

May 10, 2016

Dear residents,

During the past year, the Village of Ostrander has experienced more discussion of “change” than in the previous decades. Southwestern Delaware County seems to be the new opportunity for growth. We have been approached by a number of developers looking for information about zoning, sewer availability and development opportunity.

We can have mixed emotions about this “invitation into the future” but one thing we should all feel comfortable about is the fact that if a small community is ever prepared for this, we are. You have a great Council and over the past two years we have delved into this inevitability and have been putting our tools in place to work our way through the issues to come. We have done preliminary Master Planning, evaluated and inventoried our assets and understand our budget demands.

As you read through this you will begin to see the challenges and hopefully you come to the same conclusion as myself. If we work together we can turn those challenges into opportunities to both preserve our history and prepare for the growth of the future.

Meadows of Mill Creek:

Perhaps one of the longest and most difficult challenges of the Village, I am confident that we have moved through the issues and we are well underway to a good conclusion and can look forward to a great addition to our community. I anticipate the beginning of the construction of the infrastructure of the final Phase of the Development within the next few weeks.

There was a requirement for an improvement to the route 36 access and that is designed and scheduled to be built this summer.

The other issue involved the wooded area to the west and the cutting of trees without the approval of the Village. That is resolved. All the engineering and surveys have been completed and the Village has signed off on them. The additional roads and building sites as well as the detention ponds will be cleared, all within the Village permit process. I expect that clearing to begin as early as this week.

The end results: To the west of the development, there will be a preservation area that will be deeded to the Village. The imagination of the residents will be the only limiting factor to the public park that will result in an asset the entire community can enjoy for the years to come.

Park Committee:

The Village has a great opportunity to create both a preservation park as well as trail ways through the old railroad bed. We are forming a committee and are looking for 3 -

4 members to dedicate a piece of their time to make this something exceptional. We are simply in the planning stages but have visions of pathways that will connect the Downtown Village to the Meadows of Mill Creek and potentially expand from there. We are also looking at having around 22 acres of property that we can work with preservation parks to develop. Please call **Kelly Osborne** at [513-254-5314](tel:513-254-5314) if you have an interest in joining us in this exciting change for the Village.

School:

With the passage of the Buckeye Valley School Bond Levy, Ostrander was put in a very unique position. We will own the entire current school property and how we choose to use it will be the **sole decision of the residents of the Village**. There is over 100 years of history represented in a building that has been the absolute heart of the community. The challenge will be to determine what can be saved and how it can be used... even celebrated.

It is imperative that we look at this as an opportunity to do something great for the Village, **preserve as much of the history** as possible and position the community to serve the best interests of the residents (from the kids to the seniors).

To begin the decision making process, we will be offering a tour of the building on May 19th at 6:30. Barry Lyons will be there to inform everyone of the current condition of the building. We are seeking professionals in the following fields that could assist us with their expertise; Engineering, General Contractors, HVAC, Real Estate, Marketing and Finance/Accounting.

The primary objective at this time is to get an idea of the financial picture (renovation / replacing and operational) and then connect that to the eventual uses. We would hope that you will join us for the tour on May 19th. We will organize meeting schedules in the weeks to come. If you have any questions or concerns you may contact **Julie Guy** 614-499-6307.

Library News

The Ostrander Branch of the Delaware County District Library is already gearing up for the summer with eight weeks of program packed activities planned for families with children of all ages. The fun starts on May 28 and will run through July 23 and will include our fantastic Medieval Faire on Saturday, June 4. Another highlight of the summer is the branch's 25th anniversary. We will celebrate this significant event on Saturday, July 2 with a full schedule of activities throughout the day.

Stop by and visit us out soon! Our open hours are Tuesday-Thursday 10-8:00 and Friday & Saturday 10-4:00. Besides programs, books, DVD's, and magazines we also have color copier and fax service, WIFI, and notary available. We are located at 75 North 4th St. directly behind Buckeye Valley West. Check out our website at www.delawarelibrary.org or call us at 740-666-1410 for more information.

Special thanks:

To the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and the Hump Day Helpers for all that they contribute to our community. Also, my congratulations to all those who helped make the Buckeye Valley West Carnival the tremendous success that it was. Great time!

4th of July:

The biggest event of the year! We are well on our way to meeting our fundraising goals and look forward to an even bigger event than usual. We could still use your help with money or time. Please contact **Harla** at the Library (740-666-1410).

Police Department:

Safety of the residents is the number one function of Government. We have managed with a part time Auxiliary Police Department for the past 8 years. We have relied on the dedication of well qualified men and women who have volunteered their time, paid for their own equipment and served without hesitation. We are a deterrent force for the most part, patrolling for no more than 30 hours a week collectively in hopes of discouraging negative activity as opposed to looking for it.

With the increase in population, school traffic and changing jurisdictions (36 corridor) we are heading into a situation where **more is required**. We have had a number of break-ins in the past month, felony warrants, domestic violence calls, drug related cases and an increase in our responses to our Mutual Aid partners in surrounding areas.

Perhaps the most sobering incident is the recent accident involving a school bus loaded with our children.

I have every intention of finding a way to direct the Police coverage in the Village to the next level. Delaware County is 10 minutes away and although the officers in that division are dedicated and responsive, they too are constrained by budgets and the increased growth in various population centers.

We will be working through the options in the months to come.

Income Tax:

Each year the amount of money we get from the State and County continues to diminish although the amount we send in that direction doesn't. Like almost every other small government, Ostrander will have to become more self sufficient. ***Ostrander has rebuilt nearly every road in the old village area using the OPWC and CDBG grant programs. We have gotten nearly \$5,000,000.00 in the past 12 years without having to collect one penny extra in property tax. This year, the Village was denied the funding for the major re-build of Main Street.***

For the past two years the Village has been tracking the budget demands against the revenue sources and with the current situation by the year 2018 we will be spending more that we take in. Our government is unique in the sense that we are service orientated and your officials receive token pay with no benefits. Because of that we have managed to appropriate money from the **General Revenue Source (Property Tax)** to the **Maintenance and Safety (primarily funded from State and County sources)** side of our government.

After considerable research, the Village Council has concluded that the property owners and current residents of Ostrander are **not** the primary cause of the increase demands. Property Tax Levies are a convenient fix but **we don't feel as though it is fair to have property owners underwrite everything.**

Who would pay?

Businesses and non - residents who work in the Village. That includes all new home and infrastructure construction employees as well as the nearly 75 current non resident workers.

Who would not pay?

Retirement funds, Social Security, government allotments, income earned while under the age of 18, welfare payments, workers compensation etc. ***all not taxable.***

The vast number of residents work outside the Village and most pay Income Tax in the jurisdiction where they are employed. **Those income earners would receive 100% credit for taxes they are already paying elsewhere.**

How much?

The Village Council would enact by Ordinance a 1% income tax.

If we do pass the Income Tax:

- 1) We can add revenue within months
- 2) What we collect in Ostrander **stays in Ostrander** (less the 3% collection / handling charge from RITA)
- 3) We can increase appropriations for the Police, Maintenance, Parks, Municipal Building project (School) as well as general operational costs.

Ostrander provides the opportunity for a lot of progress. We can accept it, but we don't have to subsidize it.

If you have any questions or comments, this issue is discussed in Open Session and your Council members are very knowledgeable on our process, projects, studies and goals. Feel free to contact any of us.

Single Trash Service:

This has generated a lot of discussion. There are good arguments to be made on both sides of the issue. On the one hand, it would be cheaper to the individual user, narrowed to one day a week and better for road maintenance etc. On the other hand, it forces the single choice exclusively to the will of the majority.

The actual process for establishing this objective is making a law for the entire Village (Ordinance). That alone is lengthy (6 to 8 months - to work through the text etc.) It is subject to Referendum (refer to the Public Ballot). In the end, the contract would go to the lowest best bidder and in essence it would be against the law for others to provide service.

There has been equal passion on both sides of this and the Village is willing to advance the discussion / process but would like to hear more from the residents. **Kelly Osborne** has agreed to begin collecting the opinions and points of view (513 - 254 - 5314) but feel free to contact any of the Council Members as well.

Natural Gas

The advantages of this Ohio fuel are numerous and the Village has always been active in pursuing a viable source. There are two distinct problems identified by the two distinct parts of the Village. The Old Village requires individual engineering and choice. The New Village is one entity. When it is fully developed, approximately 180 homes will have the same service lines, all owned by Consolidated. Without their involvement and a strong connection with the HOA, this is a tough challenge.

Conclusion:

Hopefully this gives you a good sense of where we are and where we are going. As your Mayor, I feel as though we are certainly up to the challenges ahead. You have a strong, thoughtful Council, Planning Commission and BPA. All those who participate do so because of a deep concern for the future of the Village. It is my pleasure to work with them and hopefully at some point you get a chance tell them your thoughts and listen to their plans for the future. I truly believe, the more we work together, the stronger we are.

Have a great summer!

Larry