

January, 2011

During the past year, Community Development Director Ron Mentzer, I, and a representative from Choose DuPage were finally able to implement our Business Visitation Program. This idea had been on our back burner for some time. Our desire to upgrade it to front burner status was thwarted by, among other things, the need to attend to the constant stream of development issues, the lion's share of which were centered in Cantera. I guess if you're looking for some upsides to the down-turned economy, one of them might be that there is now a little more time to attend to things and plans that had been deferred to a time uncertain due to the necessity to keep putting out fires. Following through on this program at this time also made sense because it would give us current information on how our Warrenville businesses are coping with the harsh realities of the economy, perhaps help identify some ways the City might be able to help local business and support economic development, and provide Choose DuPage information to aggregate with what they are gathering from other DuPage County businesses to get a bigger picture.

About 25 businesses were chosen, both in and outside of Cantera, based on number of employees, contribution to the local revenue stream, and other considerations which highlighted the businesses as ones with significant impact to the local economy. We have two or three more visits to make to complete our objective. The surveys that are a part of each conversation will all become part of the larger Choose DuPage program, and this coming year they will share with us what they have gathered, and hopefully, we will have a clearer picture of where Warrenville and the County are in terms of business economic health as well as some direction for making improvements in the local economic climate.

I have to say, while this was a significant investment in time (most visits exceeded two hours), it was well worth the effort on several levels. We learned that while many of our corporate citizens serve local populations, many others are competing successfully nationally and internationally, and the width and breadth of products and services is pretty impressive. We found out that while some businesses identify with Warrenville, take pride in being here, and are glad to contribute to the community, others are only here because it is a convenient location and feel little connection to Warrenville.

One somewhat troubling thing we learned was that a couple of companies are so successful that they are outgrowing their facilities in Warrenville and we face the prospect of losing them to another community where bargains abound on bigger buildings. In terms of corporate culture, we visited some firms that we all agreed would be really good places to work, as well as some that did not seem to be especially employee oriented. Some rolled out the red carpet for us, included all their principals, took the time to get information about us and Warrenville in preparation for our visit, and others, well, not so much.

It was wonderful to learn that one store nearly leads the region in sales, and another leads the state in certain sales. A couple of our restaurants are doing very well indeed. It was

also very satisfying to be able to identify through these conversations concrete ways the City could make some changes that would help local business. The changes were attended to promptly, and it was very satisfying to report back to the businesses that their suggestions were heard and acted upon.

One of the questions we asked everyone was: “What is the biggest accomplishment of your business for the past three years?” I’m confident that you will not be shocked to learn that, for the majority, the answer was some variant of “We’re still here.” Who would have thought, three years ago, that *survival* would be the top accomplishment for so many?

Two things help me to remain cautiously upbeat. First, businesses, communities, and individuals are endlessly inventive in finding ways to weather difficult times. People will find what it takes to survive and do it. Second, a look at history confirms that tough times are inevitably followed, eventually, by better times. Let’s hope that in 2011 the charts and graphs finally show progress toward those better times. Three years from now, for our businesses, and the rest of us as well, it would be nice to have a little more variety in the list of big accomplishments.

February, 2011

Friend and Mayor of Downers Grove, Ron Sandack, recently accepted the appointment as State Senator to replace Dan Cronin who ran for and was elected DuPage County Board Chairman. I can understand Dan's move, leaving Springfield, which by any meaningful measure is a frustrating and colossal mess, to take up leadership of DuPage County, which by most meaningful measures is doing quite well, all things considered. But for the life of me, I can't fathom forsaking being Mayor of a fine and successful community like Downers Grove to be thrown into the Springfield quagmire as a freshman Senator, where the opportunity to have a positive effect on substantive issues seems very unlikely. I'm confident that Ron will do well, for he is a sharp fellow and a dedicated public servant. Most of all, as he makes his transition, I hope he remembers his municipal roots.

Ultimately, mayors and congressmen serve the same constituents, but I have found through my experience as your mayor and as an active member of DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference, that local interests are often overlooked by those who represent us downstate. This past year, roughly 6,000 bills were considered by the Legislature. Even if a person invested only five minutes per bill to understand it, that still amounts to 500 hours! I suspect, given this volume, many potential laws don't even get five minutes scrutiny before a vote is required. I have been present in Springfield, while we showed how a recently passed piece of legislation was detrimental to municipalities to a member of the State House, only to hear him say he had no idea of the consequences we pointed out. He then had to ask an aide how he voted on the bill.

Not only does the sheer volume of legislation work against local governments, but the law of unintended negative consequences frequently rears its ugly head. Frequently, what seems like a good idea on the surface can end up costing you, the local taxpayer, more money for questionable or no benefit. And let's not forget unfunded mandates. The state is fond of giving local governments more responsibilities but not providing funding. Our pie doesn't get any bigger, but we have to make more and smaller pieces. I constantly marvel at how much time and energy is required just to try to stay ahead of the Illinois Legislature!

So, Mayor/ Senator Ron Sandack, the best of luck to you in your new position. I'm sure you know what you are doing. For me, the more I see of Springfield, the more I am thankful that I only have to visit there periodically, and the more I appreciate how we do things here in Warrenville.

March, 2011

Shortly after the start of the New Year, it is the tradition in Warrenville, as well as for most of our neighbors, for the Mayor to put together and deliver a “State of the City” address. This year was my sixth such effort, and was delivered at a Western DuPage Chamber of Commerce luncheon on February 10th at the Courtyard Restaurant. The speech generally takes about a half hour to deliver, but about two full days to compose -- and edit, and edit, and edit. I swear, no matter how many times I re-read something I have written, I keep finding things to change. I love language, and precision, craft, clarity, and conciseness are tools I enjoy employing. So usually, I edit up to the very last minute then have to rush out the door to arrive on time. Generally, in the end, I’m satisfied with the result, at least until I dig up last year’s effort for background for this year’s, and start editing it again. And so it goes.

While the process for creating my yearly check-in with you makes me a little crazy, I have yet to not be encouraged and pleased at the content of the message. Warrenville is simply a great little town with a lot of dedicated folks who work very hard to insure it stays that way. I always have good things to report. The full text of this year’s effort can be accessed at www.warrenville.il.us/c_dept_mayor_state.aspx. I encourage you to take a few minutes to read my executive summary of the community’s progress through 2010 as well as our prospects, at least from my perspective, for the coming year and beyond. If you have the time and are so inclined, you could even e-mail me your editing suggestions, thus giving me a leg up on next year’s effort.

For those of you who are thinking “Mayor, just be thankful I’m reading this. Have you seen the length of my to-do list?” let me pass along some principles on which we rely that I think you should know. Most everyone’s financial situation has been, and continues to be, difficult and uncertain. Many communities have had to deal with cutbacks in services, employee layoffs or furloughs, and other unpleasantness. Although we have had to significantly tighten our belt, we have not had to, nor do I foresee the need to, cut services or let employees go. We are holding our own through some very tough times. There are many reasons why the negative impact of the financial downturn has been muted in Warrenville, and I would like to highlight three.

First, your town pays cash for everything. We have no debt against the general fund, and thus no debt service to divert tax dollars from providing services. Very few communities have no debt. Second, we maintain healthy reserves. These funds were augmented before the downturn because of anticipated effects of the end of TIF I in December 2009. We have used some of these rainy day funds to help us get through the past two years, and anticipate using them again in the coming year, but they are far from being depleted. Third, we only promise what we are required to and can afford to deliver. We are a small town and we have always respected the limitations of our resources. Especially these days, we concentrate on delivery of our core services at the highest level we can afford to provide. Case in point: during the recent blizzard, I received dozens of comments on the great job our people did on snow removal and police response.

So, there's Warrenville's prescription for economic health: Pay cash. Avoid Debt. Put money aside for rainy days. Don't promise things you can't afford. I see that the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities recently listed Illinois with the second highest 2012 projected budget shortfall (\$15 billion, 44.9% of 2011 budget) of all the states. Maybe you should clip this column and send it to our leaders in Springfield. On second thought, never mind. I'm pretty sure they speak an entirely different fiscal language down there.

April, 2011

A short time back I visited both Home Depot and Menards to pick up some things I needed for a job I am working on. It was mid-morning on a Thursday, and Home Depot was nearly empty but Menards was quite busy. I had read that Home Depot has been struggling, and my visit seemed to confirm what I had read. My degree is in psychology, not business, but it seems clear to me at least one reason why these two companies, while engaged pretty much in the same enterprise, appear to be on different tracks success-wise. The Home Depot store was, as always, well-stocked with everything you might need for any construction project, but didn't seem much different from the first time I visited many years ago. Menards, on the other hand, has augmented their good selection of construction supplies by, in effect, grafting a department store onto their lumberyard. This store had changed dramatically since my first visit, and changed in a way that apparently sits well with their customers.

If you are a regular reader of my scratchings here, you know that change, its inevitability, and how it affects us, both as individuals and as a community, is one of my favorite themes. What I have seen again and again is that people and institutions that anticipate and deal with change most successfully survive and thrive. Community Development Director Ron Mentzer and I, as part of our Business Visitation Program in conjunction with Choose DuPage, met with the folks at Lifetime Fitness recently. Boy, have they gotten the memo! They are thriving here in Warrenville as they continue to roll out new programs tailored to their clients' needs. For the nearly thirty businesses we have met with, the ones that appear to be doing the best in these difficult times are the ones that are not afraid to innovate and assume some risk to move in new directions. Sometimes this involves expansion and sometimes contraction, but being content with the status-quo does not appear to be a recipe for success.

Here at the City, we don't have quite the flexibility to innovate that many businesses have. We have certain services to provide, with an expectation of a certain service level, our revenue stream uncertain (especially that which comes from the state), and we can't just pull new revenues out of the air. What it comes down to for us is always looking for ways to work smarter, identify new ways to take advantage of economies of scale and outside grants, planning ahead for needed projects so we can continue to implement our pay-as-you-go policy, as well as recognizing that we can't do everything, and in difficult times we need to concentrate on our core services. Not particularly easy stuff, but I am proud of how our staff and elected officials have responded to the huge challenges imposed on the community the last couple of years.

My fondest wish, and I know you are with me here, is that we can take a break from all these "growth experiences" soon, at least for awhile. I have the following quote framed on my office wall, gleaned from the Michael Crichton novel, *The Lost World*:

"Complex systems seem to strike a balance between the need for order and the imperative to change. Complex systems tend to locate themselves at a place we call "the edge of chaos." We imagine the edge of chaos as a place where there is

enough innovation to keep a living system vibrant, and enough stability to keep it from collapsing into anarchy. It is a zone of conflict and upheaval, where the old and new are constantly at war. Finding the balance point must be a delicate matter – if a living system drifts too close, it risks falling over into incoherence and dissolution; but if the system moves too far away from the edge, it becomes rigid, frozen, totalitarian. Both conditions lead to extinction. Too much change is as destructive as too little. Only at the edge of chaos can complex systems flourish.”

A delicate matter indeed, this balancing business.

May, 2011

One of the things I particularly like about municipal government is that all the decisions that are made by the elected officials on your behalf, according to state statute, must be made in a public meeting, for which you must be given at least forty-eight hours notice along with the agenda of items to be discussed. Should you have interest as a citizen in a particular issue, tracking that issue is as easy as sitting at your computer (or one at the library), accessing www.warrenville.il.us, and checking the agenda of an upcoming or past meeting. Alternatively, you can ring up an elected official or City staff to find out if a discussion or vote on your concern is imminent.

It's good to know also that if three elected officials gather to discuss City business, this is considered a majority of a quorum and an official City meeting, and as such, must be posted the same as a regular meeting. Here in Warrenville, we are very careful to meet all the requirements of the Open Meetings Act. This is good for you, the citizen, and it is good for us, the elected officials. You have the ability to follow exactly what is going on, as well as when, and we know exactly how the business of the community must be conducted.

There are some situations for which discussion behind closed doors is allowed, although votes must still be taken and recorded at a public meeting. This is referred to as entering into executive (or closed) session. There are twelve main reasons for this type of discussion, and several other lesser reasons. There must be a roll call vote of the Council to enter and exit from executive session, the state statute citation(s) for the session must be given, and discussion is strictly limited to the citation(s) listed. In addition, minutes must be kept and made public at such time that the Council deems the subject matter of the discussion is no longer sensitive.

Nearly all of our closed sessions involve discussion of potential or ongoing litigation, hiring/firing or discipline of employees and/or property sale or acquisition. Public discussion of any of these could have a significant downside for the community. You certainly would not want your opponent in court to be privy to discussions on your legal strategy. Personnel matters can be extremely sensitive and peoples' rights, as well as the best interests of the community, must be protected. And, the last thing you would want to be made public as the seller/buyer of property would be how much you are willing take/pay. Again, we are allowed only to discuss these limited matters in closed session. Votes on the outcome of any discussion must be made in open session. Towards the end of a Council meeting, when you hear me say "We will not be conducting any business when we come out of executive session," you know we are discussing, perhaps getting an update, on something for which a vote will be taken at another time.

All of this is prelude to something I have been wanting to share with you for some time. We have had the need for executive sessions several times over the past few months. The Aldermen have faced some very sensitive, weighty, and complex issues for which solutions were elusive. In each and every instance, at the end of the session, I have thanked them and said to myself: This is how it should be done! I wish the citizens could

see how their elected officials tackled this issue. Frank discussion, well-articulated, rational and varied perspectives presented in a respectful manner, devoid of personal agendas, all leading to consensus on how to move forward. Democracy at its best! Right here in Warrenville.

So I wanted to say publicly what I have said privately to your Aldermen: Thank you for performing your community service on such a high level. Ward One: Stuart Aschauer, Fred Bevier; Ward Two: Bill Wiedner and Bob Wilson; Ward Three: Matt Wiesbrock and Dan Leonard; Ward Four: Clare Barry and David Kratz. I am proud of how you conduct Warrenville's business. Keep up the good work.

June, 2011

For the past year, I have been privileged to serve as the President of the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference. My term ended on May 20, at our Annual Dinner and Recognition Ceremony, and I have now become a member of the "Past Presidents Club". I do remain as a member of the Board of Directors and automatically inherit the Chair of Nominating Committee position. So, I will still have to attend as many meetings, I just won't have to chair Board meetings.

Leading this group of DuPage municipal officials has been a special experience, and I learned much. You haven't really lived, meeting-wise, until you have to run ones composed of your peers - all people who are used to running meetings themselves - chairing for the chairs so-to-speak. The goal, as always, is to get through the agenda in a reasonable timeframe, while paying particular attention to favorable outcomes for the action items. Getting consensus was often a challenge, as you might imagine, working with a roomful of successful, experienced, knowledgeable, articulate and forceful personalities, many of whom have been doing this municipal business thing for far longer than I.

The biggest challenge, and I suppose this is really universal for anyone wielding a gavel, is getting everyone to stick to the agenda. Part of the difficulty was that a lot of the far-ranging discussions, while only tangentially connected to an agenda item, were really informative and interesting. And a lot of the "back stories", especially when politics and political personalities were involved, were downright fascinating. Many of the humorous and wry comments that surfaced during these little side-issue expeditions were worthy of Jay Leno, or Will Rogers even.

All of which leads to the sensitive part: You want everyone to be heard, you need to be respectful of your colleagues, you want the agenda item to be fully vetted and you desire a positive decision that moves things forward, but you also want to get out of the meeting before you have to shave again. Of course, as with so many things in life, about the time I became reasonably adept at navigating these tricky waters, my time was up, and someone else now has the gavel.

All is not lost, however. Running Board meetings for a year for DMMC was good training, that hopefully, will help me do a better job chairing Council and special meetings here in Warrenville. So, there's that. Not to mention, and please don't share this with anyone connected with the DMMC, I really enjoyed the experience. Wouldn't want them to get the idea that I'm not happy to be a member of the Past Presidents Club.

July, 2011

I'm sure you have heard the expression "kicking the can down the road". It most frequently surfaces in discussions of State or Federal finances, and refers to the apparent inability of government to make "hard decisions" and its propensity to continue to borrow more and more money, thus saddling future citizens with more and more debt. As an economic model, going farther and farther into debt is clearly unsustainable long-term. Sooner or later, the "can" becomes too heavy to "kick", and you go from "trouble" to "real trouble". The State of Illinois as well as Uncle Sam seem determined to achieve "real trouble".

Warrenville, I am proud to say, is debt adverse. We prefer to pay cash and continue to have no debt against the general fund. This means that every dollar that you and I pay in local taxes goes to providing the services necessary to protect health and safety and other identified and agreed-upon community needs, and no tax dollars are needed for debt service.

The weak state of the economy continues to be a cause for concern as revenues remain essentially flat, but we are holding our own for the moment. We have found ways to adjust to difficult circumstances and still maintain staff and reasonable service levels for our citizens. Having no debt or debt service is one of the main reasons we are able to do this. So, short term, the City of Warrenville continues to meet its obligations. Unfortunately, long term, we have a significant concern, one that we can't afford to ignore.

You and I, as a community, own a lot of stuff, all purchased with our tax dollars. Roads would be the most expensive item on the list that also includes public buildings and equipment, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, streetlights, signage, storm sewers, squad cars, and public works vehicles and equipment. As I said, all of this is paid for. That is good. The problem we need to face and address is that we struggle to maintain and replace all of this stuff we own. Everything eventually breaks down and wears out. If you are a homeowner, you know what I'm talking about. We have managed to get by over the years, but we have recognized for some time the growing gap between the resources we have to maintain and replace our roads, etc. and how much is needed to do this job the way it needs to be done.

Warrenville needs a capital program and a revenue stream to support it. One of the most important charges that you have given us as elected officials is to ensure the stability and long-term sustainability of the community. We have identified a problem, and we have deliberated on and are proposing a solution. This solution involves some new taxes, some increases of existing taxes, and the suspension of the Hotel/Motel Tax Grant Program.

We are doing our best to make the details of the issue and proposed solution available to you. There was a special meeting of the Council on June 27 that was televised and is still in replay on Channel 10 and on your computer. *The Daily Herald* ran an article on June 24 spelling things out, and as I write this, we are providing information to the *Village*

Chronicles so they can also write an article. We have scheduled a Public Input meeting for July 14, 2011, at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall to again provide information and an opportunity for you to ask questions and provide feedback. Please attend or watch on TV. We hope to have a mechanism on the City website that you can use to calculate the actual impact to you that would result from the proposed new and increased taxes. The soonest that the City Council would vote on this issue would be September 6, 2011.

We would like to hear from you. A special subcommittee on the Capital Improvement Plan has met eight times since October, 2010, to wrestle with this issue and bring a plan back to the whole Council, which has been done. It is one plan. It could be changed with your input. Our experience has been that every time we bring something to you, and listen to what you have to say, we end up with something better than what we started with. It is our goal to move forward with a plan that has your support. We do not want to “kick the can down the road”. Doing nothing seems a very poor choice. Everything we enjoy today as a community was provided by people who came before us and sacrificed to make it happen. Let’s look at this thing together and agree on something that we can live with that also serves the long-term best interests of our town.

August, 2011

As I write this the federal government remains locked in a struggle over the extension of the debt ceiling, with a hard deadline looming, and potential catastrophic consequences to all of us if a compromise is not reached. It does not seem unfair to characterize this as a particularly reckless game of “chicken” with each car loaded with partisan politicians sporting an “either I get my way, or there’s going to be a big crash” attitude. On top of this, we are continually bombarded with headlines that indicate many of our leaders appear to live by a double standard, practicing a “do-as-I-say, not-as-I-do” lifestyle. Frustrating to watch, when you think of the inspiring ideals on which our country was founded, and the incredible potential that democracy continues to hold for us and the world.

At the state level, at least in Illinois, there are more reasons to be discouraged by government. A few people basically run the show, and judging by our states’ position near the bottom of the list of any substantive measure of success, again, it does not seem unfair to conclude that the agendas of our representatives in Springfield only occasionally are congruent with the agenda of good government. Some of these people have been in power for decades, and presumably, had they applied themselves to working for the common good consistently, our lot as citizens would be far more promising than it appears today. Also frustrating to watch.

To be fair, local government doesn’t always give us reason to smile either. Pick your scandal category and you will find ample evidence that corruption, malfeasance, mismanagement, power mongering and moperly are not the exclusive province of federal and state government. Pick up the newspaper, listen to the radio, go online, watch the news, talk to people who are unhappy for one reason or another, and you will eventually begin to feel that all government is bad, and if a decision is made that actually benefits the citizens, this is an unintended consequence of a decision that was made to enhance the power/wealth of either those making the decision or their friends.

By now you’re probably thinking: “Why thanks, Mayor, I feel so much better now. Thank you for highlighting everything that reminds me that the present is a mess and the future is a scary place.” I hope you’re also thinking that I have framed this discussion in such a way in order to make a point, and that point is not that there is no hope, government is just always going to be a huge disappointment and it doesn’t work.

I have been involved in local government in Warrenville for 14 years now. Here is my experience. Many of us overlook and take for granted the many things that government does well every day, week after week, year after year. We underestimate the amount of work, time and good will that local elected officials put into providing the services necessary to have a safe, well-run, and sustainable community. For every scandal or misstep, there are literally hundreds of things that get done consistently that benefit the citizens. Those who staff local government, especially in Warrenville, believe in service and act accordingly. The majority of mayors and other elected officials that I have met and worked with over the years love their communities and work hard to make them a

better place. I'm sure this is true at the state and federal levels also, although I say that with some qualifications, as I have no direct experience at those levels.

Not to put too fine a point on it, I hope you don't judge government and your elected officials by the scandal de jour. I see so much evidence every day that tells me most of the people in government are well-intentioned, and expend considerable effort to make responsible decisions based on the principles of representative democracy. That having been said, things are better when citizens keep an eye on us and communicate with us.

Sooooo...one more thing. Are you familiar with the proposed CIP for Warrenville, what it is, why the community needs it and the financial consequences to you and the community depending on whether it is passed or not? No? Then, get going! Read my column from last month to start. It and lots more information about this important decision, including much input from your fellow citizens, is available at www.warrenville.il.us. Or call or email any elected official or senior staff member. Help us make the best decision for the future of Warrenville.

September, 2011

Towards the end of August, I participated in a panel discussion in Clarendon Hills. The topic was home rule, and I was invited to present the perspective of an elected official of a home rule community, specifically how home rule has affected Warrenville and how we have used it. The panel was hosted by a subcommittee of their village board charged with making a recommendation on whether to pursue home rule for their community. Clarendon Hills will never reach 25,000 in population, the point at which state statute automatically confers home rule on a community, so they would have to adopt home rule via a successful referendum, as we did here in Warrenville in 2004.

Non-home rule communities must operate using only powers specifically enumerated in state statutes, whereas home rule communities face less restriction by the state and have more local control and flexibility in their governance decisions. This local control makes a lot of sense to many of us who reason that those who live in a community are in the best position to determine how to handle community issues. Home rule makes others nervous because it makes possible additional taxes without referendum approval, as well as removing the property tax cap restriction. There is also more flexibility in dealing with property maintenance, inspection and occupancy issues, a sensitive area (the City is still in the process of investigating options, and has made no substantive changes to current policy).

Currently, roughly 70% of the people of Illinois live in home rule communities. Since the adoption of the latest Illinois constitution in 1970, only four communities that were home rule voted to return to non-home rule, which is also possible through referendum. Each of these towns had their own reasons for this reversal, specific to them. There is simply no evidence of frequent or widespread abuse of home rule powers throughout the state.

What has Warrenville done with home rule since 2004? First of all, we have abided by our promise to apply the State Property Tax Cap to the City's annual property tax levy, so that it would not exceed the non-home rule tax cap, and it is our intention to continue to do so going forward. In addition, in March of 2004 a home rule sales tax of .75% was adopted. This was increased to 1.5% in March of 2006, along with the adoption of a Food and Beverage tax of 1.5% on all prepared food and beverages served in restaurants. Also, in February of 2006 the City used its home rule authority to allow hotel/motel tax revenue for general operating costs instead of only for tourism as required by state statute. In April of 2008 the City broadened the use of hotel/motel tax to include capital expenses.

All of these changes have helped Warrenville's financial stability by allowing us to avoid debt and continue to pay cash for our needs, they have helped make it possible to maintain staffing and service levels to a standard acceptable to the majority of our citizens, and have allowed us to shift a good deal of the local tax burden on to visitors to Warrenville, who after all, place additional strain on the services we are required to provide. For the City's General fund, home rule related revenues comprise \$2.3 million

of the \$10 million in FY 2012 revenues, or approximately 23% of total revenues. Without this money, our financial situation would be far different!

Currently, the proposal to fund the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) includes two items (out of a total of five) that rely on home rule authority: adopting a 4-cent-per-gallon tax on fuel purchased at Warrenville gas stations, and additional use of hotel/motel taxes as outlined earlier. Again, the intent of these proposals is to shift some of the tax burden for maintaining our streets, equipment, and so on to visitors to our community and away from residents.

These are the only actions that the City has taken, or is considering taking, that rely on our home rule authority. Nearly all the decisions made from week to week for the operation of the community are based on authority that the City had before home rule was adopted. Home rule has given us some options and flexibility which we have used with extreme care and, I think, quite responsibly – all in the service to the best long-term interests of Warrenville. The trust that nearly 60% of our citizens placed in us when they supported the home rule referendum in 2004 was not misplaced, and this added responsibility continues to be taken quite seriously by all of us at the City as we look forward.

October, 2011

I have owned my own business for nearly 35 years, and as the world changed with the advent of the Internet, I didn't evolve with it. That's not because I don't know how to use technology – I do! It's because with my tight margins, I have to keep overhead low, so developing and maintaining a website was just not in my budget. I'm certainly not alone. I know many Warrentville small business owners are in the same situation. They don't have the expertise, time or money to develop a website. The problem is, that in today's technology driven world, my fellow small business owners and I need to use technology to reach a whole host of potential customers. More and more people go to the Internet, and increasingly their smart phones, not the phone book, to find what they need. For most young people, the phone book has gone the way of the Sears catalog. I have long realized that I needed a presence on the web, but how?

My community to the rescue! In July, the Warrentville City Council supported a recommendation by staff to contract with a website developer that would provide mini-websites to Warrentville businesses – small and large – for free. They provide an easy tool that allows people like me to develop a web presence that is posted on the City's website at a link called [Shop Warrentville](#). I even got training on how to use the tool.

The [Shop Warrentville](#) business is great for citizens too, as it gives access to webpages of local businesses. These businesses can display information such as new merchandise or services, current coupon offerings, available job openings, product photos, and much more. The directory helps make the Warrentville business community more available and more vibrant. With Shop Warrentville, citizens go to one central location to search for local businesses. They have the ability to print out coupons, see menus, ask questions, determine store hours, join mailing lists and find a business location, among a host of other capabilities.

To find the Warrentville Business Directory, go to www.warrentville.il.us, look for the [Shop Warrentville](#) link at the bottom of the homepage. You'll recognize it because it has a little acorn next to it. Citizens or business owners who need assistance in utilizing this program can contact Administrative Assistant Marie Lupo in the Community Development Department at (630) 393-9050 or mlupo@warrentville.il.us.

If you have a small business in Warrentville, do take advantage of this opportunity, this free opportunity, to get the word out about what your business has to offer. As with so many other things, people have rediscovered "local" and how it makes sense on so many levels to use and support local vendors. Let us help you take advantage of this healthy trend by becoming more accessible to the very people who appreciate your being here and want to support Warrentville and patronize our businesses!

November, 2011

Funny how you acclimate and adapt to changes in your life. Situations that once intimidated you to the point of stomach upset become manageable, accepted as part of the program, even looked-forward-to in some cases. Some things that on first blush appear to endanger our “quality of life,” and accordingly we would much prefer to avoid, can, a little farther down the road, become a “new normal” every bit as comfortable as the status quo we were so unwilling to surrender and cling to with such passion. Often, I have found, the difference comes down to acceptance, and as my old friend and mentor, Ed Clark, used to counsel me, cultivating the ability to “lean into” experiences. Ignoring and denying, or conversely, jumping in with both feet, can result in moving from “trouble” to “real trouble,” and can lead to some unanticipated negative consequences. But “leaning into” an issue, engaging it without letting it engulf you, can work surprisingly well to produce positive outcomes.

I got started on this train of thought as I reflected this morning on the City’s second neighborhood flood mitigation meeting held at City Hall last night (October 25). Twenty-five or more neighbors stayed around for more than two hours to get information, ask questions and share concerns with DuPage County and City representatives about potential changes to their properties that would protect them from flooding, but would come with a price: concrete walls, in some places as high as five feet. There were awkward and uncomfortable moments, and much work on the implementation of the Preferred Alternative Flood Mitigation Plan remains, but I came away from it feeling good about a couple of things.

On a personal level, reflecting on my early public meeting experience as Mayor some six years ago, I find these occasions generally don’t cause me as much apprehension as they once did. Part of that is due to experience and familiarity I guess. I’ve done this meeting thing a lot by now. I’ve also, more significantly for me, come to recognize that being a member of a great team, understanding how important a clean and open process is, and in some small way helping to facilitate good decisions for the long term best interests of the community is deeply satisfying. “Leaning into” these sometimes difficult meetings almost always produces positive results for Warrenville.

Another thing that makes citizen input meetings something to look forward to is the interaction with you, our citizens. Frequently people arrive upset, skeptical, apprehensive, sometimes angry. And frequently, they have good and valid reasons to be so. That having been said, I am continually impressed by the respectfulness you afford each other as well as presenters and officials, and I especially appreciate your willingness to “lean into” whatever is causing your concern with open minds, gathering new information and correcting misconceptions with a willingness to at least entertain other perspectives. Almost always when we get together, we are able to identify common ground that allows us to keep moving forward.

What will our flood mitigation program ultimately look like in the affected neighborhoods? Because of your input, at the very least, there will be a lot of changes to

the original plan as presented. Please continue to work with us and DuPage County. We have a great opportunity to reduce flooding in Warrenville, funded by the County. For our part, the City will do its best to provide the optimum context for you to make the best decision for your neighborhood as well as the entire community. Let's continue to "lean into" this thing together.

December, 2011

Took a little spin around town last week to have a look-see at some ongoing projects. Those who cherish the status quo might wish to see less “progress”, but those who want to see something different have to be smiling. Our little town continues to evolve, and while we elected officials do our best to manage change and promote improvement, as opposed to change for change sake, the messy period during which change is actually accomplished can be a real bother. Just ask anyone who has to regularly traverse Route 56, or someone who lives along the West Branch and has to watch the cleanup alter the landscape of their back yards. Or someone who grew up with the Warrenville Grove dam, on their first visit back to the area, now without the dam. It’s gonna take awhile to adjust to a lot of this.

Some of these things are precipitated by issues beyond our borders and control, for sure. Butterfield Road is a SRA, Strategic Regional Arterial, under the control of IDOT engineers, whose mission is to make sure people in cars get from point “A” to point “B” efficiently and safely. As a state agency, it is not their job to manage local concerns about how to mitigate the multiple negative impacts or maintain the local character, but we have been able to work with the folks at IDOT to alter designs and plans to accommodate our local concerns. I’m sure that we are into hundreds of hours over the past couple of years advocating the tailoring of their plans to protect the character of Warrenville as much as possible. While we were not successful on everything we wanted, we were able to find mutually acceptable alternatives for what we needed. I’m hopeful that a couple of years down the road, if you’ll pardon the expression, the result will be not as bad as we expected and better than we hoped.

The river cleanup thing, of course, did not originate in Warrenville, but north of us at a factory, decades gone, that allowed radioactive waste products from their manufacturing process enter the river and drift downstream and settle. This operation is very nearly complete, but boy, things along the river sure look different! Vistas are now open that haven’t been so for many, many, years. Add into this mix the dam removal/alterations and the prospect of proposed flood mitigation efforts funded by DuPage County necessitating further changes, and after all the dust settles, people who have not been in town for awhile may have to take a moment or two in order to get their bearings. Why, it’s enough to make a person shout: “Stop! That’s about enough change!”

Almost. Those of us who have been around the block a few times know that, as hard as change is to swallow sometimes, we can’t stop it, only do our best to manage it. Communities have to continue to evolve or they begin to wither. Warrenville is not about to wither and is certainly evolving. It is no longer the town of my childhood or my father’s childhood. The good news is that much of what is happening, from my perspective, will ultimately be good for Warrenville. Route 56 will be safer and get folks through town quicker. Prairie Path and pedestrian crossings will be improved and safer and we got some things into the plan that will enhance future redevelopment of our Civic Center and the river. Take some time to visit north of us where the restoration has had a little time to take hold. It is simply beautiful. Standing by it, I find myself thinking that

this is what it used to look like 80 years ago. I can almost see my Grandpa and my Dad meandering along the shoreline with their poles, their eyes peeled for that perfect spot to drop in their lines and maybe catch something for supper. Now, that's progress!