



State of the Village – December 6, 2021

This is the first State of the Village since April 2019, due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, postponed and rescheduled elections, and virtual meetings. Although, through our monthly newsletters we tried to keep everyone apprised, I will use this opportunity to review Village activities and events for both 2020 and 2021. As you might expect, COVID and how we handled it, will feature prominently.

Of course, no State of the Village could begin without first acknowledging the extraordinary efforts of the many members of the Larchmont community who volunteer countless hours to make this Village such a wonderful place to live and work. And never has this been more important than over these last 20 months. I want to be sure that I give a personal thank you to the Board of Trustees (with congratulations to Brigid and Dana on their recent election), all Village committee members, volunteer firefighters and the Volunteer Ambulance Corps, community organizations, and business owners. It truly does take a Village.

But special recognition and thanks must go out to Village staff. When COVID hit in March 2020, across the board our staff had to pivot quickly – finding ways to keep Larchmont running while working to ensure they and our residents were protected. Over the last 20 months, we said goodbye to many long-time, dedicated employees who retired or moved on. Recently, we've welcomed new additions to our staff who we're confident will be just as dedicated to our Village.

Some of the many changes that had to be implemented were: creating COVID protocols for handling emergency calls, moving all Board and committee meetings to zoom, creating a lobby service desk to reduce traffic within the building, setting up an online scheduler for making appointments to review materials or meet with staff, staggering shifts and breaks to reduce the number of employees gathered together at any one time, acquiring and distributing PPE, and implementing rules at playgrounds and parks.

Then of course, since COVID wasn't enough, there was Tropical Storm Isaias in August 2020 and Ida in September 2021. Both of these weather events kept our DPW and emergency responders hard at work for days on end. A big thank you to all for your dedication to getting the job done well.

And as applications for renovations increased dramatically during COVID, the Planning Board, ARB and ZBA worked overtime to try to accommodate the needed reviews under new working circumstances. Thanks to the members of those land use boards.

We have been back to our normal operations since July, which is when in-person Board of Trustee meetings also resumed. We have continued to require appointments for the building department and the land-use boards continue to hold their meetings virtually using digital plans. It seems some of the adaptations necessary for COVID ended up being improvements.

Although the Governor recently declared a State of Emergency again, we are waiting to see the data on Omicron from researchers and are monitoring our numbers of new cases locally. Over the entire course of the pandemic, Larchmont had 664 reported cases of COVID, 1 reported fatality and we currently have 23 active new cases.

This is the first December Re-Organization meeting in Larchmont's history – but this will now be the norm since, at the rescheduled September 2020 Village election, residents overwhelmingly approved moving our Village election to coincide with the November General Election. We felt, and the community obviously agreed, that this change would make more residents aware of the Village election and increase participation

Thankfully, the Village, by which I mean Deputy Mayor Bauer, began using Constant Contact for emails to residents in September 2019. This put us in a good place for the incredible level of communication necessary during COVID, especially in those first few months. We now have a monthly digital newsletter and email updates, as needed, going out to over 2400 subscribers! We also upped our game on Facebook and Instagram, where we have now 2100 and 1200 followers, respectively. Some Village posts reach over 6000 people! Up next in improved communication, the long-awaited revamp of our website. Plus, our domain will be shorter and easier to remember and type as we move from villageoflarchmont.org to larchmontny.gov.

Of course, a major focus of the Board has and continues to be the vitality of Larchmont's downtown and its survival during COVID, about which we were incredibly concerned. Here is where having a close-knit community was so invaluable. To support our businesses, residents stepped up with donations and

over \$150,000 in grants was given out through One Larchmont and low-interest loans were provided through Bridge the Gap Larchmont.

As New York started its phased reopening, the board and administration began talking about the need to expand our existing usage of public space to provide additional capacity to restaurants, retailers and service providers. We knew that customers may not be comfortable going indoors and that capacity limits of 25% were not a sustainable business model.

We began those conversations in mid-May and by early June we had a plan in place. I issued an executive order changing the rules for use of public space, and we had mapped out lane and street closures, created free permits, and had ordered barriers.

Because of our early planning, when the opening date was unexpectedly moved forward by two weeks we were ready on June 8, putting out the barriers to set up for outdoor dining in parking lanes, streets and parking lots.

Because we were ready to go on day ONE, we attracted people from all over who were looking forward to getting out again and who otherwise would not necessarily have come to Larchmont. The stories on NBC and in the Journal News highlighted what we were doing and helped draw people to our community.

In addition to using the sidewalks and streets for restaurants and retailers, we also provided, at no charge, space in our public parks for yoga classes, music instruction and co-working events, among other things.

The opportunity to have this additional capacity helped so many to not only survive but thrive. In an article in the Yale Daily News from early September 2020, the owner of Tequila Sunrise stated that, “after suffering through his worst spring ever, since re-opening on June 9th with outdoor dining he was within a few days of canceling out that deficit.”

As winter approached the village decided to continue outdoor dining and the use of the parks. We once again changed the regulations to handle the new cold-weather uses and One Larchmont stepped up with another fundraising effort to help purchase igloos and greenhouses for restaurants.

Although we did lose some of our businesses during this time, we had several new businesses open during COVID, celebrated the anniversaries of longtime Larchmont staples who were sustained by our efforts, and, compared to pre-Covid, we ended up with a net gain of thriving businesses in our downtown.

Progress continues on the two new buildings in the downtown. 1912 Palmer, which burned down in November of 2016, is almost complete. The exterior should be closed up and scaffolding removed this week. The sidewalk and parking will be

reopened shortly thereafter, however a new sidewalk does need to be poured. This is presently planned for next week. Fingers crossed. The Board recently toured Centro, the new mixed-use building on Chatsworth and it's looking great. We're excited to see this rejuvenation of the Chatsworth/Palmer area and look forward to completion of both sometime in the spring, bringing additional foot traffic, new retail, and vitality to the Village

The fiscal health of the Village is of the utmost importance to this Board. Just before the COVID related shutdowns started the Village had prepared its Tentative 20/21 budget and was moving toward adoption. Within a short time, it became clear that the Village's finances were going to be impacted in a major way. The tentative budget was amended to reflect the approximately \$800,000 in anticipated revenue shortfalls and only a 1% increase to the property tax levy. To accomplish this, we cut and deferred planned capital projects, put a hiring freeze in place on all vacant positions as well as numerous other reductions in expenditures. While commuter parking revenue and Court fines have been slow to come back, we did see a rebound in the area of Sales Tax, Mortgage Tax and NYS Aid (AIM funding). The combined result of all budgetary efforts maintained the fiscal health of the Village and avoided closing the year in a deficit. Our Treasurer's Office are working with the independent auditors on the annual audit and financial statements which we hope to present to the public later this month.

The current year (FY21/22) budget was prepared and discussed entirely via zoom – which was an awkward process. The FY21/22 budget was adopted as NYS Tax Cap complaint for the 4th year in a row and was balanced without the use of fund balance for the 3rd year in a row. These and other decisions ensure the fiscal health and favorable credit rating from rating agencies. Larchmont remains an AAA rated entity which ensures great access to credit and low interest rates.

The Village Board recognizes the need to invest in the Village's infrastructure and provide for services while being sensitive to the property tax burden faced by property owners. To accomplish both needs the Board regularly reviews expenses and needs to ensure they are accomplished effectively and efficiently. The Board is also always open to review and consider non-property tax revenue sources to ease the dependence on property tax increases.

As we embark on the preparation of the FY 22/23 budget it's clear that rising costs felt by residents will impact the Village's expenditures. The cost of electricity purchased by the Village is expected to increase 25%, health insurance is expected to increase by 10%, in addition to the rising cost of fuel and other supplies. The Village Board will move forward, with a commitment to making decisions in the best interest of Larchmont residents as stewards of the community.

As fellow residents, we are always sensitive to the need to control taxes. The Board is always working to develop additional non-tax revenue streams, as well as take new looks at some of the drivers of expenses.

After several years of study, discussion and communication with the community, the Board implemented paid on-street parking in Larchmont. In December of 2020 we approved a borrowing resolution of \$625,000 to purchase multi-space meters, a License Plate Reader, new signage and other related items. The system was installed in the spring of 2021 and went fully live June 1, 2021. As had been stated in Village parking studies dating back to the 1960's, paid parking is the most effective tool we can use to create turnover and business-supportive use of parking. It also recognizes the value of this common asset and creates an opportunity for the users, not all of whom are Larchmont Village taxpayers, to assume some of the financial responsibility for its upkeep. To that end, and in recognition of the significance of this change to Larchmont, the Board created a Special Revenue Fund through which all revenue and expenses for this new "parking franchise" would flow. We then set a policy that 90% of the net revenue of this fund would be restricted to use for capital projects related to transportation and mobility. We are dedicated to having this new revenue source be spent primarily on long-lasting, tangible improvements that will benefit the entire community.

Grants can be an important component of non-tax revenue and we are pleased to announce that these past two years the fire department was awarded \$22,000 for COVID supplies, \$12,800 for a washer and dryer to clean in-house the FD turn-out gear, and \$1500 for new hoses and nozzles. Chief Caparelli has applied for a \$1,000,000 to purchase a new tower ladder truck. Fingers crossed – we should here by mid-2022.

We also won NYSDEC grant for the installation of 3 Electric Vehicle Charging stations in the amount of \$67,553. These will be installed in the next few months.

Thanks to the support of Assemblyman Steve Otis, we were awarded a NYS SAM grant in the amount of \$250,000 for the replacement of a water main, and some hydrants and valves.

We are working with the Town of Mamaroneck, our partners in the Joint Sanitation Commission, on ideas for a new structure to improve the flexibility and efficiency of this important service. Our monthly work sessions are open to the public and can be found posted on the Village website calendar. Additionally, a correction made to the allocation of Commission costs saved the Village about \$130,000 in sanitation expenses.

Next, I would like to highlight some of the operational and capital projects undertaken in the Village.

We have taken several steps in an effort to enhance overall efficiency and quality of service.

Timely to the crisis, online parking permits sales were ready to begin in May 2020. We also added online property tax payments in June 2021. Residents can now pay their taxes, water bill, parking permit fees and parking ticket fines online. We hope to move to allowing building department and other permits to be payable online in the not-so-distant future.

The DPW and Water Department, using the SAM grant funds, installed over 600 feet of 8" cast iron water main pipe and 2 new fire hydrants in Flint Park. They also reconnected the sprinklers to Fields A and B and made some other improvements to connections to buildings within the park. Using in-house labor saved us at least \$60,000. The staff did a great job on this project!

Working with the City of New Rochelle, the Town of Mamaroneck and the Village of Pelham Manor, we completed a thorough survey and evaluation of our sanitary sewer system. The consortium was awarded a \$5.7 million grant from the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation, the Village's share of which is \$807,000.

Since commencing the project in October of 2017 the Village has spent almost \$1.7m cleaning, evaluating, repairing and lining sections of its sanitary sewer system. As the consortium prepares to embark on Phase 2 of this project the Village Board has applied the entire disbursement of ARPA funds (\$635,000) toward additional sanitary sewer repairs. Work under phase two is in the final design stages and construction is expected to resume in early 2022. This work will include significant repairs to eliminate I&I (inflow and infiltration) in sections of our sanitary sewers in the area of Shore Drive, Spanish Cove and Old Colony Drive. The Village also expects to replace the water main in this work area as well as other infrastructure improvements such as roadway drainage and paving.

This year we began employing a new sidewalk grinding technique to remove known trip hazards without needing to replace entire sidewalks that may otherwise be in good condition. This enables us to make repairs more quickly and at a savings of 75% over replacement cost.

We are awaiting delivery of our first hybrid police vehicle and are moving towards a hybrid and electric fleet.

Over the past two years the DPW has been replacing Village street light fixtures with LED light fixtures. They are about 80% done. Based on 2021 prices of electricity the completed LED Street light project was projected to save the Village

approximately \$65,000 annually. This is achieved in a reduction of 276,000 (kWh) {kilowatt hours} used by the street light network.

In early summer of 2020, we completed an important redesign to the Turtle Park Traffic Intersection at Palmer and Hall Avenues. This not only improved vehicular traffic flow, but created safe pedestrian crosswalks at a busy intersection where few existed previously. Thanks to Joanne Grossman of Larchmont Nurseries for planting the island in October 2020 as her gift to Village.

The tradition of public/private partnerships continued in full-force despite COVID. Working with the Parks & Trees Committee and Friends of Larchmont Parks, we managed to complete the long-planned renovation of Constitution Park. This was not without some hiccups, since we broke ground in September 2019, then had to shut down construction for several weeks. We were able to start up again and with a combination of virtual and outdoor meetings, made our way through all the final details. The opening was held in October, 2021 with a fully-masked gathering of all those who helped make this amazing community gathering space a reality. Thanks again to all those who worked so hard on this project: P&T, FOLP, designer Rivi Oren, BOT, DPW, Administrator Datino, Nick's Electric, Casale and all the generous donors. Private donations funded approximately 75% of the project costs, with the remainder coming from the Village.

We are now working with the Flint Park Conservancy on a proposed renovation plan of that park's playing fields, playground, paths, paddle tennis court and basketball court. I'm happy to say this also includes improving the park's tree canopy. This plan is moving into the final review stage, with next steps being a public presentation and approval of a capital project budget by the Board.

We are dedicated to ensuring our parks are in good shape and we are committed to enhancing the Village's natural environment.

To that end, in the fall of 2020 Larchmont's Board instituted the first gas-powered leaf blower ban in the Northeast. Since then, we have been contacted by numerous communities around the country asking for advice on how they can implement their own bans. And there is now talk of a county-wide and even a state-wide ban as well. Our full ban goes into effect on January 1, 2022. This action could not have happened without the hard work and diligence of the LEC and we thank them for that. The LEC also brought to us the creation of Westchester's first AGZA Green Zone in Kane Park, which required a commitment that there would be no use of pesticides or 2-stroke engines. Having met all of AGZA's requirements, Kane Park was awarded an AGZA green zone certification in September 2021.

Several years ago, as the result of considerable community interest in local historic preservation, the Board created the Historic Preservation Task Force. Last year,

using a grant from the Preservation League of NYS they oversaw the completion of a reconnaissance-level historic resource survey. This survey can be found on the Village's website under the Our Community/History tab. We are now in the beginning stages of reviewing possible historic preservation legislation and should be bringing a draft to the community soon for review and discussion.

Yes, we've been busy working, but we have been having a bit of fun too!

Most of our traditional events were cancelled or held virtually in 2020, but we came back strong in 2021.

To open the year, the volunteer FD held a spring egg hunt in Constitution Park. We then worked with the Chamber of Commerce on a very successful Sidewalk Sales in the downtown!

On May 15th we had the first annual Larchmont Music Festival, an all-day concert which for many was the first large group activity for over a year. What a day!

The fun continued all summer with the expanded Larchmont summer concerts calendar and the Speakeasy acoustic concerts sponsored by Post Wine and Spirits.

In September we celebrated the 130th birthday of Larchmont's incorporation with Larchmont Weekend! This 3-day event began with a performance by the Chamber Orchestra of NY, followed by the Larchmont Day/Big Truck Day festival and culminated in a Sunday ice cream social. This event keeps expanding in scope and growing in popularity and it would not happen without the volunteer help of the LPFFA and PBA members, volunteer firefighters, lots of community involvement and the event organizing skills of Trustee Fanelli.

Thankfully, this year we were able to hold the Tri-Municipal 9/11 memorial event, remembering those who were lost 20 years ago on that terrible day.

Rounding out the fall, the Larchmont Arts Festival returned for their first year in the new Constitution Park. It was a resounding success. And on October 23rd the Ragamuffin Parade had over 1,000 participants marching down Larchmont Avenue and stopping at Village Hall for music and hot dogs.

We were glad that the LPD was able to resume their popular Coffee with a Cop at Sunshine Coffee Roasters last week. Please watch for future opportunities to share coffee and conversation with the members of our Village police department.

And finally, this past weekend we had the Village-wide Light Up Larchmont celebration – organized as a collaboration of the Chamber of Commerce and the LPD and LPFFA. And new this year, the Chabad of Larchmont-Mamaroneck, in

cooperation with Larchmont businesses, held a Hanukkah Walk through the downtown and then lit a giant menorah at Constitution Park.

Our thanks to everyone who works to make these community events a reality! We look forward to an even bigger schedule next year!

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we thank you for the opportunity to serve our friends and neighbors in the Village of Larchmont and we look forward to another productive year.