Thanksgiving has now passed and we, like others, look back over the year that has been very good to the Village and its residents.

We are very thankful our financial position has allowed us to acquire additional open space, ensuring that our Village retains its rural feel with large lots and beautiful “big-sky” vistas—while still paying out to residents a healthy tax-rebate this year.

As you may be aware, the Village agreed to purchase 2.4 acres along Riverwoods Blvd. (see details under Parks on page 5); and I am pleased to inform you that the Village Board has just recently agreed to purchase a property at the SW corner of St. Marys Rd. and Rt. 60...directly across from the Forest Preserve Horse Barn facility. The resident owner of the property (who had lived on the property for 40+ years) invited the Village to make an offer for this home and 3.95 acre property.

This acquisition is a good example of your Board protecting the Village’s future. This site could easily have become a target for a commercial gas station or another development. Your Board believed that by purchasing this property they could protect the corner site from development; plus, this 2,800 sq. ft. ranch house will be the most inexpensive alternative for a Village Hall for the Village. So this acquisition by your Board has many benefits to the Village and its residents.

These investment programs are possible because of the commercial businesses in the Village. So while few would like to sacrifice open space for commercial development, it does pay for programs that benefit our residents now and in the future: therefore, a reasonable trade-off.

Now, as the holiday season approaches, we will be focusing on snow plowing and land management projects as well as beginning our preliminary planning for the fiscal year 2014 Budget.

Our Village Board committees have also been busy this past quarter. You will find their reports on the pages that follow.

Financially, we are again ahead of budget projections for the year; and therefore, your Village Board has approved a second tax-rebate payment equal to the first payment, which you should have now received. With this second payment, we will have issued a 10X tax-rebate payment for 2012.

New Village Appointments

New ZPA Commissioner: Holly Hirsch

We wish to welcome and thank Holly Hirsch for serving as a Commissioner on the Village Zoning, Planning and Appeals commission. Holly was sworn in as a ZPA Commissioner for the Village of Mettawa on November 20.

The ZPA Commission handles all Village administrative zoning, planning and appeals issues. Holly has been a Mettawa resident for six years. She works as a Specifications Specialist for Knauf Insulation. Before that, she served as Commercial Market Development Manager for Johns Manville, a Berkshire Hathaway company. Holly—who earned her BA in Communication and Environmental Conservation at the University of Boulder and her MBA from the Keller Graduate School of Management of Devry University—looks forward to supporting the community in this role.

From all of the Village officials we wish you and your family the very best health and happiness during this special holiday season.
Quarter 2 FY 2013 results

With the conclusion of the second quarter of FY 2013, we are financially on target to meet our budget projections this year.

Rules: Village Bonds

Mettawa’s bonds have a set schedule for payments—this is how all bonds are paid back. In many instances, bonds have a “call provision” in which part or all of the bonds can be “called” for payment. Because bonds are an investment, investors expect a certain amount of return on their assets. If a bond is paid too soon, it may not appeal to investors who expect sufficient returns. As a result, bonds have a fairly long call provision. The most common is 8 to 10 years. Generally speaking, market investors set the terms of a bond sale.

In the case of Mettawa’s $1.9M bond used to purchase part of the Oasis property, we have a call provision in eight years. That means that we have the option to pay off the entire balance in 2018. Given our current cash reserves, it is likely that we will pay off the bond as long as our cash reserves and the economy remain stable. However, we cannot legally call the bonds for payment before the eighth year (about 6 years from now), which is part of the bond agreement.

Understanding Your Real Estate Taxes

To better understand your taxes, each Lake County Real Estate tax bill has a listing of the taxing body and its associated rate. These rates are listed on the left-hand side of your bill. One of those line items will be a tax paid to the Village of Mettawa.

The Village of Mettawa assesses one of the lowest tax rates in Lake County. We tax at 0.108 per $100 of Assessed Value. For example, a house that has an assessed value of $195,000 is taxed a total of $210.60 by the Village of Mettawa.

This is the only tax the Village levies and receives from Village tax payers. The Village has not increased the tax levy for almost 10 years. Additionally, it continues to be our plan to provide a tax rebate to homeowners that is equal to 8-10 times their annual Village tax.

For that reason, the Village of Mettawa is trying to help our residents through lower taxes.

We continue to be driven by two primary goals: making sound fiscal decisions and keeping taxes low.

Rising Real Estate Taxes; What can be done?

Several residents had questions about taxes in the resident survey conducted recently. (see page 5) So that we might respond to these questions, we offer some additional insight on the taxing bodies that collect taxes from you in your annual real estate tax bill.

Many of these taxes are not levied by the Village and are out of our jurisdiction.

Schools and pensions make up the majority of taxes levied against homeowners. These school levies and pensions, depending on which district you live in, make up about 67 to 75% of the total real estate tax bill that each homeowner must pay. Unfortunately, none of this money goes to the Village; nor does the Village have any say in the levy process. Therefore, the annual tax bill for an average $195,000 assessed value home would be approximately $7,350 in school taxes (about 3.77/$100 assessed value). Other districts are often higher.

In summary, a quick comparison shows that the Village only gets $210.60 in taxes each year (from our example home) AND the Village provides tax rebates to offset these and other taxes.

On the other hand, local schools get about $7,350 (and rebates none of it).

The Village of Mettawa is committed to maintaining a fiscally sound government to the benefit of our residents. The challenge we face is that lower taxes and tax rebates make it hard for us to offer free sewer or city water to all homeowners. The funding for these services — which can run into multi-millions — would require additional funding for upkeep and maintenance. These costs are decades long and the service costs never go away.
P W C has been working diligently on multiple projects in an effort to preserve and maintain our beautiful community.

Road Repair Work

The committee is working to finish as much of the resurfacing as possible before the winter weather sets in. Ideally, temperatures need to be above 40 degrees with dry conditions. To provide a longer life for the pavement, we are using a fiberglass fabric. The application of this special material also requires dry conditions. Since the combination of warm and dry conditions at this time of year can be hard to come by, the PWC will press the contractor to take advantage of every opportunity to complete as much work as possible before it becomes too cold and wet. If we are unable to complete all the roads in the next month, the asphalt base already in place will weather the winter without incident.

The Village is spending approximately $338,160 for this project, though the final cost may vary slightly due to minor field changes. This cost is 17% lower than the nearest responsible bidder and 24% lower than the highest responsible bidder. Given the state of the economy, we believe our return on this investment is very good. And, with proper preventive maintenance, these roads will last many years longer than the surfaces that were replaced.

Our goal is to build the best quality roads for your safety. Rather than rush the process during improper conditions to finish before the heart of winter sets in, our goal is to complete the roads without jeopardizing everyone’s safety or incurring unnecessary expense to the Village.

Our Village road consultant, CIORBA, has completed the initial engineering design allowing the Bradley Road resurfacing project to move forward. In order to expedite this project, we held a special Public Works meeting with CIORBA on October 29 and are now identifying and resolving any utility and trail easements, right-of-way issues, and drainage alternatives. Actual construction for this project is expected to begin in early 2014. During this “research phase” of the project, we will also consider options regarding the best ways to ensure the safety of our residents through the use of “Traffic Calming” techniques. These techniques under consideration include speed bumps, speed tables (which are longer and wider speed bumps), etc. At this point, nothing is final, but we will continue to keep you informed as new information is gleaned.

Road Truck Traffic

The PWC is actively working to redefine Mettawa ordinances for truck traffic on our roads. Much of the confusion on truck enforcement can be attributed to the current language on our signs which does not clearly state that “local deliveries” are allowed. We have met with the Lake County Deputy Sheriff responsible for truck enforcement operations and are now — based on our discussion — crafting the proper language for a new ordinance for new signs.

J A W A Water

We are making progress for the Area 1 water line extension on North St. Marys Road. Once approved by the Village Board, we will schedule a public hearing to establish this Special Service Area, allowing the Village to levy taxes to pay for the water line. If we stay on target with our current timeline, we should be able to begin construction in March or April of 2014.

 Separately, two other water line projects are underway. First, a Sanctuary Estates waterline is currently being engineered. The second project -- along St. Marys Road just north of the CN railroad tracks -- is also moving forward. We have received unofficial County approval and are now ready for formal approval by the County Public Works Department.

However, the Village must also review and approve the final plans for both of these projects. If the timing works out properly, we may be able to complete both of these projects at the same time, which could lower the overall construction costs.

2012-2013 Winter Plowing Season

Our plowing and salt contracts have been negotiated and are in place for the upcoming winter season.

This year our salt purchase was significantly less than last year due to a surplus in supply from the past two seasons.

If you notice a situation during a storm that needs special attention, please notify Bill Armstrong, Chairman of the Public Works Committee, or any Village Trustee and we will see that the situation is addressed efficiently.

While winter storms may be beautiful in Mettawa, please use caution and common sense while you are out and about during any winter weather event.
The P&R Committee has been working diligently on multiple projects during the last quarter in an effort to enhance and maintain Mettawa’s natural beauty:

**Whippoorwill Berm**

The new berm is now complete! This landscaping feature will help screen out traffic from Riverwoods Blvd. and wraps around to the west along Rte. 60. The berm, once completed with landscaping, should provide protection and act as a sight and sound barrier for nearby residents.

**Roadway Culverts**

We are happy to report that the drainage issues along our roads are being resolved so that we will be better prepared to handle future stormwater problems. In addition, a new “ponds/wetlands evaluation” study is underway; and we are analyzing ways to improve access and maintenance to all retention/detention ponds in the Village.

**Korhumel Home**

The Korhumel House has been razed. The next step will be to raze the remaining barn and outbuildings. As a reminder, the decision to raze the buildings allowed the Village to avoid possible commercial development of the land while reducing liability and insurance costs.

**Oasis Park**

The 20-acre park land acquisition now completed will make a wonderful addition to our open lands and trail system. Currently, we are looking into constructing berms on this parcel to block out views and noise from the Oasis to Bradley Road and to provide more privacy in the area as was recently completed at Whippoorwill.

**Riverwoods Blvd./Bradley Rd. Intersection**

We are pleased to report that the educational landscaping—whereby people can see a working wetland, a native prairie and a wooded savannah—constructed by Tallgrass Restoration, Inc. is almost finished. Upon completion, a lovely space will be designed to separate the three styles of native landscaping. The wooded savannah will be a transitional landscape area that leads to a split rail entryway into the residential area of the Village. This area will then be further enhanced by the existing wetland and new native planting. We hope that residents will be inspired to see how this type of traditional landscaping might work in their own yards. We expect this area to be in full bloom over the next three seasons. Native plantings takes a bit longer to establish; but once the roots are mature, the benefits will be seen for years to come.

**Everett Park**

We are currently working with Teska and Associates to design a plan for Village property near Everett and Riverwoods Blvd. on the east side at Everett and adjacent to the tollway. The goal here is to analyze the Village-owned property to see how we might enhance it so that it better blends with the other beautiful open lands areas in our Village.

**Another Great Acquisition of Open Space**

The Village of Mettawa remains committed to keeping our open space free of development so that we can continue to enjoy our “hidden gem” for many years to come. To that point, we recently acquired a 2.4 acre parcel located across from the hotels and adjacent to the new wooded trail area on the west side of Riverwoods Blvd.

**The Crest**

Last, but not least, we would like to acknowledge and thank Mr. Novak for purchasing the Crest (NE corner of St. Marys and Old School Rds.) and for providing the additional tree and deciduous landscaping along Old School Rd. His contributions to the beauty of Mettawa are greatly appreciated.
Village Resident Survey Recently Conducted

This fall, Franziska and Tom Lys hosted an informal gathering in their home to provide an opportunity for residents near their home to meet each other. “We moved to Mettawa two years ago and hadn’t had a chance to convene with very many of our neighbors,” said Franziska. In addition, Mayor Jess Ray attended the event giving guests the chance to ask questions and discuss important issues that concern Mettawa’s residents.

Bob Hollar attended the Lys’ coffee and so appreciated the experience that he offered to host another at his home so more residents could participate. “The conversation was lively and interesting with everyone sharing their ideas and opinions,” commented Bob. “It struck me that it might be helpful to survey all Mettawa residents on a few important issues so that everyone’s voice could be heard. Franziska and I just decided to do it.”

Bob was able to share the survey results at a later neighborhood coffee hosted by the Rojas.

According to Bob, participation in the survey was quite high, surpassing what is typically seen in online surveys. The majority of respondents indicated that they agreed with how the Village is being run and approved of the direction that the Board has taken. However, residents did recognize that the increasing demands on Mettawa officials might require some changes.

Residents were also asked about their preferences regarding a Village Hall. Some people feel that the Village should continue to operate as it has been, without a designated facility; however, most believe that the Village needs a space where business can be conducted — either by converting an existing structure or leasing space in Mettawa. The Village’s current practice of rebating excess tax revenues back to residents was also examined. The vast majority of residents responded that they wished the current practice to be continued as is, or augmented. “I guess it was a silly question; everyone loves to get a check in the mail,” said Bob.

“The primary goal as a Village is to remain fiscally sound; and our plan is to continue to give tax rebates to residents,” added Mayor Ray. “In fact, residents should soon be receiving their second 2012 rebate check!”

The Village scored strikingly high in the section of the survey that concentrated on residents’ general satisfaction with the community. Three-fourths of respondents were in agreement that Mettawa is “headed in the right direction; operated with both transparency and fiscal responsibility; and responsive to the needs of residents.”

As to the future, respondents want to prioritize the prevention of future commercial and higher density residential development and support efforts to elevate property values.

“People are generally happy. They really appreciate the Village the way it is and they love the green areas…that is a good thing,” added Franziska.

“Overall, I was very pleased with the survey results because they demonstrate how we all share the common goal of preserving Mettawa’s natural landscape within our hidden gem of a community,” concluded Mayor Ray.

Editor’s note: Look for survey results on the Village website in early December! www.mettawa.org

The Public Safety Commission continues in its effort to keep Mettawa safe and secure. In fact, our efforts are paying off. During the past quarter, our community was quiet and crime free, just the way we like it.

COMMITTED TO KEEPING METTAWA SAFE

As you may know, we have combined three security programs to help ensure that Mettawa remains crime-free. First, the County Sheriff’s district patrol cars continuously monitor our Village. Second, these deputies earn additional income – paid for by residents and visitors. This “3-tiered” approach of protection provides the Village with a full security insurance policy. However, that said, it is important to remember that any time help is needed, dial 911 – to alert the Sheriff’s Office. If our Mettawa Security patrol is on duty, they will hear the call and respond as well.

As a reminder, if you would like a “watch alert” for your home during extended winter vacations, the Mettawa Security patrol keeps a house log of these absences for additional inspections.

Residents may call 847-404-6272 to notify the Mettawa Security patrol of your out-of-town dates, as well as a contact number if security needs to reach you.

Our Village is proud of the work we do to keep Mettawa safe and secure. This fall, Franziska and Tom Lys hosted an informal gathering in their home to provide an opportunity for residents near their home to meet each other. “We moved to Mettawa two years ago and hadn’t had a chance to convene with very many of our neighbors,” said Franziska. In addition, Mayor Jess Ray attended the event giving guests the chance to ask questions and discuss important issues that concern Mettawa’s residents.

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Our Village is proud of the work we do to keep Mettawa safe and secure.
The Village of Mettawa strives to preserve and nurture our authentic rural and horse-friendly environment and to ensure the highest quality of family life for our residents.

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Acquiring Village Open Space

Over the past two years the Village has acquired a number of parcels of land. This has been a planned activity which was agreed to by the Board in support of resident input.

As background, in late 2009—early 2010 the Board held a series of resident work sessions where residents gave input to the Board on various goals and objectives to protect Mettawa’s future. These sessions ultimately lead to the Village’s first Strategic Plan of record. http://www.mettawa.org/government/village-of-mettawa-strategic-plan.html

One of the goals of that adopted strategic plan covered the topic of “open space.”

Open Space Goal

To protect, maintain or expand, where possible, the supply of open space in and around the Village.

Objectives established to achieve this goal were:

- Acquire land that might otherwise lead to commercial development or higher density
- Encourage the use and maintenance of native flora to further accentuate the Village’s rural heritage.
- Nurture desirable and/or endangered wildlife and aquatic species and enhance their habitats.
- Enhance the aesthetic image of roadway corridors through the use of native landscaping, replacement of dead trees, and better summer grass maintenance.
- Continue to finish trails—possibility of using fencing as added safety for trail users

Why is this Goal good for the Village?

It was the attitude of some residents during these input sessions that establishing environmental goals of preserving open space and protecting critical habitat, while reducing impervious cover, would improve water quality and reduce stormwater runoff.

However, acquiring open land also helps meet other Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives by stopping additional commercial development or increasing the population density in the Village, two items mentioned in the recent resident survey.

But how do residents benefit?

Examples of resident benefits produced from providing open space include scenic vistas, the community character embodied in rural landscapes, solitude or simply the lack of human congestion and occupation. Other benefits deal with cleaner water, clean air, and biological diversity, while viewing the many forms of wildlife that typically depend in part on habitat provided by open space.

Much of the economic value to the Village and its residents is associated with open space-related activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, horseback riding, enjoying scenery, viewing and photographing wildlife, or just reading a book in a quiet setting.

We will continue to review opportunities to acquire open space where it meets the objectives of this important Strategic Plan Goal, but always balanced against the opposing weight of the financial soundness of the Village.