

**River Forest Township
Supervisor's Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2023 (April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023)**

2023 Annual Town Meeting

SUMMARY

Fiscal Year 2023 was a welcome return to “normal” after two fiscal years of the COVID-19 pandemic. This primarily represented a transition back to in-person programs and services from the virtual format.

The Township's overall goals were:

- **actively grow awareness** of the Township and its human services-related programs through outreach and enhanced communication;
- **develop new programs and services and enhance existing ones;**
- **strengthen ongoing relationships** with organizations and other government entities;
- seek and develop **new partnerships**.

In addition, the Township Assessor's office continued its availability and accessibility to residents on both a virtual and in-person basis. The Assessor's office provided service and assistance to hundreds of residents, including many of our seniors, by phone, email and zoom, returning to in-person appointments as the year went on. FY2023 was especially challenging for the Township Assessor's office, as the Cook County Assessor's office experienced frequent technological changes and glitches, missed deadlines, short notice of deadlines, deadline changes, policy changes, delayed tax bills, etc. The Township Assessor's office was nimble and flexible in response.

We appreciate the efforts of Assessor Pam Kende and Deputy Assessor Kathy Elliott in responding to the constant changes at the Cook County Assessor's office, and in keeping our residents apprised as well. The Township Assessor's office had excellent success with their new electronic newsletter, sent out through Constant Contact.

Work on the new Township website continued, led by Vanessa Druckman as the Website Project Manager and Hutchinson & Associates as the design firm. Completion and launch are anticipated in early FY2024.

April Dugal from Oak Park Township continued to do an excellent job as our General Assistance (GA) administrator. Partnering with OPT has proven to be far more efficient than hiring someone to uniquely handle the small number of GA cases in River Forest. We raised the monthly flat River Forest GA grant to \$500 from \$650. We, as well as April, continued to field numerous questions from residents related to financial need.

With April Dugal/OPT, groundwork was laid for the new Emergency Assistance (EA) Program. The EA Program uses GA funds to support one-time grants to qualified residents to help alleviate a crisis like eviction or utility shut-off. EA is an alternative way to help residents in need who may not qualify for GA. The EA Program will start 4/3/23; OPT will administrate.

OP and RF Township Senior Services, along with the Villages of River Forest and Oak Park, continued the Home Repair Program for seniors and those with disabilities. The program, which works on a sliding fee scale, continued to be successful, with solid repeat business. The CAPABLE program was added on, which offers visits and recommendations by nurses and physical therapists. CAPABLE will be further marketed in FY2024.

The Township successfully launched two new senior programs, held at the River Forest Community Center. We partnered with the RF Park District to hold pickleball in the RFCC gym, which was very popular. We also hired a mahjong teacher to run weekly mahjong sessions, also well attended.

Celebrating Seniors Week returned to in-person programming in 2023 after a 3-year hiatus. RF Township held several successful programs, including a Housing Forum with Arbor West Neighbors, which explored affordable and accessible housing options for seniors.

Youth Services enhanced its presence in River Forest, repositioning in both RF and OP as Youth and Family Services. The number of Youth Engagement Program clients increased in RF. The Girls on the Rise after school program for girls of color expanded to Roosevelt Middle School and Willard Elementary School.

The IPLAN project, led by the Oak Park Public Health Department, and in partnership with the OP CMHB, was initiated and completed. Project included extensive data analysis, a community survey and interviews.

Efforts in FY2024 will focus on:

- final completion and launch of the **new Township website**;
- final action on the “**the HUB**”, in light of agency feedback and the approaching 211 program.
- rollout of the **Emergency Assistance Program**;
- enhanced **senior outreach efforts**;
- enhanced **senior programming** with RF Park District and Dole Center;
- development of **new communication outreach efforts**, including a senior mailing, a new mental health resource guide and a Township newsletter;
- **Overall, we will continue to focus heavily on demonstrating and communicating *the unique and strong value* provided to residents by the Township in the areas of youth, mental health, senior and assessor services.**

FY2023: YEAR IN REVIEW

FY2023 was characterized by a positive environment of collaboration, cooperation and communication. Activities included:

Financial and Reporting – completed the following financial reports per deadline, submitted final reports to required places and posted/publicized as required:

- FY2023 Budget
- FY2023 Audit
- FY2023 Annual Treasurer’s Report
- FY2023 Annual Financial Report (AFR)
- 2022 Levy
- FY2023 Annual Report of Revenues and Expenditures

Board-Related Activities/Administration/Office

- Approved **new committee members** for Mental Health Committee and Senior Services Committee.
- Complied with **IMRF audit**.

Regular Meeting Commitments– Staff, elected officials or I attended and provided status reports at the following:

- **Monthly:** RF Township Board of Trustees, RF Administrators Forum, RF Mental Health Committee, OP & RF Township Youth Services Committee, OP & RF Township Senior Services Committee, Positive Youth Development (PYD), D200 Mental Wellness Collaborative, RF Collaboration Sub-committee, HUB Advisory Team
- **Quarterly:** OP & RF Community Foundation *Communityworks* Advisory Board and Guidance Team

RF Civic Center Authority (RFCCA)

- Drafted new Front-End Services Agreement with RF Community Center, first update since 2015, and presented to RFCC. Approval planned for early FY2024, effective 4/1/23.

General Communications/Awareness

- Continued RF Township **Instagram**.
- Maintained **RFhappenings.com community calendar**.
- **Worked with Assessor** to create outreach packets for seniors who visit the Assessor's office.
- Maintained **display racks** at RFCCA Building and Village Hall for all Township materials
- Maintained dedicated **Township bulletin boards** at RFCCA Building.
- Continued work with **Inside Edge communications** firm to issue press releases, maintain facebook and twitter social media, and other projects. Ensured strong promotion of Township-sponsored events.
- Continued to **promote Township events and services** in monthly RF Village eNews, quarterly Township Seniors Services News & Views newsletter and RFCC newsletter.
- Continued to **maintain current Township website**.
- **Participated in 2023 Memorial Day Parade**.
- Maintained **communication with local media**.

Other Taxing Bodies

- Continued strong relationship with **RF Public Library in regard to senior programming**.
- Attended **Joint Review Board meetings** for North Avenue and Madison Street TIF's, hosted by Village of RF.
- Worked with **RF Park District** to develop new senior programming.

Community Outreach

- Attended the following **community events** (in-person events were generally cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic; others were held virtually):
 - ✓ Rotary lunch meetings
 - ✓ Juneteenth ceremony at RF Public Library
 - ✓ NAMI annual fundraiser
 - ✓ CSS Circles of Support fundraiser
 - ✓ Opportunity Knocks golf outing
 - ✓ Housing Forward 30th Anniversary celebration
 - ✓ NAMI Annual Meeting
 - ✓ OPRF Community Foundation Annual Fundholders Presentation

Mental Health Services (with Mental Health Administrator)

- Attended several monthly **RF Mental Committee (MHC) meetings**; provided status report.
- With OP CMHB, Healthy Communities Foundation, and Community Memorial Foundation, continued management of **The HUB** (www.healthconnectionhub.org); participated in weekly status calls and virtual trainings.
- Participated in **IPLAN task force**, led by Oak Park Public Health, and completed new 5-year IPLAN.
- Served on **D200 Mental Wellness Collaborative**. Co-sponsored and worked on Parent University events, held November 2022 and April 2023.
- Continued to support **Sibshops** program, in partnership with Thrive Counseling Center.
- Met with **D90 social workers** to present Township programs.
- Participated in **OP CMHB Community Needs Assessment** process.
- Welcomed return of in-person **LOSS meetings** at River Forest Township.
- Continued participation with **Behavioral Health Consortium** and **Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Consortium**.
- Attended **mental health funders group** meetings.

Senior Services (with Senior Outreach Coordinator)

- Continued to co-sponsor virtual **Gather, Discover, Engage** with RF Public Library, including Coffee Monday and Social Stitching.

- With RFPL, continued to co-sponsor virtual ***Celebrating Seniors All Year Long*** monthly series of programs and lectures.
- through Northwest Housing Partnership.
- Supported **Home Repair Program IGA** between RFT, OPT, Villages of RF and OP and Northwest Housing Partnership.
- Funded Betsy Kelly to help issue **weekly Community Connections email** to seniors, in joint effort with Arbor West Neighbors.
- Supported development of **homesharing** pilot (Betsy Kelly).
- **Supported 2022 Celebrating Seniors Week** and return to in-person programming.
- Worked with **River Forest Park District** to develop recreational programming, including indoor pickleball and events during Celebrating Seniors Week.

Youth And Family Services

- Supported efforts to successfully **renew Youth Engagement Program IGA** among RF taxing bodies.
- Made public comment to Village of RF Board regarding **Youth Engagement Program**.
- Regularly reviewed **status of youth programs** with Megan Traficano.
- Continued to **promote youth scholarships** to D90 social workers, etc.
- Worked with Youth and Family Services to promote **Girls on the Rise** group to D90 for rollout at Roosevelt and Willard.

General Assistance

- **Raised monthly flat GA grant** from \$500 to \$650.
- Developed **Emergency Assistance Program** with OPT for 4/3/23 rollout.

Oak Park Township

- Maintained **ongoing positive relationship** and met regularly with Oak Park Township Manager and staff.
- OPT participated in **RF Memorial Day Parade**.
- Attended “big reveal” event for OP Township new logo.

Substance Prevention

- Financially supported Township **Prevention Services** department and Prevention Services IGA.
- Continued relationship with **Positive Youth Development (PYD)**, as their goal of addressing underage substance use directly aligns with the Township's youth and mental health mission.
- Sarah continued to serve on **PYD School Committee** and PYD general steering committee; collaborated with OPRF HS student prevention programs.
- With D200 and OP CMHB, supported program at OPRF HS for **Rosecrance** to do screening for students with substance offenses.
- Attended and spoke at **International Overdose Awareness Day** in Scoville Park
- Participated in **Way Back Inn Bike and Brunch**
- Attended **Marijuana Town Hall** meeting.

Holiday Food and Gift Basket

- Continued **in-kind support of Holiday Food and Gift Basket**, including office and conference space, computer, copier, storage.
- Worked with **new Director**, Angie Seder.
- Continued referrals and **grant support to HFGB** for RF residents.

Training- completed the following virtual trainings:

- ***TOI Annual Conference***
- ***TOCC Educational Session***

TOCC/TOI

- Member **TOCC Board**; co-chair of **TOCC legislative committee**; **Vice-President of TOCC Supervisors Division**.
- Revived **TOCC Supervisors Division**; **attended in-person meetings**.
- Attended virtual **TOCC Board meetings**.
- Attended **TOI Township Topics Day** in Springfield (April 2023).
- Attended **TOI Annual Conference** in Springfield (November 2023).