

PLEASANTVILLE POSTS



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NEWS FROM THE VILLAGE OF PLEASANTVILLE | SIXTH EDITION | SPRING 2021

MAYOR SCHERER REELECTED TO FIFTH TERM; DAVID VINJAMURI AND MICHAEL PEPPARD TO SERVE AS BOARD TRUSTEES

The Village of Pleasantville congratulates Mayor Peter Scherer, who was reelected to the post for a fifth term, as well as Trustees David Vinjamuri and Michael Peppard, who will be starting their second and first terms, respectively.

In reflecting on his role, which has spanned 12 years to date, Mayor Scherer says that he has gotten the opportunity to be knitted into the community in a way that most people are not afforded. He feels fortunate that during his nearly 40 years as a Village resident, the community has engaged him in so many different ways—from activities with his children to his neighborhood to different commissions.

“While I’ve seen the Village change over the years, I also find that much of what drew people here decades ago is what keeps them here today and continues to draw new residents,” said Mayor Scherer. “This is a community that values education, our neighbors, and the arts and offers easy access to Manhattan. There’s a whole lot to like about that.”

Trustees Vinjamuri and Peppard couldn’t agree more with the Mayor’s assessment. Mr. Vinjamuri moved to Pleasantville from Manhattan with his family a decade ago when he and his wife were expecting their second child. Although his first term was served during a particularly challenging time, he is very grateful for the experience and, “loves working on Village issues.”

Mr. Vinjamuri chose to run for a second term to assist the Village as it emerges from the pandemic and to champion some of the projects that were postponed by the economic uncertainties of this past year.

“I’m excited about finalizing a plan for the Village pool, and about starting the pedestrian safety improvements on Manville Road to make it safer to walk in that area, particularly for seniors,” said Mr. Vinjamuri. “I also look forward to finding a way to construct a civic space so that we have a real Village center where people can watch a movie under the stars or meet for an outdoor cup of coffee.”

Mr. Vinjamuri also played a key role in creating the Village’s first scholarship for its summer day camp. Upon learning that there are dozens of students at Bedford Road School alone whose economic situation qualifies them for free lunch, he realized how critical, yet challenging, it will be for many parents to enroll their children in a safe camp situation in order for them to work. The

Village announced that scholarships will fully fund camp for 15 children (see the Recreation Department article on page 3 for more information).

The newest trustee, Mr. Peppard, is a historian of religion at Fordham University in the Bronx who discovered the Village of Pleasantville six years ago when his daughter participated in Farm Camp at Stone Barns in Pocantico. To eliminate the drive back and forth from their Manhattan apartment, he would drop her off and come to Pleasantville for the day to get some work done.

“I realized that Pleasantville was a very artsy community; not just because of the Burns Center, which we love, but because it really values performing arts. And it [had] this incredible local bookstore,” said Mr. Peppard. “Being here gives me a real connection to the land. I can ride my bike from my house to a farm or hop on a train to Manhattan and be at either in less than an hour.”

Although Mr. Peppard says that he has, “always been politically inclined,” it was, “a crisis of meaning during the pandemic,” along with watching his wife pivot to manage her small business, that motivated him to run for the Village Board of Trustees.

“Local government needs to be very practical and, at its best, it creates an environment in which families, individuals and business can thrive,” said Mr. Peppard. “I think we all learned lessons in the past year, but I don’t come to this role with my own agenda. It’s my job to listen to our residents about their concerns and what they need to be successful.”

Reflecting on the future of the Village, Mayor Scherer talks about the necessity of taking multiple opinions into account and of finding a balance “between holding on to what makes Pleasantville special yet not letting it get stuck in the past.”

“If there’s one thing I’ve learned in my time as mayor, it’s that people can see issues in strikingly different ways,” said Scherer. “It’s our responsibility to listen carefully and get to a point where we make a decision with the confidence that there has been a thoughtful process.”

Mayor Scherer concluded: “As challenging as it has been to hold this position at times, there is something that happens almost every day that makes it clear just how rewarding this job is.”

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MOUNT PLEASANT PUBLIC LIBRARY TO HOST PLETHORA OF SPRING ACTIVITIES

Starting April 19th, the Mount Pleasant Public Library's Branch Library on Lozza Drive in Valhalla will be open for browsing Monday to Thursday from 10 to 5 and Friday from 10 to 2. Plans are also being made for the next steps in the phased reopening of the Main Library in Pleasantville.

While the library has already run many programs for adults and children during the pandemic, the library is pleased to announce that live storytimes with Miss Debbie are set to begin on the front lawn of the Main Library in Pleasantville as the weather warms up. While storytime continued virtually since the start of the pandemic, the library has already received several emails from parents about how excited their kids are to see Miss Debbie in person again.

"Many of us have really missed the human connection this past year, so it's very important for us to be there for our community," said Program Coordinator Debbie Jordon. "When we offer these programs to the children, it's not just about doing a craft. It's just as much about seeing and speaking with their peers."

Some popular children's activities being offered by the library include 'grab and go' activities (scavenger hunts, etc.), with programs for children ages 3-6 being held twice and 7-12 once a month. There is also the family friendly Get Outside program, which began in March and provides children with a bag filled with the materials needed for a fun outdoor activity. In March, for example, the bags contained a pair of binoculars and pictures of local birds, while April's activity will be a tree hunt.

Nicole Procko, who has an 8-year-old son and 15-month-old daughter, says that the Grab and Go Kits have assisted them with home schooling, particularly for art and Reading and Writing Workshop. "As a teacher, I find these Grab and Go kits aligned to what is being taught in the school and a supplement to add an additional craft to complete. This provides a hands-on learning experience" said Nicole. "These kits can help bring some normalcy back into families lives."

From craft socials and cake decorating to knitting to practical

guidance on financial issues, adults are also enjoying a host of programs. Coming up there will be three 'Nature Series' talks held by the Pleasantville Conservation Advisory Council on pollinators, trees, and composting. On May 19th there will be a Native Plant program presented by the Native Plant Center at WCC. There is also a book group run in collaboration with The Village Bookstore that meets on the last Wednesday of each month. On April 28th there will be a virtual visit from Amor Towles, author of Rules of Civility.

There is a drawing class coming up - taught by an artist in Michigan, where participants learn how to draw using just a pencil and paper, and an Indian dance workshop held on May 8th. The popularity of programs has been growing so much that the library recently had to increase registration when more than 70 participants registered for an art program!

"I think they've done a fantastic job - I didn't realize these socials were happening pre-pandemic but I look forward to participating once they go back to meeting in person. It's been a welcome Thursday

distraction once a month and I've even gotten my mom involved. The first few she was off camera sharing my supplies but now she's all in," said Rebecca Woodcock, who began participating in programs last August. "I also recently talked a friend into signing up - she's enjoying it as well - she was resistant at first because she's on Zoom all day for work but found she enjoys the social and creative aspects of the programs."

In addition to all these existing and upcoming programs, another effect the pandemic has had on the library and the community is the skyrocketing



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CLINTON STREET SENIOR CENTER PROVIDES SUPPORT AND CONNECTION THROUGHOUT PANDEMIC

The past year has been a challenging one for us all, but the COVID-19 pandemic has been especially difficult for the senior citizens in our community. In this time of crisis, the work of Pleasantville's Clinton Street Senior Center is more important than ever, which is why the Center has adapted its methods over the course of the pandemic to keep our community's senior citizens engaged and connected.

Once the pandemic began last March, the Senior Center was forced to close its doors, but that was simply the beginning of a full pivot to remote and socially-distanced

assistance. The first thing the Center did was have each of its four full time staff place weekly calls to each of their 500-plus participants. In addition to checking on their mental and emotional state of mind, the primary focus was on getting seniors the necessities, including meals and medical attention, if needed. The staff also placed calls to the families of some seniors if they believed they were going through a particularly difficult time. Additionally, the Center worked with local agencies and community volunteers to set seniors up with personal shoppers and other food delivery systems while also teaching them to use

Zoom to talk to their friends and family. Many seniors were also shown how to navigate websites hosting games like bridge and mahjong in order for them to play with their friends.

"I've never been on the phone so much in my life, but every minute has been worth it," said Director of Senior Services Joni Ehrlich. "Our members were all very grateful, and also surprised by how easy it was to connect with their friends and loved ones through technology."

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PROPOSED VILLAGE BUDGET OVERVIEW FOR FY22

A tentative budget for the Village of Pleasantville's new fiscal year, which commences June 1st, 2021 and ends May 31st, 2022, was filed last month in the office of the Village Clerk. As required by law, a public hearing took place on Monday April 12th, 2021 at 8PM to accept comments on the proposed budget from the public.

The budget is tax cap compliant with a tax rate increase of .89%. The average property owner in Pleasantville pays approximately \$4,300 in Villages taxes. Water rates are proposed to remain the

same for all residential, business and non-district customers. Refuse rates to support the Village's sanitation and recycling services will increase by \$1.45 for single family homeowners.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, parking revenue—an important part of Village income—was down considerably. The Village does expect COVID relief funds from the federal government with further guidance and details expected to be issued by the Treasury Department in the coming weeks.

VILLAGE POLICE DEPARTMENT ENGAGES COMMUNITY ON KEY ISSUE; SUBMITS REFORM AND REINVENTION PLAN TO STATE

Last summer, the Village of Pleasantville Police Department and government began engaging the community about the development of the Police Reform and Reinvention Plan. This reform process included the creation of a community stakeholder group as well as a series of six online public forums focused on specific areas of interest, followed by three public meetings to obtain feedback on the drafted plan.

The Police Reform and Reinvention plan was developed following Governor Cuomo's Executive Order 203, which requires each of the more than 500 law enforcement agencies in New York to adopt a policing reform plan. In an August letter to police chiefs, Governor Cuomo indicated that, "there must be mutual trust and respect between police and the communities they serve", and, in recognition of the diversity of communities across the state, that, "each community must envision for itself the appropriate role of the police."

Police Chief Erik Grutzner and Mayor Scherer have embraced the opportunity to hear from residents. "This is a community effort, not a police effort," said Chief

Grutzner. "One of the strengths of the planning process is that it focused on a variety of topics, which encouraged residents to think about what they want from the police force and to get involved in the discussions."

The plan, which was submitted to the state in advance of the April 1st, 2021 deadline, includes five recommendations, each of which is made up of several components. The recommendation categories are: enhanced training for police officers; communication, community outreach and engagement; policies and procedures; enhanced collection and analysis of data; and civil service reform. Chief Grutzner and Mayor Scherer respect the various interests that are represented and the perspectives that were shared, including the importance of recognizing when a person has a disability and the anxiety one might feel when they have to engage with the police.

"Conversations of this nature used to be held in private, and we appreciate that we are now engaging the public," said Chief Grutzner.

Several of the action items within the recommendations are slated to begin immediately, while others continue established practices. In fact, last summer every Village of Pleasantville police officer participated in multiple trainings, including... The police force has also embraced an approach called 'principled policing,' which means that an engagement with a citizen is not judged solely by the outcome, such as a citation given or arrest made, but also by the officer's ability to listen and to treat the citizen with respect.

Another long-standing priority of the Village Police Department is establishing a relationship with members of the community, including some of our youngest residents. Youth Officer Joe Zane is a regular presence at Pleasantville Middle School, where he leads discussions about topics ranging from substance use to bullying

Chief Grutzner believes that community policing is important in Pleasantville. "We want the young people to know and trust our police officers. In addition to Officer Zane going to the schools, we have officers on foot and bike in the Village interacting with the kids," explained Chief Grutzner. "We understand that we need to build and maintain that trust."

The full plan, along with recordings of the public forums and other pertinent information, can be found on the Village website at www.pleasantville-ny.gov/police-reform-reinvention-collaborative.

PLEASANTVILLE PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT PREPARES FOR A SAFE AND FUN SEASON

Spring and summer of 2021 are looking up in the Village! The Rec Department has been diligently and strategically planning for a wonderful season, making sure the health and safety of residents is the first priority. Here's a look at what's to come for a safe summer of fun.

VILLAGE SUMMER CAMP

Due to limited space, Pleasantville Day Camp was held through a lottery system. Groups were broken down on Monday, April 12. Everyone who entered the lottery received a slot! Camp will

begin on June 28 and run through August 6 with two sessions. Applicants chose from the full six week session or one three week session. Camp will be operating at two sites throughout the summer, including the Village Pool. Tents will be set-up to provide ample shade. "We know we needed to get a little creative this year and plan to bring in a magician, a nature expert and more," said Recreation Supervisor Mike Newman. Fifteen (15) full summer camp scholarships will be available to alleviate some of the financial strain this year has caused for families.

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MOUNT PLEASANT PUBLIC LIBRARY continued from page 2

interest in e-books and magazines, along with streaming services for movies. Thanks to a generous donation through the Virginia O'Dell Legacy, the library was able to add a wide variety of titles to their ebook collection to meet the demand.

While the library is excited to invite more community members

in for browsing as it is deemed safe to do so, operating during the pandemic has given library staff ideas for the future. The online classes, for example, may continue, as this allows a greater number of people to participate. In the meantime, exciting activities are on tap this spring.

SENIOR CENTER continued from page 2

As the summer wore on, the Center held exercise and Tai Chi classes outdoors while holding indoor activities such as the Choral Group, Harmonica and other Cultural Activities via Zoom. Seniors also began coming to the building a few times a week for grab & go home-cooked meals, a program that continues today.

Currently, the Clinton Street Senior Center is in the process of slowly re-opening. In addition to continued Zoom activities, some of which are also broadcast on PCTV for seniors without computers, in-person activities such as Ted Talks, Aerobics, Tai Chi and Cooking and Bingo are being held at the building during the week. The Center estimates that there are now about 60 seniors passing through the building every day, which is why, in order to keep all members and staff safe from COVID-19, the

Center recently upgraded their HVAC, added air filters to improve indoor ventilation and follow best practices.

The other primary initiative right now is getting seniors access to COVID-19 vaccines, particularly those that are homebound. The Center has helped seniors get signed up for vaccine appointments and arranged transportation when needed, also referring those eligible to the county's homebound vaccination program.

Overall, the Clinton Street Senior Center has seen a surge of new participants during the pandemic many of whom are surprised at the range of programs and services offered. In addition to making management reconsider safety protocols, operating during a pandemic has had the unexpected benefit of opening up new avenues for keeping seniors engaged and connected.

Zoom, for example, isn't going anywhere after the pandemic ends, as it is a lifeline for seniors who are homebound or unable to reach the Center due to inclement weather. The Clinton Street center has remained a vibrant place for the community's senior population to gather, grow and connect.

"I'm extremely proud of the courage and positive attitude that all of our seniors have shown, but I'm hardly surprised," said Ms. Ehrlich. "This cohort has been through so much in their lives that it's made them incredibly resilient."

Those interested in learning more about or volunteering with the Clinton Street Senior Center Programs and Services are encouraged to go to our website (please add the link). You can also call (914)-769-2021 or send an email to directorseniorservices@pleasantville-ny.gov.

PARKS AND RECREATION continued from page 2

THE VILLAGE POOL

Looking for a way to cool off? Residents are in luck! The Village Pool is opening this summer. The pool will have social distancing measures in place with more information and registration available in the coming weeks.

SPRING 21 AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS AND PRESCHOOL ACTIVITIES AT PARKWAY FIELD

Pleasantville Preschoolers are in for a treat this spring with "Little Honeybees" & "Itty Bitty Butterflies," gardening and craft programs designed for our youngest residents! Classes will take place outdoors and COVID-safe restrictions will remain in place.

The Rec will also be hosting many after school classes at Parkway Field for elementary school students ranging from sports to the SuperHero Stem and popular Chocolate Clubs.

"It's our job to stay engaged with the community and the kids. What's great about Parks & Rec is that you have a dedicated base of people who count on us to keep kids engaged and active. We stay innovative and we change with the times. That is true

all the time but has been particularly important during COVID. We change and adapt to the environment and conduct engaging programming for our residents," said Mr. Newman.

MEN'S SOFTBALL LEAGUE

Athletic fields are also available for use this spring and summer. The Village Men's Softball League will be up and running again this year, with nine teams participating, similar to years past.

"It's great to be playing softball again this year," said Armand D'Angelo who has played for the PDaddy's for about ten years. "Last year was difficult for so many and this helps to bring some normalcy back."

VILLAGE PARKS

Village parks are open and available to residents. The green spaces throughout the village have been a respite for both children and adults throughout the pandemic. "We hope that these parks are and have been a lifeline to our residents during these challenging times. We're doing our part to keep things safe and we will continue to sanitize and clean common areas," said Mr. Newman. "We ask that residents abide by park rules and clean up after themselves so we can continue to keep these spaces beautiful."



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