

MAYOR'S COLUMN

Spring is finally here and with it a renewed emphasis on our Village outdoor spaces. We have recently begun a cleanup and small refurbishment of Sagamore Park, the village's only play park. Much work is needed but due to a scarcity of funding we will be improving the park in stages with our initial emphasis on safety and cleanliness.

With spring comes the enactment of a new county law regulating the idling of vehicles. Effective February 10th, if a vehicle is idling more than three minutes, county and local law enforcement officials are authorized to issue violation tickets of \$250 for the first offense and \$500 for each offense thereafter. This includes all school buses and delivery trucks as well as passenger vehicles. The only exemptions exist for hybrid and electric cars, police and emergency vehicles and businesses that rely on a running engine such as an ice cream truck or a cement mixer.

My hope is that this law will result in education and compliance, not in ticket revenue. We need a cultural enforcement and community buy-in of these types of regulations since over a quarter of the country's CO₂ emissions are from motor vehicles. As an illustration, if a car is going to be parked for more than 30 seconds it makes sense to turn off the engine because just 10 seconds of idling uses more fuel than turning the engine on and off. In fact, for every two minutes a car is idling, it uses the same amount of fuel it takes to drive one mile.

The American Lung Association just this year gave the air quality in Westchester County ratings of poor or failing grades making the law most timely as there is no downside to clean air.

I also hope the Village's emphasis on sidewalk repair, dog cleanup and general safe passage will increase walking in our Village this spring. Chappaqua Village and School have "walking Wednesdays" and Larchmont and Pleasantville have similar programs we can emulate.

Spring is also very busy for Village government. The Trustees had a special meeting last Thursday and marathon budget workshops on Sunday and Monday. At the special meeting, two new police officers were hired bringing our current complement to 21 officers.

Joining our team are two veterans from the Mt. Vernon police force, Paul Cavallo and Jason Cooper. Officer Cavallo is 25 years old and lives right next door in Fleetwood. He is a golfer, runner, and an excellent cook coming from a family of well known caterers. He is a graduate of Westchester Community College and will fill the slot vacated by one of our officers who returned to the NYPD. Officer Cooper is 32, has a background in banking and lives in nearby Pelham. His favorite hobby is working on all kinds of cars. He will fill a slot funded in last year's budget.

We also hired a firm to undertake a comprehensive review of our insurance policies. We charged them with making recommendations to improve our coverage and remarket the policies with the goal of achieving some cost savings. Frenkel & Co., Inc. was chosen from the firms we interviewed to do this

analysis. They came highly recommended from the Village of Scarsdale who has worked with them for thirty plus years.

Finally I want to recommend that Villagers retrieve the New York Times article on the bookstore closing in Chappaqua that was featured in the March 22 Westchester Section. The author spoke so eloquently about how small towns need independent merchants as much as they need us. To paraphrase, the writer said that a community that wants a vibrant downtown needs to support it, even if Tylenol is cheaper at Target or a book cheaper on Amazon. He ended by saying that if a village “loses a store out of indifference or to save a buck or two, we lost a lot more than we’ve saved.”

To help our merchants, we are opening the Avalon parking lot for free customer parking on Saturdays and Sundays from 7am to 3am. We are hoping this will help businesses whose customers have long term parking needs including restaurants, fitness centers, hair salons, and the theatre.