



INCORPORATED VILLAGE OF **Plandome Heights** NEWSLETTER – SUMMER 2021

Message from the Mayor

Kenneth C. Riscica
Mayor

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July 22– I write to report to you on events, activities, progress and plans in our Village.

We are at the “starting line” of a very exciting time in this coming year or more in the Village. If all goes according to plan,

85% of our paved roads would be freshly (or recently) paved and 70% of our Village gas mains will be updated to current standard, replacing old steel mains that are past their useful life. Think about that; a year from now we will have beautiful roads and not need to do significant paving for 20 years.

It will be hard work that the Trustees and I look forward to doing and it will involve temporary inconvenience for most residents.

This started with our plan to pave Bournadales in 2021, after delays including from COVID-19. Then we learned that NatGrid, without advising us, needs to replace about 70% of the gas mains in the Village, including in the Bournadales. Utilities normally coordinate with municipalities when they plan to do such work, like we did with MLWD in the past. That didn't happen here until we intervened. Now that we are in touch with NatGrid, we are working in partnership on a plan to achieve the best results for our residents. For more on that, see inside.

Most mature Villages like ours have few “land use” issues. So, on February 1, we held a Public Hearing to hear your input on our plan to merge the functions of our land use body, the Planning Board, into the Board of Trustees. Then we had months of deliberation and hundreds of pages of testimony and comment posted to our website – full transparency. On June 7, 2021, the Trustees unanimously approved the merger of the functions of our Planning Board into the Board of Trustees, as many mature villages in our Town have done. More inside.

Speaking of “land use” you should see inside what is developing on single family zoning.

While we presented a unique opportunity to buy a Village Hall to the community, after receiving

inputs, we rejected that opportunity. While that opportunity had several challenges, many residents have encouraged us to continue to pursue the goal of a permanent Village Hall.

In April, 2021, we passed our 2021 – 22 Budget with no tax increase (actually a slight decrease) to reflect that our 10-Year Capital Plan funding is largely complete as well as our desire to “bend the curve” of property taxes down.

In June 2021, we completed the installation of LED street lights in the residential areas of the Village. We had previously, in May 2020, installed LED highway lights on Plandome Road in our Village. See inside the newsletter.

On June 7, we had a Public Hearing to receive your input on a new law to “opt out” of certain limited provisions of the new cannabis law. The Board took no action and expects to take action at the September Monthly meeting. More inside.

On June 28th, the Trustees met by Special Meeting to take action to “opt-in” and request funds under the ARP (COVID-19 relief). We may, or may not have needs that qualify for funds. We requested our allocation in order to preserve maximum opportunity for residents. More as this develops.

With COVID-19 largely behind us, we have an ambitious “continuous improvement” agenda this summer. The Newsletter contains more information on these and other things of interest.

I have to give a shout-out to our Trustees who worked under constantly changing conditions and mandates, and were nimble and hard working to conduct the business of the Village in difficult circumstances. We owe thanks to Aida, Dianne, Alvin, Norman, Dan & Gus for an outstanding job. We are fortunate to have these extraordinary volunteers.

It is my great privilege to serve. Questions, comments and complaints are cheerfully accepted at Mayor@PlandomeHeights-NY.Gov.

Kenneth C. Riscica

Mayor

The “Starting Line” of a New Plan

Our plan for 2021 was to do the next road project in our 10-Year, \$1.15 million Capital Plan, which is road resurfacing in the Bournedales. We have two grants (\$175,000) pending to support this work.

In June we learned that NatGrid had begun a gas main replacement project that will impact 70% of our paved roads including the Bournedales. We learned this after NatGrid started a small project and, when they asked for more, we stopped their work and called a meeting to understand their plans. And so, instead of paving just the Bournedales (40% of our paved roads), it looks like we are going to have to pave, or partially pave, 70% of the roads over NatGrid gas mains. Then, since Shore Road (which does not need a new gas main) is next in line after Bournedales, we may well pave Shore Rd. earlier than planned in 2023. When we are done, in about a year, we would have paved or partially paved about 85% of our paved roads.

So, we are at the “*starting line*” of a whole new plan.

Much has been done in June and July to put shape to that plan and much needs to be done to implement it. The headlines of the plan are as follows:

- We need to conclude our existing NYS road grants for \$175,000 to have the desired funding for the work,
- We need to define the scope and timing of the gas main work and sign-off on street opening permits to that effect,
- We need to conduct a competitive bid for the roadwork involved including separate “work orders” for each piece,
- We need to evaluate and hire the lowest responsible bidder,
- We need to negotiate and execute contracts for road restoration with NatGrid.

NatGrid’s protocol for road restoration for the work on the west side of the Village is to repair “bell holes” with

permanent patches. Because that road is only three years old, which they did not know, we have negotiated a higher-level repair, that being “half road repair.” In this, the side of the street with the disruption will be paved past the crown in the road and we avoid the checkerboard of unsightly patches.

NatGrid’s protocol for road restoration on the east (Bournedale) side of the Village, where continuous trenching, not bell holes, will be employed, is “half road.”

We have essentially negotiated a much more desirable “half road” restoration for the entire Village. In roads that are currently in the Capital Plan (Bournedales and Beachway), we would pave the full road.

Shore Road, which does not need a new gas main at this time, is likely, but not assured, to be added to our paving plan while the construction resources are in place.

The roadwork plan is for the Village contractor to do the work with reimbursement from NatGrid for the share of work caused by their gas main work.

So, I say we are at the “*starting line*” because the effort is now a nearly half million-dollar project and it involves multiple negotiations, multiple agreements and multiple sources of funds, none of which is in place and all of which has to be managed. If all of our funding sources conclude successfully, we would have more opportunities to this plan.

The work would occur in stages starting Now, and into the Fall, into the Winter and planned to conclude in the Spring of 2022. For residents, like me, in the Bournedales, this is one more delay, but it is a necessary delay of only a few months.

So, while disruptive, the new plan will leave us with “up-to-date” gas mains where needed and 85% of our paved roads freshly, or recently, paved. We will then face a period of 20 years before these roads need attention and the remaining 15% of our roads probably 10 years away from paving.

Mayor’s Finance Report; No Tax Increase, Continued Strength

We use “Best Practices” for governments in our budgeting, financial controls, performance vs. budget, “Planning Beyond One Year” and our 10-Year Capital Plan. Results include: (1) moderate, stable taxes that are *lower than outside the Village* and (2) building capital reserves to support our 10-Year Capital Plan.

Year-Ended May 31, 2021 – At our July meeting I gave the Trustees a financial report for the year ended May 31, 2021. I do that in July before our annual audit. My report is, therefore, *subject to change*. That report is contained at www.plandomeheights-ny.gov/finances on our website.

This fiscal year had costs and disruptions from COVID-19 and Storm Isaias, among other things. We had new costs, many

temporary, which I estimate to be about \$20 – 25,000. We hope to recover about \$15,000 of such costs from FEMA but our application is still pending. Three things helped offset those costs: (1) *savings on snow removal and road repairs* from a mild winter and (2) active cost control on operating costs and (3) a small increase in Building fees. As such, I am projecting a small surplus of about \$24,000.

This year, residents expressed interest in our financial reserves. So, my report this year includes a report on financial reserves. That report indicates that we have met our goal to fund our 10-year Capital Plan. Because of this, we held the line on Property Taxes in April with no increase (in fact, a very slight decrease) hoping to bend the curve down some.

100% LED Lights

In June, we completed the installation of 60 LED street lamps, replacing high pressure sodium lights and are now 100% LED.

This action follows years of patience and study. It also follows months of experimentation and testing with different types, colors and intensities of lights for resident evaluation. Many residents gave feedback on the test lamps and that feedback helped guide our decision.

Ultimately, we decided on the 3,000 Kelvin (a measure of light color/intensity) retrofit light. This is the same type of installation that was done by the villages of Plandome and Plandome Manor recently. In addition, we are in the process of refurbishing our faded metal poles with black gloss paint.

In 2020, we replaced our existing extension arms and light fixtures on Plandome Road with new stainless steel extension arms and LED lights.

The 2021 portion of the project will be paid for with Capital funds set aside for Parkland and appropriate for that purpose. So, there is no effect on your property tax. The total LED project, including the nine highway lights done on Plandome Road in 2020 should be about \$25,000 with no effect on taxes. And we expect to save on electricity as well as service.

So, we are 100% LED; when I pointed out to the Town that their lights on Webster Avenue were the only non-LED lights in our Village, they agreed to change them to LED too!

Land Use – A Planning Board for our Future

A municipal Planning Board functions as a land-use body covering primarily subdivisions. Periodically, other matters come up such as “concurrent jurisdiction” on neighboring property (like a development in adjacent Plandome).

As a mature, fully developed community, few land use issues come up for the attention of the Planning Board. In 20 years, there were only four matters to come before that board and only one of those was a subdivision matter (in 2018). That situation is unlikely to change as there are very few “as of right” opportunities to subdivide in the village.

After five years of discussion by the Trustees, a Public Hearing held in February 2021 and hundreds of pages of testimony and resident input is on www.plandomeheights-ny/publichearinginformation. In June, the Trustees voted unanimously to merge the function of the Planning Board into the Board of Trustees. One-third of the mature villages in the Town have a similar structure including Munsey Park and Flower Hill. The bottom line is that the Planning Board has no work to do and consumes 7 volunteers who require training and experience (which we cannot provide).

Land Use – Single Family Zoning

If you are truly concerned about land-use, you might want to focus on the movement to eliminate single-family zoning, and local zoning control, all together. That’s right.

Recently, states and cities across the nation have been looking at reforming their land-use regulations, particularly single-family zoning. In 2019, Oregon became the first state to ban single-family zoning. The city of Minneapolis banned single-

family housing in 2018. Washington State is considering it in 2021. Others are following suit.

If you think this isn’t coming to Plandome Heights, you should search “LIRR: Railroad for the Rich” a June 26, 2021 NY Times opinion piece, advocating for the elimination of single-family zoning in NY. Or search “Trees are for the Rich” a follow up NYT opinion piece on June 30, 2021.

A Permanent Home

Earlier this year, we presented a unique opportunity to purchase a Village Hall *in the Village*. As an imperfect opportunity, many objections were expressed; we listened and we rejected that opportunity. Many residents have encouraged the Village to continue to pursue the goal of a permanent Village Hall like most municipalities have. There are many

advantages to owning since we pay no property tax and interest rates are remarkably low. So, we continue to welcome opportunities, mindful of the opinion’s residents expressed, both for and against. It is an exciting thought and we welcome help and input. But for now, we are fairly busy with the “starting line” of the largest capital project in recent history.

“Opt-In” to American Rescue Plan (“ARP”)

In June, the Trustees met by Special Meeting to take action to request funds under the ARP (COVID-19 relief). The use of these funds, \$103,000, is restricted and evolving. We may, or

may not have needs that qualify for funds. We decided to request our allocation of funding in order to preserve maximum opportunity for residents. More as this develops.

“Opt-Out” (Limited) on New Cannabis Law

On March 31, 2021, Governor Cuomo signed a new law to regulate the possession and sale of recreational marijuana for

adults 21 and over. Municipalities, but not Counties, have been given a “limited opt-out” of certain provisions of the new

law as they pertain to the (i) retail sale and (ii) gathering for use, of marijuana. We cannot ban cannabis from use in our Village. We held a Public Hearing on our proposed law on July

12, 2021 and we expect to vote on this at our September meeting.

Continuous Improvement

With COVID-19 behind us we have work to do on “continuous improvement.” This year our program includes: vibrant new flags on Plandome Road, painting the STOP lines on our roads to promote compliance, refurbishing our decorative street

lamps and poles, replacing about faded Street Name signs, replacing the last of the old style STOP signs as well as other faded and worn traffic signs and posts and sidewalk repairs. These small things improve the quality of life in our Village.

Protection of Manhasset Bay – In June, we swept our streets and cleaned our storm drains. Our streets drain to the Bay, so this work helps protect and clean Manhasset Bay.

Please Curb Your Dog and Don’t Trespass – We are

receiving complaints about (a) dogs being allowed to walk, leashed, on resident’s property and (b) the failure of pet owners to pick up their dog waste. Please be courteous and follow the law, don’t allow your dog on others’ property and pick up and dispose of your dog waste.

Clerk’s Corner

As a reminder, we pay for side-yard pick-up so it is not necessary to put your trash at the curb. We remind residents that overnight parking requires a permit from the Village.

Village code restricts contractor work to 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday – Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday. No work is permitted on Sundays or Federal holidays.



Incorporated Village of PLANDOME HEIGHTS

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