

The State of the Village

Continued from page 1

It is also important to keep in mind that these projects are the work of developers who have a right to build on their property. Unless residents want to spend millions of their tax dollars competing with developers to buy up the few remaining buildable lots, the Village can only control these developments indirectly, through its building and zoning codes.

And we have been exercising that control. We have undertaken a comprehensive recodification process that began more than six years ago.

During that time different trustees have attended workshops and conferences; we have hired planning consultants; we have held public work sessions and public hearings; and we have prepared and passed numerous changes to the code that have increased our control over development:

- we have enacted standards for businesses abutting residential areas;
- we have enacted standards for senior care housing;
- we have created a Planning Board and established procedures for that Board to conduct subdivision reviews and site plan reviews of large projects;
- we have established off-street parking requirements for new developments;
- we have created new zoning districts; heights from 60 feet to 48 feet in all districts and to 36 feet in some business districts; and
- we have established procedures for requiring developers to pay fees in lieu of parkland for new construction. In the case of the Signature Place application, if the 230 condominiums are approved, Rockville Centre would see parkland fees worth \$2.3 million that would be earmarked for the exclusive use of our parks and recreation facilities. . . .

One of the best things we have done in this period is to adopt legislation allowing multi-family dwellings in commercial districts.

This legislation was adopted after a moratorium on large non-residential uses and before we had a Planning Board or the site plan review process to allow public study of new developments.

This new law made it possible for developers to propose multi-family dwellings like apartment houses or condominiums as an alternative to large commercial operations that might compete for the same site.

From a land use point of view, all experts agree that residential housing has much less of an impact than large

commercial operations. Residential uses are usually regarded as the highest, best use of a given piece of property.

The upscale condominiums proposed for the Darby property would enhance that area: they make an excellent neighbor for the housing projects further to the north and are a dramatic improvement over a light manufacturing or other commercial use.

In addition, our multi-family law was cited by Vision Long Island as a positive example of what municipal planners call “smart growth”: allowing mixed business and residential uses in downtown areas has been shown to support local retailers and to reduce reliance on automobile transportation and so lessen traffic congestion.

The kinds of developments made possible by our multi-family law are exactly the kind that are being hailed as a hoped-for wave of the future: a way to counter the “suburban sprawl” of strip malls and big box stores by strengthening the vitality of the downtown with people who live there and help give it character.

But we are not finished with the recodification process.

As several trustees and many in the public have pointed out, Rockville Centre needs to study density controls: how many units per acre should be allowed in our various zoning districts? . . .

The solution here is not to call for a repeal of the multi-family law. The solution is to continue forward, to continue building on the work we have already done and to further refine our code. This six-year recodification process has already served the public well and will continue to do so in the future.

It is time to reconvene a “tri-board” meeting of the Planning Board, the Zoning Board, and the Board of Trustees. We held

such meetings several years ago before beginning the recodification process. Let us do so again to assess how far we think we have come in that process and to discuss with the most knowledgeable people in our community what we should be doing next. . . .

Density is one issue that should be studied as we have studied other aspects of our code: by consulting planners, by comparing our districts to similar ones in other municipalities, by making proposals that are discussed during public work sessions, by finally proposing legislation that is discussed further in public hearings.

Another useful refinement to our laws might be to establish a procedure so that developers could appear before the Planning Board at an earlier stage in a project’s life.

Currently, developers have to undertake the expense of submitting a formal proposal prepared by architects and engineers before hearing any feedback from the community. . . .

Adding a new phase — a preliminary, informal public meeting before the Planning Board where developers, the public, and Planning Board members could talk to each other — would help the process by promoting communication and the participation of all interested parties.

And I am sure that others on the three boards will have ideas of their own to add to the discussion.

Rockville Centre has become such a desirable community because so many of its residents care about its future. These are the people who are drawn to public service and to the public arena. I propose that we draw on their good intentions and their experiences to chart a course for the continuation of the recodification process.



This Month in Rockville Centre

One College Place, P.O. Box 950
Rockville Centre, New York 11571

PRSRKT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Rockville Centre, NY
Permit No. 271
CR-RT-SORT



Dates & Events

Tuesday, February 7, 7:30 P.M.
PLANNING BOARD

Wednesday, February 8, 8 P.M.
BOARD OF APPEALS

Monday, February 13, 8:15 P.M.
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Monday, February 20
PRESIDENTS’ DAY
Village Offices Closed

Events are at Village Hall unless otherwise indicated.

Videotapes of Board of Trustees meetings are broadcast on Cable Channel 18 on Wednesdays (8:15 p.m.) and Saturdays (1:30 p.m.) following each meeting.

For general information
Call 678-9300

Emergency Numbers

Fire **911**
Police **911**
Ambulance **911**
Electric 766-5800
Water 678-9252
Nights & Weekends 766-5800

A complete Calendar of Events, is available on the Village’s website
www.rvcny.us

Printed on Recycled Paper

This Month in Rockville Centre

FEBRUARY, 2006

VOL. 55, NO. 1

Mayor Eugene Murray’s 2006 State of the Village Address

The Mayor’s review of the accomplishments by each Village department in 2005 is given in the full text of his speech. The concluding portion follows.



Mayor Eugene Murray delivered his State of the Village address at the January 9 Board of Trustees meeting.

Rockville Centre’s excellent record of accomplishment and its growing reputation as a desirable place to live have caused some residents to worry. Recently we have heard that Rockville Centre is suffering from “overdevelopment.”

I believe the evidence shows that we are not suffering at all.

Rockville Centre has been for many years a well-developed, “mature” community. There is no remaining large open building space anywhere. But areas of our Village are being redeveloped: an old non-conforming restaurant has been turned into seven single family homes, a privately-owned parking lot whose lease had ended has been turned into apartments, a two-family house has been razed to make way for townhouses.

According to the study, the project will generate about \$130,000 of surplus revenue for the school district.

But no project has excited more interest and criticism than the 230 condominiums proposed for the old Darby Drug property on the Village’s West End. Many have called this project too large, though it has been scaled back from 349 units down to 230 as result of the diligent work of our Planning Board.

Yet when people look around the Village and see all the new construction: condominiums on Maple Avenue and Morris Avenue, seven houses on Woods Avenue and two more on Lincoln Avenue, the senior housing on Clinton Avenue — it is, perhaps, natural to feel that something new and maybe alarming is taking place.

Others have worried about its impact on Village services, but our departments have concluded that its impact will be negligible. It will not tax our water supply or our sewer system. It will not affect our

electrical rates nor will it strain our ability to provide power. The sale of additional electricity actually adds to Village revenues. . . .

Nor will the Signature Place condominiums put any strain on Rockville Centre schools.

An economic and enrollment analysis of the project, prepared for the Village last year, concluded that the district could expect the 230 units to yield about 50 new students, about 25 in grades kindergarten through sixth and another 25 divided between the middle school and the high school.

And I am sure that others on the three boards will have ideas of their own to add to the discussion.

Rockville Centre has become such a desirable community because so many of its residents care about its future. These are the people who are drawn to public service and to the public arena. I propose that we draw on their good intentions and their experiences to chart a course for the continuation of the recodification process.

Continued on page 4

The full text of Mayor Murray’s State of the Village address may be found online at www.rvcny.us.



Village Hall Comments

By Trustee Jeanne Farnan Mulry
*Expand Participation,
Repeal Multi-Family Law*



In Rockville Centre, government “by” and for the people” is a solemn duty and a sacred obligation that none of us take lightly. In our Village, we have many potential opportunities “by”

and “for” the people: I appreciate every effort our residents make to participate in our government. It’s the way our government was meant to work, and I am dedicated to help it work for you.

Doing the people’s business takes many forms and should be conducted openly. Since being elected, I have advocated that the Board of Trustees adopt procedural rules to ensure fair and complete access to our government. Incorporation of a “New Business” section to the agenda, which is already used by other boards and councils in Rockville Centre, would make certain that your governing board has the duty to formally, and publicly, respond to your concerns. Also important for you, I look for ways to permit residents to speak earlier at Village Board meetings, so residents do not have to wait, until past midnight at times, to bring their issues to the Board of Trustees.

Right now, our residents have other important means of participating, through our local cable Channel 18 and our excellent website, www.rvcny.us. The website and Channel 18 list meetings and agendas of our Village boards.

I am now working with Cablevision officials to expand the content on Channel 18. Under our franchise agreement, Rockville Centre has very broad rights and access to equipment, training and studio space from Cablevision. Right now, I am looking to put together a training session for Village residents who want to participate to broaden our governmental access. If you are interested, please contact me at Village Hall, or via email, at JeanneMulry@aol.com.

recent successful Ph.D. dissertation defense), conducts regular, and important, seminars and workshops. As Dr. Charrow makes clear, we have 6,000 seniors in Rockville Centre and not all can get to the Senior Center for all of the programs. An active governmental access channel could bring these programs into our homes. Parks and Recreation is another opportunity: the summer program and gymnastics events could be included. Sports teams – especially championships and awards celebrations – could also be filmed and broadcast. Under our contract, Cablevision agrees to provide us with “mobile” studio equipment. I intend to see that utilized to benefit all of us.

Government by the people also needs to be broadcast regularly. It is great that we have our Board of Trustees meetings broadcast, but there are many other meetings where important issues are discussed and decided. Hundreds of people turned out for the first Signature Place hearings and now a new Signature Place application has been filed by the developer (check the Village website under Planning Board agenda for hearing information). All of these Planning Board meetings must be broadcast. Briefing sessions, and any session where proposed legislation is discussed, must be broadcast so that all residents have equal access to law changes which impact all of us.

* * *

In the 2006 State of the Village address, Mayor Murray takes a strong public stand in support of Signature Place and the multi-family law passed in January 2003, which, for the first time, permitted apartment buildings anywhere in the commercial districts. I applaud the Mayor for directly addressing the issue of overdevelopment which has raised so much concern among residents of our Village, but I hope he fully understands what underlies these concerns, including impact on quality of life and Village services.

Why not answer the residents’ question: does more and more development benefit Rockville Centre? I have seen no evidence that it does, so I have asked that the January 2003 multi-family law be repealed. When the January 2003 law was passed, the Village did not do an Environmental Impact

This Month In Rockville Centre

Published by the Village of Rockville Centre
Eugene J. Murray, Mayor

Trustees

Wayne H. Lipton
James C. Sifton
Jeanne Farnan Mulry
Andrew P. Karamouzis

For information concerning Village facilities, residents are invited to telephone Ronald J. Wasson, Village Administrator, Clerk-Treasurer, 678-9300

Community News

Dog License Changes

A change in the New York State Public Health law now prohibits dog licenses from extending beyond the expiration date of a dog’s rabies certificate.

Dog owners wishing to receive a full-year license should arrange for their dog to have a rabies vaccination booster before renewing the license. Licenses are available at the Cashier’s Office in Village Hall, One College Place.

Pennies for Pups

The Rockville Centre Lions Club is sponsoring a Pennies for Pups program during February in all the RVC elementary schools. The children are encouraged to collect change in order to raise the \$5,000 necessary to sponsor a guide dog.

The donations will benefit Guiding Eyes for the Blind as well as the individual needing the dog.

RVC Historical Society

The Rockville Centre Historical Society, which oversees the Phillips House Museum at 28 Hempstead Avenue and sponsors many events during the year, is holding its annual membership drive.

To join, send a check for \$10 (\$15 for a family membership) to the Society at P.O. Box 650, Rockville Centre, New York, 11571.

Calendar of Events at the Senior Center

The Sandel Senior Center offers a wide variety of programs, including aerobics, art, music, mah jongg, yoga, walking groups, current events, pilates, book clubs, and much more. The Center is open to all Rockville Centre residents 60 and older. To join, call 678-9350 for more information.

Special Events

The Mayor’s Luncheon is Wednesday, February 1 at 1 P.M. \$5 per person; reservations required.

AARP tax assistance is available by appointment every Tuesday from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. beginning February 7.

The annual Valentine’s Day Dance is Friday, February 10 at 1 P.M. Wear red and pink and bring a home-baked dessert for the Viennese table. \$3 per person.

The Black History Luncheon is Wednesday, February 22 at 12 Noon featuring Charles Winslow, founder and president of the Long Island Black Artists Association who will share his family’s ancestral art: Pine needles woven into intricate baskets, hats, and sculptures.

Also, meet photo artist Clifton Jones whose works are on display at the Sandel Center throughout February. A delicious traditional meal will be served for \$5; reservations are required.

Sandel Sunday

February 26 from 2-4 P.M. features dancing to Linda

Ipanema and the music you love from the 20s to the 60s. The event is free and open to the public. Coffee and cake for purchase.

Arts and Leisure Activities

An artist’s reception for photographer Clifton Jones, who specializes in abstract architectural and reflective designs, is Tuesday, February 21 at 11 A.M.

The Wednesday Book Club meets February 22 at 2 P.M. with Ellen Berman to discuss 3 Junes by Julia Glass.



Sandel Center members Marion Jaffe, Doris Matlin, Connie Lorelli and Edith Richner participate in Mah Jongg. New classes begin February 2.

Travel and Dining

A trip to Broadway’s Imperial Theatre for Dirty Rotten Scoundrels is Wednesday, April 26, including luncheon at Sophia’s. \$143.50 per person.

A cruise to Bermuda begins Saturday, April 29. Seven days aboard the Celebrity Zenith starts at \$1,031. Contact Sharon at 867-7215 for specific information.

February at the Recreation Center

Winter Recess Events

Monday, February 20
Presidents’ Day Relays for grades K - 5 from 10:15 to 11:30 A.M. Fee \$3.

Tuesday, February 21
Trip to Fun Zone in Farmingdale for grades 1 to 8. Fee of \$22 includes 35 game tokens, unlimited rides, and transportation. 12:30 - 4:30 P.M.

Wednesday, February 22
Honest Abe Sports Day game and sports activities for grades K - 5. Bagels and juice after playtime. 10:15 A.M. to 12 Noon or 12:15 to 1:45 P.M. Fee \$8.

Thursday, February 23
February Craft Activity (and a little hot chocolate) for grades K - 5 from 10 to 11:15 A.M. or 11:45 A.M. to 1 P.M. Fee \$7.

Thursday, February 23, 2 P.M.

Annual Cherry Pie Eating Contest for grades 1 to 6. Celebrate George Washington’s Birthday by seeing if you can down cherry or apple pie faster than other contestants in your age group. Register before Friday, February 17. Fee \$2.

Friday, February 24

Bowling at RVC Lanes Bumper Bowling for grades 1 & 2: 12 Noon to 2:30 P.M.; for grades 3 to 8, 12:30 to 3 P.M. Fee \$12.

All trip participants must be registered members of the RVC Parks and Recreation Department for the 2004-2005 year. To register, a parental permission slip and the appropriate fee must be submitted to the Recreation office **PRIOR** to the day of the event.

Winter Recess Gym & Game Schedule

Basketball, ping-pong, and Xbox. Monday, February 20 through Saturday, February 25. For grades 4 and up: 12:30 - 4:30 P.M.; for grades 6 and up: 7:30 - 10:15 P.M.

Middle School Dances

The Recreation Department is sponsoring monthly dances on Fridays from 7:30 to 10 P.M. The dance on February 3 is for sixth graders only; seventh graders only February 17.

The dances are open to teenagers who live in Rockville Centre or who attend Rockville Centre schools. A school ID is required for admission.

Nursery School Registration

Registrations are now being accepted for the RVC Recreation Center’s nursery school programs for the 2006 - 2007 school year.

Pre-Pre-K classes for those entering kindergarten in September 2007 are offered five days a week from 9 to 11:30 A.M. or Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 12:15 to 2:45 P.M.

Pre-Pre-K for those entering kindergarten in September 2008 are offered Monday through Thursday from 9 to 11:30 A.M. or Tuesday and Thursday from 12:15 to 2:45 P.M.

To schedule an appointment to visit the school, call the Recreation Office at 678-9338.

Square Dancing

Caller Lee Kopman offers western square dance lessons on Mondays and Tuesdays from 7 to 10 P.M. \$5 per person.

Spring Softball

Rosters and fees for men’s spring softball are due by February 13. Games are tentatively scheduled to begin the week of March 27.