

Signs of the Season  
October 2008



## THIS MONTH IN ROLLING MEADOWS

**October 1** — Urban Affairs Committee, 5 p.m., Zoning Board of Appeals, 7:30 p.m., both at City Hall

**October 3** — Public Reception for City Manager candidates, 5 p.m., at City Hall

**October 4** — Public Works Open House, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., 3900 Berdnick Street.

**October 5-11** — National Fire Prevention Week

**October 7** — Economic Development Committee, 6 p.m., Plan Commission, 7:30 p.m., Budget Workshop, 7:30 p.m., all at City Hall, Library Board, 7 p.m., at the Library

**October 11** — Rolling Meadows Fire Department Open House, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Plum Grove Fire Station

**October 13** — Board of Fire and Police Commissioners, 9 a.m., City Hall

**October 14** — City Council Meeting, 7:30 p.m., City Hall

**October 16** — Adjudication Hearing, 1 p.m., City Hall

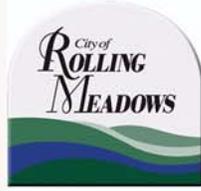
**October 21** — City Council Committee of the Whole, 7:30 p.m., City Hall

**October 23** — Adjudication Hearing, 1 p.m., City Hall

**October 28** — City Council Meeting, 7:30 p.m., City Hall

**October 30** — Adjudication Hearing, 1 p.m., City Hall

**October 31** — Halloween, Trick or Treat hours are 3 p.m. - 8 p.m.



# NEWS

Volume 12, Number 10

# & Views



3600 Kirchoff Road . Rolling Meadows, IL 60008 . 847-394-8500 . [www.cityrm.org](http://www.cityrm.org)

## Renovated Plum Grove Station to Host Fire Department Open House, October 11

Community members will explore the recently renovated Plum Grove Fire Station (Station 16) and watch firefighters participate in a series of specialized rescue demonstrations during an Open House hosted by the Rolling Meadows Fire Department, Saturday, October 11, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Attendees will receive a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the renovated facility, located at 2455 Plum Grove Road, during guided tours conducted by Department personnel.

Participants of all ages will experience the Department's fleet of engines and ambulances up close, and learn more about the Fire Department's proud tradition of service to Rolling Meadows residents and businesses.

Firefighters will also showcase their skills and equipment during two rescue demonstrations – a simulated

auto extrication at 11 a.m. followed by a technical rescue demonstration at 1 p.m.

"This Open House is an opportunity to help residents

Division operations under one roof, which enhances the ability of Fire Department personnel to coordinate operations from a central location.

Other improvements

**National Fire Prevention Week Is October 5-11. For more information, turn to page 2.**

discover how the newly-renovated Station 16 plays a major role in the Department's comprehensive strategy to prepare effectively for future fire protection needs," Fire Chief Ron Stewart explains.

Station 16's \$300,000 modernization project, completed earlier this year, allows for better use of existing space. The new layout allows the Department to consolidate its Training

include conference rooms and larger workspaces for Department training seminars, a new entrance/reception area, and modern facilities for the Fire Prevention Bureau.

The renovation project followed construction of a new dormitory facility in 2007, which increased Station 16's maximum capacity by 20%.



## October 4 Open House to Showcase Public Works Department Services

The Public Works Department will welcome residents to its facility at 3900 Berdnick Street during an Open House Saturday, October 4, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., that will showcase department services and their impact on the City's quality of life.

During the family-friendly event, Public Works staff members will offer guided tours of the Berdnick Street facility,

provide demonstrations of the City's Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping project and let residents explore Public Works equipment up close – including a ride in a Department dump truck.

Attendees will learn more about Public Works' street, recycling, water, sewer, vehicles services, facilities, refuse

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Look Us Up on the Web  
at: [www.cityrm.org](http://www.cityrm.org)

## October 4 Open House to Showcase Public Works Department Services

Continued from page 1

and forestry operations while enjoying complimentary food, beverages and raffle prizes.

"The open house offers Public Works an opportunity to display the wide range of services it provides. We want to remind people of just how much Public Works impacts daily life in Rolling Meadows," explains Assistant Public Works Director Reid Bateman.

The open house will showcase the Department's on-site "rain garden" that aids in storm water runoff. Acting as a sort of catch basin, the rain garden helps remove sediment and other contaminants from storm water runoff that eventually flows into Salt Creek.



Public Works vehicles at 3900 Berdnick St.

Northrop Grumman has donated 500 educational brochures promoting the benefits of the Public Works Rain Garden for distribution at the open house.

In addition, members of the Urban Affairs Committee's Environmental Subcommittee will be on hand to help guests learn more about ways to protect the environment.

Raffle prizes include three 35-gallon recycling carts, provided by Rehrig Pacific Company, and a tree (2.5 inches in trunk diameter) donated by Veolia Environmental Services. Public Works will make arrangements with a local contractor to plant the tree on the winner's behalf. The raffle drawing will take place at 1 p.m.

Veolia has also donated 200 spruce seedlings that will be offered to attendees.

For more information about the October 4 open house, contact Public Works at 847-963-0500.



## Fire Prevention Week to Focus On Home Fire Safety

BY FIRE CHIEF RON STEWART

We consider our homes to be safe havens, but home fires resulted in 2,580 deaths, 12,500 injuries and \$6.8 billion in property damage across the country in 2006.

Children under age five and older adults face the highest risk of home fire death, but young adults face a higher risk of fire-related injury.

To reduce the potential for deadly fires in our community, the Rolling Meadows Fire Department is proud to partner with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and encourage residents to "Prevent Home Fires," the theme of this year's National Fire Prevention Week, October 5 – 11.

### Healthy Heating

Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fire deaths. To reduce the possibility of a devastating fire, we urge residents to:

- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected each year by a qualified professional.
- Keep combustible materials – such as paper, bedding or furniture – at least three feet from heating equipment.
- Turn off portable space heaters when going to bed or leaving a room.
- Never use an oven to heat a home.

### Strike Out Smoking-Related Fires

The best way to avoid smoking-related home fires is to smoke outside. If you decide to smoke inside, use deep, sturdy ashtrays. Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach, and **never** smoke in a home where oxygen is used.

### Cook with Care

Stay in the kitchen when frying,

grilling or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen – even for a short period of time – turn off the stove. Other precautions include:

- Keep anything that can catch fire away from the stovetop.
- If a small stovetop fire starts, put on an oven mitt and smother the flames by carefully sliding a lid over the pan. Turn off the burner.

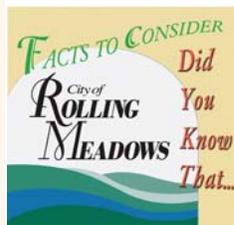


### Everyday Electrical Safety

- Keep lamps, light fixtures and light bulbs away from anything that can burn (lamp shades, bedding, curtains and clothing).
- Replace cracked or damaged electrical cords.
- Use extension cords for temporary wiring only.
- Call a qualified electrician if you encounter recurring problems with blown fuses or circuit breakers, discolored or warm wall outlets, flickering lights, or a burning, rubbery smell coming from an appliance.

Residents should also test each smoke detector once per month, following the manufacturer's instructions, and replace batteries once a year. A good rule of thumb is to replace batteries the same day you change your clocks from daylight savings time to standard time each fall.

For more information on National Fire Prevention Week, visit [www.firepreventionweek.org](http://www.firepreventionweek.org).



**Harper College in Palatine has served 17,622 Rolling Meadows residents since the college opened in 1967, including 1,081 who earned a degree or educational certificate. More than 1,600 residents have registered for a class at Harper in the past year alone.**

Source: Harper College

# Retiring City Manager Tom Melena's Legacy: Empower People, Get Them Working Toward Goals

Long after Tom Melena leaves City Hall's second floor corner office at yearend, the people of Rolling Meadows will continue to benefit from the discipline he brought to goal setting and planning. "If you spend \$50 million on city government, at the end of the year, you ought to be able to say you've accomplished something," he likes to say.

Melena's legacy is that he knows how to empower people and get them working together toward common goals. His seven-and-a-half-year tenure as City Manager is notable for the absence of contention and disagreement. Everything didn't always happen the way city planners hoped—a redevelopment solution for the former Dominick's property has proven especially elusive—but everyone remained committed to the goals outlined, then updated at each annual goal setting meeting.

## 'Hands Off' Style

As a manager, Melena's "hands off" style of executive leadership empowers department heads, holds them responsible, and makes a conscious effort to stay out of their way. When Police Chief Steve Williams came in recently to say that he did not want to lay off any sworn police officers to meet reduced budget targets, even if that meant losing civilian employees who had been hired to reduce costs, Melena looked him in the eye and said, "That's your call."

When former Fire Chief Phil Burns announced his plans to retire two years ago, Melena convened a meeting of the fire department's senior staff and told them, "The next chief is coming from this group." They looked at one another, and at first no one was sure what to say.

Melena's administrative assistant, Cathy Thompson, describes her boss as "low key" and "very fair." She says, "He trusts his department heads to run their own departments. He's hands off, but he keeps track of what they're doing. He doesn't micromanage anything."

The City pays department heads good salaries, Melena reasons, "Why

**Tom Melena, left, Mayor Ken Nelson and former Mayor Tom Menzel joined Meijer Public Affairs Manager Tatjana Nenadovich at a ground-breaking**



**ceremony for the retailer's Rolling Meadows store in 2003.**

shouldn't I rely on them? I try to delegate, trusting the staff, and I let them know I'm here whenever they need help."

Many years of experience in municipal management have taught Melena that small, symbolic things can be important. For example, he does not sit on the dais at City Council meetings. He and the staff sit down on the same level as residents attending the meeting (albeit with a reserved seat up front). "We don't want to be seen as the equivalent of a Council member," he says. "Let the Mayor and Council do the debating. We don't want to become part of the issue. We provide the information and look to them to tell us what to do with it."

## A Unique Opportunity

When he arrived in Rolling Meadows in 2001, Melena wasn't sure how he'd fit in after working for municipalities in Minnesota and New Hampshire that had been recognized for taking innovative approaches, especially in economic development. "I was given a unique opportunity. It's been one heck of a ride. I've learned a lot, and I've had a great group of employees to work with," he says.

"Tom has done a truly wonderful job for the City," says Mayor Ken Nelson. "He's constantly full of ideas and always looking for ways to improve. I'd hold our City Manager up to anyone I've seen in a similar position."

Looking back, Melena realizes that while he came here with nearly 30 years of experience in municipal management,

several aspects of the Rolling Meadows assignment were new to him, beginning with the sheer massiveness of working in the shadow of a huge, polyglot city, Chicago. "It was like coming from AAA baseball to the major leagues," he says.

Then, there is Rolling Meadows' remarkable diversity: Latino, Asian, Russian, Muslim, African-

American. He hadn't seen such diversity in Minnesota or New Hampshire, though he had learned from U.S. Army deployments in Haiti (where he was the minority) and Bosnia.

## Appreciate 'Hometown Feel'

Melena quickly came to appreciate Rolling Meadows' "hometown feel." The City has a sense of community that's much stronger than you will find in most suburbs, he believes. "People are out walking on the sidewalks and getting involved in activities like Terry Moran Day, the parades and celebrations, the car shows. It's different."

Another thing about people in Rolling Meadows is that "we watch our buck very closely. Surrounded by larger communities, we're a nice little community making our way in a big cruel world."

Melena moved into the City Manager's office as the 2001-2002 recession was deepening. Now he's leaving as another recession takes hold. Between recessions, he's led some notable accomplishments in economic development. When he arrived, the on again, off again Meijer superstore project was faltering. He got it back on track and directed completion of the retail center now functioning around the intersection of Golf and Algonquin Roads.

Three of the four buildings planned for the Riverwalk mixed use development on Kirchoff Road across from City Hall and Kimball Hill Park have been successfully completed. The project stalled when the bottom dropped out of the condo market, but when the economy turns, it and other economic development

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# Retiring City Manager...

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initiatives delayed by the slump will be back on track.

Melena believes his most lasting contribution to economic development has been creation of the comprehensive plan, which divides the City into seven development areas and establishes goals for each of them. It draws on the resources of urban planning consultant the Lakota Group to outline options for developers. Instead of waiting for developers to make proposals, the plan lets city planners take the lead.

## Desire to Build in his Blood

Melena is the son and grandson of construction industry entrepreneurs and believes the desire to build is in his blood. He completed a second bachelor's degree in construction management. That background served him well when it was time to remodel the outmoded City Hall building. A complete City Hall renovation would cost \$4 million, one contractor said. Melena decided instead to divide the job into four sub-projects and do it little by little, step by step. It took two years to complete, but the cost was cut to less than \$2 million.

Fire Department officials saw the same passion in Melena's shepherding of the renovation of Station 16 on Plum Grove Road and now the planning for the new Station 17 on Algonquin Road.

As he prepares to retire, Melena says he's "surprised at the wisdom of the 25-year-old kid who chose a career in public administration. It turned out to be a very good choice. I'm glad I did it, and I would do it again."

After receiving a bachelor's degree in economics and political science from Minnesota State University (MSU), Mankato, MN, Melena was drafted into the Army. He hadn't made the best grades in college, having determined that "anything better than a 'C' is overkill."

In the Army, he heard about a master's program called Urban Studies. At MSU, the head of the program was Dr. Robert Barrett, who decided he liked young Melena, despite his very mediocre college record. With Dr. Barrett's help, Melena was provisionally admitted to the program and given an opportunity to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). He surprised Dr. Barrett and himself by doing well on the GRE. Dr. Barrett then helped him get an internship assisting Warren Hyde, the City Manager in affluent, suburban Edina, MN.

Mr. Hyde declared, "You're going to become a manager," and a career was launched. He became assistant city manager under his third important mentor, Bill Bassett, in Mankato and went on to a series of manager positions, leading to Rolling Meadows.

Meanwhile, he maintained a parallel career in the Army Reserve, rising to the rank of Lt. Colonel. When he arrived in Rolling Meadows, Cathy Thompson considered calling him "Colonel" before deciding on "Doc," the nickname she often uses today. At the time he became City Manager, the Mayor was Tom Menzel, and there were several other "Toms," so she started calling him "Doc," because he was completing the work for a Ph.D. degree in public administration. He's done everything but the dissertation required to become "Doc" officially.



*"It's been one heck of a ride. I've learned a lot, and I've had a great group of employees to work with."*

— Tom Melena

# City Council Invites Five Finalists For City Manager Interviews, October 3

City Council has chosen five finalists for Rolling Meadows City Manager and invited them to visit the City Friday, October 3, for a round of interviews, a City tour, and an introduction to the community, including a reception to which the public is invited.

When the October 3 interviews are completed, Council expects to narrow the field to up to three candidates, who will be invited to stay over Saturday, October 4, for a second round of interviews.

Forty-three candidates applied for the position to be vacated when City Manager Tom Melena retires at yearend after seven-and-a-half years on the job. The City's professional recruiting consultants, The PAR Group, Lake Bluff, first picked 18 finalists and conducted interviews and reference checks before bringing 10 to City Council for consideration at a September 10 executive session that lasted three hours.

"We intended to narrow the field to six, but as we got through the process, these five were clearly the top candidates," Mayor Ken Nelson says. PAR Group Vice President Mark Morien concurs: "We believe any of the 10 candidates could do the job, but these five are the best for Rolling Meadows."

Nelson says some of the City Manager finalists are younger and others would bring more than 30 years of experience to the job. Some are from Illinois and others out of state.

"We have been pleased with the whole process—the number and quality of candidates brought by our nationwide search, the thoroughness of PAR's research, and the constructiveness of City Council's discussion of this very important decision," Nelson says.

The City's priorities include excellence in budgeting and fiscal management, a track record in achieving economic development goals, ability to work with unions and handle other personnel matters, and understanding of issues associated with diversity in the community and the workforce.

The five finalists are being invited to bring their spouses or significant others and perhaps other family members when they visit the City October 3. "It's critical that spouses and family are comfortable with the environment here," says Nelson.

In addition to the City tour, candidates' families will be introduced to schools, parks, libraries, places of worship, cultural attractions, shopping and other advantages of Rolling Meadows. "Rolling Meadows needs to sell itself," Morien says.

City Council's objective is to hire a new City Manager by the end of October, with time for a transition before Melena's retirement.

## City Explores Staff Cutbacks To Balance Budget

City officials, struggling with declining tax revenues, diminished fund balances and rapidly escalating costs, are considering a 10-15% reduction in City staff levels and increases in service fees to balance the 2009 budget, Finance Director Jim Egeberg reports.

The proposed staffing reduction includes up to 19 full-time employees and all part-time and seasonal personnel in the Community Development, Police and Public Works Departments.

"The City budget consists primarily of employee salaries and benefits. Simply cutting expenditures for supplies and contractual services is not an option in crafting a viable budget," Egeberg explains.

As a result of current economic conditions, Egeberg says the only option is to reduce the number of City personnel and, subsequently, reduce services to Rolling Meadows residents.

The proposed staffing cutbacks for 2009, as indicated in the budget draft, will be spread among personnel in all City departments.

Egeberg emphasizes that Rolling Meadows' emergency services will not be affected.

"Residents who call 911 will receive prompt service from first responders, but they may notice a reduction of available services in other areas," he says.

The City also faces a steep reduction in its cash reserves. This prevents Council from tapping fund balances to offset lower revenues and higher costs, as in previous economic downturns.

Skyrocketing costs, compounded by major declines in revenues, have taken a toll on the City's financial health. In 2008 alone, Rolling Meadows experienced vast increases in fuel and vehicle costs (43%), the cost of purchasing water from Chicago (15%), and refuse pickup costs (9%) due to rising fuel prices.

To offset higher costs – which the City must pay to service providers – the 2009 budget recommends increasing refuse pickup fees by 9%, water usage fees by 17.5%, and storm water fees by 7.5%.

Council members are

also considering proposals for revenue surcharges on utilities, such as natural gas and electricity, and the modification of rental license and building fees to reflect current market rates.

Department heads were ordered to cut \$1.1 million from their operational budgets, which freezes spending at 2008 levels, in an effort to reduce costs.

"Due to cost increases and inflation, we're looking at a significant reduction in spending levels for 2009," City Manager Tom Melena says. "Proposed staffing levels and cost containment strategies will have an effect on City services, but these are the tough decisions that will have to be made to guarantee the City's financial integrity," he explains.

A draft of the 2009 budget is available for review at City Hall, 3600 Kirchoff Road, the Rolling Meadows Library, 3110 Martin Lane, and online at the City's Website, [www.cityrm.org](http://www.cityrm.org). City Council expects to approve the budget in late November.

## Bev Keagle Elected President, Historical Society

Bev Keagle, counted among the community "pioneers" who moved to Rolling Meadows in the mid-1950s, was elected to a two-year term as President of the Rolling



*Bev Keagle, at an early museum fundraiser, has been active in the City's Historical Society since it was founded.*

Meadows Historical Society.

Keagle was a founding member of the Historical Society in 2002, and has previously served as Vice President and Secretary.

Other Historical Society officers are 6<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman Kathy

Kwandras (First Vice President – Programs), Alice Fitzgerald (Second Vice President – Membership), former City Clerk Marylyn Koch (Secretary), and Jackie Liszewski (Treasurer).

"Members of the Rolling Meadows Historical Society have accepted the challenge of preserving the City's storied past for future generations," Keagle says.

"The Society has achieved considerable success in our six years of existence. We will continue our efforts to chronicle the rich history of Rolling Meadows and tell the stories of those who built the City we love today."

Visit the Rolling Meadows Historical Museum, a replica of an original Kimball Hill Home, Sundays, 1-4 p.m. For more information, call the Historical Society at 847-577-7086.

## City's Recyclable Material Collection Increases 25%

Recyclable materials collection increased 25% over a four-month period following the launch of Rolling Meadows' expanded recycling program in early April, according to an analysis of recycling data by the Public Works Department.

Between April and July, recycling collection increased to 936 tons of material, up from 748 tons for the same period in 2007. City officials believe the transition to larger 65-gallon recycling carts now in use by residential refuse customers played a key role in the jump.

"The new recycling carts were delivered to all refuse customers the first week of April to replace the 18-gallon bins in use for many years," Public Works Director Fred Vogt says. "The initial numbers look promising. We hope this trend continues over a longer period of time."

In addition, the carts are designed to lower the City's overall refuse disposal costs, or "tipping" fees, Assistant Public Works Director Reid Bateman says.

"Besides gaining environmental benefits, the larger carts will help the City reduce its costs for disposal of household refuse, as material normally destined for the landfill is instead recycled," Bateman explains.

The City's expanded recycling initiative followed a highly successful "pilot" program that was completed in 2007. More than 600 participating households in select neighborhoods across Rolling Meadows were provided with the larger recycling carts in an effort to explore possible advantages of using the 65-gallon carts.

## Flags Wave on Patriot Day

City Hall was the site of a solemn display of patriotism on September 11, as Rolling Meadows residents gathered for a flag raising ceremony and remembrance of the tragic events of September 11, 2001.



About 200 St. Collette School students joined the observance, many bringing homemade Thank You cards accepted by Police Chief Steve Williams (left) and Fire Chief Ron Stewart. St. Collette's Principal Val Zemko accompanies kindergartner Jason Bernero for his presentation.

## City Of Rolling Meadows

**Mayor:** Kenneth Nelson

**City Clerk:** Lisa Hinman

**City Manager:** Thomas M. Melena

**City Hall Hours:** 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday

**Curfew:** Sun.-Thurs. 11 p.m., Fri. & Sat. Midnight

### Aldermen

**1st Ward:** John Pitzafarro  
847-655-1390

**2nd Ward:** Barb Lusk  
847-567-2444

**3rd Ward:** Lawrence Buske  
847-255-9126

**4th Ward:** Tom Rooney  
847-392-2254

**5th Ward:** Glenn Adams  
847-259-5875

**6th Ward:** Kathy Kwandras  
847-398-7113

**7th Ward:** James Larsen  
630-244-4228

### Services

**Fire & Police Emergency:** 911

**Fire Department non-emergency:** 847-397-3352

**Police non-emergency:** 847-255-2416

**Public Works** 847-963-0500

**Finance/Utility Billing Questions —** 847-394-8500

**Community Development Dept. —** 847-506-6030

**TDD:** 847-506-0490

**Senior Services** 847-506-2061

**ComEd —** 1-800-EDISON-1

**PNRC —** 847-506-2059

*City Council, Committee of the Whole, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Plan Commission Meetings are televised on Cable TV Channel 6*

## City Feeling Economic Pinch

BY MAYOR KEN NELSON

It's that time of year again, when the City Council buckles down to put together next year's budget. Just like you, the City is feeling the pinch of the tight economy.

Sales taxes and Real Estate Transfer taxes are down. We pay the increased gasoline prices, just as you do. The price for the salt we use in the winter more than tripled since January. This is going to be one of the most difficult budgets since I've been a part of City government.

The effects of the slowing economy began early this year, and by mid-year we had imposed a hiring freeze. For 2009, the hiring freeze will continue and we may even

be faced with the unpleasant task of reducing staff. That, in turn, could mean a reduction in services.

We're not alone in this. Everyday, there are headlines in the newspapers about belt-tightening in both the public and private sector. The job of the Council now is to do everything we can to minimize the impact these tight times might have on our residents. I invite you to follow the budget discussions closely and to comment on them as we proceed.



## City to Scale Back Capital Improvement Projects; Golf, New Wilke Intersection Tops Short 2009 List

Budget constraints will force Rolling Meadows to forego its annual street improvement program in 2009 and instead allocate funding to reconstructing the intersection at Golf and New Wilke Roads, City Manager Tom Melena reports.

"The Golf/New Wilke intersection is in extremely poor condition. It needs to be completely replaced after several years of minor fixes that just don't do the job anymore," Melena says. "Due to next year's anticipated budget constraints, we thought it best to scale back on other road work in order to

pay for the project."

As a result of rising costs and lower revenues caused by the weak economy, Melena says only three other capital improvement projects are planned for 2009:

- **Construction of Algonquin Road Fire Station** – The new station will be built on an undeveloped parcel of property on the south side of the street, between Meadowbrook Drive and Wilke Road. It will provide effective fire protection and service to the growing southern portions of the City.

- **Installation of water mains and storm sewers**

**along Old Plum Grove Road** in conjunction with the road's reconstruction by the Cook County Highway Department.

- **Completion of new water mains** to improve water flow and meet fire suppression requirements in the City's northwest industrial park.

The City will also reduce its 2009 vehicle replacement program by more than 50%. Lack of funding will require that purchases be limited to a Public Works refuse vehicle, Fire Department ambulance, and Police Department patrol cars, as necessary.