

March 26, 2025

Our community deserves complete unbiased information and an opportunity to finally bring closure to the difficult and costly St. Paul's Main Building saga.

As promised, I am sharing what I recently learned from our Village records about what was going on behind the scenes when Westerman Construction was preparing their cost estimates. Westerman Construction was hired to provide cost estimates for renovation, façadism and demolition of the St. Paul's Main Building. Their reports were used for the October 2023 Public Opinion Poll, and they are being used in the creation of ballpark figures for the St. Paul's Survey. It is a cautionary tale of special interests, our local government, and obfuscating important information for residents.

With the majority of the Board relying heavily on the Westerman Report and two members of the newest St. Paul's Committee being part of the small group working behind the scenes in the drafting of the Westerman Report, it is important for residents to know. This information was not known by the majority of the members of the Board of Trustees during the time Westerman was engaged.

1. Within days of the BOT engaging Westerman to provide cost estimates, a small group was formed to communicate with Westerman Construction. The small group was proposed by the leader of the SPA (St. Paul's Alliance), and it included himself, the former Mayor, and three residents. The leader of the SPA is a long time advocate for preservation whose St Paul's Resume includes being: an initial named plaintiff in the litigation against the Village regarding St Paul's; a fundraiser and opposition leader to Care Matrix and Avalon Bay; actively involved in the preservation and adaptive re-use of St Paul's since 1993; and a leader of opposition to demolition of St. Paul's.
2. Before Westerman was hired, the SPA leader sent an email to the former mayor, a sitting trustee, the small group, and four other residents setting forth a strategy on façadism which he called "a horrible architectural concept." He wrote that it was a "fabulous political concept," however, because "it could be hung around the opponents necks" referring to the following election. The small group worked with the Village Building Superintendent who directed Mr. Westerman to price a 125,000 sq ft structure behind the façade. (These emails helped explain why days before the 2023 Village Election, a Village meeting was held where inflated project numbers were associated with both my name and the name of another candidate).
3. An email describes a pricing strategy to be communicated to Mr. Westerman to keep adaptive reuse under \$50 million and ramp up over time with the conservancy. One of the group members prepared a "pricing strategy document" that was sent to Westerman, and the emails mention the importance of Westerman working with the group's engineer to "skinny down the costs." Another email emphasizes how important it is that members of the group review the content of Westerman's assessment before it is presented to the Village.
4. The emails document a meeting requested early in the process when one engineer in the small group voiced concerns about what Mr. Westerman said during the initial walk through. Another email included a request for a meeting to respond to structural issues being raised. These conversations were presumably continued off-the-record, and I was unable to learn what comments of Westerman troubled the group or to find the structural issues noted or who raised them.
5. The emails included directions to Mr. Westerman to update his demolition price to include salvage and storage which would increase the cost of demolition. Many may recall that the initial Westerman Report

priced transporting the salvaged items across the country for storage in a better climate.

6. The SPA leader who worked on this cost estimation report with Westerman also provided the Torino Tax Exemption document shared at a POA meeting and widely criticized as misleading seniors on whether their taxes would be impacted by the project, shortly before they were being asked to vote in the Public Opinion Poll.

All of this political strategy and maneuvering to steer residents in an effort to save the St. Paul's Main Building occurred while this committee and cost estimation was being funded by Village Taxpayers.

The emails are available for residents to view (Add link). This will allow residents to have a better understanding of what was being asked of Westerman and why the report looked the way it did. As your Mayor I feel that being candid with residents is most important, even when it isn't easy. This column was difficult to write.

Next week I look forward to focusing on the many great things that have happened over the last four years in my final Mayor's Column.

### **WATER WORKS BUILDING**

The Board has engaged D&B Engineers and Architects, D.P.C. to provide architectural and engineering design services for the exterior masonry restoration and roofing replacement of the 150-year-old Water Works Building, located at 103 Eleventh Street. D&B will conduct an evaluation of the existing building condition, make recommendations for restoration of the selected building exterior components, and prepare contract documents for building. The building, currently used by the Water Department and occasionally for special meetings held by the Police Department, is one of the Village buildings from the A.T. Stewart Era listed as a thematic group on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

### **ST. PAUL'S PLAYING FIELDS**

The Board authorized a one-time treatment of the St. Paul's Fields with a non-organic crabgrass pre-emergent. The treatment would require the fields to be closed for a period of 48 hours over Easter weekend (April 19-20) to coincide with pre-planned field closures. According to Andy Hill, those fields have a severe crabgrass issue and it's starving the grass we're trying to grow. The fields will be monitored. "Hopefully this will help us significantly improve the conditions of those playing fields," Mr. Hill said.

### **ARBOR DAY 2025**

The Board of Trustees has declared Friday, April 25, 2025 as Arbor Day in Garden City. Recreation and Parks Department tree crew members will join Arborist Joe Umana, Trustees and members of the Civic Beautification Committee, Environmental Advisory Board and Recreation Commission on April 25 at 2:00 p.m. to celebrate Arbor Day by planting a Little Leaf Linden tree in an area near the Library. The Rotary Club of Mineola-Garden City, on behalf of Village resident Althea Robinson, donated the tree to the Village.

### **FEBRUARY POLICE ACTIVITY**

During the month of February, the Garden City Police Department responded to 1,941 service calls, including:

- 47 case investigations
- 17 arrests
- 1 juvenile arrest
- 159 medical calls

- 67 accidents
- 18 impounds
- 1,944 parking tickets
- 1,401 traffic tickets
- 2 appearance tickets

### **BUDGET SESSIONS**

The Board of Trustees is conducting work sessions to review the [Tentative 2025-26 Operating and Capital Budgets](#) in person in the Village Hall Board Room and via Zoom. Here is the remaining schedule (Budget Session #1 took place March 19; Budget Work Session #2 took place March 25):

#### **Budget Work Session 3**

Thursday, March 27, 2025: 7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

- Finance Department / Other Unallocated Expenses & Revenues / Insurance Reserve
- Building Department
- Administration
- Summary of Budget Changes

#### **Public Hearing**

Monday, April 7, 2025: 7:30 p.m.

- Public Hearing and Adoption of Budget

### **HAPPENING IN GARDEN CITY**

- **SATURDAY, MARCH 29** 10:00 a.m. Mah-Jongg at the Library. Must register.
- **MONDAY, MARCH 31** 1:30 p.m. Movie Matinée: *Enchanted April* at the Library
- **MONDAY, MARCH 31** 7:30 p.m. Adult basketball at the Field House. Nominal fee.
- **TUESDAY, APRIL 1** 7:00 p.m. Yoga With Kimberly at the Library. Must register.
- **WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2** 2:00 p.m. Mary Maguire Presents “The Hermitage” at the Library
- **THURSDAY, APRIL 3** 6:30 p.m. Encore showing of *Conclave* at the Library
- **THURSDAY, APRIL 3** 7:30 p.m. Adult volleyball and soccer at the Field House. Nominal fee.
- **FRIDAY, APRIL 4** 11:00 a.m. Learn Italian at the Library. Must register.
- **SATURDAY, APRIL 5** 11:00 a.m. Long Island Music for Aardvarks at the Library. Must register.
- **MONDAY, APRIL 7** 7:30 p.m. Budget Public Hearing and Organizational Meeting at Village Hall and via Zoom

- **WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9** 10:00 a.m. Baby and Me Yoga Ages Birth-17 Months at the Library. Just register.
- **WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9** 11:15 a.m. Toddler and Me Yoga Ages 18 Months-5 Years at the Library. Must register.
- **SATURDAY, APRIL 19** 10:00 a.m. Easter egg hunt at St. Paul's Fields.
- **SUNDAY, APRIL 20** 12:00 p.m. 70th annual Easter Sunday Vintage Car Parade
- **SATURDAY, APRIL 26** 9:00 a.m. Flea Market at the Bird Sanctuary. Free entry.