



THE SWANSEA REPORT

VOLUME 31, ISSUE 12

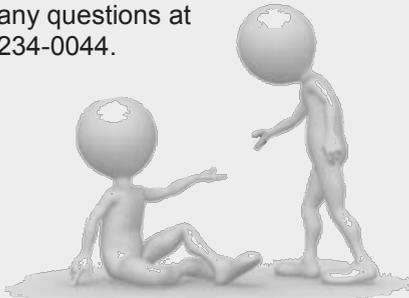
DECEMBER 2016

Donations Needed By Dec 8th For Those Who Would Like To Help Support Effort

Each year many decide to direct some of their charitable giving during the holidays towards neighbors in Swansea who need assistance. If you would like to join them, please consider donating to the Swansea Family Christmas Program this year.

Donations typically come from individuals, families, neighborhood associations, civic organizations, churches and businesses. While new toys and new clothing are always accepted, a donation of cash allows volunteers to purchase gift certificates which in turn allow families in need to purchase specific gifts for their children and buy food for their holiday meal.

Checks in any amount can be made payable to the "**Swansea Family Christmas Fund**" and mailed or delivered to the Swansea Government Center, 1444 Boul Ave. Please do so no later than **Thursday, Dec 8th**. Any other donations may be dropped off to the same location. Please call the Village with any questions at 234-0044.



Swansea Family Christmas Program Helps Residents In Need

Sign Up For Assistance Nov 29 & 30, Dec 1 & 2

The "Swansea Family Christmas" program evolved about thirty years ago from a decision by a group of co-workers to 'adopt' a local family at Christmas rather than exchange gifts with each other.

Today the program helps many local Swansea residents in need by providing a holiday dinner and / or gifts. In 2015, more than 70 Swansea families, representing 254 individuals, applied for and received assistance.

If because of job loss, illness, or some other reason, you may not be able to provide Christmas gifts or a decent meal for your loved ones and could use some assistance, please let the Village of Swansea know.

There are generous individuals, businesses, and organizations in Swansea who are willing to help individuals and families in these situations.

The Village assists that effort by gathering information from residents who need help, and then providing that information to volunteers who distribute gift cards and donations to those families.

In order to be eligible, applicants must be:

- Swansea residents,
- Have a genuine need, and
- Provide current proof of residency.

Applications will be accepted at the

Swansea Government Center, 1444 Boul Avenue, in the Meeting Room between 8:30 am and 3:30 pm, on the following dates:

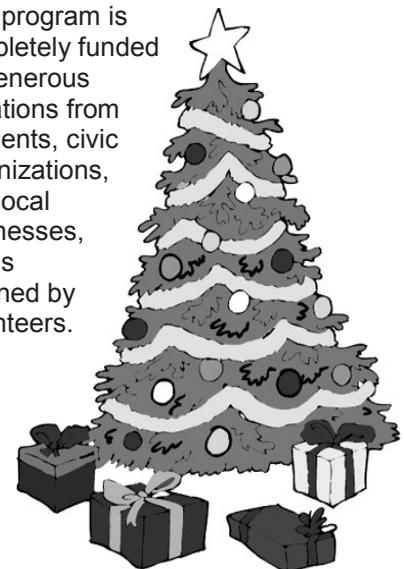
- Tuesday, November 29th
- Wednesday, November 30th
- Thursday, December 1st
- Friday, December 2nd

You must do so in person and on these specific dates and times. Late applications will not be accepted.

Applicants should bring both:

- A current, valid driver's license or State I.D. card **AND**
- A current power, water, or sewer bill, or a current public aid card, each showing the same name and Swansea address as proof of residency.

This program is completely funded by generous donations from residents, civic organizations, and local businesses, and is manned by volunteers.



News Briefs

Resident Clarifies That Mine Subsidence Insurance Is Automatic

After reading the article in last month's Swansea Report a resident contacted the Village and clarified that by State law, all insurance companies writing property insurance in Illinois must automatically include and provide coverage for mine subsidence for both residential and commercial properties in St. Clair and 33 other counties. These are the 34 counties in which most underground mining was conducted in Illinois.

Therefore, coverage should be included on all properties in Swansea unless you have specifically rejected that coverage in writing.

Policy limits for mine subsidence coverage is generally the same as the that for fire or windstorm damage. The coverage is reasonably affordable and in the event of damage, from mine subsidence, could save you thousands of dollars for out-of-pocket repairs to your property. The savings from not carrying the coverage may therefore not be worth the associated risks.

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Government Center Holiday Closings Trash and Recycling Collection Will Not Be Affected

The Swansea Government Center and all non-emergency services of the Village will be closed on Monday, Dec 26th and Monday January 2nd. Since both Christmas and New Years fall on Sundays, the Village observes the holidays on the following Mondays. The Village Board and committee meetings normally held on Jan 2nd, will be shifted to Tues, Jan 3rd instead, at the same times.

The holidays will not affect trash and recycling collection. Republic Services will still make collections on Dec 26th and Jan 2nd.

Village Reaches Settlement With Sewer Contractor

At its November 7, 2016 meeting the Village Board approved a settlement agreement with the previous contractor on the Western Avenue Sanitary Sewer Project Phase II. In the agreement signed by the contractor and their surety (insurance) company, the Village retained all monies budgeted for the project and received a settlement check for \$53,467.85.

The combination of those funds allowed the Village to hire a new contractor to repair and correct the previous contractor's work, to pay for

emergency repairs already made at a creek crossing on the project and to pay for the services of attorneys, engineers, and other costs incurred in resolving the matter.

While the process took time, the Village was made whole in the end. Notice of Award was given to the new contractor on November 8th with hopes that they could get some or all of the work repaired by year end.

Santa Arrives In Mel Price Park On Dec 3

Santa plans to arrive at his special house in Melvin Price Memorial Park on Saturday, Dec. 3rd. While he may be busy at other times rechecking his list, he will be at his Swansea home from 1:00 pm until 5:00 pm on Saturdays and Sundays, and from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm each weekday evening, through December 22nd.



The house is near the Lehr Community Center at the south end of the park. The park is in the 1500 block of Caseyville Ave. Photos with Santa will be available for \$5.00, and every child will receive a small gift. The Swansea Santa House is sponsored by the Swansea Park Board.

Santa could always use some extra help. If you might be interested, contact Marilyn Neumeyer at 234-6293 or 363-8694 for details.

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News Briefs

Bank Card and Check Convenience Fees Pass To Users Dec 1st

Starting Dec 1, 2016, any customer using a credit card, debit card or on-line check processing for the payment of utility bills, purchase of trash stickers, and other financial transactions with the Village of Swansea, will be charged the associated fees for doing so.

Up to this point, the Village has absorbed those fees but the annual cost has grown to over \$27,000.

Now anyone paying by on-line check will be charged a flat fee of \$1.00 for each check processed. In addition, those using credit or debit cards either on-line or in person will be charged a fee equal to 2.75% of the transaction amount, plus \$.50 if the transaction is for an amount less than \$100.00.

Also effective Dec 1st, the Village will no longer accept paper checks sent by a bank to a processing service on

a customer's behalf. For example, in the past, if a customer chose to pay their utility bill electronically through their bank, but the bank was unable to process that payment electronically, the bank produced a paper check, sent it to a service, and that service sent it to the Village. The service then charged the Village a fee. Now the bank must send the check directly to the Village. The service will no longer accept such payments on behalf of Swansea.

To still pay on-line but avoid such charges customers can establish a direct electronic transfer from their account to the Village's. They do so by completing and submitting the NACHA form on the Village's website at <http://www.swanseail.org/FormCenter/Sewer-4/Electronic-Sewer-Payment-NACHA-34>. Or simply go to the Form Center on the Village Website and click on "Electronic Sewer Payment form".

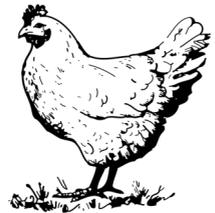
In this type of transaction, the Village incurs no service fee and therefore has no need to pass that on to a customer.

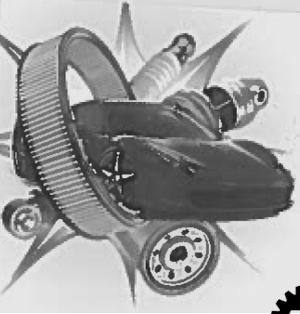
Residents May Now Keep 'Urban Chickens' In Swansea

At its November 21, 2016 meeting the Village Board enacted a new ordinance that allows residents to get a permit and thereafter keep chickens in residential neighborhoods in Swansea. The practice of keeping backyard or "urban" chickens on residential properties is on the rise in the U.S. Homeowners typically do so for the eggs they produce.

The proposed ordinance requires Swansea residents to first secure a permit. The regulations allow no roosters, a maximum of four chickens per property, and dictate enclosures, the handling of waste, odor and noise, and other details.

If the permit holder complies with those rules, they will be able to keep chickens on any property zoned for single family residential use.





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Village/Patrol Officers Agree To 1 Yr Contract

The collective bargaining agreement between the Village of Swansea and its Patrol Officers expired on April 30, 2016. The two sides had been meeting since then to come to agreement on new contract terms.

Initially, discussion was focused on proposals for a 4-year contract. But uncertainty remains as to the potential costs of consolidating 911 dispatching - mandated by the State of Illinois. The Village wanted to focus on that issue and get a clearer picture of the financial impact before it agreed to a longer term contract. So it offered a one year deal that addressed some of the changes wanted by both sides.

Officer's will receive a 2.5% increase in the base wage rate retroactive to May 1, 2016, will now be allowed to reside up to 20 miles from the police department, and training officers will get \$1.00 per hour extra while acting in that capacity. The Village will now have greater flexibility over the

scheduling of specialty units like K-9 officers, members of drug tactical units, and school resources officers. In addition the provisions for drug and alcohol testing were clarified and expanded to include random testing and mandated testing following any vehicular accident.

While both sides preferred a longer agreement, the Village will now have a few months to focus on its approach to 911 consolidation and hopefully implement that approach with its known costs before the two sides return to the bargaining table to address all remaining issues and establish a longer agreement.

The Village's four police Sergeants are under a separate union contract which also expired April 30th but has not yet been extended.

Board Recommends Creation of SSAs for New Subdivisions

Changes proposed to the subdivision code will require that every new subdivision created in the future in

Swansea must establish a Special Service Area or SSA. SSAs allow the Village to provide additional services within a specific geographic area, with those services being paid for by a property tax levied only in that area. In this case the framework for an SSA would be created with each new subdivision, but only implemented if the need should arise in the future.

For example, a subdivision homeowner's association (HOA) might ask to transfer ownership of common ground to the Village and have the Village take care of its maintenance from that point forward. If the Village agrees to do so, it would levy a property tax only on the tax bills of the residents living in the subdivision, then use those funds to pay for any maintenance costs.

This system has the advantage of ensuring that every property owner pays towards those costs, whereas an HOA might find it difficult to collect fees from all subdivision residents. The SSA provision can help prevent

Continued on page 10, See "SSA"

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062015-05622AC

News Briefs



automatic pistol was later found under the driver's seat, loaded and with a live round caught in the extractor, as though it was being loaded during the traffic stop and jammed. Three containers of open alcohol were also found in the vehicle. Two of the three occupants were arrested and jailed.

An Illinois Conservation Officer has explained through the Police Chief that this is mating season for coyotes and for about a month they will be very active at night. They are relatively common in urban areas including in Swansea. He noted that when people live near wooded areas, it becomes more likely that they will encounter coyotes.

Elected Officials discussed the issue at some length but are reluctant to become involved in any public effort to capture and kill the animals.

Officials did encourage residents to not let their dogs or cats run loose, to keep pets under close watch when they take them out to 'do their business', to secure any outside trash, and to not leave dog or cat food outside. Almost all attacks on pets occur when they are off leash.

The Conservation Officer also noted that the State of Illinois has never handled a case of coyotes attacking human beings.

It is illegal to discharge a firearm within the Swansea municipal limits so residents cannot shoot the animals themselves.

Officer Recognized

At the November 7th Board meeting Police Chief Steve Johnson presented Officer Dan Voelker with a Certificate of Excellence recognizing his efforts related to a traffic stop on Oct 29, 2016 at 12:30 am.

The driver of that vehicle was taken into custody for DUI and driving with a revoked license. The front seat passenger had an active St. Clair County warrant for his arrest and became extremely agitated, saying Officers would "have to shoot" him before taking him back to jail. A semi-

Officer Voelker was recognized for his ability to de-escalate the situation and facilitate these arrests by Police Officers with no violence.

Committee Discusses Concerns With Coyotes

In November the Village's Public Safety Committee members discussed residents' concerns with coyotes. Some residents have reported finding coyotes preparing to attack their pets, and as many as seven coyotes have been observed traveling in a pack.

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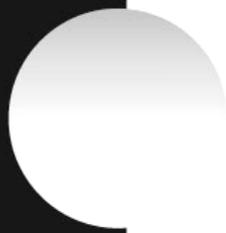
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Understanding Snow Plowing: What To Expect As A Resident

Knowing how the Village's Public Works crews approach snow plowing can help residents have realistic expectations when storms arrive.

- The Village usually runs seven plows, each with a salt spreader and each with a designated route. Those routes are plowed in a specific order, clearing snow routes first, then moving to primary, and then secondary streets. Those with the least traffic volume tend to be plowed last. Each route is designed for efficiency and to minimize backing up so a truck may come down one side of your street but then turn onto one or more other streets before it returns to plow the other side of yours.
- Depending upon the forecast, crews may first spread salt or liquid calcium chloride to pretreat road surfaces and melt the falling snow. This remains effective when temperatures stay above 20 degrees.
- Plowing typically does not begin until at least two inches of snow has fallen. There needs to be some accumulation for the plows to work effectively and not damage streets.
- A heavy and lengthy snowfall may require that plows continue to go over the main arteries and snow routes to keep them clear before the driver gets to more residential streets. Therefore plowing some residential streets may be delayed depending upon the storm's type and intensity.
- If the snow accumulation is 3 inches or more it becomes illegal to park a vehicle, or allow a vehicle to

remain parked on any designated snow route in the 24 hour period following that accumulation, or until the snow route has been sufficiently cleared of snow.

- Any vehicle that is parked along a snow route can be towed if not moved before plows arrive.
- Within Swansea some roads and highways are plowed by the State of Illinois, St. Clair County or township crews. The Village has no jurisdiction over those streets.

What You Can Do To Help

- First, a snow plow moves snow from the middle of the road to the sides. So plows may deposit some snow at the ends of driveways and sidewalks that have already been cleared. You may have to shovel the end again. Consider helping neighbors who are elderly or ill.
- If you pile snow at the end of your drive, do so on the right side as you face the street. A snow pile on the left might get pushed across the drive as the plow moves past.
- Ensure that your mailbox does not hang out into the roadway. The closer it is to the road, the more likely it could be damaged by the snow pushed aside by the plow.
- Do not allow portable or fixed basketball goals to hang out into the roadway, where they might be hit by the raised bed of the truck.
- If possible, don't park on any street until plowing has ended. Crews often return to "plow back" snow at the edge of the streets or around the perimeter of cul-de-sacs once the drive lanes have been cleared.

The following are designated snow routes within the Village of Swansea.

Beau-Gon: for its full length within Village limits
Bettina Dr.: Lakeland Blvd. to Big Bend Blvd.
Big Bend Blvd.: Bettina Dr. to Leawood Dr.
Bobbie Dr.: Castle Dr. to Brian Dr.
Brian Dr.: Bobbie Dr. to Mary Jo Dr.
Caseyville Ave.: Gilbert St. to North Belt West
Castle Ct.: Route 161 to Castle Dr.
Castle Dr.: Castle Ct. to Bobbie Dr.
Creekside Ct.: Creekside Dr. to Old Collinsville Rd.
Fawn Meadows: Lake Lorraine Dr. to Old Collinsville Rd.
Fournie Dr.: Mary Jo Dr. to Josephine Dr.
Fullerton Road: Rte 161 to Rte 159
Gilbert St.: North Illinois St. to Kenwood Dr.
Green Haven Dr.: for its full length
Huntwood Road: for its full length
Josephine Dr.: Fournie Dr. to Rte 161
Kenwood Dr.: Gilbert St. to Kingsbury Dr.
Kingsbury Dr.: Kenwood Dr. to North 17th St
Kinsella Ave.: West "H" St. to Caseyville Ave
Lakeland Blvd.: Rte 159 to Bettina Dr.
Lake Lorraine Dr.: for its full length
Leawood Dr.: Big Bend Blvd to Twin Lake Dr.
Lyonshall Blvd.: within Village limits
Mary Jo Dr.: Brian Dr. to Fournie Dr.
Morgan St.: 17th St. to Rte 161
Polo Run: for its full length
Rand Lane: for its full length
Roger St.: 17th St. to Rte 161
Smelting Works Rd.: North Illinois. St. to Drake Rd. for those portions within the Swansea municipal limits
Steinberg Farm Rd.: Rand Lane to William Lane
Twin Lake Dr.: Leawood Dr. to Huntwood Rd.
William Lane: Old Collinsville Rd to Steinberg Farm Rd.

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Village Board Recommends Tax Levy Increase For Pensions

Plans To Also Abate \$50,000 From GO Bond Tax Fund

At their meeting on November 7, 2016, the Finance Committee of the Village of Swansea once again discussed the levy for property taxes payable in 2017. Of particular concern is a significant increase in the recommendation of actuaries for funding the Village's obligation of both its Police and Fire pensions.

While last year's actual tax extension levied \$817,487.85 for the Police Pension Tax, the actuary has recommended the new levy be \$1,033,507.00. Likewise, last year's tax extension for the Firefighter's Pension Tax was \$73,931.64. The actuarial recommendation for this year of \$208,325.00. Thus, meeting the recommended levy for both funds will require \$350,412 more from the Village than in 2016.

The Village has few choices. Since the State makes the rules for the pensions, the Village has no control over their cost. The Board could levy less, meeting only the actuary's minimum required levy, but that will cause the Village to simply fall further behind in its obligations, much as the State has in theirs.

The Village could also try to fund the increase from other General Fund revenues, but doing so would take \$350,000 away from other public services, which are already struggling under tight budgets.

In the end, Board members recommended that all property taxes

within the levy be held at last year's dollar amounts, except the two specific to Police and Fire pensions.

The specific amounts for each levy where verbally announced as estimates at the November 7th Board meeting and the Trustees approved those estimates by resolution.

A public hearing is now set for Dec 5, 2016 at 5:45 pm at the new Government Center. At that hearing the Village is required to explain the reasons for the proposed increases, which in this case is fairly obvious. Members of the public will have an opportunity to ask questions or make comments. The Board is expected to consider the ordinance for passage that same evening during their meeting that begins at 7:30 pm.

Village Plans To Abate Bond Tax
St. Clair County levies the property tax on behalf of the Village to make principal and interest payments on the General Obligation Bonds used to construct Fire House #2. Because of their process, an extra \$50,000 has accumulated in that fund over the years.

Finance Committee members agreed that once the levy was issued - but before tax bills were prepared and mailed - the Village would 'abate' \$50,000 from the tax levy, meaning the County will collect \$50,000 less. Doing so will in essence lower the impact of the pension fund increases by that \$50,000.

VILLAGE OF SWANSEA CONTACT INFO

Swansea Government Center
1444 Boul Avenue
Hours: 8:00am - 4:30pm, M-F
www.swanseail.org

Administration,
Mayor's Office, Village Clerk,
Utility Billing & Public Works
Phone: 618-234-0044
swanadmn@swanseail.org

Building, Zoning, Permits
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swanbnz@swanseail.org

Swansea Police Department
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Non-emergency: 618-233-8114
swanseap@swanseail.org

Swansea Fire Department
Emergency: 911
Engine House: 618-234-3291

Village of Swansea Officials

President: Ken Mueller
mayor@swanseail.org

Village Clerk Lauren O'Neill
lonell@swanseail.org

Treasurer Michael W. Leopold
mleopold@swanseail.org

Trustee Matt Lanter
mlanter@swanseail.org

Trustee Brian McGuire
bmcguire@swanseail.org

Trustee Marilyn Neumeyer
mneumeyer@swanseail.org

Trustee Stephen Pulley
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Trustee Katherine Ruocco
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News Briefs

Board Makes Changes To Ordinance For Sewer Billing Process

Also in November the Village Board passed revisions to the General Sewer Regulations as they apply to the process for issuing sewer bills and collecting payments. The revised ordinance evolved from a review of the prior language and discussions on how it could potentially be clarified so that it is easily understood and fully reflects the billing process and procedures.

Staff, committee members and the Village Attorney all contributed to the proposed revisions.

What Is The Cost of A Leaking Toilet?

Do you sometimes walk into your bathroom and notice that water is running in the toilet? You know, where you need to 'jiggle' the handle to stop it? Or do you ever hear the toilet fill up with a short

burst of water, even though it hasn't been flushed in awhile? Both are indications of a sticking flapper valve or some other leak in the toilet.

While you might put off fixing it immediately, a toilet leak might send as much as 200 gallons of water per day down the drain. Since you pay not only for that unused water, but for its treatment as wastewater, the loss costs you about \$1.69 per day.

Not that bad? Well, if you let it go one week before you get around to making the repair, the delay costs you \$11.82. Put it off for a month and your loss is \$50.67. Wait 2 months until your sewer bill comes out again? \$101.35 went down the drain in the meantime.

Experts estimate that in the average U.S. home, 14% of annual water usage is attributed to leaks. So one way to keep utility costs in check is to quickly fix any leaking toilet, dripping water faucet, or leaky exterior hose bib, before they impact both your water and sewer bills.

Ban On Burning Yard Waste Back In Effect

November 30th was the last day to legally burn yard waste in Swansea for the season. Burning is now banned again until next Spring.

Residents who still have leaves to dispose of and have yard waste collection through Republic Services can of course continue to use that service through the end of December.

Others may want to consider mulching leaves with a lawn mower or composting on site rather. For a fee, residents can also take yard waste to St. Louis Compost, located at 5841 Mine Haul Road. And some local companies, like Wilson's Landscaping & Lawn Service, at 106 Service Street, offer curbside/bulk leaf removal services. The company can assist by performing complete leaf removal, or use their leaf vacuum machine to pick up leaves the resident has raked to the edge of the road. Their number 618-416-5393.



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Attendees At Comprehensive Planning Session Recommend More Topless Bars For Swansea

Actually, that's not true... But one participant joked that there were so few people who attended the public input session on October 27th, that a small contingent of residents would have had the opportunity to make 'wild suggestions', potentially impacting the plan for everyone else in Swansea.

In all, less than twenty people attended the first public session and many of those were elected officials, staff and Planning and Zoning Board members.

The Village is in the middle of preparing a new comprehensive plan and the public input session are intended to help gather opinions regarding the future of the community and the community's vision of that future.

At the October session, participants divided into two tables and each responded to a series of probing questions in a workbook that was

distributed by Todd Streiler of Streiler Planning.

In some cases those responses took the form of notations or stickers attached to maps, indicating participant's perspectives of positive community features, transportation and traffic issues or concerns, and areas of specific potential development.

Though the groups were small, the discussion was lively and engaging and those who did attend offered good ideas for consideration. It was obvious that the participants care about Swansea and its future and want to see positive growth.

When both groups had completed the tasks, a spokesperson from each presented their group's perspective

and suggestions. And while some were common to both groups, there were unique ideas from each as well.

A second public input session will be scheduled at the end of winter or early spring. Todd Streiler has also interviewed a cross section of specific stakeholders and is pouring through about 150 questionnaires completed and returned by residents. That questionnaire was included as an insert in a previous issue of the Swansea Report.



At the end of the evening, participant Tim McMinn presented the input from his small group to all those present at the public planning session.

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News Briefs

SSA *Continued from page 4*

a situation where an HOA disbands or otherwise becomes inactive and no one remains to officially ensure that grass is cut and other maintenance performed on any subdivision common areas.

SSAs have been in use in Illinois for decades. They are often used in commercial areas where businesses might decide to help fund new sidewalks, decorative lighting or a complete streetscape. The municipality might coordinate the effort and fund the improvements upfront, but then each property contributes towards paying off the cost of those improvements over a set period of time.

The Village would be willing to consider those kinds of requests, as well as requests from established subdivisions that may want some new or additional service specific to them. For example, a subdivision might want sidewalks when they have none. An SSA could be established for the subdivision so that the property owners who benefit from the new sidewalks, share equitably in the cost of their construction. Other residents in the Village would not be taxed for those sidewalks.



Metro East Regional Chamber Hosts Holiday Bash for Charity on December 7th

Our local Chamber's Holiday Benefit Bash is a wine & beer tasting and food pairing event that is always a good time and is for a good cause. The event will be held Wednesday, December 7th, starting at 5:30pm, at the Four Points by Sheraton in Fairview Heights. Proceeds go directly to the Swansea Family Christmas Program which assists Swansea families in need over the holidays, and the Caseyville Township Toys for Girls & Boys Program. Members, spouses, friends, and clients are all welcome. There will be vendors, a silent auction, DJ, and a visit from Santa. For more info or to buy tickets contact the Chamber office at 618-233-3938 or email chamber@MetroEastChamber.org.

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Swansea Community Calendar - December 2016

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
 <i>Merry Christmas</i>				1	2	3 Swansea Park Board Meeting 7:00am Norman Lehr Center
4	5 Tax Levy Hearing 5:45pm Govt. Center Committee Meetings 6:00pm Govt. Center Village Board Meeting 7:30pm Govt. Center	6	7 Chamber of Commerce Holiday Bash 5:30pm Four Points by Sheraton	8	9 Chamber of Commerce Morning Mingle 7:45am - 9:00am Recreation Center Fairview Heights Rec Center, 10025 Bunkum	10
11	12	13 Planning and Zoning Board Meeting 6:00pm Govt. Center	14	15	16	17
18	19 Committee Meetings 6:00pm Govt. Center Village Board Meeting 7:30pm Govt. Center	20	21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve
25  Christmas	26 Christmas Holiday Observed Govt Center Closed	27	28	29	30	31  New Year's Eve

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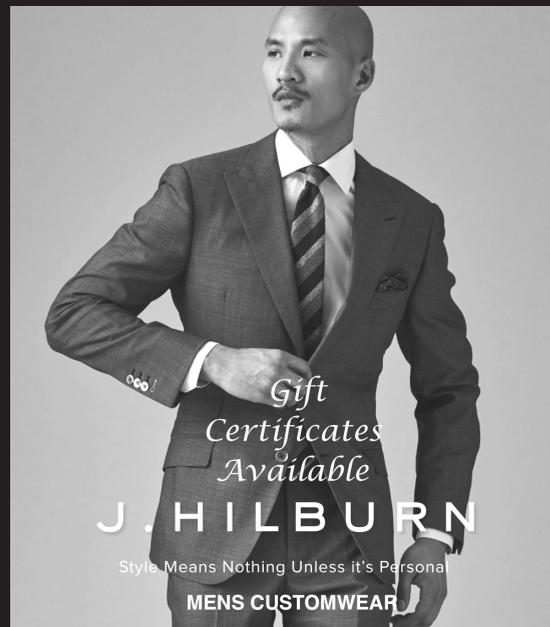
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