

The Challenge: Provide Great Service(s) With Less

By: Village President Ronald A. Oppedisano

I would like to begin by wishing all of you a Happy New Year. I hope that your holidays were spent in the company of family and friends. As we look back at 2009, the year was a challenging one in many ways for the Village with the death of President Earl Field and the tough economic times we have faced. While we have had some stumbling blocks along the way, it has challenged us to find other ways of conducting business while continuing to provide the high quality services you have become accustomed to.

Many people think that a municipality or any governmental body has an abundant amount of money; no matter how tough the economic times may be. The reality is the Village of Norridge functions very similar to many businesses in the private sector and is financially affected in many of the same ways you are in your household. Village expenses like health insurance costs, legal services and even fuel costs have increased.

Just like you, the Village felt the impact of the rise in oil prices and the trickle down effect which led to higher gasoline prices at the pump and the higher costs associated with paving the streets in our village with oil based products such as asphalt.

It's really all about revenue – the amount of money brought into the Village to pay for services and the maintenance of infrastructure like streets, sewers and water.

About 75% of all operating revenue for the Village, which is used in part to provide services, is funded by the sales tax revenue received from the State of Illinois, which has been behind in the remittance of checks to the Village for some of these taxes. When shoppers, who are trying to scale back on their spending, spend less money at our Norridge stores, this greatly affects our share of local sales taxes, which is a loss in the revenue we have available for what can be termed “essential” services, such as police protection, clean drinkable water, and the removal of waste through our sewer system, to name a few.

Our sales tax revenue for the fiscal year is projected to be down about \$1.3 Million from a year earlier. Given the loss in revenue, under my administration we have aggressively pursued alternative sources of revenue, and have been successful in procuring several grants (Federal, State and County) totaling in excess of \$5 million, which in essence is money saved, or to put it another way money which is available for services and infrastructure but which does not have to be funded in the traditional manner.

I can tell you that we are doing our best to keep costs to our residents at a minimum. I have encouraged every Department Head to review all contracts with our vendors on a continuous basis. We are committed to spending wisely, while at the same time, doing our best to increase efficiency.

Our research indicates that while the Village has been forced to impose or raise some service costs, the costs for such services to our residents are still at the very low end of the range compared to the costs that residents in other nearby communities incur.

Here are just a few examples:

- The Village is one of only 5 municipalities in Illinois which operate an Emergency 911 Center, but do not charge their residents a tax on land lines for this service.
- The Village of Norridge does not levy a real estate tax for any services provided by the Village. A quick look at your tax bill will confirm this. The local municipality part (tax) of most real estate tax bills in other communities typically runs between 7% and 12% of the total tax bill for any given property. Since the retirement of the bonds which were necessary for building the Village Hall were retired in the early part of the last decade, taxpayers in Norridge did not incur any real estate tax from the Village of Norridge.

- Our water rate charges are at the very low end of the municipalities who obtain their potable water through the City of Chicago system; even though the cost for such which Chicago charges rise continually.
- The Village incurs all costs for taking away the waste water from your property and allowing it to safely empty into the sanitary district system. There also are no special service areas (SSAs) in the Village, within which in other communities taxes are charged to the properties lying within that part of the municipality.
- Norridge does not charge for garbage collection service; while almost all other communities in the area do so. The cost for garbage service in our community is over \$1 Million annually, and none of the cost for this “essential” service is passed on to our single family residential community.
- We run very lean on staffing when looking at departments in other municipalities and the total number of people they employ. Our ratio of part-time to full-time employees is higher than most communities.

Village of Norridge Service Charge	Average Surrounding Communities
Norridge Charges around \$3.50 per 1,000 gallons of water	\$4.40 per 1,000 gallons of water
Norridge doesn't charge for emergency 911 land line service	\$1.00 per month and more is charged by most communities
Norridge does not charge for garbage collection	Anywhere from \$6.00 to \$20.00 per month is typical
Norridge does not charge any storm or sanitary sewer service fees	\$.59 cents per 1000 gallons
Norridge does not charge any real estate taxes for any services provided or for the maintenance of our infrastructure	7% to 12% in surrounding communities is the norm

As we begin 2010, I want to affirm to you my belief that the financial “ship” has turned and is now pointing in the right direction. A good stiff wind in our sails (job increases?) will set us off on our journey towards a better future for all of us.

As always, I am humbly and appreciatively yours,

(MY SIGNATURE HERE)

Ronald A. Oppedisano - Village President

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Click here to email (www.villageofnorridge.com)