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VOLUME 31, ISSUE 4

MAY 2016

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New Municipal Budget Begins May 1



By the time you read this the Village Board will have passed the municipal budget for the new fiscal year which begins May 1st. A Tentative Budget was published on April 12th and made available at the Government Center for public review. A public hearing was subsequently held on April 18th, and then a special meeting was scheduled for April 25th when the final version of the budget was set to be passed.

This new budget will look significantly different from recent budgets but very similar to budgets from years ago. While state law requires only line items with fiscal year dollar amounts for last year, the current year, and the budget year, this year's budget includes significant detail within those line items to help everyone understand where revenue comes from and where it is being spent. It also includes projections by month, which helped elected officials and department heads to time proposed expenditures to anticipated revenues, helping to better manage 'cash flow'.

Revenue and expenditures for each fund or function are summarized at the beginning of that section and the fund, its purpose and its restrictions are described to facilitate understanding. Each of those fund summaries includes a projected Beginning and Ending Fund Balance to highlight whether spending within that fund is 'balanced' for the fiscal year. Expenditures are divided into operational and capital categories.

Elected officials and department heads are also able to see the calculations that go into specific line items to further clarify the information

contained in the document. All this detail helps to assure accuracy in the budget as well as fulfill a goal of the Board of Trustees for even more transparency of information in Village government.

Some revenues and expenditures have been designated as "Enterprise" or "Restricted" accounts. Among these are functions like the Swansea Report and Refuse & Recycling, which the Village expects to be self-supporting financially, and monies that come into the budget but are not available for general expenses, like pension fund taxes, some revenues specific to DUI and drug enforcement, and donations to the K9 unit or youth academy. In addition, the Village's Non-Home Rule Sales Tax and its share of the Township Road and Bridge Tax have been separated into an independent fund to provide for infrastructure improvements, including the construction or maintenance of roads and other infrastructure, as promised when the sales tax was passed.

In all, the budget projects about \$5.5 million in operational and capital expenditures from the General Fund during FY 2017. The final budget will be posted on the Village website, and a printed copy will remain available at the Government Center for public review.

News Briefs

Village Board Begins Visioning and Strategic Planning Process

On Saturday April 9th, the Mayor and Members of the Village Board spent their day participating in a Visioning session. In a very positive and cooperative way, everyone shared ideas and brainstormed about a number of issues as they worked towards a collective vision for the future of Swansea.

The participants proposed and defined five core values as well as the core purpose that they believe encompasses who we are as a community - who we are at our very center. They developed a concise mission statement and described the components of a vision statement that will vividly describe what they hope Swansea will be in the future.

While these concepts are common in the business world, they are not as commonly found in the public sector. Yet the public sector can reap the same benefits from a defined culture and a set of guiding principles.

The participants concluded their session by designating six strategy zones that will begin to form the foundation of a very specific strategic plan. That plan will guide the staff and leaders of the Village towards systematic implementation of the steps needed to eventually bring this vision to reality. Details will be provided in future issues of the Swansea Report.

Deadline To Apply For Police Officer Hiring List is May 6th at 5:00pm

Police Departments hire new officers from an eligibility list, and the Village of Swansea is in the process of establishing a new list. As such, the department will conduct a written examination and physical agility / fitness test on Saturday, May 14th, at Southwestern Illinois College, Room 1513, 2500 Carlyle Ave., Belleville.

Applicants must be between the ages of 21 and 35, although there are some exemptions to the upper limit for those with prior military or certified police officer experience. Applicants must also have the minimum of an Associates Degree or equivalent credit hours. The starting salary for a probationary police officer is \$51,871 plus benefits.

Detailed information and the application packet can be found online at www.swanseail.org, or picked up at the Swansea Police Department, 1400 N. Illinois Street, Swansea, IL 62226. Non-emergency phone number is 618-233-8114.

Part-Time Summer Job Available

The Village is seeking applicants for part-time summer employment working outdoors and performing manual labor. Applicants must be physically able to lift up to 50 pounds. Must have valid drivers license and excellent work ethic. Prefer

experience operating commercial mowers. Position filled as early as possible, running through October. Weekly schedule of 32 hours per week, with 2 hours on Sat and Sun every other week. \$12 per hour, no benefits. Apply on-line at the Village's website www.swanseail.org or pick up an application at the Government Center, 1400 Illinois Street.

Make Time on Memorial Day To Honor Those Who Served and Still Serve

As has long been the tradition in Swansea, men and women who have served and sacrificed in service to the United States will once again be honored at the Village's annual Memorial Day Ceremony.

This year the event is scheduled for Monday, May 30th, beginning at 10:00am at Pavilion #2 in Melvin Price Memorial Park, 1500 Caseyville Avenue. The event will feature a guest speaker, music by the Westview Baptist Church Worship team and refreshments.

Any Swansea resident who is a veteran of the Armed Services, either retired or currently serving, is asked to email mlineumeyer@att.net ASAP or call 618-363-8694, to have your name added to an ongoing list of Swansea Veterans.

Those veterans as well as all residents and the general public are invited and encouraged to attend.

Swansea Community Calendar - May 2016

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2 Committee Meetings 6:00pm Govt. Center Village Board Meeting 7:00pm Govt. Center	3	4	5 Swansea Farmer's Market - Opening Day 11:00am - 3:00pm Rural King Parking Lot	6 Chamber of Commerce Morning Mingle 7:45am - 9:00am Recreation Center Fairview Heights City Hall, 10025 Bunkum Rd	7
8 Mother's Day	9 Swansea Patriots Meeting 5:30pm Norman Lehr Center	10 Planning and Zoning Board Meeting If needed 6:00pm Govt. Center	11 Chamber of Commerce Board of Director's Meeting 4:00pm Chamber Office	12 Swansea Farmer's Market 11:00am - 3:00pm Rural King Parking Lot	13	14 Swansea Park Board Meeting 7:00am Norman Lehr Center Anti Bullying Community Awareness Day, 11:00 am - 2:00 pm., at High Mount School.
15	16 Committee Meetings 6:00pm Govt. Center Village Board Meeting 7:00pm Govt. Center	17	18	19 Swansea Farmer's Market 11:00am - 3:00pm Rural King Parking Lot	20	21 Armed Forces Day
22	23	24	25	26 Swansea Farmer's Market 11:00am - 3:00pm Rural King Parking Lot	27	28
29	30 Holiday Govt. Center Closed Memorial Day Ceremony, 10:00am Mel Price Park	31				

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Holiday Affects Trash, Recycling & Yard Waste

Memorial Day, May 30th is a holiday observed by Republic Services. As such, the collection of trash and recycling will shift one day for all routes that week. Normal Mon pickup shifts to Tue, Tue to Wed, Thu to Fri, and Fri to Sat. Wed yard waste shifts to Thur.

Farmer's Market Opens May 5th

The Swansea Farmer's Market starts its eighth season on May 5th. The market will be open every Thursday from 11:00 am until 3:00 p.m., on the parking lot of Rural King, 2801 N. Illinois Street, Swansea, rain or shine.

For the month of May, you can expect to find asparagus, varieties of lettuce difficult to find elsewhere, strawberries, and other spring crops. As with last year, a local restaurant or charitable organization will be selling or donating food. The opening day menu includes hot dogs, brats, and other items.

While supplies last, the market will

also be giving away potted plants and cannas for you to take home and plant. And in honor of Mother's Day they will give a chocolate covered strawberry to each mother and will be selling additional ones for a dollar each, again while supplies last. Come enjoy your market and meet the volunteers who operate it.

Anyone who would like to be a vendor should contact them at swanseafarmersmarket@yahoo.com or call Norm Geloat at 978-8753. Vendor fees are:

- Produce/Meats \$10 Weekly
- Baked Goods \$10 Weekly
- Crafts/Flowers \$3 Weekly
- Food Vendor \$5 Weekly

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High Mount To Hold Anti-Bullying Event As A Community Awareness Day

High Mount School will host an event to help children and others stand up against bullying. It is being offered as a Community Awareness Day and all Swansea residents are invited and welcome to attend. The event is Sat, May 14th, from 11:00am – 2:00pm.

High Mount To Also Hold Pre-K Screenings May 24 & 25



All children who live in the High Mount School District who will be at least 3 years old on or before Sept. 1, 2016, but less than 4 1/2 years old, (therefore not eligible for Kindergarten in the Fall of 2016) should participate in this pre-screening process. The process involves testing Vision, Motor Coordination, Hearing, Speech, Concepts Formation, and Language.

The screenings will take place at High Mount School at 1721 Boul Ave., in Swansea.

To Make an Appointment Call the school at 233-1054. Personal screening are expected to take approximately one hour each.

A child must participate in the screening in order to be eligible for the High Mount School Pre-K At Risk Program.

News Briefs

Police & Fire Youth Academy June 20-22nd

The Village is currently accepting applications for its 2nd Annual Swansea Police and Fire Youth Academy. The 3-day event allows youth ages 9-13 to experience law enforcement training, fire department demonstrations, leadership preparation, and much, much more.

This year's dates are June 20th, 21st & 22nd. Participants meet from 8:00am until 4:00pm each day, with graduation at 4:00pm on the 22nd. Donations cover all costs so there is no fee to participants, who also receive a Youth Academy shirt and lunch each day.

Only 50 spots are available with preferential spots for Swansea residents and new recruits. If interested email 911 Supervisor Michelle Russel for an application packet at mrussell@swanseail.org.



Police Department Receives Donations for K9, Youth Academy

The Swansea Police Department has received significant financial donations towards the cost of adding Leo, our new K9 dog to the force as well as towards the cost of the 2nd Annual Youth Academy. In fact, the purchase of Leo was accomplished without the use of Village funds and donations continue to come in towards his medical care, food and other support.

In addition, donations have been received to help underwrite the cost of the upcoming Youth Academy.

In addition to these, the Police Department has or is starting a number of other community service initiatives that benefit from donations, including the annual Citizen's Academy, the Bike Patrol, its Explore Post, and Neighborhood Watch programs. Residents or businesses who would like to help any of these specific initiatives should call the PD non-emergency number at 233-8114.

Swansea Park Board Has Open Position

The Village is looking for a resident interested in volunteering their time to serve on the Swansea Park Board. The group meets on the second Saturday of each month at 7:00am, and advises the Village Board of Trustees on issues related to parks. Interested persons should email to swanadmn@swanseail.org, and provide name, address, phone number, email address, some brief biographical information and a short paragraph about why you would like to serve in this capacity.

Rotary Club 5k Run Walk June 4th

The 13th Annual "Service Above Self" 5K run/walk sponsored by the Swansea Rotary Club will be held rain or shine on June 4th. Begins and ends at Wolf Branch Middle School, 410 Huntwood Rd. Starts at 8:00am. For additional information contact Jim Riess at 618-920-9698, Jamie Lemons at 618-580-4781, or register on-line at www.swansearotary.org.

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Road Resurfacing Projects Included in Budget; Bids Received

Residents in the area of 15th, 16th and Caseyville Ave have had to put up with construction, detours and other general inconveniences as Illinois American Water replaced water mains in that area of Swansea. But those same residents are about to reap some benefits.

The Village designates some money in each year's budget towards the renovation of residential streets. Last year's projects were in the northern end of Swansea, so this year the Village was looking south. Knowing that the Water Company would need to patch streets where they had excavated, the Village approached them with the concept of partnering on a more comprehensive road resurfacing project, and Illinois American agreed.

The Village therefore requested bids for grinding up the existing oil and chip road surfaces, and overlaying that with new asphalt pavement. The low bid was opened Apr 21 and was very favorable. Illinois American's share should cover about half the total cost, allowing the Village to double the length of roads it can resurface this year.

Specific streets that are part of the project include, N. 15th Street, from Morgan Ave. to N. Belt West, N. 16th Street, from Morgan Ave. to N. Belt West, N. Caseyville Ave., from Morgan Ave. to N. Belt West, Anna Rose Drive, from Morgan Ave. to end of the street, Anna Rose Drive, from Jay Ave. to N. 16th Street, Karin Drive, from N. 15th to the end of the street Jay Avenue, from Caseyville Ave. to N. 16th Street, Comer Avenue, from N. 15th to N. 16th Street, and West Belle Street, from N. 15th to N. 16th Street.



Siemonsma Eagle Scout of The Year



Patrick Siemonsma, from Troop 52 in Swansea was recently named as the Lewis & Clark Boy Scout Council's 2015 Eagle Scout of the Year. Patrick has served in a number of leadership positions in the troop and is a second year staff member in the council's National Youth Leadership Training program. His Eagle project included construction of a large bird enclosure for the Tree House Wildlife Center in Dow, IL. Construction took five weekends and more than 378 hours to complete. He is pictured here with Paul Pulse, Troop 52 Scoutmaster.

VILLAGE OF SWANSEA CONTACT INFO

Swansea Government Center
1400 N. Illinois Street Hours: 8:00am - 4:30pm, M-F
www.swanseail.org

**Administration,
Mayor's Office, Village Clerk,
Utility Billing & Public Works**
Phone: 618-234-0044 swanadmn@swanseail.org

Building, Zoning, Permits
Phone: 618-355-0280 swanbnz@swanseail.org

Swansea Police Department
Emergency: 911
Non-emergency: 618-233-8114 swanseap@swanseail.org

Swansea Fire Department
Emergency: 911 Engine House: 618-234-3291

Village of Swansea Officials
President: Ken Mueller mayor@swanseail.org
Village Clerk Lauren O'Neill lonell@swanseail.org
Treasurer Michael W. Leopold mleopold@swanseail.org
Trustee Matt Lanter mlanter@swanseail.org
Trustee Brian McGuire bmcguire@swanseail.org
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High Mount Starts Community Garden

What began as a dream has finally come to fruition. The dirt in High Mount School's Community Garden is ready for planting. The ten, raised beds are located at the top of the hill behind the school.

First year art teacher, Emily Potoski, brought the idea to Superintendent Mark Halacha at the beginning of the year. Together, they organized funding, volunteers, and supplies while drumming up interest throughout the Swansea community.

By creating a community garden, the school hopes to expose students to lessons that can't effectively be taught simply through books or lecture; including healthy eating and hands on science while they watch seeds grow. The garden will also give back to the community by providing free, healthy fruits and vegetables to Swansea families in need. If you would like to share your gardening knowledge, labor, cooking skills, make a donation or rent a box next season, contact Emily Potoski at (618) 233-1054 ext. 204 or epokojski@highmountschool.net.



Fire fighters from the Swansea Fire Department served as the Color Guard before the St. Louis Blues hockey game on April 4th.

Recycling Options for TVs/Electronics

While on January 1, 2012, Illinois Public Act 97-0287 banned 17 electronic products from landfills, including TVs, computers, monitors, printers, VCRs/DVD players, gaming systems, MP3 players, scanners, and fax machines, residents have recently been finding it difficult to recycle these items, as more places have ceased to accept them.

Since these items can not be put out with your trash or recycling, the Village has identified 4 area locations still accepting electronics:

- **J&C Recycling** - 621 Atlanta Dr., Belleville, IL Call 618-233-5009. Fee ranges from \$10 to \$30 (this is the only location in St. Clair County)
- **Power Recycling, Inc.** - 9200 Collinsville Rd., Collinsville, IL. Accepts electronics on the 2nd Friday of every month. Parking lot across from 228 W. Main St, Collinsville. Fee is \$25. For hours Call 618-344-7232.
- **CJD E-Cycling** - 5257 N. State Rt 157, Edwardsville, IL. Call 618-659-9006. Fee from \$5-\$30, depending on size.
- **Eagle Recycling**, 26099 Wiedle Rd Shattuc, IL (Clinton County). Call ahead 618-226-3478.

Eradication Of Bush Honeysuckle In Centennial Park

From 9:00am until Noon on May 14th Friends of Centennial Park will once again work on removing bush honeysuckle and cut invasive vines that are choking out trees in Centennial Park, off IL Rte. 161.

Bush honeysuckle is perhaps the worst of exotic plants becoming a problem in our area. Shade tolerant, it becomes so thick that native trees, flowers, and other plants can't reproduce, and so prevalent it makes foot travel difficult. Left unchecked, it could eventually choke out oak, hickory, walnut, cottonwood, maple, and other native trees, along with the food source they provide for animals.

While it may take years to remove all the Honeysuckle, the group intends to have fun getting it done. They will have a picnic afterwards for those who are willing to remain. More information and photos can be found on Facebook under "Friends of Centennial Park, Swansea, Illinois". Or email Brian Wells for details at bwells@swanseail.org.

Sign Up For Code Red Alerts

Swansea provides access to the Code Red system for all its residents, but you have to sign up for the service to take advantage of it. Code Red will send a message to your landline phone, cell phone or both, to notify you of emergency situations or even missing child alerts.

It is a free service available to all Swansea residents and businesses. Simply go to the Swansea website at <http://www.swanseail.org> and look for the red sign up bar on the right side of the home page. Click on it to go to the registration page and then simply fill in the requested information.

The Village is considering adding the optional Weather Warning alert to the system, so residents can use it to stay informed about tornado warnings, flash floods and other weather events. Funding was proposed in the budget for consideration. More to come...

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Understanding Your Real Estate Property Tax Bill And How It Is Calculated

When Spring arrives property tax bills can't be too far behind. And generally that means some residents will call the Government Center with questions about their taxes and the information on their bill. While confusing at first to most, once you understand the process, it all starts to make sense.

First you need to learn to 'speak the language'. Here's what the terminology means:

- **Assessed Value** is the value placed on property by the County Assessor. Typically this is about 1/3 of the **Fair Market Value**.
- **Fair Market Value** is what your property would be expected to sell for in today's market.
- **Equalized Assessed Value (EAV)** results from applying a state equalization factor to the Assessed Value in an attempt to make taxes fair – or 'equalize' them - across the state.
- **Taxing Body or District** is any governmental entity that has the authority to raise revenue by taxing the properties within its boundaries.
- **Tax Levy** is the dollar amount a Taxing District wants to collect from its residents for a specific purpose during a specific year.
- And the **Tax Rate** for that specific purpose and that district is determined by dividing the Tax Levy requested, by the total Equalized Assessed Value under the jurisdiction of the taxing district or body.

A simple example might help.

Suppose that in Swansea there were only 10 properties – one big retail store and 9 residential homes. Suppose the store property has a Fair Market Value of \$9 million and an EAV of \$3 million. And suppose each of the 9 houses has a Fair Market Value of \$90,000 and EAVs of \$30,000. In this "Swansea" the total EAV is therefore \$3,270,000. (\$3,000,000 + (\$30,000X 9).

Now let's say Swansea passed property tax levies for three public services. \$16,000 for Police, \$9,000 for Fire and \$8,000 for Streets. So together, the Village wants to collect \$33,000 in taxes. To figure the Tax Rate you then need to take that \$33,000 and divide it by the total EAV in the Village – the \$3,270,000. The resulting rate is 1.0091743%.

Now when St. Clair County prepares tax bills, it uses this calculated rate to equitably share the responsibility for Swansea's taxes across all properties in Swansea. So for the store their individual EAV of \$3,000,000 is multiplied by the Swansea tax rate of 1.0091743%, which means they will pay \$30,275.33 in property taxes to Swansea.

Each of the 9 homes will pay their individual EAV of \$30,000 multiplied by the same rate of 1.0091743%, or \$302.75 each in Swansea property taxes.

And if you add those up - \$30,275.33

from the store plus 9 x \$302.75 from all the homes equals \$33,000 – the amount of Swansea's total Tax Levy.

You will note that the store pays more of the total tax dollars even though everyone's taxes are based on the exact same rate. They do that because their property is worth more than the residential homes. It works that way in the real world as well. Not all homes are worth the same, so the more yours is worth the more tax dollars you will pay, even though your rate is the same as all other homes.

The process starts with a taxing body like Swansea deciding how much money it wants / needs to collect for specific, allowable purposes – like Police Protection, Fire Protection, and Liability Insurance. State statutes set a limit on some of those levies and not on others.

Then the Village requests that money in the form of a dollar amount. It would be great if taxing bodies could ask for a specific tax rate, because they would immediately know the impact on their taxpayers. But since the total Equalized Assessed Valuation in a taxing district is not known at the time of the levy and since that EAV determines the final rate, districts can only estimate the EAV and wait to see the end result.

This twist is a particular challenge for communities that are growing and seeing new construction. If in our fictional Swansea of 9 homes and one retail store, 5 more homes were built in a single year, one would

expect the EAV for the community to increase. But if Swansea levied the same taxes as the year before, the additional EAV would cause the tax rate to drop, and everyone would pay less individually. Great for them, but Swansea now has 5 more homes for which it needs to provide services.

Often the better option is to try to guess how much the EAV is going to increase and to at least increase the dollars requested through the levy by an amount that would leave the rate generally the same. That way, the store and the 9 original residents pay about the same in tax dollars, but the new residents also pay their fair share, and the Village has more real dollars to provide services. And sometimes that taxing body simply needs to levy an amount sufficient to cover the public's needs and desires, even if the tax rate will increase.

Another aspect of the property tax system seems to confuse some people. The bill you receive is a single bill for multiple overlapping taxing bodies. For efficiency, taxes are collected by the County for every taxing district that provides services to your property. The County includes them all on a single bill and sends it to you. When you pay the bill the County splits the money and sends each taxing district their share.

But it is not unusual for someone to look at the combined bottom line on their bill and assume the Village gets all those tax dollars. It does not. The Village in fact gets a relatively small percentage of the total taxes you pay.

Sample Tax Bill (2014)

Assessment Level	Land Value	Building Value	Total Value
Market EAV	36876	130674	167550
State EAV	12292	43558	55850
Fair Market Value	36876	130674	167550
Board of Review EAV	12292	43558	55850
Board of Review Prior to EAV	12292	43558	55850
Assessor Value	12292	43558	55850

Exemption Description	Exemption Amount
Owner Occupied	6000.0000

Legal	
Township	ST CLAIR
Legal Description Line 1	
Legal Description Line 2	
Legal Description Line 3	
Legal Description Line 4	

Tax District	Tax Rate	Tax Amount
BELLEVILLE HS #201	2.0352	\$1,014.55
ST CLAIR CO OTHER	0.9388	\$467.99
ST CLAIR ROAD	0.2472	\$123.23
ST CLAIR TWP	0.0513	\$25.57
SWIC DIST #522	0.4285	\$213.61
VILLAGE OF SWANSEA	0.5093	\$253.89
WOLF BRANCH #113	3.7238	\$1,856.31

The median value of a home in Swansea is about \$165,000. The tax bill above is for an actual property in the Village. It has a fair market value of \$167,550. Note that while the taxes paid by this property owner come to a total of \$3,955.15, only \$253.89 of that total will be distributed to the Village - about 6.4% of the total tax bill.

For what amounts to less than 70 cents per day, the Village provides police and fire protection, street maintenance, parks and recreational opportunities, and a host of other public services.

So while you might hear someone complain of 'Swansea's high taxes', they are probably confusing the total bill with the Village's share, which at 70 cents a day is actually a bargain. To put it into perspective, compare it to the daily cost of a cup of specialty coffee. Or compare the annual cost of all your municipal services through property taxes to a monthly cell phone or cable bill. The value becomes evident very quickly.

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