

## **2006 PLATFORMS**

### **► VILLAGE**

#### **Leash Law**

There appears to be strong support for a leash law ordinance. Fifty-nine percent of respondents favor an ordinance that would require that dogs be kept on a leash at all times while on public property. The dog beach would remain a leash-free environment. Of those who favor an ordinance, 53% also favor an ordinance that no dog be left unattended even if on a leash.

**The Caucus recommends that the Village study the adoption of an ordinance requiring that all dogs be controlled with a leash while on public property, including the Village Green, all streets not marked as “private,” alleys, sidewalks, parkways, parking lots and other public thoroughfares.**

#### **Virtual Suggestion Box**

Eighty-five percent of respondents support the creation of a “virtual suggestion box” on the Village website. The Caucus believes that this tool could be used by various departments to acquire valuable and timely input on topical issues.

Due to the exceptionally strong response in favor of implementing this communications vehicle, **the Caucus recommends that the Village study its immediate implementation, and that procedures be put in place to actively maintain it, monitor it and disseminate input to the Council and staff. The Caucus also recommends that Village departments and committees be made aware of this tool and invite the community to employ it in providing feedback on the issues that come before them.**

#### **Wildlife**

Because of news coverage and anecdotal evidence of a problem, the survey sought feedback on residents’ experiences with destructive wildlife over the past year. Sixty-two percent of respondents reported having no experience with destructive wildlife. Of the 28% who had experienced a problem, 78% contacted no one. Seventy-four percent of all respondents are satisfied with the current policy as outlined on the Village website.

**The Caucus recommends that the Police Department continue to make the public aware of its efforts and policies with regard to wildlife and public safety.**

#### **Post Office**

Eighty-two percent of respondents agreed with the stated objective of transforming the West Elm business district into “a magnet attracting people day and evening on a year-round basis – a gathering place for families and friends.” However, this question received more comments than any other on the survey. The diversity of the comments as well as the overwhelming number of respondents who asked for more information on the subject indicates that the community would welcome the opportunity for more input.

Because 69% of respondents received information on the Post Office project from the *Winnetka Talk* and 49% from the *Winnetka Report*, **the Caucus encourages the Post Office Committee to continue to conduct its informational campaign through those sources. In addition, it encourages the Committee to consider the “virtual suggestion box” as a source of community input should this vehicle be available in a timely manner.**

#### **Property Maintenance**

When informed that the Village’s Public Nuisance Code requires both homeowners and private construction contractors to maintain their properties in a way that is neither bothersome nor dangerous and prohibits those “buildings” that are so “dilapidated or out of repair” that they are “dangerous, unsafe, unsanitary or unfit for human use,” 64% of respondents did not find it appropriate for the Village to create a Property Maintenance Code to address less egregious instances of property neglect. Of the 15% of respondents who reported experiencing a problem with a neighbor’s neglected property, however, 73% of them reported they would support the creation of such a Code.

There appears to be strong support for an ordinance among the 15% of Village residents who are experiencing a problem. However, due to the solid response from those who did *not* find it appropriate, **the Caucus does not recommend the study of a Property Maintenance Code at this time.**

### **Fire Code**

At the April 11, 2006 Village Council study session, the Fire Department gave compelling reasons why the present Ordinance requiring sprinklers should be extended beyond commercial and multi-unit construction to include *all* new construction. This issue of public safety was referred to the Caucus for inclusion in the '06 survey, where it received surprisingly strong opposition (64% in favor of maintaining the present policy). In light of the survey's failure to ask the reason for the response, no further insight can be extrapolated.

There is increasing evidence that sprinklers save both the lives of the residents and the firefighters attempting to save them. **The Caucus recommends that the Fire Department engage in an educational effort to upgrade the public's awareness concerning this issue.**

## **► PARKS**

### **Maple Street Beach House**

The survey asked residents how the Park District should address the deteriorating condition of the Maple Street Beach House. Thirty-one percent of respondents favor making necessary repairs and improvements, including making the beach house handicapped-accessible; 22% are interested in completely renovating the beach house; 18% are interested in constructing a new beach house; 17% favor demolishing the beach house and not replacing it.

Because 71% of respondents are in favor of having a beach house on the Maple Street site, either by maintaining or renovating the existing beach house or constructing a new one, **the Caucus recommends that the Park District Board carefully study the costs and feasibility of each of these options and then hold public hearings to determine the appropriate course of action.**

### **Privately- Funded Facility on Unused Land**

The Park District owns approximately 1.8 useable acres southwest of the Winnetka Ice Arena. The survey asked residents if the Park District should build a facility on this property if it were funded primarily through private donations. Forty-nine of respondents answered "Yes"; 28% answered "No"; 11% answered "Not Sure"; and 12% answered, "Need more information" (such as "what kind of facility?").

Of those respondents who answered "Yes," 43% would like an indoor recreation center with an indoor pool; 28% prefer an outdoor swimming pool; 14% would like a second indoor ice rink; 15% answered "Other." *Note that these results were gathered before the WPD proposed to use a portion of this acreage for a new service center.*

Because there is not a clear majority of respondents who want a facility built on the unused property southwest of the Winnetka Ice Arena, even if the facility were to be funded primarily through private donations, **the Caucus recommends that the Board gather more specific and detailed input from residents, including Northfield residents served by the WPD, prior to taking any action.** Such input will help ascertain whether residents would like a facility on this property and the kind of facility they would prefer.

### **Assessing Special Events**

When asked how the Park District should measure the success of its special events, 94% of respondents indicated "Attendance/Participation"; 53% indicated "Community tradition"; 27% indicated "Variety of events offered"; 6% indicated "Other." Respondents were asked to choose *all* the criteria that they supported.

**The Caucus recommends that the Park District attempt to accurately measure and record the attendance at its special events.** In some cases, such as the July 4<sup>th</sup> parade and festivities, attendance can only be estimated. These records should note any factors influencing attendance, such as weather conditions. **When deciding which events to repeat and which new ones to offer, the Park District should be guided by this attendance data.**

## **Underutilized Parks**

Forty-four percent of respondents indicated that the Park District should “Continue to maintain low utilization parks”; 26% indicated that it should “Endeavor to increase utilization of these parks through enhancements such as landscaping or playground equipment”; 22% endorsed “Sell[ing] or swap[ping] the park land” and using the proceeds for other parks and Park District projects; 9% indicated “Other.”

**The Caucus recommends that the Park District continue to maintain low utilization parks. It also recommends that the Park District not enhance underutilized parks or swap park land without first gathering more specific and detailed input from residents. These recommendations also apply to underutilized parks in Northfield owned by the Winnetka Park District.**

## **► SCHOOLS**

### **Quality Assessment Tools**

Sixty-five percent of survey respondents felt annual end-of-year parent surveys would be “very helpful” or “extremely helpful.”

**The Caucus recommends that the School Board establish a joint committee of parents, teachers, and administration staff to develop and maintain assessment tools. We suggest this committee begin with annual end-of-year parent surveys.**

### **School Facilities**

Fifty-nine percent of respondents supported some form of expansion at Greeley and Washburne: 25% preferred to expand facilities to maintain class size and safety; 34% preferred to expand facilities to maintain class size and safety AND to provide adequate space for programming and classroom support services.

**The Caucus recommends that the School Board exercise fiscal restraint while expanding the facilities or considering an expansion program to minimally maintain class size and address safety concerns at Greeley and Washburne.**

### **Middle School Assessment**

This year, the Caucus Council sought resident opinion about two specific schools, Skokie and Washburne.

Respondents who currently had a child attending Skokie School or Washburne or had a child attend in the past 3 years rated their satisfaction with the following aspects of the school experience: Facilities; Instructional Staff; Administrative Staff; All-School Events; Communication About Student Progress; Before- and After-School Programs; School Culture; Staff Responsiveness; and Transitions (to Skokie and from Washburne).

Respondents rated both schools positively, reflecting greater satisfaction than dissatisfaction on every score at both. Of note, however, was the disparity between Washburne and Skokie. Washburne received a satisfaction rating (“somewhat” or “very satisfied”) of higher than 70% on eight measures out of nine (with the only exception being Before- and After-School Programs), while Skokie received a satisfaction rating above 70% on only two measures (Facilities and Transition). Washburne received a higher satisfaction rating on every measure, including four where the differences were pronounced: Administrative Staff (79% at Washburne vs. 59% at Skokie); Instructional Staff (80% at Washburne vs. 65% at Skokie); School Culture (72% at Washburne vs. 58% at Skokie); and Staff Responsiveness (72% vs. 59%). Conversely, dissatisfaction (“somewhat” or “very dissatisfied”) with Skokie was greater than dissatisfaction with Washburne on eight measures out of nine.

The exception to this pattern was Before- and After-School Programs, where 18% of Washburne parents were dissatisfied vs. 16% of Skokie parents. This measure was the only one where the schools’ satisfaction rating was below 50% (47% at Washburne and 46% at Skokie). Further, this was the only measure on which Washburne received a dissatisfaction rating above 15%, while Skokie received a dissatisfaction rating of 15-24% on six measures (Administrative Staff, Staff Response, Culture, Communication, Instructional Staff, as well as Before- and After-School Programs).

## The Caucus has no recommendations.

### Tutoring

The series of Tutoring Questions produced noteworthy data: Between 53% and 70% of District 36 parents have provided outside tutoring to one or more of their children. (The imprecision in these numbers is due to an oversight in the survey design.) Parents more often provided outside tutoring in math (68%) and reading (42%) to their children than they did tutoring in other subjects, such as English (24%) and general study skills (17%), with foreign language, science, computers and social studies tutors each being engaged by fewer than 10% of parents. Tutoring peaks in 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades at 41% of tutored children; 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades also have high rates of tutoring (35-38%), while 2<sup>nd</sup> grade comes in only slightly lower (32%). Forty-nine percent of parents providing tutors reported using the tutor to compensate for learning difficulties, while others said that their child's needs were not being met by a teacher (44%) or the curriculum (39%). Maintaining skills over the summer (28%) and following a teacher's recommendation (21%) were other fairly frequent rationales. Slightly more parents reported arranging tutoring for Skokie students (48% of tutored students) than Washburne students (45% of tutored students) even though slightly *fewer* parents overall reported having a child enrolled at Skokie (37%) than at Washburne (39%). In contrast, rates of tutoring at the three elementary schools are roughly comparable.

## The Caucus has no recommendations.

### ► LIBRARY

This year, the survey used an open-ended "comments" section to elicit community views on the library. There were 361 responses noted on the library comment section out of the more than 1,300 surveys returned.

- **General approval:** By far the greatest number of comments (133) offered praise for the library's services, collection, and staff. The 15 negative comments compared our library to neighboring libraries, citing Glencoe's comfort and both Glencoe's and Wilmette's superior collections of downloadable DVDs/CDs/audiobooks.
- **Specific suggestions for improvement:** Non-book items garnered the most interest in improvement. Eighty-nine respondents want the library to improve the depth and breadth of the library's collection of DVDs, CDs, audiobooks and downloadable items. If the 24 comments on adding more computers and improving the website are included in this category, then 113 respondents desired improvements in the library's tech (i.e., non-book) services and offerings.
- **Children's services:** Thirty-eight respondents suggested adding more children's programs and increasing the number of DVDs/CDs/educational software for children. Thirteen respondents suggested that the children's area at the Winnetka branch be enlarged and improved and generally made more attractive.

Interestingly, very few commented on the book collection itself, perhaps indicating satisfaction. Also notable was the scarcity of interest in changing the physical library. Only nine respondents suggested adding to or changing the architectural style of the building.

Improving comfort and enhancing library publicity were the two key items on last year's platform. This year, few comments indicated dissatisfaction with the library's comfort: 11 respondents suggested improved seating. Eight people suggested that coffee be available in a "café" area of the library. The low number of comments might reflect the satisfaction with the improvements made this year in response to the platform's mandate. The same cannot be said about library publicity: 23 respondents commented negatively on library PR; there were only five positive remarks concerning PR. Moreover, quite a few of the specific items requested on this year's survey are already available at the library. This indicates that these respondents are unaware of the library's offerings despite publicity attempts by the library.

In summary, the majority of respondents praised the library. Adding to the collection of DVDs/CDs/audiobooks/downloadable items was the number one suggestion this year. Improving children's

services was the second area of concern. Comfort of the library does not appear to be a large issue this year; library publicity continues to be a problem.