

## Supervisor Report 2021 Annual Towns Meeting

It's been two years since I've reported out on Township activities of the Supervisor's Office. Despite the lockdowns and a few setbacks, the Supervisor office worked hard turning lemons into lemonade.

I'm going to cover four main areas of our accomplishments over the last two years.

First and most boring is budget and finance. Over a five year period we froze our property tax levy for the General Fund. Over that same five year time frame we reduced staffing from 12 employees to 5, and added job responsibility and productivity, and didn't miss a beat.

Those personnel savings allowed us to fully fund our pension and pension obligations to all retired employees. It also allowed us to add funding to the capital project fund and begin updating the Township for the future. More on that in a moment.

Environmentally, our green energy program resulted in the EPA making Downers Grove Township a green energy partner, a first for us. We are also currently working on a project I outlined in 2019, a rooftop mounted PV solar array. This project is included this year in the state infrastructure budget as a grant. We've completed the first two rounds of paperwork and are close to being able to bid out the project. Not only will it pay for itself, but it will also additionally generate more than \$200,000 in utility savings for taxpayers over the next 25 years.

After years of study and planning, at the 2019 annual town meeting I outlined an ambitious project to finally build the missing piece for township services: a multi-purpose township senior center. That project is now complete beyond our expectations. We came in under budget and ahead of schedule with an energy tight building and a permeable paver parking lot with huge built-in stormwater storage.

Along the way we forged new long term relationships with several non-profits to bring their volunteer services closer to our residents.

The Friends For Downers Grove Township Seniors is our non-profit foundation supporting our services. They worked hard raising money to outfit the new building and have raised over \$33,000 in that effort.

The FISH Food Pantry has emerged from our basement to a new ground level facility and has more than tripled the number of families in need they serve. At the same time they went through a changing of the guard, from the original driving force volunteers of almost half a century, to a group of dedicated new volunteers that have brought new energy, new ideas, and new drive to their mission. It's a great partnership that will grow moving forward.

After supporting their mission to our senior citizens for several years, in 2020 we started working directly with DuPage Senior Citizen Council to distribute frozen meal packs to our seniors aged 60 and over. We delivered over 10,000 meals in 2020, and I'm proud to announce that program begins again starting Thursday April 29<sup>th</sup> and will continue through September. Our Human and Senior Services employees Cathy Rager and Susan Mistretta went above and beyond on that project. Another component of our direct cooperation is Meals on Wheels will now be staged for delivery out of the new township center. They make deliveries to over 400 homebound residents in DG Township. A third component is DuPage Senior Citizens will be providing lunchtimes up to five days a week for seniors who can travel to the Township Center. These programs will commence when the state allows.

GardenWorks LLC is a nonprofit that will be installing raised bed vegetable gardens on the new back patio area, allowing us to start a gardening club for all residents, and growing fresh veggies for the FISH pantry.

AARP will start up again this fall with drivers ed classes and the car care checkup clinic. Both were hugely popular in the past and were halted due to COVID. We look to add more programs moving forward with this partnership.

Consolidated High School District 99 will be rolling out a very ambitious program to use our grounds as a STEM Field Lab for environmental studies. Students will be hands on learning about native plantings and their benefits for our environment, creating a new home for birds, bees, and butterflies.

Those are just a few of the new partnerships. There's more partnerships to come.

COVID did cause setbacks, but the Supervisors office stayed open and engaged all year. Dial-a-Ride, benefits access, passports all continued via appointments.

Our youth services due to COVID took a hit and we lost some schools because of confusion caused by remote learning. I would like to single out Jill Braun, our youth services employee, for her dedication and ingenuity in translating the state required learning materials into a website and on-line resource with teaching modules that cover the state required Social Emotional Learning standards for youth aged 13 and under. We continued to help children aged 13 and under build a base of resilience and common sense, of sympathy and empathy. That work will continue, and we'll get those schools that fell by the wayside back on board moving forward.

We changed and upgraded our accounting system last year when our sole supplier and support succumbed to COVID. This was a huge effort for our Executive Administrator Chris West, who also coordinated with other townships on training and getting a lower price on the software.

We received CARES Act funding, and in the fall and winter we distributed over \$120,000 to more than a dozen non-profits in our township that were rocked with unexpected COVID expenses. Passing those funds down the line kept them on their mission and helped them survive so they could continue helping our township residents. CARES Act funding also went to upgrade and update the food pantry hardware, and paid for personal protection equipment.

Our senior services took its hits too, as we could no longer hold our popular senior survival series meetings during COVID. It seemed like help and assistance for those most in need ground to a halt and disappeared at many levels of government, but not for us. The offices of the Supervisor stayed open and engaged with the public the entire time. We pivoted to providing information for residents, ranging from how to burn through seemingly endless barriers to get assistance, to intaking and referring a record number of assistance cases to the proper authorities that could help them. For example Gary Ostrowski in General Assistance processed over 1,700 Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program LIHEAP utility cases before sending them to the county for payment.

Unincorporated residents got a five year extension on coherent reasonably priced refuse service with minimal price increases. The refuse contract was a first for the township, and its saved households hundreds of dollars each and every year.

Public service is not based on timing. It's based on solving problems and taking care, as best we can, of those in need of that care. We are the closest level of government to the people, and there's never a wrong time to do the right thing.

You can find out much more about our partnerships and purposes for the new building and our services on our website, our Facebook page, our Nextdoor page, or through our simple tri-fold brochures. What we've done over the past two years is not to make government bigger, it's to make serving the people a bigger part of what we do.

When I first agreed to run for Township office, it was with the tacit agreement that my boss Ms. T decides when my time in office is done. I'm sorry to disappoint her, because she knows I still have work to do, and she knows why I won't be able to finish what I started.

So I will continue to serve until May 14th, 2021, and then a new Supervisor will be sworn in. I will leave work unfinished.

Ultimately, the people of Downers Grove Township, all the people - young and old, rich and poor - are the source of the power and legitimacy, and the purpose of our Township government. That's a healthy perspective for any elected official and public employee to keep in mind. Thank you for your time and consideration.