August 3, 2020

Dear Northfielders,

The number of COVID-19 infections in Northfield continues to slowly increase: there were 99 reported COVID-19 infections the week of July 17; 102 infections the week of July 24; and 102 infections the week of July 31. Please continue to observe recommended precautions, including wearing face masks, self-quarantining, regular hand-washing, and self-distancing.

At present, the Village has the personal protective equipment that our first responders need to function safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are so grateful to the many Northfielders who stepped up in the past months to provide face masks, gowns, meals, moral support, and more. We are also grateful to our neighbors who continue to work in the midst of the pandemic, including our nurses, doctors, hospital employees, and first responders. If you need a free face mask, click here to complete a request form and masks will be delivered to your home.

**Financial Impact on Village**

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a direct impact on our Village's revenues and non-budgeted expenses. To better assess the long-term implications, the Village has developed a series of financial models including a most likely case, worst case, and a best-case scenario. The initial projections suggest a $1.2 million loss of revenue under the “most likely” scenario, a $1.02 million loss in the “best-case” scenario, and $1.89 million loss in the “worst-case” scenario for FY2020/21.

As the pandemic progresses and the Village receives actual sales tax numbers from the State, these models will be updated and refined. The Village Board will use these models as a tool to track and forecast the impact to our budget; inform future decisions and expenditures;
monitor our strong reserves and AAA bond rating; and help ensure that we can provide essential services.

In the upcoming months, more detailed information is anticipated on sales tax, unemployment, a COVID vaccine, and the trajectory of COVID cases. The models will be regularly updated and refined to reflect the most current information and to then project any impact on reserve levels and Village operations. The Board will regularly monitor the situation and review details at its Committee of the Whole meetings.

**Census**

One of the primary ways that state and federal governments determine how to apportion revenue and award grants is the number of residents in a community. That being the case, **it is critically important that every Northfield resident responds to the U.S. census count that is taking place right now.** If you no longer have the census form that was mailed to your home, you can report your count by calling the U.S. Census at 844/330-2020. This phone number is available seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. It takes less than five minutes to answer the census questions. The Northfield response rate at present is 79% - let's do better than that. Thank you for helping make sure that our Village receives the revenues to which it is entitled. Thanks as well to Village Trustee Charles Orth for heading up Village’s census count.

**Skokie Valley Trail**

Working in partnership with the Villages of Glenview, Skokie, and Wilmette, Northfield has received two grants to fully fund the Phase II study of the Skokie Valley Trail (SVT). The SVT is a regional bicycle and walking trail which, once completed, will stretch from Chicago to Lake Bluff. Before the aforementioned communities can begin the Phase II study, Northfield must determine the trail’s alignment from Willow Road to Voltz Road. Possible route options will be presented and discussed at the Village Board’s August 18th meeting at 5:30 p.m. The meeting will be held remotely, via Zoom. Everyone is welcome to attend online and participants will be given an opportunity to voice their opinion. Alternatively, you may share your opinion ahead of time by emailing the Village Board at vgroup@northfieldil.org.
Library
I have been in touch with the Winnetka-Northfield Library Board of Trustees to learn more about their timetable for reopening the library's Northfield Branch. Of course we are all eager to return to the library and avail ourselves of this vital community resource, but the library must act prudently and ensure that both staff and patrons can use the facility safely. Last week, Interim Library Director Sarah Quish provided the following information with regard to the reopening of the Northfield branch:

*We are doing our best to move the plans for Northfield forward, and are planning to do it appropriately and safely. This week we have already done the following things to get the ball rolling:*

· We started conversations with our facilities team who will need to do an assessment of the work needed (plexiglass barriers, added supplies, added cleaning rotations, etc.) to prepare and maintain the building for various stages of reopening beginning with the simplest step, which is curbside service. They have informed me that it will take them at least two weeks to prepare from a facilities standpoint. They should be sending me a list of tasks that they need to complete this week.

· I started a conversation with the municipality about the airflow within the Northfield Branch, and how we can increase the airflow to ensure that we are doing our due diligence to make it a safe environment for staff and patrons (when we get to that stage). They told us that they can increase the airflow, and but we do not know details about this yet. I have also included our Winnetka facilities team to make sure that we try to get the Northfield Branch to the same/similar levels of air flow if possible at both facilities, as they’ve done the research on the safety of various airflow levels. Everyone is communicating and we will determine next steps.

· We are formulating a Northfield Exploratory Group made up of staff to provide their input/ideas about reopening since they are the front-line workers in the space and passionate about getting the branch up and running. The intent is to utilize their knowledge about the facility and the patron base to inform our decisions moving forward. There is a lot of excitement about this group, and I will be scheduling their first meeting soon.

· We are launching a staff survey about the reopening at Winnetka and future steps at Northfield to get staff feedback and learn from the past as we move forward.
I’m sure there are things we can improve upon, and that feedback will inform how we proceed.

We are making every effort to seek information and make decisions in a timely manner.

For the latest information, check the library’s website.

Local Business

Please make every effort to patronize our local businesses. It is an extraordinarily difficult time for our restaurants, stores, and salons, and you can make a difference simply by remembering to shop local.

Unemployment Compensation

The $600/week federal unemployment benefits officially expired on July 25, 2020, and the extension of some level of federal unemployment benefits is currently the subject of debate in Congress. If you would like more information about unemployment benefits, visit the State of Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) website. In addition, IDES has assembled helpful FAQs about unemployment benefits in the context of the COVID emergency.

Schools

The question whether our children will return to public classrooms this fall is in flux as the number of COVID-19 infections continues to change. New Trier School District 203, Avoca School District 37, and Sunset Ridge School District 29 continue to survey parents in order to provide the best option for their students. At this point, it appears that all three school districts will likely employ some sort of in-school hybrid learning option, as well as a Remote/eLearning option.

For the latest information, check your child’s school’s website: www.newtrier.k12.il.us; www.sunsetridge29.org; www.avoca37.org.

Joan Frazier
Village President