

DECENNIAL COMMITTEE JOINT REPORT

NORWOOD PARK TOWNSHIP

NORWOOD PARK TOWNSHIP ROAD & BRIDGE

Norwood Park Township, with a population of 27,441 as of the 2020 census, is one of the 29 townships of Cook County. The Township includes an unincorporated area of Cook County, a section of Park Ridge, and the villages of Norridge and Harwood Heights. There are 2 full-time employees in the Township, not including elected officials. There are no employees in the Road District, not including the elected official. The Township's annual budget for 2023 is \$1,003,665. The 2023 budget for the Road District is \$234,765. The Township's equalized assessed valuation for 2023 is \$437,739,442.

Norwood Park Township Decennial Committee Members

Township Supervisor: Anthony Nasca

Township Highway: Commissioner: Larry Rogawski

Township Trustee: Paul Alongi

Township Trustee: Andrew Cichon

Township Trustee: Dennis Stefanowicz Jr.

Township Trustee: Steve Wyda

Township Assessor: Dennis Karns

Township Resident: Fiona Tanny

Township Resident: Heidi Moore

Decennial Committee Meeting Dates

June 7, 2023 - First organizational meeting

December 29, 2023 - Second meeting

May 31, 2024 - Third meeting

Programs and Services Offered by Our Township

General Assistance: Provides financial assistance to residents in need

Youth Committee: Provides grants benefiting resident youths in education, scouting, sports, arts, etc.

Senior Committee: Provides grants to resident senior programs

Subsidized Taxi Program for Senior and Disabled Residents

Summer Enrichment Camp for K-8th Grade

Property Tax Assistance and Educational Seminars for Residents

Assistance with Disability/License Placard Applications

Assistance with RTA Reduced Fair Permits

Notary Public Service

Assistance to Access to Care Applications

Referrals to social services including LIHEAP

Prescription Drug Take Back Program

Drop Off Cell Phones for Senior Programs

Educational Safety Seminars in conjunction with Cook County Sheriff

Voter Registration

Official Toys for Tots drop-off location

Norwood Park Township partners with the non-profit Senior Assistance Center in Norridge, IL which benefits all senior residents in the Township. Yearly grant funding from the Township provides many seniors with needed healthy home-delivered meals. The Township is considering partnering with various food banks to provide a food pantry that could benefit a larger population our residents in need.

Intergovernmental Agreements/ Partnerships

Our Township maintains strong relationships with other local government entities to enrich our residents' lives. These partnership programs allow Township residents to receive necessary services practically and efficiently. The following is a list of some of these partnerships and the services that are or were provided:

1. The Township partners with the local school districts to provide funding for much needed enhancements that have been an enormous benefit to the youth in our community. Among these provided have been much needed security upgrades, modernized playground equipment, electronic message boards, virtual reality teaching tools, and asbestos abatement. In addition, the Township was also able to supply every local student with updated technological tools including iPads and Chromebooks. The Township also partners with the school districts in our Township to provide a Summer Enrichment Camp for students in K-8 grade

2. Our partnership with the Norwood Park Fire Department has allowed for the yearly distribution of life-saving flu shots to residents. The Township has also assisted in funding necessary paramedic equipment including ambulance monitors and stretchers.

3. Our Township, with The Cook County Sheriff, has been offering safety seminars aimed at keeping seniors safe and informed. We also partner with the Norridge and Harwood Heights Police Departments to provide a "National Night Out" in our community which fosters strong relationships between residents and the local police forces.

Review of Township Laws, Policies, Rules and Procedures, Training Materials, and Other Documents

We have reviewed the following list of laws, policies, training materials, and other documents applicable to the Township to evaluate our compliance and to determine if any of the foregoing should be amended.

State laws applicable to Townships, including, but not limited to the Township Code (60 ILCS)

Illinois Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120)

Policy on public comment

Designation of OMA officer (5 ILCS 120/1.05(a))

All Elected Officials have completed OMA Training (5 ILCS 120/1.05(b))

Schedule of All Township Regular Meetings for Calendar or Fiscal Year (5 ILCS 120/2.03)

Illinois Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140)

Designation of FOIA officer (5 ILCS 140/3.5(a))

FOIA Officer Training (5 ILCS 140/3.5(b))

Computation and Retention of FOIA Requests (5 ILCS 140/3.5(a))

Posting Other Required FOIA Information (5 ILCS 140/4(a); 5 ILCS 140/4(b))

List of Types or Categories of FOIA Records under Township's Control (5 ILCS 140/5)

Periodic Meetings to Review Closed Meeting Minutes (5 ILCS 120/2.06(d))

IMRF Total Compensation Postings (5 ILCS 120/7.3)

Designation of Whistleblower Auditing Official (50 ILCS 105/4.1)

All of our Elected Officials have filed statement of economic interests (5 ILCS 420/4A-101; 5 ILCS 420/4A-101.5)

Sexual Harassment Prevention Training (775 ILCS 5/2-109(c))

Our Intergovernmental Agreements

Our Social Service Agreements or Contracts

Our budget and financial documents

State Ethics Laws, including, but not limited to the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (5 ILCS 430/1-1)

Reports on government efficiency, including “Local Government Efficiency and Size in Illinois: Counting Tax Revenues, Not Governments” by Wendell Cox (2016); “Local Democracy and Townships in the Chicagoland Area,” by Wendell Cox, (January 2012).

What Has Gone Well and Recommended Improvements

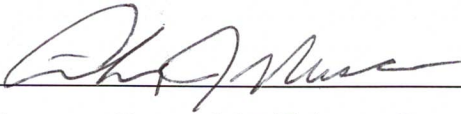
Norwood Park Township strives to be fiscally responsible while improving and enhancing the lives of our residents. The Township has not had a levy increase in over 20 years. Our elected officials do not receive pensions. We maintain a small efficient staff and are very conscientious of any expenses, which keeps our operating budget low. This year the Township replaced outdated fixtures throughout the building with upgraded LED lighting. The new energy efficient, sustainable lighting system has improved the aesthetic in the Township as well as reduced maintenance and operating costs. Projected future utility operating cost savings from this update will be substantial. Our focus is serving our residents to the best of our abilities. Our office is open Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 3 pm, thus ensuring there is always an elected official or staff member onsite to address any concerns of residents. Messages and emails are responded to promptly. The Township is open daily during the week for in-person visits. The phone is always answered during business hours. We have a message system and an emergency phone number for off business hours. The Township can also be contacted via email, and through our website or Facebook page. We respond promptly and thoroughly to any FOIA requests. One of the most utilized services of the Township is the assistance offered to residents by the Township Assessor. The Assessor aids and advises residents with property tax appeals, exemptions, and various filings. In addition, the Assessor this year has been hosting educational property tax seminars which have been well attended by residents.

As continued growth and vitality is important for the continued efficiency of the Township, we are always looking for ways to improve. The Township has been implementing more social media and digital communications in our operations. Continuing this will strengthen our communication with residents as well as our connections with other governmental entities, thus opening the way for more partnerships in the future.

The Norwood Park Road and Bridge District is responsible for and provides maintenance to the streets in the unincorporated section of Norwood Park Township. This includes snow removal, winter salting and street repair. The Road District also has not raised a levy in 20 years. Having no staff and running daily operations as cost effective as possible the Road District has maintained tax savings that are very appreciated by residents. To continue to maintain and repair roads properly and efficiently as the costs of these endeavors rise, the Road District should continue to investigate more areas where partnerships and grants could occur.

In preparing this report we reviewed several studies on local government efficiency. These studies have highlighted many key factors. The average local government in Illinois serves a lower number of residents compared to the national median. Most townships in Illinois operate with no bond debt and Norwood Park Township and the Norwood Park Road District are not exceptions to that. We like most Townships maintain low costs including labor. This correlates with the fact shown by studies that Township expenditures have grown at a lower rate than those of any other level of government since 1992.

The Norwood Park Township Decennial Committee has been tasked with recommendations regarding increased accountability and efficiency for the Township and Road District. We recommend both entities continue to strive for and maintain fiscal responsibility. While maintaining a fiscally conservative approach we suggest continued investigations into additional partnerships with other governmental entities. This would serve residents better by providing available, supplemental resources.

Submitted by: 
Chairperson, Decennial Efficiency Committee of Norwood Park Township
and Norwood Park Township Road & Bridge

Date: October 16, 2024