



## VILLAGE OF SCARSDALE

### **Open Letter to Scarsdale Community**

*COVID-19 Update: April 08, 2020*

Dear Scarsdale Residents,

On Monday evening, the Village came together – each in our front yard – and sang “God Bless America” to show our solidarity for our health care providers and first responders. Personally, I was struck by a sense of unity and togetherness that came from singing with my family and hearing my neighbors doing the same with their loved ones. This was another recent event that highlighted the sense of community that makes Scarsdale special and will be the base from which we move beyond the difficult weeks ahead to heal and renew our community.

I would like to acknowledge two people that made Monday night’s heart-warming community song a reality. Lee Fischman sent me the idea of a Village-wide collaboration of “God Bless America” over two weeks ago. While I thought Lee was onto something, I did not take the reins and run with the idea. Fortunately, my wife, Cynthia, spoke with Lee last week, fully embraced the idea and rushed into action to make it a reality. Thank you, Lee and Cynthia, for your vision and execution – singing “God Bless America” together was a perfect way to recognize those working hard to keep our community safe and to remind us: who we are, what is important to us, and that we will get through the difficult time ahead together.

### **Plasma and Blood Donations**

People who have recovered from COVID-19 may have high levels of immunity in the form of antibodies. Their plasma can be used to help save the life of another struggling to survive. Please consider donating plasma if you have recovered from the Coronavirus. Mount Sinai and White Plains Hospital/Montefiore have regional locations that will be accepting plasma donations, and you may volunteer to have your blood tested for high levels of antibodies. If you are interested, please contact Mount Sinai at [COVIDSerumTesting@mountsinai.org](mailto:COVIDSerumTesting@mountsinai.org) or White Plains Hospital/Montefiore by completing a survey at: <https://bit.ly/3a0iU1W>.

White Plains Hospital/Montefiore screening will take place at Scarsdale Medical Group’s office at 259 Heathcote Road.

Blood donations have been dramatically reduced due to social distancing and the cancellation of blood drives. Many people have asked me how they can help and this is a very straightforward way in which we all may contribute. Those interested in donating blood may reach out to: AABB ([www.aabb.org](http://www.aabb.org)), America’s Blood Centers ([www.americasblood.org](http://www.americasblood.org)), American Red Cross ([www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)), Armed Services Blood Program ([www.militaryblood.dod.mil](http://www.militaryblood.dod.mil)), or Blood Centers of America ([www.bca.coop](http://www.bca.coop)). Thank you to all who donate for your life saving generosity.

## **Needed PPE/Other Donations**

There is real ongoing need for personal protective equipment (PPE) at medical centers and for first responders. Please consider donating any PPE you may be able to share with our first responders, including Scarsdale Police, Fire, and Volunteer Ambulance Corps; White Plains Hospital; or other medical providers.

Constituents may donate goods, services, or space to New York State's response to the COVID-19 public health emergency by emailing [icanhelp@westchestergov.com](mailto:icanhelp@westchestergov.com).

## **Mental Health and Mindfulness During Crisis**

Governor Cuomo announced yesterday that New York State has partnered with Headspace to provide New Yorkers with free meditation and mindfulness resources. As the Governor's announcement noted, "We can't underestimate the impact this public health crisis has on mental health. New Yorkers can access a collection of free guided meditations, along with at-home mindfulness exercises and additional resources to help address rising stress and anxiety. Visit [www.headspace.com/ny](http://www.headspace.com/ny)."

New Yorkers may also call the COVID-19 Emotional Support Hotline at 1-844-863-9314 for mental health counseling. New York State has been actively engaged in providing mental health resources to assist residents struggling during this highly unsettling time.

## **Health Insurance**

New Yorkers without health insurance can apply through NY State of Health through May 15, 2020. Residents must apply within 60 days of losing health insurance coverage. New York State of Health may be accessed at [www.nystateofhealth.ny.gov](http://www.nystateofhealth.ny.gov).

## **Village Budget Update**

The Village must hold a public budget hearing no later than April 15 and adopt its budget no later than May 01 to comply with NY State requirements.

The approach the Village has taken to manage its current fiscal and the FY 20-21 budgets is to: (i) identify near-term threats to revenues, (ii) prepare a downside analysis to identify revenue threats, (iii) identify primary sources to fill expected revenue gaps, and (iv) identify secondary sources to fill potential downside revenue gaps. The Village Manager and Treasurer have accomplished these goals and the Village Board has supported staff's recommended approach to manage this time of economic strain.

The Village Board has stated that it is committed to making thoughtful, appropriate, and responsible adjustments to the FY 20-21 operating budget based on data that will become clearer over the coming weeks and months. The tentative Village budget has been posted on the Village website and will be addressed at the budget hearing on [April 14](#) at 7pm via Zoom teleconference.

At the budget hearing, we expect to see a proposal for the first change in the FY 20-21 operating budget. Since the library budget was prepared and presented to the Village in January, the expected reopening of the renovated library was pushed from September 01 to November 01. This two-month completion delay will correspond with a commensurate delay in the re-staffing of the library to full operating levels, which will result in operating savings for the library of about \$210,000. It is expected that the Village Board will recommended that the full reduction in the library budget be used to reduce the FY 20-21 tax levy to recognize the financial strains of residents during the economic upheaval resulting from COVID-19. If adopted by the Board of Trustees, that would mean that the annual increase in the Village tax levy would be reduced from 1.98% to 1.46% and the average home would see its Village real estate taxes increase by about \$95 rather than the \$128 shown in the filed tentative budget.

Please note that the library's FY 21-22 operating budget will be its first full year in operations after reopening. This will cause a known one-time elevated percentage increase in its FY 21-22 budget relative to FY 20-21.

The Village budget is a working document that is revised on a regular basis. This year is no exception as there will be continuous reviews of the Village's financial position. As is always the case, the Village encourages resident participation in all budget discussions.

### **Social Distancing**

Please be diligent in social distancing when outside of the home. Governor Cuomo announced the state is increasing the maximum fine for violations of the state's social distancing protocol from \$500 to \$1,000 to help address the lack of adherence to the protocols.

It is critical for management of the pandemic that we strictly adhere to social distancing – for our own benefit and for our friends and neighbors, especially those who are most at risk. Also, inform your children of the importance of social distancing. Thank you for your diligence – whether on line at a store or walking. It is up to each of us.

### **Landscaping**

New York State has clarified guidance on landscaping. Please note that only work which is “for maintenance and pest control purposes has been designated as essential.” Therefore, please have your landscapers refrain from planting decorative plants – though you are welcome to do so yourself.

### **Leaf Blowing**

I would like to remind all residents that the local leaf blowing ban goes into effect on June 01. Please be sure to eliminate use of gas-powered leaf blowers starting in June.

A number of people have asked whether leaf blowers may spread Coronavirus. To date, the NYS Department of Health has not issued any guidance that indicates that the virus may be spread by leaf blowers. Should the NYS Department of Health issue guidance that may link leaf blower use to the spread of the virus, the Village will take immediate action.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The Village remains committed to providing essential services and preparing for the difficult weeks ahead as well as the time in the not too distant future when we return to a new normalcy that is rooted in the past while incorporating learnings from the current adjustments we are all making.

While I know the uncertainty of the weeks ahead weigh heavily on residents' minds and hearts, we must continue to have hope and take comfort in the strength of our community and its resilience. Reach out to neighbors and friends to say hello and just connect. Continue to be kind and make selfless gestures that are the hallmark of Scarsdale. Together we will face this and together we will overcome the adversity. We need each other more than ever and while we cannot be together we can be "together apart." Be well and please stay home.

During this week of religious observances for many residents, we cannot help but note the connection of this pandemic to the stories and teachings we are about to encounter. In spite of the current difficulties and stains we are facing, I wish you joyous and meaningful celebrations with family.

Sincerely,



Marc Samwick  
Mayor