook County Department of Emergency Management and Regional Security, our hospital system, and various private vendors. Senior

staff was also in contact with our assisted living and skilled nursing facilities to exchange information and monitor the conditions within those buildings. Fire Department EMS response plans were modified to ensure additional safety of patients and personnel, and to include significant cleaning, disinfecting, and decontamination of equipment and personnel. Disinfecting foggers and a UV disinfecting light were purchased and are regularly used in the cleaning process. In order to further try to keep personnel safe, various training sessions were held through self-study or online, and some in-person training sessions were staggered to reduce the amount of contact between firefighters. Unfortunately, even with this, the Fire Department has been affected directly by COVID with several of our personnel testing Positive over the last few months, and getting ill from COVID. A couple of these were attributed to exposures on the job, while others were mostly infected elsewhere. Thankfully, they have recovered from most of their symptoms.

Aside from the daily impacts and adjustments made due to COVID, the Fire Department persevered with many other projects, programs and activities.

In January, nine Candidates were hired and sent to the Basic Operations Fire Academy. Even with the impacts of COVID, all nine were able to graduate in May. In fact, four of our personnel ended up with over a 90% score in the class, and the class overall ranked number four out of the 45 classes held at the Romeoville Fire Academy. Six of the spring graduates also attended EMT school this past fall. We are also currently in the midst of another recruitment and hiring process.

The Fire Department also made some enhancements in equipment and facilities. Early this year, our Foreign Fire Insurance Fund approved a number of purchases. They included face coverings for personnel for COVID, new particulate stopping firefighting hoods for cancer prevention, and new SCBA mounting brackets for our fire apparatus, improving safety and efficiency for firefighters getting in and out of fire engines at emergencies. They also approved the purchase of a new treadmill and new flooring for the Village Hall fitness room, used by fire, police and other personnel, which will be safer for workouts and easier to clean and disinfect. Fire and Police

personnel worked together to remove the old carpeting in this room and installed the new flooring.

Also earlier this year, the Fire Department purchased two new automated CPR compression devices for the ambulances, which was planned for in the Village budget, and with some funding assistance from the Fire Department Foundation and the Foreign Fire Insurance Fund. The new devices provide higher quality CPR compressions with limited interruptions compared to manual CPR, and create efficiencies for EMS personnel performing other life saving measures to a patient in cardiac arrest. In addition, with funding from the Village budget and Fire Department Foundation, two new Thermal Imaging cameras were purchased for our fire apparatus, replacing older cameras that had suffered from mechanical failures. In addition, in conjunction with improvements made at LTACC, and with the Police Department, our Fire Department radio communications moved to the statewide STARCOM21 system, an enhanced public safety radio network. Staff worked diligently preparing for such, particularly Division Chief Norm Rick.

Earlier this year, although there was not a formal recognition event due to COVID, Evan Lilly was named Firefighter-of-the-Year. Also during the year, some organizational changes were made due to anticipated personnel changes, and to work towards some succession planning. On September 1st, three of our paid-on-call Fire Lieutenants were promoted to the rank of Captain. These Captains, John Psenicka, Jim Gruszka and Steve Tullis, each have many years of experience with our Department, and have various new assignments and responsibilities. In addition, in November, a testing process was held for Paid-on-Call Lieutenants, which included a several hour assessment center. Each of the Candidates performed admirably, with John Fagan scoring the highest. As such, he has recently been promoted to Lieutenant. We wish all of these new fire officers well, and look forward to the assistance they will provide us in their new leadership positions.

Although COVID prevented us from providing in-person fire safety presentations at schools this year, Fire Department personnel were able to get some fire safety message out related to Fire Prevention Week. Fire safety materials were provided to schools for all children

in pre-school through the 3rd grade. In addition, our firefighters created fire safety videos that were released daily during Fire Prevention Week on our Facebook page, the Village website and our Fire Department YouTube Channel.

Over the past twelve months, the Fire Department responded to 2,071 calls for service, with 75% of those related to EMS, and the other 25% for fires, rescues and other emergencies. A number of significant or otherwise noteworthy incidents are as follows.

In early January, on a Friday at 1:00 am, firefighters responded to a report of a gas odor inside Plymouth Place involving the skilled nursing area. Firefighters used detection and monitoring equipment, and quickly searching the building, discovered a natural gas line leaking in an HVAC unit on the roof. The gas was shut down to the unit, and working with maintenance, gas was safety ventilated from the building. In June, a fire occurred in the main mechanical area, in the basement of Bethlehem Woods, severely damaging a large HVAC control unit, and leaking refrigerant. Firefighters were able to shut down power to the unit, and ventilate the smoke and refrigeration gas from the lower level. In July, firefighters responded to a report of a

child trapped in Salt Creek near Brezina Woods, and upon arrival, found the female child, along with two adult males attempting to rescue her, all trapped by the current in the middle of the creek, holding onto a submerged log. The Duty Officer initially threw a water rescue rope to them for safety. Another firefighter arrived, and wearing a PFD and tethered with a second water rescue rope, swam out to them. Three separate trips were made, swimming and bringing each of them back to shore against the current with help from the Duty Officer and bystanders on the ropes. In early August, primary power lines came down between 1200 blocks of Kemman and Blanchan, causing a fire involving a shed, garage, wood fence and wood storage in a yard. Firefighters worked aggressively but cautiously in keeping the fire from spreading, as the power lines remained energized and arcing during the fire. In October, early on a Saturday afternoon, firefighters responded to a fire alarm at Bill's place, which turned out to actually be a fire in the roof. Firefighters, using thermal imaging cameras, saws and tools, worked for over an hour to find and extinguish various areas of fire within the roof structure. Between the work firefighters did on the roof and above the ceiling, salvage work by firefighters inside the store, and response

of the Building Department, the business was able to reopen later that day.

***(BUILDING)***

As most of you know, in addition to serving as the Fire Chief, I also serve as the Village's Building Commissioner, providing overall supervision of the Village's Building Department. I must point out though that our Building Official Patrick Boyle, and Building/Fire Specialist Allison Chorley, handle most of the day-to-day work. They both do an extraordinary job.

This year COVID obviously affected the Building Department, but that did not seem to slow things down. At the end October of this calendar year, we had issued 855 permits, where in 2019 we had only issued 773 permits during such time. Although many residents suffered financial impacts from the pandemic, many others appeared to take advantage of the time and resources they had to make repairs and small improvements to their homes. We saw a significant increase in permits issued for miscellaneous residential repairs, including for electrical and plumbing, and for the installation of decks, patios and

fencing, probably linked to spending more time at home and outdoors. In addition, permits for three new homes were also issued.

In order to handle this activity during COVID, staff made many changes to operations, developing new ways to handle permitting and payments online, and providing contact free permitting by installing a Building Department kiosk in the Village Hall. During times that the Village Hall had to remain closed due to positivity rates, a drop-off and pick-up area was created. This allowed for residents and contractors to continue to transact business with the Building Department. In some cases, the Building Official actually drove permits out to job sites to keep things moving.

Throughout this activity and the pandemic, the Department also made some significant improvements in other areas. Early this year, the Village Board approved new Building Codes and Fire Codes, including them as updated Chapters in the Village's Municipal Code. This significant undertaking, involving many staff hours, updated nearly all of the building and fire codes used by the Village, many of which were some 16 years old. Now, in addition to various local

amendments made to them, the Village has adopted a complete set of modern, nationally recognized, model codes.

Also, throughout the second half of the year, staff worked many hours on planning and training for, and implementing, entirely new building permit and inspection software, which is part of the new overall Village ERP. This new system went live on October 5th. This was all implemented without any interruptions in services, while staff continued with getting their regular daily work completed. Many were involved in this, but Allison and Patrick again worked tirelessly within the Building Department to make this a reality, and continue to do so today, making tweaks and modifications. This software offers some key advancements such as much better efficiency for both staff, and those applying for and obtaining permits. Inspection results are also now added to the software in the field, with results being emailed to permittees. Soon, if hard copies are required for particular inspections, we will have the ability to print them at the Building Official's vehicle onsite. As staff continues to become familiar with the software and make additional tweaks to the system, additional

features will most likely be made available to the public to improve services even more.

Next, I would like to note that we had a record year of property owners who have taken advantage of the Sewer Backup Prevention Reimbursement Program. Unfortunately, most of it can probably be attributed to the substantial flooding the Village experienced in the spring. The program was initially budgeted at \$50,000.00, but the Village Board approved an additional \$25,000.00 in late July due to the high demand. Also unfortunately, those funds were also encumbered quickly by those submitting applications and completing work. A total of 25 property owners were able to have taken advantage of the program since May 1st.

Lastly, I would like to highlight some projects of note that our Department has been involved with to some extent over the last year. Last December, work wrapped up and final inspections took place for the Panera renovations, and the moving and remodeling of the 5/3 Bank at the Village Market. Although the pandemic eventually affected access to both businesses, they came out very nice. New signs

were installed at the La Grange Park Library. At Bethlehem Woods, a new chiller and cooling tower were installed for the complex. At Homestead Apartments, they replaced 200' of old sewer pipe, and replaced some concrete areas, including some walkways. In the spring, final inspections were completed and occupancy approved for the new Mattone outdoor dining patio, just in time for trying to help overcome some of the initial COVID restrictions put in place. Final inspections were completed, and occupancy was approved for both Rosatis and Strive-4-Fitness at Plaza 31. Work is nearly complete at Ino's. Clovers was approved for a temporary use, and opened for seasonal business in the late spring and again in the fall. Ogden Family Dental moved their practice to our Village, at 1018 E. 31st, completely renovating and updating their space. Midwest Motorcycle Setup also moved to our Village into a commercial space on Barnsdale, and two new hair salons opened at 1901 E. 31st St., Gemini Hair Design and With the Grain Barbers.

That covers it from my end. As such, I thank you for your time, and I will turn it back over to Manager Cedillo.

## VILLAGE MANAGER

Typically, the Assistant Village Manager provides an update of economic development activities. However, Emily who held the position for nine years – went to join the administration team over at the Village of Glen Ellyn – we wish her well and miss her even though we still speak frequently. So we are in the process of recruiting to fill that key position, and hope to have it filled by February. Our consultant received over 80 applications and we are in the process of vetting 20 highly qualified candidates of the bunch. Stay tuned!

The Assistant Village Manager works closely with the Village's Commercial Revitalization Committee, to enhance the Village's economic development efforts. Per the recommendation of the CRC, in 2017, the Village Board approved and successfully implemented Two Tax Increment Financing Districts and four Business Development Districts, which include nearly all the commercial property within the Village. These are financial tools intended to support reinvestment and spur redevelopment in the community.

Since these tools have been implemented, the Village has experienced a growing interest in our business community. To date:

- In 2017, the restaurant Posto 31 opened on 31<sup>st</sup> Street and was the first business to benefit from the TIF and Business District instruments.
- In 2018, the Village approved a redevelopment agreement with the owner of 1201 Barnsdale for a new self-storage facility. This project includes a full interior and exterior renovation. The project has been significantly delayed due to covid. However, the owners report that they are committed to moving forward. In the coming days, we will work with the owner to review what they have planned for the site in terms of next steps.
- In 2019, the Village approved its third redevelopment agreement, with the owners the Plaza 31 strip mall on 31<sup>st</sup> Street. This agreement provides financial incentives for the property owner to install a fire safety suppression system throughout the tenant spaces, allowing the spaces to be leased to wider variety of potential businesses. Rosati's opened up in 2020 while we are still awaiting news from Ino's, a Mexican restaurant relocating from Oak Park. They recently submitted their business application. There are now a couple of businesses interested in the last remaining space.

- Also this year, the Village completed a new sidewalk restoration with enhanced design along 31<sup>st</sup> street in front of Plaza 31<sup>st</sup>, using TIF dollars for the cost differential. This new sidewalk is designed to bring attention to the site to attract tenants and shoppers alike.
- Nearly concurrent to the new sidewalk, the Village agreed to a 50/50 payment to the owners of Plaza 31 using TIF dollars for a new Concrete Barrier between the walkway and the parking lot to address the grade differential that resulted from having to grade the new sidewalk to ADA standards. The barrier divides & supports the two uses and is currently being constructed.
- The concrete barrier is also part of a parking lot reconstruction project at Plaza 31. Improvements include new curb and surfacing, new landscaping islands and a new monument sign. There are some preliminary plans to transition one parking island to outdoor dining, which would have to go before the planning and zoning commission for approval. Here is what the lot looks like now, they are constructing the curb, and the parking surface and landscaping will occur in the Spring.

- As Director Radde noted earlier, the Village recently completed the construction of seven new parking spaces on Beach Avenue, adding to the parking availability of that commercial area. This work was funded through TIF dollars.
- The Village is in the process of negotiating a redevelopment agreement with the owner of Murphy's Auto to assist with the costs for fire suppression, water service line upsizing and landscaping to meet new code requirements. We hope to approve that agreement in January. Murphy's is expanding by adding on two additions to its building to offer new mechanics services for larger vehicles. The expansion will include a new parking lot and landscaping. It's a great project.
- The Village is looking to TIF dollars to help improve the public spaces in the Village Market TIF District. One of the more immediate projects will likely include the replacement of deteriorating streetlights.
- We are hopeful to share more redevelopment news with you next year as we work with potential businesses who wish to call La Grange Park home – stay tuned! There are some projects we are working on now, so cross your fingers.

In looking ahead and at the greater picture, for 2021, the Village will reconvene the CRC to take a closer look at its economic development instruments now that we have more information regarding the level of revenues being generated. Taking the long view, we will look at funding performance and set goals for each of the redevelopment and business district areas.

Finally, I would like to wrap up this section of the presentation by encouraging residents to shop local as much as possible, all the time if you'd like, and especially during the holidays. Your purchases of local goods and services will keep these dollars in the community. The business owners benefit with sustaining operations, providing jobs and adding amenities and vibrancy to our community. The Village benefits from all of those things too – as well as with 1% sales tax to pay for necessary services and 1% business district tax to reinvest in improvements to the district in which the business is located. So get your coffee, refreshments, antiques, sub sandwich, craft beverage, gift cards, pizza, bicycles, health foods, salon services and products locally – it really does make all the difference for our

community. Just by ordering take out – you are helping to strengthen your community. What a delicious way to contribute!

While the Village Board has made economic development a priority, the Village would not have seen such success without the benefit of great partnerships, such as the La Grange Park Chamber of Commerce – and their efforts to sustain and grow our local business community. At this point, it is my pleasure to introduce Chamber President, Sheri Sauer who will share with you the many efforts of the La Grange Park Chamber.

**LA GRANGE PARK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

GOOD EVENING, EVERYONE. MY NAME IS SHERI SAUER; I AM THE PRESIDENT OF THE LA GRANGE PARK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. IT’S MY PLEASURE TO BE HERE THIS EVENING TO PRESENT YOU WITH AN UPDATE OF WHAT THE CHAMBER HAS BEEN WORKING ON IN 2020.

FIRST, I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION MY GREAT BOARD MEMBERS. MICHELLE BEDNARZ FROM CENTRAL FEDERAL IS OUR SECRETARY, SANDY MATTSON FROM 1ST NATIONAL BANK OF BROOKFIELD IS OUR TREASURER, DAVID SMITH FROM EDWARD JONES IS OUR VICE PRESIDENT AND OUR MEMBERS AT LARGE ARE RON MINELLA WITH MYSLICKI REAL ESTATE, ANNA WAGLER WITH AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE, KATHY HARRIS WITH PLYMOUTH PLACE, AND JESSICA CANNADAY FROM THE COMMUNITY PARK DISTRICT. EMILY RODMAN WAS OUR LIAISON FROM THE VILLAGE AND WE ARE GRATEFUL TO HAVE HAD HER AS PART OF THE BOARD. BUT WITHOUT THE DEDICATION OF OUR BOARD, WE COULD NOT BRING SUCH SUCCESSFUL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS TO OUR COMMUNITY.

TYPICALLY, EACH YEAR, WE HOST SEVERAL COMMUNITY EVENTS TO BRING EXPOSURE TO THE BUSINESSES. BUT THIS YEAR, DUE TO THE PANDEMIC, THINGS WERE MUCH DIFFERENT AND WE HAD TO GET CREATIVE IN DEVELOPING NEW WAYS TO OFFER PROGRAMMING THAT CONTINUED TO ADD VALUE TO THE MEMBERSHIP AND THE COMMUNITY, WHILE STAYING SAFE. SO MUCH OF OUR PROGRAMMING, BUSINESS SUPPORT, AND PRESENCE TRANSITIONED ONLINE.  
*EXPLAIN*

OUR NEXT EVENT WILL BE: \_\_\_\_\_.

LAST DECEMBER WE HOSTED OUR 8TH ANNUAL DINNER HONORING OUR BUSINESS OF THE YEAR D'DAMI SALON. IT WAS A GREAT CELEBRATION, AND OUR WINNERS ARE VERY DESERVING PARTICIPANTS. WE LOOK FORWARD TO HONORING OUR BUSINESSES IN PERSON IN 2021.

THE LA GRANGE PARK CHAMBER WORKS CLOSELY WITH THE VILLAGE ON THE RIBBON CUTTINGS FOR NEW BUSINESSES. THIS YEAR HAS BEEN CHALLENGING WITH COVID BUT WE DID HOST ONE for ROSATIS AND ONE for STRIVE 4 FITNESS. WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUING THE PROGRAM IN THE NEAR FUTURE, AND WITH THOSE BUSINESSES WHO HAVE OPENED DURING COVID. THE CHAMBER CONGRATULATES THE NEW BUSINESSES THAT HAVE OPENED OVER THE LAST YEAR.

THE LA GRANGE PARK CHAMBER CONTINUES TO GROW BY OFFERING MORE WAYS TO BRING OUR LOCAL BUSINESSES AND OUR LA GRANGE PARK FAMILIES TOGETHER FOR A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY. WE ARE THANKFUL TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE VILLAGE OF LA GRANGE PARK, THE COMMUNITY PARK DISTRICT, AND THE LIBRARY.

WE MEET AS A GROUP EVERY FOURTH THURSDAY OF THE MONTH OFFERING EDUCATIONAL SPEAKERS ON TIMELY AND ENGAGING TOPICS. THE MEETINGS ALSO PROVIDE A FORUM FOR SPEED NETWORKING AND A CHANCE TO KEEP INFORMED ABOUT PRESENT AND FUTURE HAPPENINGS WITHIN THE CHAMBER AND THE VILLAGE.

WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR WAYS TO IMPROVE AND PROMOTE COMMERCE AND TO FOSTER AN ENERGETIC BUSINESS CLIMATE IN LA GRANGE PARK. REMEMBER TO “SHOP LOCAL”. THANK YOU PRESIDENT DISCIPIO FOR HAVING US HERE FOR THE ANNUAL STATE OF THE VILLAGE ADDRESS.

## **VILLAGE PRESIDENT**

The Village has a long history of working closely with our partner taxing bodies, the Community Park District of La Grange Park and the La Grange Park Public Library. This year, we are fortunate to have representatives from both organizations here to share with us their current and upcoming initiatives. It is my pleasure to now introduce the Jessica Cannaday, the Executive Director of the Community Park District.

## **COMMUNITY PARK DISTRICT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Thank you, President Discipio, and the Village of La Grange Park for the opportunity to provide this update. My name is Jessica Cannaday, and I am the Executive Director of the Community Park District.

The challenges presented by 2020 reinforced just how essential equitable public access to open space and recreational services is for

the overall physical, social, and emotional well-being of our residents and community.

In January and February of 2020, the Community Park District was enjoying record registration numbers and program participation. When the dire reality of the COVID-19 pandemic hit us in March, our board and staff responded decisively by implementing stringent cleaning and safety protocol, executing symptom identification training, and developing daily health self-certification protocol for staff and patrons. Knowing that the Community Park District's operating budget is funded at 40% by programming and usage fees, and understanding that safety restrictions on recreational programming would severely impact revenue, our board swiftly approved an internal COVID-19 response budget that addressed our workforce expenses, program cost recovery models, and increased funding for safety and pandemic mitigation. We worked with the Village, Library, our risk management agency, and neighboring park and recreation agencies to develop communication strategies and share information, safety measures, and operational strategies.

However, it has been, and continues to be, the La Grange Park residents, neighbors, and local businesses that are the Community Park District's most valuable resource in this crisis. For example: Longtime resident, Tim Gallagher, assisted in organizing a Zoom focus group that helped the park district create an education and communication strategy that allowed the tennis courts to remain open and compliant with local, state, and national mitigation mandates. This provided our residents immeasurably valuable access to physical activity and exercise when even our playgrounds were closed. This group also helped us develop safe summer tennis programming that provided an essential operational revenue stream for the park district.

In another instance, Brookfield resident and Footlight Players volunteer Vanessa Feurstein helped to create a fundraiser for our theatre program and provide a capstone experience for more than 100 children that, due to COVID, were denied their onstage performance after months of dedicated rehearsals.

And I would be remiss to not mention our Ready Teddy Preschool families. There is no way to quantify their patience, input, and support as we worked to create a virtual curriculum for their children. Instead of withdrawing from the program, a vast majority of our families finished out the 2019/2020 school year, many of them doing so expressly to support our teachers.

Over the summer, our small and dedicated staff worked to design fun and nimble programming that could be delivered safely. This included a full day summer camp program that was fully compliant with IDPH and CDC recommendations, and provided parents with fun and safe childcare so they could go to work.

This past summer, we also received an incredible \$25,000 donation, and signed long-term partnership agreement with one of La Grange Park's newest businesses, Strive 4 Fitness. When Strive's owner, Shawn Groll, learned that COVID-19 put the park district at risk of having to forfeit a \$30,000 grant from the National Fitness Campaign for the installation of an outdoor fitness court in Memorial Park, he

pledged financial and operational support to help see the project through.

We know that right now, outdoor exercise is more important than ever. Thanks to Strive 4 Fitness, the Village of La Grange Park, the National Fitness Campaign, and numerous generous local donations, The Community Park District will complete a full renovation of the Memorial Park Multi-Use Courts by July of 2021. This summer, La Grange Park residents will enjoy free access to three new pickleball courts, the world's most innovative outdoor gym, and a redesigned multi-use area that includes gaga ball, tetherball, a mini race track and more. The new space provides multi-generational activities, ensures that people of all ages and abilities have access to the very best outdoor fitness opportunities, and greatly increases instances of the positive role modeling to our youth. When children regularly see adults exercising or participating in healthy activities, they are more likely to develop their own healthy routines that will last a lifetime.

In continuing to look at ahead, our board is committed to evaluating and planning improvements at each of our parks. As part of our

strategic planning process, the Community Park District looks forward to continuing to work with the community to assess the recreational needs of our residents to plan programming and budget for projects that address the immediate and long-term improvements for each park.

Our goal is to work to ensure that our community has access to the programming, amenities, and spaces it needs to stay active, connected (even at a distance), and healthy - both today and tomorrow. Thank you.

### **LIBRARY PRESIDENT**

Good evening fellow residents of La Grange Park. My name is Laurie Whitman, and I am the President of the Board of Library Trustees of the La Grange Park Public Library District. It is my honor to share with you tonight how the board and staff of the library have worked for you this year to continue living out our vision of Enriching Lives.

As we reflect on the highs and lows of 2020, certainly there was no greater challenge than facing a global pandemic while still attempting to offer important services to our residents. On March 13, 2020, our library made the difficult decision to close its doors to the public

based on the advice of health experts and following the lead of nearly every library leader in Illinois.

During the time that the library was closed, our staff shifted into high gear from home. They immediately began researching ways to connect digitally, new online resources to offer, and how to provide needed services in this new environment. Our staff ramped up our social media presence, switched to online and phone based reference service, and added new digital services that would provide streaming and downloadable content that could be accessed from home. We added Hoopla, a collection of digital books, audio, and video which has thus far seen over 3,000 borrows. We expanded access to Kanopy, another collection of videos and saw increased use of over 240% from the same period in 2019. We also invested nearly \$20,000 in Media on Demand, another collection of downloadable books and audio.

The Children's Department shifted their focus to online programming and readers' advisory. All online programs, including story times, Mad Science, Kids' Kitchen and several more, have been very well received and viewed hundreds of times via YouTube and Facebook Live. Our summer reading program was online for the first time ever and helped hundreds of kids stay motivated to read during the summer months.

The Young Adult Department pivoted to outreach mode to keep the teens engaged with the library. We offered interactive take home kits and a monthly book box program that matches teens with book recommendations based on their likes and dislikes. Our amazing teens have responded to home volunteer opportunities, which included writing book reviews, sewing masks for frontline workers, and sending postcards to seniors living in our local retirement homes.

One of the biggest highlights of the year for the library was the transition to becoming a fine free library. This means that no overdue fees are charged for late returns of items to the library. Despite the pandemic, new library card registrations were similar to years past. Our circulation department developed a popular remote registration application, which allowed residents to register for library cards from home, access digital services, and use their physical cards in the library once we reopened our doors. It continues to be popular with students, teachers and residents, and we are considering extending the program indefinitely.

The week of Memorial Day, we rolled out Contactless Home Delivery service. This was our innovative way of keeping both our staff and patrons out of harm's way while being able to offer access to our collections once again. This service continued until July 1st when we happily opened our doors to residents once more for in-person visits.

In those first weeks and months when people began to trickle back in, over and over again our staff heard the phrase “we missed the library.” Particularly, many of our elderly residents told us they were overjoyed to step through our doors after staying away for six months or more.

We were pleased to learn in early fall that Cook County was making \$5,000 available to libraries through an allocation from the CARES Act. Our library applied for these funds in October which helped cover the cost of unanticipated expenses related to COVID-19.

With the recent spike in cases, we once again have moved into delivery mode for the time being and hope to shift back to in person services as soon as cases have declined. For the latest information about our hours of operation and services being offered during the pandemic, please visit our website: [www.lplibrary.org](http://www.lplibrary.org).

There was and still is no roadmap for how to successfully navigate a health crisis of this magnitude. We are grateful for the patience and understanding of the public while we continue to make decisions that we believe keep everyone safe.

And while COVID-19 has stolen much of the spotlight tonight, we cannot forget to share all of the great news about our plans for the future. Many of our patrons have become aware over the last several

years that our building is in need of considerable structural repairs. 2019 was the 30 year anniversary of the library being built, and that means the useful life is up on a good portion of our systems and equipment. In the next 18 - 24 months, our goal is to correct the structural problems so that our facility will stand strong for years to come. However, we also aim to enhance and modernize the library space so that it serves as a community gathering spot. For more information about construction planning, you can visit our website and click on the link for our Building Project near the bottom of the home page.

We were also thrilled to receive two grants from the State of Illinois during 2020. One of them allowed us to upgrade furniture and seating in the adult department, renovate our only quiet study room, and even retrofit all of our building's lights to LED bulbs. The second grant was focused on technology and included bringing in a new copy machine with faxing capabilities – a request we received almost daily for years and were finally able to follow through on - and also a new technology bar in in the children's department with three iPads fully loaded with fun and educational apps for a variety of ages and interests.

The board of trustees and the staff of the La Grange Park Public Library are determined to continue enriching the lives of those who

walk through our doors or visit us online. We are grateful for your support of the library and committed to bringing you friendly, safe service in any way that we can. Thank you for listening and please consider contacting us should you have any questions related to tonight's presentation. Be well, friends and we will see you soon.

## **VILLAGE PRESIDENT**

As you have heard this evening, there are many wonderful things happening throughout our Village, even in these toughest of times. If it is one thing we have learned this year - it is an appreciation of all the people and places and things that contribute to our high quality of life here in La Grange Park - the reasons that so many of us love to call La Grange Park home are evident all around us, thanks to the efforts of many of you.

Before we conclude, I would like to take the opportunity to thank my fellow members of the Village Board, along with the many volunteers who serve on Village committees and commissions. We are fortunate to have their leadership and dedication. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve with them.

Thank to you Village Board for their commitment and hard work over the last year:

- Trustee Jim Kucera
- Trustee Bob Lautner
- Trustee Jamie Zaura
- Trustee Amanda Seidel
- Trustee Karen Koncel
- Trustee Michael Sheehan
- Village Clerk, Meghan Kooi (pronounced “coo-ee”).

Thank you also to our consultants who go above and beyond in providing the Village excellence in expertise in a number of areas:

- Village Attorney, Cathleen Keating
- Village Engineer, Mark Volk, Hancock Engineering

The achievements of the Village would not be possible without the countless volunteers who provide service - we cannot build community alone. Here is a list of advisory groups that provide recommendations to the Village Board or have specific authority as determined by state law. Each has a team of dedicated members and we are so grateful for their service.

- Board of Police Commissioners (duties prescribed by state law)
- Police Pension Board (duties prescribed by state law)
- Planning & Zoning Commission (duties prescribed by state law)
- Sustainability Commission (established per ordinance – local authority)
- Youth Commission (established per municipal code – local authority)

- Traffic, Safety and Engineering (established per municipal code – local authority)
- Commercial Revitalization Committee (sub-group of the Village Board)

On behalf of the Village President and Board of Trustees, I extend our sincerest thank you to our community partners. Tonight is not only a time to reflect and celebrate; it is a time to be mindful of one another's challenges, achievements and goals so that we are able to work together in the future. Taking stock and being proactive allows us to better anticipate challenges, react more quickly, look for opportunities and forge ahead in the best possible manner for our community.

Thank you all for taking the time to attend the State of the Village Address this evening and to those who tuned in on Channel 6 or Channel 99. Thank you to LTTV, for providing video production for tonight's presentation and our regular board meetings. **And most of all, thank you to our residents for all that you do to make our community great. Good night and stay safe.**