



# 2020 River Grove

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## Dear Friendly Neighbors,

Last month I brought you the State of the Village and focused on housing sales, financial information, economic development, infrastructure, completed 2019 projects and a look at what is coming in 2020. This month I will conclude with information from all of my departments. Hopefully all this information is giving you a comprehensive view of just how much is going on in our village. It takes a great team to get so much done and I feel lucky to have put the best together to accomplish this.

Community gatherings and events are so important to me and the fabric of our village. I appreciate the rich history of our town and the traditions that come with it.

Our four-day **River Front Fest** in 2019 was such a collaborative effort from so many people in my administration and our village. We had outstanding entertainment that brought thousands of people to town. They were able to enjoy a great carnival and local vendors who sold tasty food at reasonable prices for the whole family. It was nice to see so many long-time River Grover's and other residents come out and enjoy our gazebo and River Front Park area. Please save the date for our 2020 River Front Fest to be held June 18-21, many more details in the April newsletter.

In 2019, we also saw our first Flannel Fest. Held in October, this fest had a petting zoo and bouncy house for kids and boasted some great German food, a German band and a stein-hoisting contest! My goal is to continue to enhance our community with family events like this. In the busy world we live in, these events give us an opportunity to meet with our neighbors and make our great community even better.

I believe in investing in our greatest resource: human resource. As we move into 2020, I am focusing on training and development for our village employees. It is important they feel valued and receive the training they need to excel at their jobs to better serve the residents of River Grove. We have collaborated with MICA, our insurance provider, and we are offering mandatory training sessions for all village employees in areas such as sexual harassment, safety and skills training. Providing a safe work environment is crucial and a top priority for our village.



**As a community, we need to understand our building department exists for compliance and safety to all of our residents.** In 2019, we issued 479 building permits – trending up from previous years. Younger families are moving into town, buying older homes and making improvements to increase the value of their home. River Grove is a great town to invest in.

**In our building department,** we are committed to making it easier for residents and business owners to conduct transactions. We have brought on two new part-time inspectors to help facilitate and enhance the inspection process. Our staff treats everyone fairly and with a positive attitude in the hopes of providing the most accurate information to residents, business owners and investors in our community. This year will bring an advanced compliance system which has the ability to log digital pictures. This will help in assisting our inspectors and local adjudication through document compliance. If our residential and business dwellings are in repair and up-to-code, that produces an increase in the overall value of all our properties.

**The River Grove Police Department** is continually working to ensure River Grove is the safest community in the area. Last year brought the hiring of three full-time officers and several part time and auxiliary staff. This has significantly increased our efforts to serve our citizens. Through the help of our auxiliary force, we have effectively facilitated truck enforcement and have cracked down on street speeding in town. We brought on new crossing guards to ensure the safety of student and pedestrian foot traffic around the new Starbucks store. By strategically adding personnel while also updating equipment, the police department is better prepared to serve and protect our residents and community visitors more effectively.

Grants and technology are important in keeping our village safe. Over the last several years, the River Grove Police Department has received grant money from the state which is dedicated for specific traffic enforcement and traffic compliance campaigns. Primarily, the grant money funds officers to work the traffic campaigns, commonly referred to as road-side safety checks and click-it-or-ticket compliance checks. From 2018 to 2019, 17 River Grove officers worked 34 total traffic compliance campaigns which accounted for 1,914 traffic stops, 2,277 citations and 42 DUI arrests. The River Grove Police Department is committed to enforcing various traffic regulations that lead to driver compliance and safer streets.

Regulating parking issues and obtaining compliance for infractions is of high importance, and the officers in River Grove are extremely dedicated to keeping our streets safe. Under the chief's directive, there is an increased presence for parking and traffic enforcement. To assist officers, we ask residents to complete those tasks effectively and efficiently. The police department implemented the use of an electronic citation writing program on November 1, 2019, which provides a cloud-based platform for storing sensitive data like citations and traffic-crash reports. Cloud-based storage eliminates the need for ordering and storing paper citations and reports. The program also reduces the need for manual data entry, streamlines online paying and simplifies the adjudication processes. Additionally, the process of replacing old and obsolete police radio began in 2019.

#### **Here are a few interesting statistics from the RGPD:**

- From June 10 through December 15, 2019, enforcement was up approximately 47% percent when compared to the same time frame in 2018.
- “No truck routes” have been added and clearly defined throughout the village. That addition includes Fullerton Ave (West of River Road) being designated as a “no truck route”.
- Our chief took advantage of an early recruiting opportunity by participating in a teleconference specifically for the state-funded Tobacco Compliance and Enforcement Program. In 2020, we will designate officers for training so the Village will be eligible to participate in the TEP Program.
- The police department’s STEP and eLAP grants have been renewed by the state. Meaning, enhanced traffic enforcement (outside of normal patrol operations) will continue in 2020.
- In collaboration with neighboring law enforcement partners, the chief of police is reviewing the Illinois Crime Free Housing Program to determine if it will serve the needs of River Grove.

In 2019, the **River Grove Fire Department** responded to a total of 2,195 calls for service. Of these calls, 62% were for Emergency Medical Services. Our fire department also increased community outreach and facilitated the Office of the State Fire Marshall Free Smoke Detector Program, installing many free smoke detectors in resident's homes.

Our fire department also provided the following free programs for residents to participate in: Citizen CPR, Home Pet Safety Stickers, Flu Shots and Monthly Senior Blood Pressures.

One of the most successful outreach campaigns our fire department facilitates is its annual Santa Stop Food Drive. This event collects food for the **River Grove Food Pantry** and is always successful.

Proper education and keeping our fire personal safe is a main priority of my administration. In addition to the daily EMS and Fire Suppression & Rescue Training, the RGFD Training Division provided an OSFM Approved Fire Apparatus Engineer Class and a Fire Service Vehicle Operator Class to improve our firefighters and paramedics' ability to drive and operate our new fire engine purchased in 2019. The River Grove Fire Department is committed to the professional training and care for our vehicles to expand the life of this equipment. Keeping up on our new equipment is critical to stretch your tax dollar. The River Grove Fire Department's Fire Prevention Bureau enhanced its services by providing more comprehensive inspections on rental properties and commercial properties while working in a partnership with our building department.

With a new director at the helm, our **River Grove Public Works** team was out in full force in 2019. We replaced all outdated park benches and garbage cans down Grand Ave to give our town a fresher, cleaner look. The cans are adorned with the Village logo, using recycled street signs to create a custom can.

Through proper budgeting, the River Grove Public Works Department received desperately-needed funding for new vehicles to update its aging fleet. The department purchased four new pickup trucks, one large dump truck, one tree branch chipper, one landscape trailer and new landscaping equipment – all of which will enable us to maintain our streets, alleys and parks.

As staff openings became available, the River Grove Public Works Department brought on more experienced and skilled laborers in plumbing, carpentry, electricity and mechanics. This proved to be an asset and a saving to the village because many jobs which were previously contracted out, such as sink hole repairs and water main breaks, are now repaired in-house. This has helped keep costs much lower. Other projects included the replacement of sidewalk squares, tree maintenance, street, alley and parking lot repairs.

Our village pump house water monitoring system (SCADA) received an upgrade in the spring with the installation of new hardware and software. Last year was year two of the three-year Commercial Water Meter Replacement Program. The Village's contractor along with water department employees changed out 132 commercial meters, with the final stage of the program beginning in the spring of this year.

Many residents in the Thatcher Woods area will have noticed numerous pump trucks and the daily activity of the **River Grove Water Department** in the area. At the beginning of 2020, the River Grove Water, Sewer and Public Works Departments, along with outside contractors, constructed a bypass of the ageing system – pumping, trenching, and laying new pipe to attach auxiliary pumps to the system. Soon, we will see the engineering and construction of a modern lift station to handle the wastewater of the Thatcher Woods housing and shopping area.

It is hard to say there is nothing to do in River Grove. Our recreation department is committed to bringing new and exciting classes and events to our Village. Last year brought back program favorites such as flag football and Rockets softball while adding winter basketball and a soccer/basketball program. They also included a wide variety of established free programs, such as open gym, teen basketball, craft days and movie nights. Additionally, the department offers yearly holiday events for Christmas, Easter and Halloween as well as special events like teen dances and parent/child themed events. It even incorporated our seniors into some events.

In 2020, the **River Grove Recreation Department** will bring a new volleyball class program, bingo and a parent/tot combo class. Information on these events can also be found at the village hall or on our Village of River Grove Facebook page and website. Our recreation department is committed to bringing new and exciting classes and events to our Village. We are always happy to hear from residents with ideas or program suggestions.

In 2019, we saw the revival of the **River Grove Baseball League** with a newly energized board and the restoration of Scheltens Field. This league has always been an important part of River Grove history and Scheltens Field is our own little field of dreams for kids to experience. Opening day even brought Wayne Messmer out to perform the National Anthem. We look forward to continued growth with this program.

After working hard to continue building a strong financial base for our village, 2020 will be another year of continued service to our residents. My hope is that more senior and disabled residents will begin to use our Pace Dial-A-Bus program which was launched in 2019. The program has wide boundaries and is very convenient for our residents.

The Village has made obtaining a "Quiet Zone" designation a top priority and we have pursuing state and federal grants that could help achieve that goal. A recently-awarded grant to fund pedestrian safety improvement requirements is helping to move the Village's quest for a Quiet Zone into its final stages. Train horns are blown as a safety measure. The horns are warning devices for pedestrians and motorists to signal when a train is approaching. A Quiet Zone designation means that freight trains would not sound their horns while traveling through the Village unless the engineer feels that a dangerous condition exists. Metra trains will only sound their horn when approaching the station or when they view pedestrians or vehicles on the tracks.

The Village, in partnership with Franklin Park, will initiate additional street improvements, including the installation of a median barrier to prevent motorists from navigating around railroad gates at 25th St, Ruby St, River Road and Thatcher Ave. Making these safety improvements would be the final steps required to obtain the Quiet Zone status. Another change happening in 2020 for River Grove Metra riders is that we will be going from a cash only payment method for daily parking to an electronic or app based plan. This should avoid delays at the payment box and make for a smoother experience.

In closing, I appreciate the time you have taken to read this month's and hopefully last month's State of the Village. I am excited for the future of River Grove. I am fortunate to have department heads that share the same vision in moving our town forward. We are rapidly advancing and I look forward to hearing from our residents on how they think we can improve. In the next few months we will be having some meet and greets with our department heads. I also encourage our residents to attend our board meetings the first and third Thursdays of every month. Come see how your local government works.

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