



Welcome to the 2023 State of the Village! Thank you for granting me the opportunity to speak with you tonight. It is a pleasure to be here once again sharing this past years accomplishments and the exciting things planned for the year ahead.



Before we begin, I would like to recognize the Johnsbury Area Business Association for hosting this 12th Annual State of the Village event and extend a special thanks to JABA's President Sarah Hagen, Vice President Donna Adams, Secretary Heidi Peterson, Treasurer Rachel Northern and Josh Hagen for their efforts in coordinating all of the arrangements.

I would also like to thank Amy Hodges and Denny Norton and their team at the Cullom Knoll Restaurant for preparing our dinner tonight. Amy has always been a great supporter of the Village contributing much through her Johnsbury business, Sunnyside Tavern. Thanks also goes to the Pistakee Yacht Club for the use of this historic facility and both Cheryl and Joe Twomey for their help this evening. Let's please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.



For those of you that regularly attend this event, you know that my presentations are developed around a specific theme that relates to topics and events significant in our community. In reflecting on this past year, one thing stood out more than any other - a slogan - one that was adopted by the Board many years ago and still remains true today. It is included on the bottom of the Village's letterhead and is often incorporated into my speeches and correspondence. Can you guess what it is?.....*A Hometown with Spirit.*

When I think about what that phrase signifies, I feel it is more true today than ever, so it seemed appropriate to use it in developing the theme for tonight's presentation.

spirit spir-ət

Definition:

- *a special attitude or frame of mind;*
- *enthusiastic loyalty*

You will often hear me say that there are two types of people in this world, Johnsburger's and those that wish they were a Johnsburger.

Johnsburgers exemplify the meaning of "spirit". They are enthusiastically proud of their hometown and loyal to their community. They will welcome you with open arms and always be there to help in times of need. That attitude and frame of mind is exhibited in part of our logo, the image of two hands joining, which signified the joining of neighbors during the 1991 annexation of Johnsburg into Sunnyside. That was a very historical event made successful because of the many hardworking people that set aside their difference and came together for the betterment of both communities. Today that spirit prevails and is exhibited through the selfless contributions of time, resources and efforts displayed by the many people who serve our community through local organizations whose sole purpose is to help those in need.



In keeping with the Hometown with Spirit theme, I want to spend some time tonight talking about the wonderful ways it's exhibited in our community, beginning with the many hardworking men and women who contribute their time serving to make great things possible. They coordinate and sponsor events that raise money to help those in need and contribute towards improvements in our community. During a time when many communities are seeing a decrease in volunteerism, Johnsborg's organizations are thriving. That is a great representation of the spirit of our community.

But volunteerism is nothing new to Johnsborg. It dates back to 1841 when the first settlers came to Johnsborg. They worked together to help one another make a home in a new and foreign land. That selfless attitude continues on through the efforts of our local organizations such as the Johnsborg Community Club, Johnsborg Community Men's Club, Johnsborg Lions Club, the Johnsborg Cart Club and the many Village committees through which our citizens serve.

I see several of our community volunteers and committee members in attendance tonight. Could you please stand. Thanks to you and countless others who contribute their time and talents to our community, Johnsborg has flourished. It's not "I", it's "We" as no one person is credited for our successes. It takes the efforts of many working together to make things happen. Thank you for your continued service to the Village.



The Johnsbury “spirit” is also exhibited when we come together as a community in celebration. Celebration is an important part of a healthy community. It provides the opportunity for us to set aside our trials and tribulations and come together and rejoice. Our local organizations have sponsored many events over the years with the Johnsbury “spirit” in mind, for these events not only provide an opportunity to celebrate but they also raise funds to carry out charitable missions.

The Village’s Community Affairs Committee also organizes several events each year to bring us together in Celebration. The first event started out as a community picnic back in 2006 in celebration of our Village’s 50th anniversary and many more have since followed

Thanks to the generous efforts of all these organizations, we’ve been able to maintain long standing events and expand on what we have to offer. I’m pleased to say our events grow more popular each year.



Good planning is another important component to our successes. As many of you know, the Village regularly conducts Strategic Planning Sessions to gain stakeholder input as we plan for the future of the Village. You will likely recall that previous State of the Village Presentations always included a slide of both our Mission and Vision Statements, but you may not know the history of how they came about. Our first Strategic Planning Session took place in 1995 and was conducted over two full day sessions. In addition to the Village Board, attendees included employees, residents, business owners, and school district representatives. Coming out of that session, we developed strategies and an action plan with measurable goals. A follow up session was conducted in 1997 to review our progress and update our strategies. We met again in 1999, 2003, and 2009, each year expanding our list of invites to include more community stakeholders.

In 2011 another session was held for which we were fortunate be able to bring in an experienced facilitator. She guided us through a SWOT analysis which enabled us to assess our Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats, giving us a fresh new look at our planning strategies. Her efforts also resulted in the development of our Mission and Vision Statements. In February of 2020 right before the pandemic, she again facilitated a session attended by stakeholders throughout the community.

Over the years, the results of these sessions have helped guide us in our decision making while we keep up with the changing times and demographics in our growing community. By soliciting the voices of many, we can be sure that our community is well represented.



Each year at this event, I take a moment to recognize people who go above and beyond in support of and in service to our community. This year I would like to recognize Frances Glosson for her generous contribution of time and talent in facilitating our Strategic Planning sessions. Frances has spent more than 45 years employed in the health services industry and is a long time resident of Johnsburg. Today she is the President of Frances' Facilitations, which specializes in organizational development, leadership, facilitation and strategic planning. We are very grateful for her generous donation of time and expertise in facilitating our sessions and developing our strategic plan reports. Those sessions and her reports have served to further our mission and carry out a plan so that we can realize the vision for Johnsburg.

We are honored to have Frances in attendance tonight. Frannie, can you please come up here and join me.

Thank you Frannie



Last year we spent a lot of time talking about our new municipal center. Just one year later we are already seeing the benefits of bringing our Administration and Public Safety Departments together under one roof. This merging has helped streamline our operations and improve communications between departments. The expansion will serve the Village very well for many years and our employees are enjoying their new work environment.

Tonight we have some employees in attendance from all of our departments as well as our engineer and attorney. If you could please stand as I call your name Joe Kleinhazel from our Parks and Facilities Department, Public Works Foreman Dave Walsh, Special Projects Coordinator Rick Quinn, Assistant Administrator Vinny LaMontagna, Chief Keith VonAllmen, Village Administrator Claudett Sofiakis, Village Attorney Michael Smoron and our Village Engineer Tim Hartnett.

These individuals are members of our A Team. They help make exceptional things happen and contribute greatly to our successes.



I would like to take a moment to introduce our Board of Trustees. If you could please stand as I call your name. Beth Foreman, Mike Fouke, Josh Hagen, Scott Letzter, Greg Klemstein and Jamie Morris. As a Board we oftentimes have to make difficult decisions and we don't always agree, but focusing on what's best for our community helps to point us in the right direction.

Last week, the Village Board approved the fiscal year 2024 budget and during the budget presentation, we had the opportunity to review our accomplishments and discuss projects proceeding this year. These are very exciting times as we see our efforts over the past several years begin to take shape.



Driving around Johnsburg you'll notice an abundance of construction projects already underway and the one impacting us the most is the Johnsburg Road Bridge construction. During last year's presentation I informed you that the McHenry County Division of Transportation was looking into several options to safely extend the life of the Johnsburg Road bridge until it could be replaced. I am happy to report that since then, McDot has decided to go ahead and replace the entire bridge deck and that work has begun. Johnsburg Road is now closed through July to accommodate the construction, but upon completion, all delineators restricting travel over the bridge will be removed and the full left turn lane will be restored. We realize the closure will create inconveniences for our residents and ask for your cooperation and patience while the work is being done.



Another project that got underway last week is the Church Street Realignment Project. This project is being funded by a \$750,000 grant and involves the construction of 600 feet of road needed to realign the intersection of Johnsburg Road and Church Street. The improvements include a new crosswalk with ADA ramps at each corner and the installation of 1540 feet of sanitary sewer main along Church Street and Johnsburg Road to further our sewer extension project.



In coordination with the Church Street realignment, the Sunnyside Beach Road Improvement Project will begin shortly. In addition to repaving the road, the project will include drainage improvements and a gate at the end of the road which can be opened to allow passage for garbage trucks and emergency vehicles. An opening in the gate will be included so that pedestrians, bicycles, golf carts and UTVs can pass. This project has been a long time in the works and the residents on Sunnyside Beach Drive are excited to know their new road will soon be a reality.

Sunnyside Beach Drive is a privately maintained road that is being upgraded to meet Village road standards. Upon completion, the Village will take over all future maintenance of the road. At the request of the residents, the Village pursued bonds to pay for the improvement and designated the area as a special service area so that the residents on Sunnyside Beach Drive could pay for the cost of the improvement over time on their tax bill.

The Village has used Special Services Areas, also known as SSAs, for nearly 30 years as a financing mechanism to help residents pay for the cost of major infrastructure improvements. They have been very helpful in upgrading privately maintained roads and residents who have participated in a road SSA regularly express how pleased they were with the outcome. Our Special Projects Coordinator Rick Quinn has been instrumental in helping to carry out SSA projects. As a resident who lived on one of the first private roads improved with an SSA, he brings a first hand perspective to these projects which is helpful when addressing residents questions and concerns.



The Riverside Drive project will also be under construction this year beginning early this winter with the replacement of the storm structure under the Riverside Drive Bridge. Winter is the ideal time to perform this work as water levels will be lower. Resurfacing of the road will then be done during the 2024 construction season. Sidewalks and a bike path will be installed to safely separate pedestrian and bicyclist movement from vehicular traffic. The project, which is estimated to cost nearly \$3 million dollars, is partially supported by a \$1.5 million grant and more than \$400,000 in Rebuild Illinois Funds.

Including multi-modal improvements along arterial roadways is a high priority. Providing accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclist is important for the safety of our citizens and promotes active lifestyles for a healthy community. We incorporated them in partnership with the County when Johnsburg Road was reconstructed and again on Chapel Hill Road with the help of a Safe Routes to School grant. I am pleased to report that since our last presentation we secured an additional \$1.5 million grant to resurface Ringwood Road. That project will also include sidewalk improvements and is slated for the 2027 construction season.



In keeping with our discussion regarding road projects, maintaining the Village's infrastructure is a top priority and it keeps our Public Works team very busy. We strive to be aggressive with the maintenance and resurfacing of our roads and our public works team does a great job helping us achieve that goal. Each year they identify sections of road throughout the Village in need of patching. In the past most of that patching was contracted out, which limited the amount that was performed each year due to costs. Larger patching projects on more heavily traveled roads are still contracted, but by performing much of the work in house we are able to patch more roads which helps to lengthen their life.

In addition to patching, the Village pursues a resurfacing program each year. Roads are rated and updated annually to establish resurfacing priorities. Doing so enables the Village to plan for timely improvements so that we can anticipate and control costs. This year the Village will again be pursuing 2.5 miles of road resurfacing which includes Lower Pitzen and Bald Knob Roads. These roads were part of the second private road SSA ever pursued in the Village. That project was done in 1996 and was obviously very effective as here we are today, 27 years later resurfacing the roads for the first time.



Moving away from our road improvement projects, another much talked about project is the River Sewer Extension Project. We've made great progress this past year by securing the easements needed to accommodate the new infrastructure and finalizing the grant agreement with the State to enable the project to proceed. With the easements in place, our engineers are finalizing the engineering plans and we expect to be out to bid later this year. The project, which includes a regional lift station and the extension of 1400 feet of carrier pipe and force main, is expected to cost approximately \$1.8 million. Fortunately we've secured nearly \$1,400,000 in grants and have \$400,000 in capital funds on hand to cover the cost. Once complete, businesses such as the Waterfront Hotel will be able to connect to the Village's sewer system and a significant piece of backbone infrastructure will be in place to extend the system to nearly 500 homes and businesses on the east side of the river. It will also help to facilitate economic redevelopment of underutilized properties and development of vacant parcels along Chapel Hill Road.



Since 2018 I've been reporting on the Village's efforts to secure funding through the Army Corp of Engineers for our Dutch Creek Aquatic Restoration Project. Last year we were advised that the Army Corp of Engineer's Chicago Division ranked our project #1 for funding. This year, the Army Corp came on site to the project area and met with Village representatives to develop a Federal Interest Determination. The Army Corp representatives expressed eager interest in the project and we are hopeful that they will determine that it meets the requirements to be eligible for federal funding. If so, we would be eligible for up to \$200,000 in planning funds and \$10,000,000 for construction.



Following last years hugely successful Fishing Derby, I am pleased to announce that Hickory Way Park and Fishing Pond will be seeing some fantastic improvements this next year. Thanks to the generosity of the Johnsbury Lion's Club, the pond is being treated and a shelter will soon be under construction. The Club donated \$25,000 towards the project with plans to donate additional funds for more improvements in the coming years.

The Johnsbury Lion's share in the Village's desire to create positive recreational opportunities for our youth. They were one of several sponsors of our fishing derby and want to further the activity. Additional improvements at the park will follow next year and the park will be named after the Johnsbury Lions Club in recognition of their incredible contribution.

This year's Fishing Derby event will take place this weekend. Additional information is available on the Village's website or by calling the Village Hall. Don't miss out on this family fun event.



Speaking of family fun activities, I'm pleased to report that the golf course is experiencing a lot of play from golfers of all ages. Our efforts continue in partnership with GolfVisions to improve course conditions and bring about new opportunities. Last year I informed you that we are looking into grant funding and other opportunities to construct a shelter at the course that can be utilized for outings and other events. Those efforts are still underway and we are also working to bring another irrigation well on-line to aid in improving course conditions.

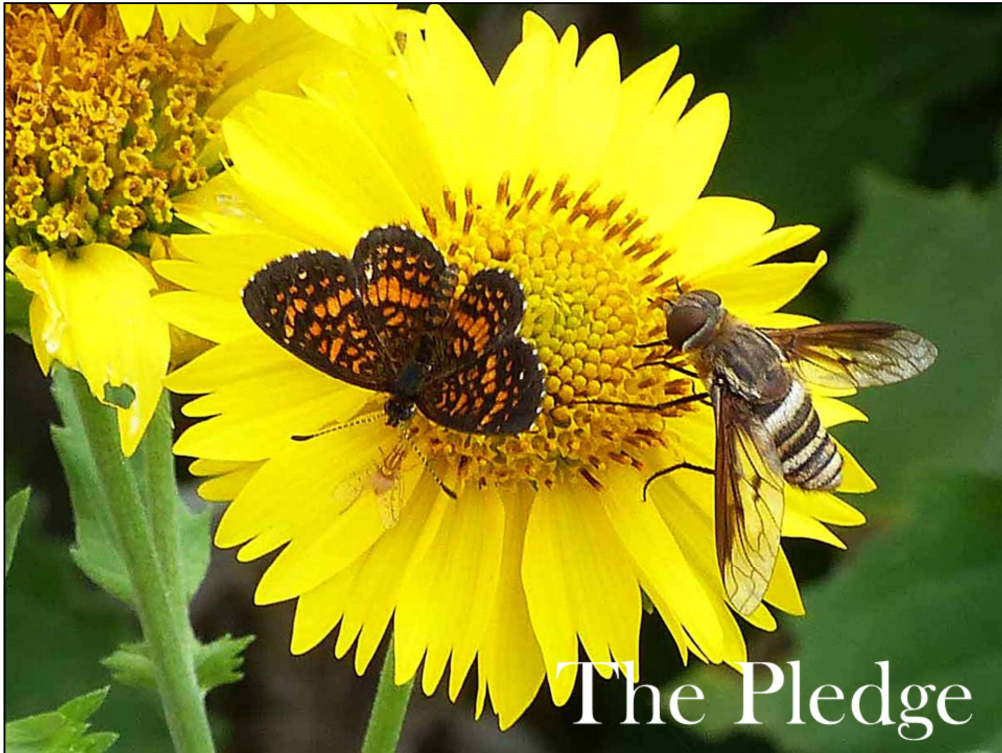


In addition to the improvements at Lions Park and the golf course, we have some additional park improvement projects on the horizon. The first is the expansion of activities at Sunnyside Park to include Pickle Ball courts and additional play equipment. This project is being made possible thanks to a generous donor and the work is expected to be done next year.

This year's budget also includes funds for park improvements in Remington Grove subdivision. The cost of the improvement is being supported by Park Capital Improvement Fees collected from that subdivision. Details are being finalized and will be available shortly.

In the near future improvements will be pursued at Lenart Park in Whispering Ridge Subdivision as well.

This year Trustees Foreman and Fouke will be finalizing their inventory of our park assets and determine our short and long terms needs so that we may develop a Comprehensive Park Plan for the Village. As the demographics of our community change, its important that we provide park amenities that appeal to a diverse community.



Our pollinator site on Sandalwood Lane in Lake Dawnwood Subdivision is struggling a bit with the unusually dry conditions we were experiencing, but with some extra TLC, we expect it will thrive as the summer progresses.

This past year the Village was recognized for its participation in the Monarch Pledge Program and this year we are expanding those efforts working to educate residents about the importance of pollinating insects and developing pollinator sites. To help facilitate this effort the Village passed an ordinance in support of beekeeping this past year as well.

Downtown Enhancements



The need for infrastructure improvements in our downtown to support economic development continues to be a high priority. This past year, the Village has been looking into the cost to construct a water tower in association with our Shiloh Ridge water system. The tower will enable the Village to provide a fire rated water system, which will be a true benefit for existing businesses and will help draw new business interest in the downtown area.

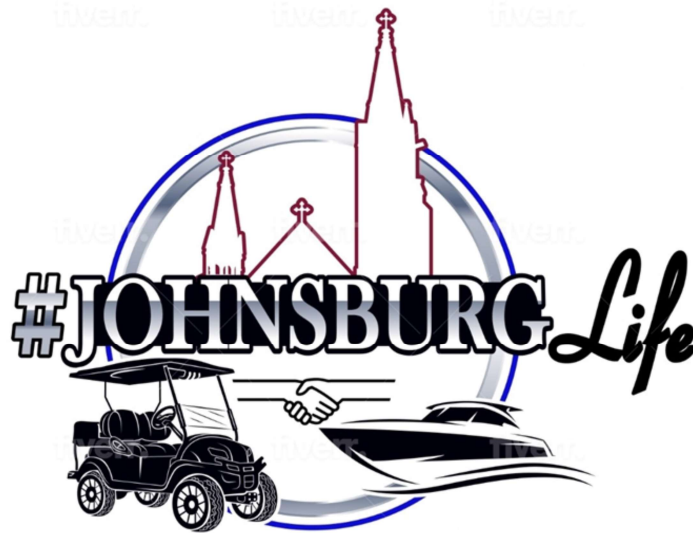
Diversified Housing



I am pleased to report that we continue to experience interest by developers who wish to pursue unique housing products not currently offered in our community. This presents us the opportunity to overcome one of the Weakness identified during our Strategic Planning Session – the Lack of Diversified Housing.

Last year, the Village approved a townhome rental developed marketed towards working families. This year, the Planning and Zoning Commission is about to review a new residential development proposal in our downtown area. The development consists of ranch rental homes marketed towards empty nesters. The concept has thus far been positively received. Not only will it provide a home product not currently available in Johnsburg, it may also help to encourage business development and help support infrastructure improvements in our downtown area. To foster a balanced and healthy community, we continue to remain open to new concepts in housing alternatives.

The Johnsburg Way of Life



Expanding on the Village's brand and marketing what we have to offer remains an important goal for the Village. This past year, the Economic Development Committee and Village staff furthered those efforts through the development of #JohnsburgLife. Decals have been made to share throughout the community. We have them available tonight and encourage you to take one, spread the word and be a part of the movement.

A Façade Improvement Program was recently approved by the Board, which provides funding assistance to businesses in all four of the Village's business districts. The program was developed to encourage improvements to properties in an effort to revitalize and enhance the character of our community. More information regarding the program is available on the Village's website. The Committee is also working to reestablish the Real Estate Tax Rebate Program and it is expected to be in place later this year.

Trustees Hagen and Morris will continue work on ways we can expand our marketing efforts and develop concepts for the Board to consider and implement.

Carting Around Town



Its amazing to see how recreational travel by golf carts and other non-highway vehicles has grown throughout our community. When the program began in 2014, the Village had 18 registered non-highway vehicles. Today, we have nearly 500 and the number continues to grow. This year we've included \$30,000 in the budget to construct paths in places where safe road travel is unavailable. The cost of the improvement is supported by generous donations received by the Village from the golf cart community and from revenues derived from the sale of license plates. Trustees Letzter and Klemstein are working to identify additional areas to extend our path network and develop ways we can secure more funding and the easements needed to accomplish this goal.



We have a couple new and exciting events that have kicked off this year. The first is the Wednesday night Johnsburg Food Truck event that began the first week in May. Village resident Dave Winiarski coordinated the event in concert with the Community Affairs Committee and it has quickly become a great success. The event first started in the Valmar Center parking lot in an effort to gain awareness from the higher traffic volumes experienced on Johnsburg Road. The event has been such a success that it has since been moved to the Community Club grounds and has expanded to include more food vendors and live entertainment each week. This event has provided another opportunity for friends and family to get together and enjoy what Johnsburg has to offer. Thank you to Dave and his wife Linda for making this event a reality.



The other fantastic new event is the Markets of Remington Farm Farmer's Market. This event also began in May and takes place the first Saturday of each month next to Prem Magnetics in downtown Johnsburg. The event, which has been brought to us by Josh and Sarah Hagen, has developed an incredible following. There is something to enjoy for everyone in the family. Vendors share everything from fresh produce and seedlings to honey, jewelry and other locally sourced goods. Thank you Josh and Sarah for bringing this great opportunity to Johnsburg.

The next Farmer's Market will take place on Saturday, July 1st so mark your calendars and check out this fun new event with the whole family.



In closing, we are excited about the many projects and programs that that I've share with you tonight and eager to discover new opportunities to enhance our community. Last week we once again approved a balance budget which includes \$4.5 million for infrastructure projects and \$200,000 in capital purchases. We also committed an increase in contributions towards our Capital Fund and Reserves to insure that monies are available for future projects and purchases. In addition to the grants and donations we've secured, the conclusion of the Walmart Economic Incentive Agreement has freed up funds to help support these projects.

The year ahead will be bring about more progress in the Village. The parking lots at both Sunnyside Park and Hiller Park will be improved and street name signage will be replaced along roadways on the east side of the river.

Dead tree removal and fence line clearing will continue at the Chapel Hill Golf Course and the roof will be replaced at the 19th Hole. Orchard pruning and new T markers will also be pursued at the golf course.



As always, funding is a major hurdle we face in accomplishing our goals and the current rate of inflation only adds to those challenges. Our dedicated team continues to implement innovative approaches and pursue grants whenever possible to help us achieve our goals. As I said earlier, no one person is credit for our accomplishments. It takes a “village” of dedicated people to get things done.



We don't know for certain what lies ahead but diligent planning and a shared vision helps to insure that we will be prepared to take on the toughest challenges and make great things happen - that's the Johnsburg spirit.

You are here this evening because you are a part of this great community and are excited about its future. I thank you for your support and urge you to join us as we work to make sure Johnsburg continues to be the place we proudly call home.



I thank the Johnsburg Area Business Association for the opportunity to present to you this evening and all of our residents and business owners who have given me the honor of representing them as your Village President.

Thank you for sharing your time.