



Village President's Message—Vol. XXXVI

September 21, 2020



Ann Potter
Village President

Dear Fellow Residents,

With Labor Day in the rear view mirror and the start of school, I always think of autumn as a time of fresh starts and new beginnings. A lot has been happening in our Village during the last few months and I thought now would be a good time to provide an admittedly lengthy (!) update.

The Fountain

Thanks to a major gift from an anonymous donor as well as support from several other residents, those driving on Kenilworth Avenue will see that we are in the process of replacing our much loved, but crumbling fountain. The new fountain will look as much as humanly possible like the landmark that has graced the center of our community for almost a century. The stone which has been sourced is an extremely close match to the original sandstone but will withstand our winter conditions. The design will be an exact replica of the original and the bronze fish at the top of the fountain will be placed on the new fountain. We were able to remove the original upper bowl in one piece and it has been given to the Kenilworth Historical Society for preservation.

Kenilworth 2023

You may also have noticed that there is utility work being done on both Leicester and Raleigh Roads. This phase involves Commonwealth Edison relocating their equipment in anticipation of the beginning of Phase 2 of the Kenilworth 2023 Infrastructure Plan. The Village has been working with Com Ed's project manager to use special technology to protect the roots of our largest parkway trees. The Village will be soliciting input from the residents of Raleigh and Leicester as it plans for the installation of a green infrastructure storm water management system south of Kenilworth Avenue. Phase 2 is scheduled to begin next spring. In conjunction with the start of this second phase, the Village has applied to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) for \$1.5 M in grant funding. We hope that the commitment to a green system will enhance our chances of receiving the grant.

Shoreline Protection

The Village Board has been looking closely at shoreline erosion mitigation alternatives. It will not come as news to any of our residents that the lake is at historically high levels. It certainly affected our summer enjoyment of the beach

Village President

Ann Potter

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but now we need to protect the shoreline from the damage that winter weather can cause to unprotected bluffs. In the short term, we are focused on shielding the portion of our shoreline north of the water plant and work is currently being done on that area. This includes adding rip rap and cementing the stones into place to lessen the sloughing of the bluff. Long-term solutions pose real challenges in terms of costs and regulatory approval but this is not something that can be ignored. The Village Board will be working towards a long-term solution in the coming months now that the beach season is coming to a close.

Outdoor Dining

Our community's support for Great Coast Grille's outdoor dining option has been nothing short of spectacular. Many thanks to all who have found their way to Park Drive over the last several weeks. I know Chick and Lauryn are also appreciative of the welcome they have received. You may have noticed that there are now lights on the parkway there. We hope that, as the days grow shorter, the lights will allow the restaurant to maintain its current hours of operation. The Village recognizes that it has become a de facto communal gathering space and is committed to accommodating Great Coast as fall sets in to the extent it is possible to do so.

Halloween

One of the casualties of the pandemic is the tradition of trick or treating on Halloween. Given that our children won't be able to enjoy the usual Halloween festivities, the Village is collaborating with Sears School, the Park District and the Kenilworth Historical Society to sponsor a Halloween Home Decorating Contest. I'm sure, like me, you've noticed your neighbors spending more time enjoying walking and biking around town. This seems like the perfect year to initiate this contest, allowing residents a creative outlet and providing those strolling around town with some visually interesting scenes. Please look to www.vok.org for further communication on this entertaining event designed to encourage everyone's participation!

October is Celebrate Our Parks Month

The Village is also collaborating with the Park District to celebrate our parks around town during the month of October. It's not widely known but while the Park District owns some of the green spaces in town, the Village also owns some of our parks. Both recognize that now, more than ever, our green spaces are a vital asset that can be better utilized. While the weather allows, the Park District will be offering a series of activities in our parks during the month of October, including an Oktoberfest, weekly fitness classes, a self-guided tour of our parks, a parks based scavenger hunt for our families, a pumpkin carving event, an alternative celebration of Halloween and our home decorating contest.

Parkway Tree Program

By now, you all should have received a letter explaining our annual fall parkway tree-planting program. This long-standing tradition allows residents to contribute to the beautification of our public parkways by donating towards the purchase of approved trees for planting on the parkways. Participants in the program are usually allowed to designate where the trees will be planted. Kenilworth has always been known for its wealth and diversity of trees and it is especially important that we continue to add new specimens to replace the ones we lose to age or disease. For more information on this notable program please visit the Village's website at www.vok.org. The Village is also investigating ways to encourage residents to plant trees that augment the town's tree canopy when a major construction project takes place on a property.

Refuse Collection Contract

The Village's contract with Republic Services expires shortly so the Village will be soliciting bids for a new contract. Given the strong interest expressed by our residents, we will be asking for the inclusion of an a la carte option for composting.

Leaf Blowers

Hopefully next summer will be quieter in Kenilworth as the Village Board enacted an ordinance at its last meeting to prohibit the use of gas-powered leaf blowers from May 15th to September 30th and during the rest of the year before 8:00 am and after 6:00pm (electric blowers only). This will allow for efficient spring and fall yard clean ups but will lessen the noise as well as the stirring up of dust particles during the time when residents are most enjoying their outdoor space. When gas blowers are in use, they must remain below 75 decibels.

Public Safety

By now it's almost a cliché to say that we live in difficult and challenging times. Uncertainty is the watchword --- globally, nationally, regionally and even locally. I understand why some residents are concerned about public safety in our community and I want to provide some information which I hope will alleviate some of these concerns.

As we all know, our police department is second to none in its leadership and the carrying out of its duties, but it is not large. Residents should be aware however, that it has access to numerous additional personnel and other resources through cooperatives with our neighbors should the need ever arise. Kenilworth is a member of the Northern Illinois Police Alarm System that provides highly trained teams equipped with the latest technology and equipment in order to respond professionally to crisis situations. It also belongs to the Mutual Aid Car Plan that enables a member community to summon up to 50 additional uniformed police officers for fast and efficient critical incident response. While we don't anticipate that we would ever have to rely on these additional resources, it's important for our residents to know that "back up" is available if our department is confronted with a crisis of any kind.

Village Finances

While the Village, like everyone else, has had to deal with the financial challenges COVID-19 has brought on, I am pleased to say that our community's finances remain good. This appears to be a case where our reliance on property taxes as our main source of revenue has cushioned us from the effects of the pandemic since this revenue stream has been very stable. While we did see a slight downturn in other sources of revenue, our expenditures have gone down commensurately, if not more so. One area where our revenues are up is with permitting fees. I would expect that we will continue to see more fees for construction and home improvement projects into 2021.

Autumn is also the beginning of the budgeting process for the Village. Village staff is working on the 2021 budget draft for board review as well as the draft Five Year Capital Plan. I would encourage everyone to follow this process as it is an excellent way to understand what the Village has planned for the coming year – and in the case of the Capital Plan the next five years.

COVID

Thanks to the adherence to CDC guidelines by the vast majority of our residents, our number of COVID-19 cases remains relatively low. I can't say thank you enough to those who have altered their behavior to keep themselves, their loved ones and their fellow citizens safe. As I'm sure you all know, however, we are approaching flu season when the risk for COVID related complications becomes much greater. Please continue to wear masks and practice social distancing. Follow the limitations on social gatherings and please make sure to get your flu shot as soon as possible.

Welcome To Our New Families

As we all walk around our town, it's obvious from the realtors' signs that we have a number of new families in town. It's vital for any community to have new families join its ranks. They bring energy, dedication and new perspectives to their hometowns. They also bring new students for our school. I would be remiss if I didn't thank the Sears School Board and administration for its

heroic efforts to make sure that our school would open and all our students would have the chance for in classroom learning five days a week. As long as we all do our part in terms of the CDC guidelines and with some luck, we can be optimistic that our school will remain open. If you have new neighbors on your block, please welcome them and let them know how pleased we are that they have chosen to live in Kenilworth. If you are one of our newest residents, I'd like to extend a personal welcome to our community. I hope you will enjoy living here as much as my family has. Please make a point of introducing yourself should our paths cross and please think about joining any of the many community organizations which make Kenilworth the very special place it is.

Sign Up for Kenilworth Contact

The best way to keep up with what is happening in Kenilworth is to sign up for Kenilworth Contact, our weekly e-blast which highlights the most current activities and Kenilworth related news. The sign up link is in the left hand banner on our web site, www.vok.org.

Warmest regards,



Ann

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