



February 3, 2020

Dear Residents:

As I'm sure most are aware, 2020 is a Census year. It is very important and beneficial to the Village that everyone completes their Census information. Federal funds, grants, and support to the States, Counties and Communities are based on population totals and other factors captured in the Census. By responding to the Census, you help Westphalia get its share of the \$675 billion per year in federal funds that go towards schools, roads, public works, and other vital programs. Census information is completely confidential and your personal data will not be disclosed. Please be sure to complete your 2020 Census information when you receive it.

It was noted in the December 2019 Village Council Meeting Minutes that Phase II of the Downtown Improvement Plan was being tabled in order to focus on other Village priorities. Some residents have expressed concerns that future phases of downtown improvement plans were being abandoned. This is not the intent of the Village Council or Planning Commission – we just feel other priorities should be addressed at this time. It should also be noted that several other street improvement projects are slated for 2020 and we hope to have the details finalized soon. Major street projects tend to be quite expensive and it is important that we remain focused on all Village infrastructure needs and expenses. However, that does not mean future phases of the Downtown Improvement Plan are being abandoned.

We recently met with Mike Engels of Michigan Rural Water Association to conduct an evaluation of the current water/sewer rates in relation to potential future infrastructure maintenance and replacement needs. Among other things, the evaluation addresses the age of systems, long term benefits of being “proactive” versus “reactive” when it comes to our most vital infrastructure items and the importance of doing preventive maintenance. The Village Council is reviewing the information and data provided to determine the appropriate course of action. We will continue to be diligent and proactive in preparing for future expenses. This, and the fact that there has not been a rate increase in 8 years, makes it likely that a change may be necessary the near future. It should also be noted that even with an increase in our rates, they will still remain significantly lower than most other municipalities.

The Village Planning Commission has been busy reviewing our local ordinances. While there were a few specific issues that needed to be addressed, the Commission decided to go the extra step and do a complete review. This can be an arduous undertaking and I appreciate how thorough and dedicated the Commission has been in completing this task. Their efforts will provide long-term benefits to the Village.

The safety of walkers and runners on Village streets, especially after dark, continues to be a legitimate issue. While it is understood that the street may be their preferred option to use, nighttime visibility continues to raise some serious concerns. Please wear reflective clothing and exercise caution when using the Village streets after dark.

Sincerely,

Dean Kohagen, President

Village of Westphalia