



June 5, 2019

Dear friends and neighbors,

It seems hard to believe; my term as your Village President began just two short years ago. Milestones tend to be a natural point to reflect upon prior accomplishments, and I have certainly been reflecting on the significant progress we have made as a Village during the past seven years. There are plenty of signs around town about the changes that have been made. The first phase of our Kenilworth 2023 program was completed and resulted in better water flow to our fire hydrants and reduced flooding with a state of the art storm sewer system and new lining system. We've addressed a long-standing safety problem at the intersection of Sterling, Roger and Green Bay roads, providing a safer intersection for both pedestrians and motorists. A commitment to upgrade amenities at the beach and limitations on lakefront development reflect the first steps in focusing upon improving our beach and lakefront. Our next step includes a decision on the future of our decommissioned water plant.

Actions which aren't as visible include making additional contributions to our Police Pension Fund to counter projected large contributions required in the future, updating of various codes, many of which hadn't been revised since the 1960's, and adhering to a balanced budget which garnered us a Aaa rating from Moody's.

While all of these actions are very positive, there is one area where I feel that we could be doing much more to both enhance the quality of life of our residents and help reduce the property tax burden. Our business district is an under-utilized asset that I feel has great potential. Most successful downtowns provide residents with options to shop, dine, and naturally establish a sense of place for the community. A result of this vibrancy is an increase of property values and shift of tax burden from property taxes to sales taxes. This is what the authors of our 2008 Comprehensive Plan envisioned for Kenilworth - a vision that has yet to be realized.

Approximately a year ago, the Village Board began exploring options to revitalize our business district. One of the economic development tools suggested in the Comprehensive Plan was the creation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District in our downtown. With a TIF District, the Village would receive special revenue funds which could be used to beautify our downtown, provide grants to improve building façades, install new sidewalks, benches and street lighting, as well as incentivize reasonable development - all without changing the way other taxing bodies levy taxes, or disproportionately increasing property taxes.

I understand the concern that potential changes to our business district can engender, particularly with regard to the extent of redevelopment and the costs associated with the improvements. I can assure you that, irrespective of a TIF District, any development must go through our rigorous and public approval process. My goal is to move slowly and deliberately with what is done to attract businesses. Practically, just as in the rest of town, there are infrastructure improvements that need to be made. Aesthetically, there are a number of small-scale upgrades that we can implement to enhance the look of our business district and a TIF can help us pay for those improvements.

Recently, a group of taxing bodies (Joint Review Board) recommended that the Village Board consider creating a TIF District by a vote of five in favor, one opposed, and one abstaining. On May 20th, the Village Board held a public hearing to accept comments from other taxing bodies, residents, and business owners. During that meeting, one business owner expressed support for the TIF District, and approximately 20 residents and visitors spoke against the proposal.

Looking at the overall needs of the Village, efforts we have made to improve our financial health and minimize the impact to tax payers, it is my personal opinion that the TIF District is our best option to reverse the pattern of decline in our business district. However, part of my responsibility is to both apply my best judgment as a trustee of our village and weigh the comments and opinions of our residents. In doing so, I feel that it is important to obtain opinions from all our residents since it will affect everyone either directly or indirectly.

In today's world, it can be difficult for many of you to find the time to fully engage upon community matters and express opinions. However, that is exactly what I am about to ask of you. Please review the TIF District information on our website and consider attending the June 17th Village Board meeting to share your opinion. If you are not able to attend the meeting, feel free to send an email to the Village Board (villageboard@vokil.org). The Village Board of Trustees will be discussing the TIF District on June 17th and then taking a vote at the July 15th meeting. We would like to hear from you.

Thank you for taking the time to weigh in on this important community matter.

Sincerely,



Ann Potter
Village President