

December 20, 2013

Reflecting on the past year's events is something we all share during the holidays. Introspection is healthy and thankfully I find myself more often remembering the good, counting my blessings and living with gratitude and hope rather than lamenting disappointments or my own shortcomings. One thing about which I am always grateful is living in Floral Park and a recent incident, which involved two of our police officers and our rescue personnel, clearly illustrates that feeling. This incident not only reflects well on the professionalism of the police officers and rescue personnel involved, it also demonstrates how fortunate we, as residents, are to live in a full service village which is dedicated to providing a quick response in life threatening situations.

At approximately 1:30 pm on Saturday November 23, the Floral Park Police Desk received a call for a woman choking at Koenig's Restaurant. Rescue tones were sounded but our police units were responding to another incident in the village. No other units were immediately available, therefore the sergeant on duty, Sgt. William Doherty, responded to the call at Koenig's. PO Naughton was released from the previous scene to respond with Sgt. Doherty to Koenig's as well. Upon arrival, Sgt. Doherty was confronted with the situation of an 86 year old woman slumped on the floor. She was blue, without a pulse and not breathing. Doherty was told she was choking on some food. He immediately began back thrusts in an effort to dislodge the obstruction blocking her airway. Multiple thrusts were unsuccessful. He then placed her flat on the floor and began abdominal thrusts – multiple thrusts again proving unsuccessful. Sgt. Doherty directed PO Naughton to get oxygen out and continue abdominal thrusts. Sgt. Doherty began to manage her airway in the event that rescue breathing became necessary and he continued to check for a pulse. After several abdominal thrusts PO Naughton changed to chest compressions. Sgt. Doherty was able to see a large obstruction deep in the woman's airway. Sgt. Doherty was able to manually clear the obstruction from her airway. FPPD Rescue Company personnel arrived and took control of the scene. With the quick, professional actions of the Rescue squad, by the time the woman was placed on the gurney and transported to the hospital, she had a good pulse, was breathing and was regaining consciousness. Sgt. Doherty, PO Naughton and our Rescue Company should be commended for their quick actions which saved this woman's life. It is not uncommon that our police and rescue personnel must simultaneously respond to separate incidents. It is that capacity - - the ability to rapidly respond to multiple incidents - - that make Floral Park not only a "Great Place to Live", but also a Safe Place to Live.

In fact, the Village of Floral Park was recently **ranked #1** on a list of the safest cities in New York State by SafeWise, a home security website that released its list of "***50 Safest Cities in New York***". To arrive at its rankings, SafeWise examined data from the FBI's most recent crime statistics together with their own investigation to create a list of top 50 Safest Cities in New York with 15,000 residents or more as of 2011. It is a very interesting article and the link to it is: <http://www.safewise.com/blog/50-safest-cities-new-york/> Not surprisingly, the article speaks glowingly about Floral Park and opines that one of the reasons Floral Park's streets are safe is because of the "robust community services" that are offered by Floral Park, including the Floral Park Village Pool.

This past Summer, we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Floral Park Village Pool. The Village Pool certainly is a tremendous asset of the Village and reflects the foresight of the Village

Government working with a dedicated group of Village residents who advocated for a Village Pool several decades ago. Because of their foresight, for fifty years the Pool has provided countless hours of fun, entertainment and exercise to Village families.

The Floral Park Pool has also positively impacted the property values of all Village residents whether those residents chose to join the pool or decided to pass on that opportunity. The primary reason the Village Pool has positively impacted all residents' property values is simple. Ask any local real estate broker and they will tell you that most houses in the Village are purchased by young couples who either have just started a family or are contemplating starting a family. It is the demand for houses that keep property values up. When you are choosing a neighborhood to make your home and start your family, you want it to be safe, you want it to have good schools and you want there to be recreational activities for kids to enjoy themselves (and stay out of trouble). And, in my opinion, it is probably in that order or priority – safety first, then good schools and then recreational opportunities, such as sports and other programs, so that your kids can lead healthy and happy lives (and stay out of trouble). Therefore, the availability of a Village Pool, where your children and family can spend hours of fun in safety, will naturally be a selling point for homes in the Village.

But for a pool, fifty years is a long time. Many other villages in Nassau County began village pools at about the same time as Floral Park did. To my knowledge, Floral Park is the only village pool that has not been renovated or replaced in that period. While meticulous attention to maintenance of the pool by our Recreation Department over the years enabled us to extend the life of the pool by at least ten years, it is certainly showing its age and is in need of significant structural repairs. However, due to changes to the New York State Code and Nassau County Department of Health Codes, once you surpass a certain threshold of repairs, the entire pool must be brought up to code to meet the new requirements regarding issues such as handicap accessibility and lighting. These requirements significantly increase the costs of making the needed repairs.

Doing nothing with regard to the pool is not a viable option. While we could possibly get by for the next year or two perhaps with just maintenance and relatively minor repairs, addressing certain structural problems cannot be put off for very long. We have had our engineers examining the pool and the time to act is upon us. Also, as the pool generates significant revenues which offset its operational costs, from a tax impact perspective it is likely that doing nothing would have a greater tax impact on residents than addressing the pool's problems. That is because if the pool were allowed to deteriorate to the point where the pool structure had to be removed, the cost of such a removal and remediation of the property would be significant. Without the revenue generated by the pool, the costs of removal and remediation would have to be borne entirely by the taxpayers. In that scenario, the taxpayers of the Village would not only have to bear the burden of the cost of removal of the pool, but also lose the pool as an asset that has positively impacted their property values.

Conversely, if the problems of the pool are addressed, the costs of addressing these problems can be financed over a much longer period than removal costs can be and, with the pool continuing to operate, these costs can potentially be largely offset by the revenues that will continue to be generated by the pool memberships. Additionally, the Village keeps the pool as an asset positively driving property values.

We have been studying this problem for a long time now, and we have directed our engineers to take the next step towards developing a comprehensive plan to address the pool's needs. We will keep you informed as this moves forward.

I have often written about our everyday heroes in the Department of Public Works. These men along with our DPW administrative staff have done an outstanding job in the recovery since Sandy hit last October 29, 2012. The restoration of roads, curbing, landscape and sidewalks is 95% complete; this successful recovery is due in no small measure to the great benefit of living in a full service village. But an area still causing concern among many of our residents involves our beautiful trees. Our DPW and specifically our Tree Department has worked diligently in getting Floral Park's majestic trees healthy, safe and green again. Floral Park is justifiably proud of our designation as a Tree City. Recently the NYSDEC favorably commented on our tree program, especially noting our tree replacement, maintenance and planting program. This past year we removed an additional 86 trees beyond the Sandy removals and we pruned 816 trees. This pruning is beneficial as it allows for controlled growth. In other cases, the pruning was to mitigate the effects of wind, essentially taking the sail out of the trees. With the purchase of a new 75' boom truck and the hiring of an additional tree pruner, we hope to increase the productivity in the number of trees safely pruned next year. With luck, in three years' time, we hope to have pruned every tree in the village. We are presently planting 185 trees of seven different varieties. These new trees address the criteria for size and growth rates in response to wire friendly requirements, Irene and Sandy. Many, myself included, were saddened by the toppling of scores of 80-100 year old trees last year, but with our tree program we can keep our living resources strong and safe for decades to come. Our trees provide added value to our property, shade to our homes, a filter for the air we breathe, an identity, vitality and beauty to our Village.

In closing, on behalf of the entire Village family and my fellow Board Members may I wish you a Blessed Holiday and a Happy, Healthy and Safe New Year.