



## VILLAGE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Neighbor:

**“Steep Slope” Ordinance:** A few years ago, and after extensive study by the Plan Commission and Village staff, the Village Board was prepared to adopt an ordinance providing for certain limits on construction on the “steep slope” properties in the Village. The properties involved are those on the Lake Michigan bluff and on our ravines, and the limitations relate principally to the proximity of new construction to the bluff or ravine edge. Existing structures are not affected. The goal of the legislation is to preserve the safety and effectiveness of the bluffs and ravines.

Although many Board meetings were held at which the proposal was discussed, without opposition, a significant number of property owners appeared at the final meeting to voice strong opposition to the proposal. It turned out that a circular had been distributed to at least some affected residents that, in the view of Village staff and others, seriously misrepresented the limitations and impact of the proposed ordinance.

In any event, the Village Board decided to defer action on the matter until such time as staff was able to prepare more detailed and specific explanations of the impact of the ordinance and its application to the affected properties. Although the press of other matters has delayed that activity, it has now been completed, and the “steep slope” proposal will be on the agenda of the Village Board meeting on April 18. Letters have been sent to all affected property owners to that effect, inviting all such owners to meet with staff, should they wish to do so, to discuss the specific application of the ordinance to their individual property.

There are pros and cons to all new zoning regulations. Perhaps because there had been no prior opposition, there were no supporters of the steep slope regulations speaking at the meeting when the matter was deferred. As always, the effects on private property and the value to the community need to be weighed and balanced, and the Board needs to hear all viewpoints. I hope that those interested – from both sides – can attend the April meeting.

**Northwest Water Commission:** Some months ago, the Village was contacted by representatives of the Northwest Water Commission with a request to discuss the possibility of Glencoe providing to the NWC some form of access through Glencoe to Lake Michigan water. The NWC currently provides water to its four member communities (Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, Palatine and Wheeling). The water is purchased entirely from Evanston, and the Commission has expressed interest in obtaining alternate sources.

Discussions have been ongoing, with alternative options including construction of a new, larger water plant (on our current site) to provide water for Glencoe and the NWC members or, alternatively, construction of only an access facility and pumping station to move raw water to a processing facility in one of those suburbs. All plans would require installation of large new water main facilities running to the west.

Discussions are very preliminary. No conclusions have been reached as to what might work for the respective parties, and most importantly, whether Glencoe will receive sufficient benefits for it to consider the project. Such benefits could be very substantial. To assist in the analysis, the Village has recently taken steps to retain a consulting firm experienced in this area.

**Final Notes:** This is my last opportunity to provide the “President’s Message” in this publication, since my eight-year period as Village President will end with our May 16 Village Board meeting. My successor will be current Village Trustee Larry Levin, and I am confident that the Village will be in good hands under his leadership.

It is perhaps traditional for retiring political officeholders to spend some time listing the various specific “laws passed” and “benefits given” during their time in office. But since I do not consider myself a “politician”, or the Village Presidency a “political office” in the normal sense, I am not going to do that. (And I thank our Caucus system for my ability to be “non-political” – it is a hallmark of our community that deserves our full and constant support.)

What I would like to do is go back to my first “President’s Message” (April, 2005), and review what I offered then as “general goals for the conduct of business” during my term. Longer-term residents will recall that, when I took office, we had been through a period of some significant dissatisfaction with and distrust of our Village government. In part because of that circumstance, I identified those goals under three headings: “openness and candor”; “consideration and respect”, and “we and they”.

I believe that I can report to you that we have met those goals during the past eight years. With “openness and candor”, I pledged to you that we would keep residents informed on a timely basis on all matters of Village governance. Sometimes that has meant reporting on discussions perhaps prematurely (see left re: the Northwest Water Commission), but I have believed that, in a small community such as ours, too much information is better than too little.

“Consideration and respect” referred to what was then a somewhat frequent occurrence: public discourse carried out in a mean-spirited and vituperative manner. To a large degree, we have been able to avoid that kind of interaction in our Board meetings and other public events. (We have not been perfect – and we will see what happens at the “steep slope” meeting in April!)

“We and they” referred to the need to recognize that Village Board members were not a “they”, but rather a “we” – all of us, in Glencoe, working towards a common goal of making our community the best it can possibly be. Our Trustees have shared that goal, and I hope that those residents who have come before the Board, for whatever reason, have understood our mutual commitment to our community.

I hope you share my judgment that these goals have in fact been met.

Now on to a more personal note. I have been asked many times over the past eight years whether I have enjoyed being Village President. The answer is a definite “yes”. And I recommend it – or something like it – to everyone.

Now, before you conclude that the job has actually had negative mental effects, let me explain. It is very gratifying to be able to make a real contribution to one’s community. Some people prefer to devote their attention to larger governments, and perhaps larger issues – but

those require not only political skills, but also a desire, or at least a willingness, to do real politics. Glencoe’s system, as I said earlier, allows those of us who would prefer not to campaign, fund-raise, cater to interest groups and otherwise do all those things which we see our real politicians do (in Illinois, of course, that could include jail time...), to make our own contribution to the community. It is a real positive, and brings to office, in my (self-aggrandizing?) view, just the kind of individuals I would want to see running the town.

In addition to making a contribution, the level of government at which we work insures also that one can make a difference. This applies whether in elected office, or as a member of a board or commission.

I would not want to say that there are no downsides to this kind of public activity. There is plenty of mundane, boring detail that must be addressed. And, unfortunately, one can not help but come face-to-face with that most unpleasant characteristic of our general citizenry (Glencoe folks being especially articulate at it): our amazing ability to convince ourselves that what is in our personal best interest is also what is best for – and in fact required by – the whole community. The hardest, although also perhaps the most interesting, part of the job is finding a proper balance between individual rights and interests on the one hand, and the “public good” on the other.

I have found that the positives far outweigh the negatives, and that is why I recommend that everyone consider similar service opportunities. In a community such as Glencoe, it is truly important to have as broad a spectrum of contributors as possible. We could not have become the kind of town we are without the help of our citizenry.

And that brings me to the “thank you” portion of this message. First, to thank all of you for giving me the opportunity to make the kind of contribution I have been talking about. More specifically, to thank the individuals who have through their own contributions helped make the past eight years a worthwhile effort:

--- the ten people who have served as Village Trustees during this time: Keki Bhote, Deborah Cogan, Bruce Cowans, Larry Debb, Andrew Hayek, Joe Keefe, Larry Levin, Mitch Melamed, Ellen Shubart and Joel Solomon. Their willingness to contribute their time and

their wisdom – and to do so in a collegial and cooperative manner – has been invaluable.

--- the too-many-to-name-here Glencoe citizens who have answered the call to serve on our various Boards, Commissions and Task Forces. One of the best aspects of this job has been the opportunity to meet and work with these men and women.

--- our highly professional Village staff. We are most fortunate in Glencoe to enjoy the services of well-trained and dedicated individuals whose contributions help make Glencoe the fine community that it is.

--- and, of course, our very special Village Manager. Paul Harlow has served the Village of Glencoe since 1975 (he’s never worked anywhere else!), beginning as a public safety officer, rising through the ranks to Chief, and becoming Village Manager in 2000. Those years of service have given Paul a unique knowledge of our community, its history and its culture. That knowledge – and Paul’s total commitment to our Village – have been major factors in any successes which I can claim for my tenure as Village President. (As you may know, Paul has advised the Village Board that he will be retiring before the end of this year. Perhaps the most important task facing our next Village President and Village Board will be selecting his successor.)

Those of you who have been regular readers of this column know that I usually end with another “thank you” – for “listening”. I’ll do that one more time – especially so if you are still with me in this extra-long column – today and for the last eight years as well. I’ve also tried to do my best to listen to you. I hope I have succeeded. ■



Scott Feldman

