



VILLAGE OF SCARSDALE

Mayoral Community Update

COVID-19 and Other Information: April 30, 2021

Dear Scarsdale community,

Closing in on my first full month as Mayor, I am inspired by the public service commitment of our staff and members of the Village Board and energized by the enthusiastic support our team has demonstrated for embarking on a path to organizational excellence, supported by a strategic and financial planning framework.

In keeping with the tradition established by Mayor Samwick, I plan to continue providing periodic Community Updates to convey information of import and interest to Scarsdale. First, it is important that I emphasize the need for all community members to receive COVID-19 vaccination.

COVID-19

There are over 127,000 active cases of COVID-19 in Westchester County and 182 County residents have died from the disease in the past week. We've made great progress and must continue to press forward in combatting COVID-19. If you are not yet vaccinated, please take time this week to protect yourself and help continue the downward trend in active cases.



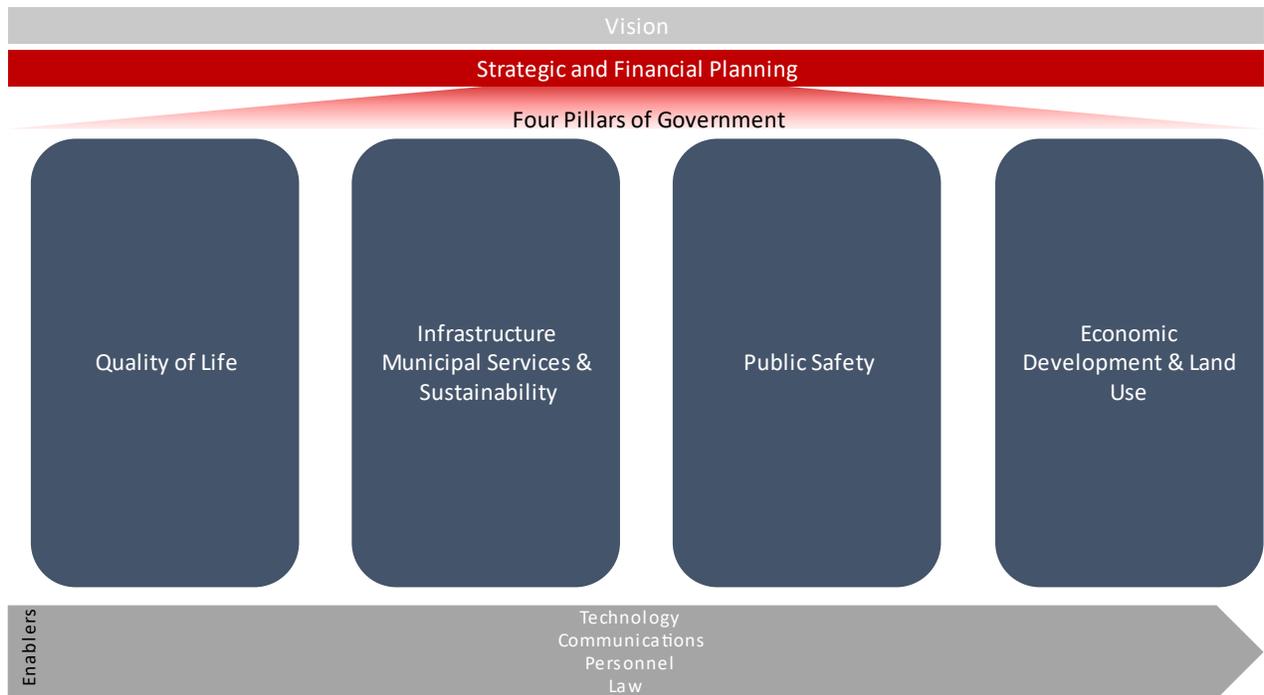
As college students begin to return the community in May, be sure to encourage your student(s) to become vaccinated. Effective yesterday, persons 16 years of age and older may receive a COVID-19 vaccination on a walk-in basis at any State-operated Mass Vaccination Site, including the Westchester County Center. In addition, and thanks to a collaboration between the Scarsdale Volunteer Ambulance Corps (SVAC) and Westchester County Department of Health, homebound residents may schedule an in-home COVID-19 vaccination by simply calling SVAC at 914.722.2288 or by email using covid@scarsdalevac.com. If you are concerned about vaccine safety, please consult with your physician and follow the advice provided.

Don't forget:

- 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.

I will now briefly speak to our new Strategic and Financial Planning framework, a transformational approach to enhancing our governmental effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability.

Strategic and Financial Planning Framework



Linking strategic and financial planning is critical to high performing organizations, whether public or private. One of the most publicly valued aspects of local government, as contrasted against business or larger units of government, is that members of the community have direct access to policy makers, administrators, and staff. Among other benefits, this high level of access supports short feedback loops, resulting in the ability to demonstrate responsiveness to immediate community needs. However, sometimes the day-to-day demands become all-consuming. Policymakers, administration, and staff may be pulled in many different directions in a reactive rather than proactive posture, sometimes leaving chronic problems unattended or resulting in strategic opportunities lost.

21st century local governance calls for a new paradigm, one that not only continues to provide a high level of public access, emphasizing transparency and public engagement, but also demonstrates the foresight and capacity for strategically identifying and seizing opportunities for improvement. With great anticipation for the future, I am pleased to convey that this is the path your Village government will pursue.

The graphic displayed above highlights our Four Pillars of Government: Quality of Life; Infrastructure, Municipal Services, and Sustainability; Public Safety; and, Economic Development and Land Use. Each of the Pillars embeds policy-level and administrative leadership to shape and advance related goals and objectives. Our financial and staff resources are being aligned to support identified priorities, including such near-term Special Assignments as the Village Manager Recruitment, the Pool Complex Condition Assessment and Market Study, and the Village Center and Residential Safety and Mobility Study.

In parallel, the Village Board is working closely with key staff to refine our budget development process, enhance our financial reporting, including developing a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and working toward achieving the Government Finance Officers Association's Distinguished Budget Award, and to identify and implement opportunities to enhance Village processes and services through use of technology and various process improvement strategies.

Routine work sessions focused on our Strategic and Financial Planning Framework have been scheduled and members of the Scarsdale community are encouraged to check the [Village Board calendar](#) for upcoming dates and times.

NEW Gas-Powered Leaf Blower Law

As previously highlighted, one of our Four Pillars of Government is Quality of Life. Within that pillar, one of the issues recently addressed with a modification to our Village Code are the impacts associated with gas-powered leaf blowers, particularly noise. Elements of the new law, which takes effect May 01, 2021, are summarized below:

For 2021

May 01, 2021 – September 30, 2021: **DO NOT** use a gas-powered leaf blower.

October 01, 2021 – December 31, 2021: **CAN** use **Monday through Friday**, but **not** on federal holidays.

For 2022 and Thereafter

January 01 through September 30: **DO NOT** use a gas-powered leaf blower.

October 01 through December 31: **CAN** use **Tuesday through Friday**, but **not** on federal holidays.

** Electric or battery-powered leaf blowers are allowed year-round **

Please note that during the month of May 2021, warnings will be provided to persons and homeowners found to be violating the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers; however, repeat offenders or those unwilling to comply with a warning may receive a summons.

Our efforts to alert the public of this new law have included: The public process leading up to adoption of the new law; mentions during public meetings of the Village Board; outreach to local media requesting coverage; a direct mailing to landscapers on file with our Department of Public Works; creation of a door hanger to leave at properties where a violation occurs in May 2021; development of an English/Spanish handout for landscapers found to be violating the new law during May 2021; and, preparation of a Water bill insert that will arrive with the bills being mailed on May 01.

Many thanks to the Conservation Advisory Council for their work in studying this issue, helping to move it forward in the legislative process, and supporting development of the referenced informational materials.

Water Rate Increase – Conserve Now!

Please note that the base water rate for all customers is increasing 3%, effective June 01, 2021. To avoid the stress of receiving an expensive water bill in August and thereafter, water users are strongly encouraged to amplify their water conservation measures. Take time to review our online [Conservation Tips](#), particularly those related to leaks and outdoor water use – the major drivers of exceptionally high bills. Invariably, there is community angst when water bills spike with increased outdoor use during the watering season. Keep in mind that there is a lag between usage and billing, which sometimes causes confusion over a high bill. To illustrate, the August billing includes usage from mid-March through mid-June, with mid-June through mid-August not being billed until November.

Adopting conservation measures now can help to reduce or eliminate water bill sticker shock later.

Importantly, the rate increase is necessary for primarily two reasons. First, effective June 01, 2021, the New York City Water Board, which supplies the vast majority of our wholesale drinking water, is increasing its base rate charged to the Village by 6%. Second, our last audited financial statements highlighted an Unrestricted Water Fund Balance deficit of \$958K. As the Water Fund is an enterprise fund, meaning that water revenues must support all costs, we need to ensure that adequate revenue for present operations and future needs, such as the major capital expenses being identified through the ongoing development of the Water System Master Plan.

The 3% increase is necessary to begin to blunt the impact of the 6% increase in the wholesale base water rate; however, a professional multi-year water rate study, which will be informed by the capital plan incorporated in the Water System Master Plan, is necessary to provide a viable long-term plan for Water Fund solvency. The completed Water System Master Plan is anticipated to be presented to the Village Board in the near-term, with the results of the related Water Rate Study following relatively soon thereafter.

On the Move!

The Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department has moved to Supply Field, 244 Heathcote, former site of the Library Loft. The move brings them physically closer to the major community assets they manage, such as the Pool Complex and Crossway playing fields, while also allowing them to consolidate operations under one roof, leading to improved daily coordination and operational control. Apart from the new location, all hours and services remain unchanged.

In coordination with the PRC move, the Village Assessor's Office is relocating to the former PRC space, located on the floor of Village Hall. The Assessor's Office move is underway, anticipated to be completed next week. Amidst the move, staff continue to serve the community in-person, online, and by phone, with no service interruptions.

Village Manager Recruitment

After 33 years of dedicated public service, Village Manager Pappalardo will retire this July. To fill his big shoes, the Board initiated a search process and hired the nationally recognized professional search firm GOVHR. To date, the Board did extensive community outreach and administered a Community Survey to gain input from residents, and GOVHR conducted in depth interviews with staff and the board. GOVHR prepared a comprehensive [job profile](#), articulating the community's goals and aspirations, and advertised the position nationally. Applications are due May 24. The VM Search Subcommittee is planning for additional touchpoints for community involvement.

News on the Horizon

There are several percolating projects and issues that the Village Board and staff have identified as near-term strategic priorities, as related below.

Pool Condition Assessment and Market Study

The Village Board and staff are in preliminary planning stages for launching a study to not only understand the magnitude of cost associated with bringing our treasured Pool Complex into a good state of repair, including assuring compliance with applicable codes and mandates, but to also examine opportunities to maximize our needed investment such that community desired and supported amenities, services, and activities may be considered. The overarching goal is to reimagine the complex to meet our residents' needs, thereby growing pool membership and attendance.

During the market study phase of the project, there will be a robust public engagement effort facilitated by a professional firm with appropriate expertise to identify fiscally constrained opportunities to make our Pool Complex more attractive, offering a highly attractive and valuable alternative to other private and public pool facility options.

Village Center and Neighborhood Safety and Mobility Projects

Like the Pool Condition Assessment and Market Study, we are in the early stages of planning for this critical project. Data clearly identifies the Village Center as not only a location with many safety conflicts between transportation modes, including walking, biking, and driving, but also one with a concentration of crashes – when conflicts translate into property and/or personal injury.

Rather than approach the issue on an ad hoc or incremental basis, i.e., one crosswalk or intersection at a time, we are undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of safety and mobility needs for all users, using an ecosystem mindset where interrelationships are contemplated and our investments will leverage durable, rippling benefits that span generations. Importantly, this initiative is highly complimentary to continuing efforts to support a vibrant and thriving business district, as well, and anticipates changes that will serve to activate public spaces, encourage public gathering and socialization, and improve economic vitality and stability.

As the project continues to mature, there will be abundant opportunity for public engagement in the process.

Marijuana Legislation

All residents are encouraged to read the New York Conference of Mayors primer, [Marijuana Legalization: Resources for Cities and Villages](#), and then present any questions, comments, or concerns by email to either Trustee Lena Crandall, using lcrandall@scarsdale.com, Trustee Karen Brew, using kbrew@scarsdale.com, so we can weave them into the discussion the Village Board will hold at an upcoming work session, to be scheduled in the coming weeks.

As the menu of local policy and regulatory alternatives becomes clearer, there will be an even greater opportunity for informed public discussion to shape our path forward.

Village Hall Reopening June 01

As a precautionary measure to guard against the possibility for COVID-19 interrupting Village operations should a positive case be detected in the workplace, in-person staffing at Village Hall has been limited to roughly 50% of full staffing, with the other 50% working remotely from home on any given day. As activity levels continue to drift back toward normalcy and workplace safety improving with vaccination rates and an overall decline in the number and severity of COVID-19 cases in our area, we presently anticipate that Village Hall staffing will return to normal levels on June 01, 2021.

As the date approaches, we will provide additional public notice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jane Veron', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jane Veron
Mayor