

ADVANCINGSM OAK BROOK

SUMMER | JULY 2022

INTRODUCING *Advancing Oak Brook*SM

I hope you enjoy this inaugural *Advancing Oak Brook* newsletter.

With the election of a new Board last year, an energetic new Village Manager, and the continued steady leadership of President Gopal Lalimalani, the Village of Oak Brook is operating more effectively than ever. Our collective challenge is keeping Oak Brook's bright future on track and its citizenry informed.

Advancing Oak Brook (AOB) has been formed to:

1. Preserve Oak Brook's unique quality of life
2. Maintain fiscal stability with high-quality municipal services
3. Encourage responsible economic growth
4. Educate the public on issues confronting the Village

AOB will give voice to issues that advance Oak Brook's best interests. While I and others carrying the AOB torch may hold elected Village office or otherwise be passionate about Oak Brook, AOB is independent of the Village. The views and opinions expressed in these pages are those of AOB and its contributors and are not official Village communications.

Sincerely,



LAURENCE "LARRY" HERMAN
ADVANCING OAK BROOK EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND VILLAGE TRUSTEE



Larry Herman
AOB Executive Director and
Village Trustee

**Important
Community
Information
Inside**

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Advancing Oak Brook is a political action committee. A copy of our report filed with the State Board of Elections is (or will be) available on the Board's official website (www.elections.il.gov) or for purchase from the State Board of Elections, Springfield, Illinois.

Oak Brook Values

Oak Brook was incorporated as a Village in 1958, about the same time some of its earliest large subdivisions were being developed. Many of the early purchasers of these new homes were hard working successful first and second generation Americans moving to Oak Brook from Chicago and other suburbs. They were attracted to Oak Brook because of its excellent schools, vast open space, and a steadfast commitment to local government fiscal discipline. For these Oak Brook pioneers, Oak Brook was the *American Dream Realized*, and the foundation for their children to aspire to even greater success.

While Oak Brook's ethnic diversity has proudly expanded over the years, the values and aspirations of today's residents are the same as those decades ago. We should all take pride in the durability of our Oak Brook values, and continue to elect leaders who will advance our Village on the same path.

This inaugural issue will explore topics that reflect our shared Oak Brook Values.

IN THIS ISSUE...

- A look at our Fire Department's outstanding performance metrics
- Dive into the remarkable financial turnaround in the 2022 Village budget
- Understanding why "Home-Rule" status isn't as good as it sounds
- Pension math matters
- Identifying and collecting missing sales tax revenue
- Keeping our community safe with a new Business Registry
- Vigorously attacking crime in our community
- Taking the Red Light Cameras down!
- Maintaining a Zero municipal property tax levy in Oak Brook

Math Has No Emotion

It's easy to succumb to emotion when making decisions. While Village officials are not immune, staying focused on data helps inform logical and constructive decisions and results.

How does Math overcome Emotion to benefit Oak Brook residents? Let's look at a recent example involving our first rate Fire Department.

During the 2021 election campaign for the three open Village Trustee positions, candidates and now trustees **Larry Herman, Jim Nagle and Suresh Reddy** highlighted that the cost per fire department call in Oak Brook was the highest around...including more than twice as much as Westmont. Around the same time, the prior Village Board majority voted to discontinue the contract with a third-party provider of

paramedics to the Village, relying instead exclusively on our experienced employed firefighter/paramedics.

Opposition voices and special interests tried to frighten our residents with claims that our emergency call volumes would increase, emergency response capabilities would be decimated, and that we'd be burdening our neighboring fire departments with such an imbalance in mutual aid requests that they would push back on providing aid to us.

To the contrary, our call volumes have remained steady, we continue to give more mutual aid than we receive, and our ambulance response time has improved!

OAK BROOK FIRE DEPARTMENT'S CONTINUED EXCELLENCE

DATA POINT	2019	2020	2021	2022-Q1
Average Daily Calls	7.4	6.2	7.3	6.3
Mutual Aid Given (calls as % of total)	57%	61%	54%	53%
Mutual Aid Received (calls as % of total)	43%	39%	46%	47%
Ambulance Average Response Time (minutes)	4:52	5:03	4:41	4:47

Our Village Board members are motivated to continue to seek innovative measures to enhance the excellence, effectiveness, and efficiency of our Fire Department.

Oak Brook's 2022 Budget

What A Difference A Year And New Village Board Makes!

Historically, the Village has targeted to maintain General Fund reserves sufficient to cover at least six months and ideally 12 months of expenses. This is particularly important for Oak Brook because unlike other communities, Oak Brook does not have a municipal property tax. The General Fund is our primary fund and it supports our general operations, including our fire and police departments. **However, the 2020 budget forecast the General Fund balance to drop to such a precipitously low level that a property tax might have been unavoidable.**

Before the new Board was elected in 2021, the 5-Year Plan projected a whopping \$22,286,694 drop in the combined General, Infrastructure and Sports Core fund balances by 12/31/2025. The new Board members campaigned on fiscal responsibility, highlighting this deeply negative trend and pledging to address it. **Remarkably, in just the first year the new Village Board has dramatically turned the financial trends in a strong positive direction as shown in the table below.**

\$24,000,000 IMPROVEMENT UNDER NEW VILLAGE BOARD!

FUND BALANCES	2025 YEAR END PROJECTED PER 2021 BUDGET APPROVED BY PRIOR BOARD	2025 YEAR END PROJECTED PER 2022 BUDGET APPROVED BY CURRENT BOARD
General Fund	\$21,440,126 (10.3 Months)	\$24,187,930 (11.7 months)
Infrastructure Fund	(\$6,787,011)	\$3,720,737
Sports Core Fund	(\$7,739,971)	\$2,964,172
TOTAL BALANCE:	\$6,913,144 (3.5 months general fund*)	\$30,872,839

*Because deficits in the infrastructure and Sports Core Funds would have been funded by the General Fund, its actual 2025 year-end balance would only be \$6,913,144, or just 3.5 months of general fund expense coverage.

Oak Brook's 2022 Budget

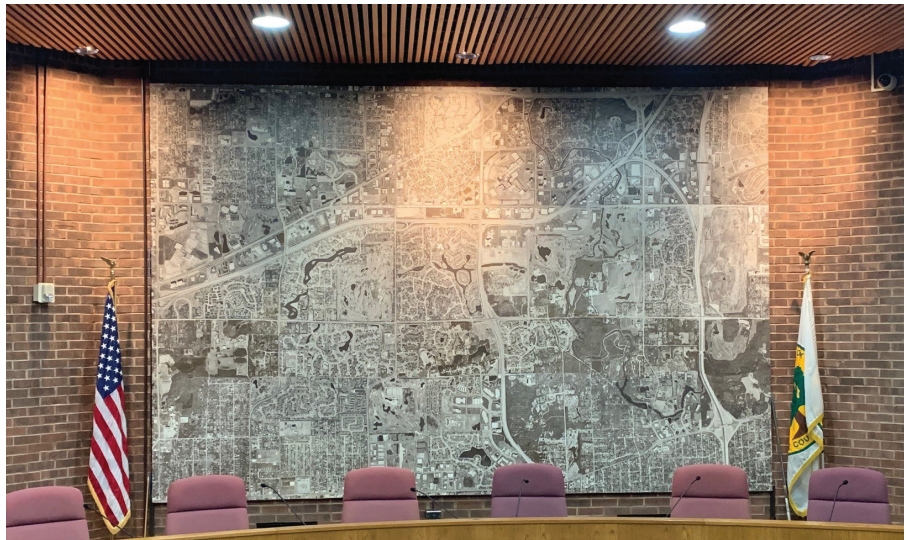
Why the Impressive Financial Turnaround?

New Capital Budgeting Process

In the past, capital projects often found their way into the budget without adequate vetting. The \$6,000,000 Salt Barn is a perfect example. No longer. A new capital budgeting process is being implemented by our new Village Finance Director to better document and evaluate each proposed project.

Many previously planned capital projects that never made sense, such as nearly **\$3,500,000 for new paved parking lots at the soccer fields have now been removed** from the budget. Instead, our new Village Public Works Director has proposed to expand parking with a permeable gravel lot at a cost of about \$120,000.

Another good example is the outdated aerial photo of the Village that hangs in the Village's Board Room pictured here. The 2021 budget contained a line item to replace it at an estimated cost of \$125,000. It's hard to justify spending \$125,000 on a replacement photo so we removed it from the budget. Our outstanding new Village manager, Greg Summers, has now identified a way to replace the photo for about \$5,000.



These are just a few examples. There are many dubious projects that have been removed or modified which contributed to the \$24,000,000 improvement in our forecasted 2025 total Village cash reserves.

Maximizing Revenues

The Village benefited from an unexpected increase in sales tax revenues in 2021, as did most governmental units. Along with new retail and restaurant development in the Village some of the increased revenue hopefully will continue despite recessionary economic headwinds. However, I estimate that the Village is losing well over \$1,000,000 yearly in sales tax revenues due to likely non-compliance by some Oak Brook retailers. See page 7 for more details.

Oak Brook's 2022 Budget



Finding Efficiencies While Ensuring High Levels of Service

The Village is benefiting from cost savings of many newly introduced efficiencies, such as a restructuring of the Public Works department by our new Public Works Director Rick Valent. Also, the elimination of the contracted paramedic service is saving the Village significant sums while emergency responsiveness has improved.

Newly Negotiated Partnerships

The Village recently negotiated new leases with Butler National Golf Club, Oak Brook Polo, and a management company that now operates our soccer fields at the Sports Core. Each of these agreements puts the Village in a much better financial position than under prior arrangements.



What hasn't changed?

Focus on Public Safety

The Village Board has renewed its commitment to public safety, including increasing its budgeting in 2022 for crime fighting technology. The Village also continues to work to align our Fire Department resources with our actual needs...both time of day and geographic.

Commitment to Infrastructure

Maintaining our neighborhood streets and other local infrastructure is a priority. Eliminating unnecessary capital projects conserves funds for our important neighborhood improvements.

Sports Core and Open Space

The Bath and Tennis Club has lost millions of dollars over the years. No more. As a result of a new management arrangement, new marketing efforts, and improved financial oversight the Club is forecast to actually operate at a profit in 2022, a **\$300,000+ improvement** over the last couple of years.



Visit the all new OBBT website at www.OakBrookBathAndTennis.com to learn more and register.

Let's Keep Our Sales Tax Rate Low But Collect What's Owed

At 7.5%, Oak Brook's sales tax rate is among the lowest around. This low rate helps drive more business for Oak Brook retailers and restaurants. We should continue to maintain this advantage and not be tempted to add a food and beverage tax or other taxes. But we do need to collect what's owed from all retailers.

“The Village will become vigilant in ensuring that local sales taxes that are owed are in fact collected and remitted, while creating a level playing field for all Oak Brook retailers.”

– Larry Herman

As Reported in the Chicago Tribune, March 21, 2022:



Restoration Hardware Oak Brook, The Gallery at Oak Brook Center. File photo.

WEST SUBURBS [FOLLOW](#)

Oak Brook looking to collect more sales taxes from retail businesses who've not been paying

CHUCK FIELDMAN
March 21 at 5:14 PM CT

Oak Brook anticipates collecting significant additional sales tax revenue from retail businesses, which would likely include furniture and jewelry stores, that previously have not been paying into the village coffers.

“Though speculative to estimate, Oak Brook quite possibly is missing out on well over \$1 million of annual sales taxes that are owed,” said Village Board member Larry Herman.

A tax attorney by trade, Herman began looking into the sales tax situation in regards to Restoration Hardware, which in September 2021 opened a 60,000 square foot gallery in a former Oakbrook Center parking area, after having a smaller presence for several years in the mall.

Home Rule vs. Non-Home Rule Status

Illinois municipalities generally have only those powers delegated to them by state law. Illinois allows more expansive powers to those municipalities that have “home rule” status. Any municipality with a population greater than 25,000 automatically has home-rule status, and other municipalities may elect by referendum to become home rule.

Oak Brook is among 15 municipalities in DuPage County that have not elected to adopt home rule status.

Among the expanded powers allowed to home rule municipalities is broader authority for their elected officials to impose various taxes on residents and businesses. A key reason often asserted by municipalities not wanting home rule status is the concern that their elected officials will be tempted to resort to increased taxes and spending instead of exercising greater fiscal discipline.

We agree with the popular sentiment in Oak Brook that **home rule status is not needed in Oak Brook**, increased taxes should be avoided, and what is most important is **continued fiscal discipline**.

TRUSTEE ED TIESENGA CHAMPIONS PENSION AWARENESS

Village Trustee Ed Tiesenga has been the leading voice in our community educating us on the enormous strain Illinois pension laws put on municipal budgets. Extraordinarily rich pensions afforded Illinois public employees are unlikely to change, and therefore local governments such as ours need to be very diligent in how we staff our various departments.

For example, our median annual contribution to a firefighter or police officer’s pension is about \$60,000 per year. Including salary, pension, benefits, and related expenses, the average annual cost to the Village of a firefighter/paramedic is nearly \$200,000 per year. To add just one firefighter/paramedic to a 24-hour shift means hiring nearly four additional firefighter/paramedics at a cost to the Village of over \$750,000/year. This is because a firefighter/paramedic works once every three days, and in addition has substantial time off which needs to be covered by a fourth one (or by expensive overtime).



Recently, Trustee Tiesenga presented an eye-opening 12-part webinar series for Oak Brook residents titled “Oak Brook Citizens’ Pension Academy”. The replays are available on the Village’s YouTube site at OakBrookTV.org.

Keeping our Community Safe with a Business Registry

Oak Brook founder Paul Butler very deliberately designed our village to include a vibrant commercial sector that would generate sales tax and other revenue to lower the overall tax burden to both residents and businesses. More than 60 years after the founding of Oak Brook, that symbiotic relationship continues to benefit both residents and businesses and is the guiding principle of governance in Oak Brook.

One of the challenges Oak Brook has had in providing cost effective services to the business community is that the Village knows very little about most of the businesses operating in Oak Brook. For example, we don't know how many businesses or employees are in Oak Brook. We don't know the specific types of businesses that are operating here and whether there are hazardous materials housed in their facilities. This lack of more complete knowledge makes it particularly challenging for our first responders to safely and effectively respond to emergency calls. It also makes it difficult for the Village to optimally configure its emergency response capabilities.

Most communities have solved the information gap by implementing a business license or registry so the businesses can provide important information about their operation to the municipality. Despite the significance of our business community, we don't have a registry system.

Of the 15 non-home rule communities in DuPage County, Oak Brook and Wayne are the only two who do not have a business license, registry, or annually renewable certificate of occupancy/zoning certificate.

By contrast to Oak Brook, Wayne has about 2,400 residents, a lot of horses, and very few businesses.

The Oak Brook Village Board voted on April 26, 2022 to implement a business registry to enhance our public safety (Voting For: Trustees Larry Herman, Mike Manzo, Jim Nagle, Suresh Reddy, and Ed Tiesenga; Voting Against: Trustee Asif Yusuf).

In most communities the business license/registry process involves cumbersome paper forms. Instead, Oak Brook is investing in new technology to streamline our business permitting and registry processes to improve the business experience.

Advancing Oak Brook is committed to ensuring that Oak Brook continues to be the most desirable place for businesses to open and thrive. We support common sense efforts to keep our community safe, which is what the business registry seeks to do.

We Don't Tolerate Crime in Oak Brook

It's no secret that residential and commercial thefts and other crimes have increased in Oak Brook and other communities throughout Chicagoland. A common thread with these crimes is that they are perpetrated by habitual offenders, many already out on bail for earlier crimes. Weak prosecutorial and judicial processes in Cook County exacerbate the problem.

What's Different in Oak Brook?

1. **We Solve Crimes** – Thanks to our outstanding Oak Brook police department detectives, we have a strong track record of solving the crimes and apprehending the criminals.
2. **No "Catch and Release"** – That may be the norm when it comes to fishing and Cook County, but when we apprehend criminals they will be jailed with appropriately tough bond requirements likely to keep them behind bars awaiting trial.



3. **We Prosecute Crimes to the Fullest Extent** – Working closely with DuPage County States Attorney Bob Berlin and his team, the criminals will be aggressively prosecuted and most likely convicted.
4. **Bound for Prison** – Our DuPage County Courts have a track record of sending convicted criminals to prison for appropriately lengthy terms.
5. **Oak Brook Elected Officials Support our Police** – We have elected officials who uniformly support our police department and are committed to responsibly investing in and improving our crime fighting resources. For example, the Village Board recently appropriated far more funds for crime fighting initiatives than even requested by our former police chief.
6. **Welcome new Police Chief Brian Strockis.** Chief Strockis is a well-respected 22-year veteran of our police department whose crime fighting credentials are welcome.

Spread the Word... We Don't Tolerate Crime in Oak Brook!

Red Light Camera Removed at Rt. 83 and 22nd Street

Crime Eventually Doesn't Pay

The worst kept secret is that the Red Light Cameras installed by Oakbrook Terrace at the corner of Rt. 83 and 22nd Street in 2017 were the result of an alleged criminal bribery conspiracy involving the Red Light Camera company, state politicians, and the former mayor of Oakbrook Terrace. Still, getting the cameras removed had been fraught with resistance and delays. Not hard to understand when you realize that the cameras at the intersection had generated as much as \$5,000,000 per year in fines for Oakbrook Terrace and the Red Light Camera company!

In 2017, Village Trustee Mike Manzo championed an effort to have the Village of Oak Brook sue to remove the cameras. The Chicago Tribune then ran a front-page expose on the Red Light Camera corruption in its September 24, 2017 Sunday issue, featuring Mr. Manzo on the cover.

As a result of the dogged determination of the new Village Board, led on this issue by President Gopal Lalmalani, and Trustees Mike Manzo and Ed Tiesenga, the cameras finally came down!

“If not for the support and resolve of the new Village Board and Village Manager, the cameras would not have come down.”

– Trustee Mike Manzo

Crime shouldn't pay... especially millions of dollars taken out of the pockets of Oak Brook motorists, which include residents, shoppers, employees, and other visitors.

Chicago Tribune
 QUESTIONS? CALL 1-800-TRIBUNE SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2017 BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

TRIBUNE WATCHDOG

No clean bill of health for health bill
 McCain's blow aside, GOP plan's demise not certain
 BY ERICA WERNER AND ALAN FRAM
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The fight over health care isn't over.
 President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence vowed to press on in the Republican Party's last-ditch effort to repeal and replace Obamacare despite what Arizona Sen. John McCain intends to do.
 On Friday, McCain declared his opposition to the GOP plan, dealing a likely death blow to the legislation and, perhaps, to the GOP's years of vows to kill the program.
 It was the second time in three months that McCain, 81, emerged as the destroyer of his party's signature promise to voters.
 "I believe we could do better working together," Republicans and Demo-

Even safe intersections getting red light cameras
 In 1 suburb, IDOT said no to installation — then senators, city, firm got state to reverse course
 BY JOE MAHR AND MATTHEW WALBERG
 Chicago Tribune

As rejection letters go, the Illinois Department of Transportation's message last year seemed pretty clear.
 Oakbrook Terrace wanted to put red light cameras at a busy but relatively safe intersection. IDOT must approve cameras on state routes in the suburbs, and it said no. Cameras are for boosting safety, and the intersection's "low crash rates" did not support a need for cameras.
 In just a few months, that no would turn into a yes.

It was a yes that, records show, came after the intervention of a powerful state senator who received campaign cash from the red light camera firm that stood to make millions of dollars from those Oakbrook Terrace cameras.
 The senator's involvement prompted dozens of emails between IDOT officials — with large passages of that correspondence kept secret to this day by IDOT.
 What happened at Illinois Highway 83 and 22nd Street highlights the inconsistent and at times contradictory way IDOT has approved the controversial cameras at nearly 200 intersections across the suburbs.
 Ten years ago, the General Assembly allowed suburbs to install cameras, but for state routes, typically the busiest roads, IDOT needed to approve. And IDOT was talking tough. Engineers wanted cameras put only in truly dangerous places where no other fix had improved safety.
 Yet a Tribune analysis found that often didn't happen. Among the findings:
 ■ More than half of the intersections with cameras scored among the safest in IDOT studies at the time the agency approved the cameras.
 ■ IDOT, more often than not, allowed cameras at places that didn't meet its own threshold for whether an intersection had a red light crash problem.
 ■ Of current cameras, one-fourth were granted permits in spots with no red-

Turn to **Health**, Page 31

Englewood's Whole Foods still work in progress
 The chain made good on promises of providing jobs, supporting local vendors and boosting healthy food options. But there's still work to be done. **Business**

TRIBUNE EDITORIAL
 Invest in Chicago, look to Chase's Detroit template
 Page 24

Turn to **Cameras**, Page 12

VILLAGE OF OAK BROOK PROPERTY TAX LEVY

\$0

Look at your Oak Brook property tax bill. What's missing?

The Village of Oak Brook is funded by the local sales tax, utility taxes, and other business revenues, not property taxes. The table below shows the impact in our neighboring communities of their property tax levy on a \$1,000,000 home. The only way we can sustain this benefit for the homeowners in Oak Brook is by maintaining a vibrant business community and being vigilant about every penny we spend. Your new trustees made that pledge when you elected them in 2021, and they are delivering as promised.

CITY	CITY TAX LEVY 2021	CITY TAX ON \$1,000,000 HOME
Oak Brook	\$0	\$0
Hinsdale	0.5312	\$1,771
Elmhurst	0.6966	\$2,322
Downers Grove	0.7872	\$2,624
Clarendon Hills	0.8036	\$2,679
Westmont	0.9687	\$3,229

Let's Keep Oak Brook at Zero!

Footnotes: (1) Assumes assessed value is 1/3 of fair market value; (2) City Tax Levy includes library levy if separate; (3) City tax is shown prior to deduction of any available exemptions.

