

Big Rock Township Supervisor's Annual Report

"The State of the Township – 2020/21"

The past year was challenging in many ways for all township residents, families, and friends, and Big Rock Township was also significantly impacted by the long Covid shutdown. Due to the Governor's executive orders, the Township Hall was closed to all public meetings and community groups for most of last year. Despite the shutdown, all township services continued to be provided uninterrupted, with virtual board meetings, resident communications, new programs, and implementing additional Covid precautions such as required masking, social distancing, installing hand sanitizers, and implementing additional cleaning.

Some of the new or expanded township programs in the past year include:

New Township Waste and Recycling Agreement

Following the positive results of a March voter referendum, a new township waste and recycling agreement was negotiated with Groot Industries as our exclusive waste hauler for all residences and businesses within the township. The 5-year agreement which began July 1 has reduced the annual cost of waste disposal services for virtually every residence, farm, and business in Big Rock by hundreds of dollars. This has significantly reduced the number of heavy trucks on township roads, with reduced road maintenance and repair costs expected in future years .

No Township Tax Hike

2020 was the 3rd consecutive year in which the township maintained a flat property tax levy (for the 2017-2019 tax years), with zero increase in the township and road district property tax rates. While the cost of many services, supplies, and other township expenses continues to increase due to inflation, the township was able to use our reserve funds to fill in the budget gaps when needed. Any future tax increases will be capped at the annual CPI (Consumer Price Increase) established by the federal government

New Senior and Disabled Transportation Program

A new program to provide seniors and disabled individuals with transportation for local doctor appointments, therapy sessions, and other essential needs will continue in 2021 as budgeted funds are available. Freedom First Transportation (based on North Aurora) can provide wheelchair-accessible vans for scheduled medical appointments with 24-hour notice. The rider pays a \$10 copay to travel within a specific service area, with the township picking up the remainder of the cost. Due to limited funds, the program is restricted to 1 ride/week, and has provided rides for several residents in the township during the past year

Strong Financial Performance and Reserves

As noted elsewhere in the Annual Financial Report, our 2020 /21 fiscal year ending March 31 was strong and favorable. The township and Road District maintain financial reserves equal to

12-18 months of regular expenses as recommended. All township funds are held in FDIC-insured accounts, primarily at Old 2nd Bank, with funds above FDIC limits held at other banks through a partnership fund-transfer agreement. Township financials are reviewed every year by our outside accounting firm (Newkirk and Associates, Plano) and they prepare and submit required financial reports to the Illinois State Comptroller. The township and road district will complete a full external audit in the 2nd quarter of this year.

Township Cemetery Activities There were 6 burial services held at our two township cemeteries during 2020, and 8 gravesites were sold. A new granite sign was installed at the entrance to Welsh Cemetery, and a project to locate and raise the old and sunken concrete lot markers began and will be completed in the coming year. A number of landscaping and tree trimming improvements were finished at Welsh and Fowler Grove. Projects planned for 2021 include repaving the driveway at Welsh and constructing an off-street parking area at Fowler Grove. A project to repair and reset several broken/toppled gravestones will also begin this spring.

Mental Health Programs and Services

The township continues to provide residents with access to a variety of mental health services through our partnership with 6 other nearby townships in the INC Board Mental Health Alliance. During FY2020, 71 residents of Big Rock Township received at least 1 mental health service. Available local services include mental health counseling, suicide prevention, family counseling, addiction recovery, crisis intervention, school-based programs, and others. I will be finishing my 4th and final year as the INC Board President in 2022.

Enhanced Township Communication

Big Rock Township has coordinated the publication and mailing of the Big Rock Crier for over 30 years, with financial support from the Big Rock Village, Park District, and Fire District. The Crier mailings expanded to 6 bimonthly issues per year to keep residents informed of the happenings and events in our community. The township website at bigrocktownship.com was updated to include more current information, meeting notices, finance and budget information, and to keep all township activities open, transparent and available to residents. The township Facebook page remains our social media option and provide very current news, calendars, and updates of both township and Kane County events.

Consolidated Election Results

172 Big Rock residents early voted, mailed in ballots, or voted in-person at the April 6 Consolidated Local Election. In addition to the reelection of all other township officials, Jennifer Schlachter was elected as Big Rock Township Clerk. New terms for all elected officials will begin May 17 except for the assessor, who by statute has a new term that begins January 1.

We look forward to a return to more “normal” township activities in the coming year and appreciate your ongoing support.

Ken Rojek, Big Rock Township Supervisor