



## VILLAGE OF SCARSDALE

### **Mayoral Community Update**

*COVID-19 and Other Information: February 04, 2021*

Dear Scarsdale community,

This Community Update is among the final ones I will be providing. In February 2020, none of us could envision what the coming months would reveal. As we now know, the horror of a global pandemic emerged.

We lost colleagues, friends, family, and neighbors. Many in our community suffered immeasurable pain in connection with the loss of loved ones and many have been subjected to fiscal pressures unlike those in our collective memories. There have been periods of significant economic downturn in the past, of course. This time, we not only experienced a sharp and sustained fiscal decline, but also a concurrent pandemic which scorched everything in its path, devastating communities and destroying lives in an unfathomable, seemingly surrealistic way. Yet, our experience is very real.

Now, there is cause for hope and the balance of my commentary today will focus, in large part, on opportunity.

I begin by relating some important news.

#### **Village Manager Retirement**



On January 29, 2021, the Village issued a [press release](#) indicating that Village Manager Stephen M. Pappalardo announced that he would be retiring in July 2021, following over thirty years of dedicated public service, nearly all of it in the Village of Scarsdale in varying capacities, including nearly six years in his current capacity of Village Manager.

The young professional depicted to the left – now a man I have come to know as a colleague, friend, and trusted advisor – will be missed as he transitions to a new stage in his life; one where his family will no longer stay up late at night wondering what time he will come home from work; one where his Saturdays may be spent watching college sports with his children, rather than being spent at his desk pouring over project reports, agenda items, and other Village business; one where he no longer feels compelled to work seemingly endless hours to ensure that the Scarsdale community is healthy and safe, and that the Village is financially secure.

However, to write that Manager Pappalardo has worked hard and sacrificed time with his family to serve the Village of Scarsdale barely scratches the surface of the depth of his public service commitment and the value of his local contributions. His imprints are all over the Village. We, as a community, are as much a part of Steve as he is a part of our community.

Thank you for your service, Steve. You have cultivated and nurtured our great community, our *Village in a Park* – the special place that we have chosen to make our home and raise our families. Our community is content knowing that you have been there, looking out for our well-being and quality of life, even when we had no knowledge of your presence and profound influence.

On behalf of the Scarsdale community, Steve, best of luck in your future endeavors and I'm sure we'll see you around the 'Dale!

### **COVID-19: Vaccine and Face Coverings**

COVID-19 vaccinations represent an opportunity to protect yourself while helping to counter the devastating impacts of the global pandemic. Although the vaccine rollout is still not up-to-speed, additional vaccines are becoming available and all Scarsdale residents are encouraged to get vaccinated, once eligible and an appointment can be made.



If you are a Scarsdale senior citizen and are having difficulty navigating the vaccination appointment process, Westchester County has launched a new help line to assist weekdays from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM: (914) 813-6300. At this time, all others must either contact their private healthcare provider for an appointment or, for vaccination at a NYS facility, check your eligibility and make an appointment through NYS [online](#) or by phone through the hotline: 1-833-697-4829. Be sure to complete the NYS [COVID-19 Vaccination Form](#) after you receive an appointment. Westchester County also posts a weekly [vaccine allocation update](#).

The State Of New York has established a [web-based portal](#) hosting the latest information about COVID-19 vaccination. There's an [overview](#), which includes background information and the sequencing of priority groups, as well as [a tool](#) you can use to determine if you are eligible to be vaccinated.

Again, all residents are encouraged to become vaccinated once eligible.

Please continue to help slow the spread of COVID-19 by adhering to the NYS mandates and continue to follow these CDC and the NYS Department of Health guidelines:

- Wear a mask.
- Wash or sanitize your hands frequently.
- Avoid touching your face.

- Practice social distancing (6 feet).
- Stay at home if you are not feeling well.

Undertaking these efforts, including encouraging children, teens, and young adults, will reduce the likelihood that more rigorous restrictions on businesses and our daily activities may need to be reinstated.

Please exercise restraint during the Super Bowl. As we have seen, gatherings cause the virus to spread.

We've done a great job locally, so let's keep it up!

### **Budget Update**

In my [last community letter](#), I mentioned that review and adoption of the annual budget is one of the most important responsibilities borne by your Village Board of Trustees, having also highlighted the financial complexities of this year's budget analysis against the backdrop of the pandemic, while also encouraging resident participation in the process.

Below is a brief summary of our progress to-date:

- The second review of our operating and capital budgets (2<sup>nd</sup> Pass) were presented 2/2/21. All budget meetings are included on the [Village Meeting Calendar](#) and have been conducted by Zoom, thereby maximizing opportunity for public viewing and engagement.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Pass budget gap was \$1,827,432, including a fund balance appropriation of \$2,250,000. The gap represents the dollar amount needed to present a balanced budget, one where anticipated revenues are adequate to cover proposed expenses.
- Following the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pass, the proposed FY 21-22 General Fund Budget is currently \$60,336,721. By way of comparison, the adopted FY20-21 budget was \$59,238,049. The year-over-year increase of \$1,098,672 is comprised of \$740,000 (67%) non-discretionary items, primarily an increase of \$576,328 in NYS pension expenses. The balance of the \$1,827,432 gap (\$728,760) is on the revenue side, with non-property tax revenues such as parking fees and Justice Court fines having sharply decreased in response to pandemic effects; these revenues are not expected to rebound fully during FY 21-22.
- If the budget gap were to be closed using an increase in property taxes, a 4.37% increase would be needed, or \$249.13 more in Village Taxes for a property assessed at \$1,510,000, the Village average. The Village Board does not support this level of increased taxation and is working diligently with staff to improve the matter.

- While a 4.37% increase would comply with the NYS Tax Cap Legislation, we are working aggressively to lower the increase to a more reasonable level that reflects and appropriate balance between maintaining Village services and appreciating the broader fiscal conditions we are confronted with as an organization and as a community.
- Importantly, the 2nd Pass does not call for any reduction to Village services.
- The next step is to continue to vet projected revenues and endeavor to reduce the financial burden on taxpayers by minimizing any tax increase and continuing to maintain Village services and support community quality of life.

Importantly, budget development is a public process and all residents are encouraged to participate. The effort is educational, offering opportunity to gain insights into our community's financial health and influence funding priorities. Perhaps most importantly for some, it is also a way to understand necessary trade-offs and help determine the impact of such decisions on local property taxes and level of municipal services provided.

At this time, future meetings are still planned to be available by Zoom, assuming public health circumstances continue to dictate remote meetings. The notice and agenda for each budget meeting is available through the online [Agenda Center](#), also appearing on the [Calendar](#). Staff are committed to posting each meeting's materials online in advance, as soon as practical ahead of the meeting. Please also note that a consolidated summary of the [Budget Schedule](#) is available on the Village Treasurer's [Budget Webpage](#).

I look forward to continued community participation in development of the FY 21-22 Village Budget.

### **Staff Appreciation**

In Scarsdale, we are fortunate that our Village continues to perform at a high level - though it certainly hasn't been easy. Our [Council-Manager form of government](#) continues to serve us well with part-time volunteer elected officials subject to term limits and a professional staff, often with long-term tenures that bring experience and professionalism to the day-to-day management of Village operations. Over the past year, staff's experience in managing varied emergencies, coupled with our history of conservative fiscal stewardship, laid the groundwork for Scarsdale to be in a relatively favorable position to weather this series of storms.

Your Village government and professional staff quickly responded to each of the crises that arose in the Village, shifting operations and fiscal management to responsibly address the rapidly onset of each of these emergencies. On behalf of our community, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to our Village staff – from the extremely capable Village Manager who steered us through each of these crises with skill, poise, and professionalism, to our facility

maintenance personnel, each of whom experienced a radical shift in their duties, having rolled up their sleeves to help protect residents and staff with aggressive cleaning protocols, often occurring after hours when they are not normally scheduled to serve the community, and our sanitation engineers that continued trash collection despite risks and uncertainties they never imagined they would face. Our public safety net, comprised of police, fire, and the Scarsdale Volunteer Ambulance Corp performed exceptionally, and there were abundant examples of heroism shining through the darkness of the pandemic.

I could share story after story of how members of staff in every single department went well above and beyond the call of duty, faced a new unseen threat and expanded job descriptions, and did so with grace and professionalism. Make no mistake, there have been and remain real strains that staff are under as a result of this series of challenges. I would like to again offer my sincere gratitude to each Village employee. Your work is important and you have consistently demonstrated an honorable level of dedication to the Scarsdale community – we are clearly a better place because you are not only here, but are essential members of our community.

While conditions for our staff have improved, as have the broader pandemic circumstances, please note that they continue to work on modified schedules, with roughly half working remotely and the other half in-person on an alternating basis. As a consequence, departments may be temporarily overwhelmed when facing heavier volumes of in-person service interactions. Please exhibit patience should you experience a longer wait than you had anticipated, as our staff continue to endure the operational constraints made necessary by the ongoing pandemic. I also ask that you join me in thanking staff whenever you interact with them. Village government is here to serve you and Scarsdale is very fortunate to have an exceptional group of employees at the service of this great community.

### **Police Reform and Reinvention Committee**

Pursuant to Governor Cuomo's [Executive Order 203](#), the Village of Scarsdale was mandated to perform a comprehensive review of current police force deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, and develop a plan to improve, where possible, particularly with respect to the intersection of policing, public trust and confidence in law enforcement, and potential racial bias in the treatment of persons of color.

The Police Reform and Reinvention Committee has prepared a [Draft Report](#) which will be presented prior to the regular Village Board meeting on Tuesday, February 09. Members of the Scarsdale community are encouraged to read the report and present any comments for further consideration prior to a final report being presented in March 2021.

### **Ad Hoc Council to Combat Racism and Bias**

In the wake of George Floyd's tragic death in May 2020, and following a vigil held in Chase Park in June 2020, the [Ad Hoc Council to Combat Racism and Bias](#) (CCRB) was formed by [resolution](#) of the Village Board on July 20, 2020.

Since that time, the CCRB has been undertaking research and convening Listening Sessions to hear from persons of color about their experiences with diversity and inclusion in Scarsdale. Most recently, they conducted a Listening Session open to anyone, regardless of race or ethnicity, wishing to relate an experience relevant to the CCRB's charge. To facilitate broad public participation in this effort, including persons unable to attend a CCRB Listening Session, the CCRB launched an online Community Experience Questionnaire and issued a [press release](#) to encourage every Scarsdale resident to participate; non-residents were also explicitly welcomed to complete the questionnaire.

The CCRB's work will culminate in a report to be presented to the Village Board at its regular meeting on [March 23, 2021](#).

Stay safe and be well, Scarsdale.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MS', is positioned above the name and title of the sender.

Marc Samwick  
Mayor