

Countryside CONNECTIONS

WINTER 2025

www.countryside-il.org



Coffee with the Mayor – March 22, 2025

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS

- ✓ Eat Well
- ✓ Exercise/Move Regularly
- ✓ Sleep Well
- ✓ Learn New Things
- ✓ Manage Stress & Mental Wellness
- ✓ Get Social
- ✓ Have a Purpose

December 7th, Mayor Sean McDermott hosted the final Coffee with the Mayor for 2024. Two extremely knowledgeable guest speakers were invited. First, Kris Lonsway, PhD spoke to the group about a resident driven initiative, Healthy Countryside. Kris's personal family experiences with Alzheimers and Autism fuels her passion to improve the health of people who live, work and play in Countryside. She discussed healthy lifestyle habits, health benefits of eating more whole plant-based foods, the "Rethink Your Drink" campaign and Alzheimer's prevention. Healthy Countryside members visited with local restaurants to encourage the availability of plant-based entrees. Any restaurant offering 2 or more entrees were recognized by the City with a waiver of their business license fees. To try one of the healthy plant based entrees visit Ledo's Pizza, Rafferty's Irish Pub or Viet Heritage. The next Healthy Countryside event is the Mental Health & Wellness Resource Fair on Wednesday, January 22 at Lyons Township High School's Reber Center from 6:30 – 8 p.m. The keynote speaker will be Dr. John Duffy,

Psychologist, best selling author, and teen mental wellness expert. For more information please visit Healthy Countryside's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61566992879422>

The second guest speaker was Vice President Patricia Theresa Flynn, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago "MWRD" Board of Commissioners. Prior to being elected Commissioner, Ms. Flynn was an employee of MWRD, working in both Pollution Control and in the Calumet Water Reclamation Plant laboratory. MWRD is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. In 2020, MWRD agreed to perform a local drainage study for Countryside. MWRD's study made several recommendations to improve drainage in our community. These recommended improvements were completed in 2023 and highlighted in last year's Winter newsletter. Vice President Flynn also discussed the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan "TARP" also known as the "The Deep Tunnel". TARP captures and stores combined stormwater and sewage and pumps it to MWRD plants to be cleaned before being released into the waterways. The nearby McCook Reservoir is scheduled to be completed in 2029 and will add 6 billion gallons of storage for our area.

In addition, Ms. Flynn was the first woman elected to the Crestwood Board of Trustees in 2011. She ran for municipal office after a drinking water scandal became public in her community. The Village of Crestwood was mingling contents of a contaminated well with the water purchased from Lake Michigan. Her passion for clean drinking water and government transparency helped Crestwood turn around this scandal which cost its taxpayers more than \$15 million in litigation and resulted in 22 felony counts against former village officials. She is now in her third term with the Village of Crestwood.



Kris Lonsway, Mayor Sean McDermott and VP Flynn

A big thanks to both speakers who provided educational presentations with such passion. Please join the Mayor for the next Coffee with the Mayor on Saturday, March 22, 2025 at 10 a.m.

WINTER / 2025

No Property Tax Levy for the 11th Consecutive Year

City staff presented a proposed fiscal year 2026 budget to the Finance Committee in November which concluded that all operating and capital costs could be funded without the use of a property tax levy. “I am pleased to report that this marks the 11th consecutive year that the City will meet its budgetary obligations without the use of property taxes” said Mayor McDermott. On December 11, 2024, the City Council voted to abate all property tax levies on file with the Cook County Clerk. The unanimous vote eliminated any property tax extensions for fiscal year 2026. City staff expects to present a final balanced budget to the City Council for consideration in April of 2025 as related to the fiscal year 2026 budget.

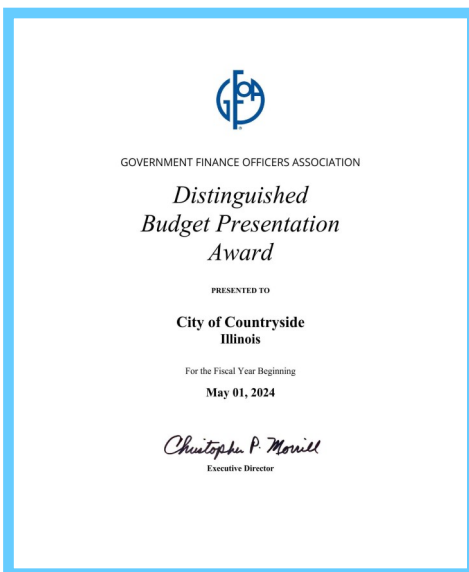
City Auditors Issue Highest Form of Opinion on Annual Audit

Matt Baren, a Managing Partner at Lauterbach & Amen, presented the annual audit findings to the City’s Finance Committee at its November 13th meeting. After a brief discussion on the core function of and process for completing the annual audit, Mr. Baren indicated to the group that the City received an **unmodified opinion again this year which means that the financial statements are presented fairly and in compliance with generally accepted governmental auditing standards.** According to Mr. Baren, “it’s the highest opinion that an independent audit firm can provide.” Mr. Baren also indicated to the group that the audit process involved a thorough review of the City’s internal control framework designed to prevent fraud and material misstatements in the financial report. He indicated that there were no significant deficiencies or weaknesses in internal controls.



Following the presentation of the auditor’s opinion and review of internal controls, Mr. Baren summarized key financial indicators for the committee’s edification. He noted that the Financial Condition of the City’s Governmental Funds is **“very healthy with reserves at 120% of budgeted expenses.”** In addition he indicated that **“the City is in an incredibly good spot with Police Pension Funding Levels at 96.7% versus just under 65.68% two years ago”**. He publicly credited the City’s successful implementation of its accelerated police pension funding model (approved by the City Council in 2022) as the driver of these results.

Finance Department Earns Audit and Budget Awards from the GFOA



The City’s Finance Department has been recognized for earning both the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award as well as the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting (audit award) from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (the “GFOA”).

This marks the 17th consecutive year that the City has received the Certificate of Achievement for its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. The Certificate is the highest form of recognition in governmental financial reporting and serves as evidence of the City’s spirit of transparency and full disclosure.

The City also received the Distinguished Budget Award for the 9th consecutive year. This award is the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting. In addition to earning the award this year, the City also received special recognition for its Strategic Goals & Strategies as well as its Long-Range Operating Financial Plans.

2025 St. Patrick's Day Family Parade

Get your green shirts ready! The City of Countryside proudly announces our annual St. Patrick's Day Parade—**Saturday, March 1st at 1p.m.** . This year's Grand Marshal is **John Fitzgerald**, who has been the City's engineer for the past 22 years and recently retired from Novotny Engineering. The presenting sponsor is **Jack Phelan—Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, RAM.**

The parade steps off at **1p.m. at 55th Place and Edgewood** and **ends at 63rd Street and Brainard Avenue.**

All parade proceeds will benefit Aging Care Connections and Healthy Countryside.

PARTICIPATE. Countryside businesses and families are encouraged to march in the parade. Consider creating a float or marching with your family or group. Prizes will be awarded for the best floats, banners, and the "Best Party Along the Route."

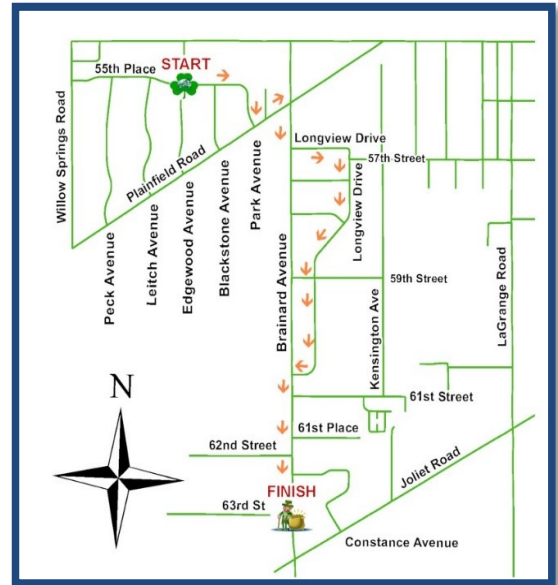
AFTER-PARTY. Everyone is invited to check out the local establishments participating in this year's post-parties. (*Establishments and specific information will be announced later.*)

SPONSOR. SPONSORSHIP LEVELS AND FEES:

- ✦ **\$1,000 Pot of Gold Sponsor** (name on website, shirts, and large print on banners)
- ✦ **\$500 Emerald Sponsor** (name on website, shirts, and banners)
- ✦ **\$250 Shamrock Sponsor** (name on website and banners)
- ✦ **\$100 Parade entry fee for Political Parties and Non-residents**
- ✦ **\$25 Parade entry fee for Non-profits & Residents** ✦

Local Schools are FREE

- ✦ **Non-advertising Business Sponsor** - support the parade and our charities by making a donation in any amount you choose.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! There are many volunteer opportunities available for teens and adults. Please contact John Finn at (708) 299-7387 or send an email to parade@countryside-il.org.

St. Patrick's Day Parade Queen. The 2025 Parade Queen will be selected from applications received from the community. We are seeking candidates who possess any of the following: Irish heritage, demonstrated community involvement, and resides in the Countryside area. Applications are available on the City's website and at City Hall. Applications must be received by February 1st, 2025. The queen will be crowned at the February 26, 2025 City Council meeting.

Rules, forms, and ongoing parade updates can be found on the City's website www.countryside-il.org under the special events tab or at City Hall. Applications and fees should be returned to the City of Countryside no later than February 10th, 2025. If you have any questions please contact Parade Chairman, John Finn at parade@countryside-il.org or (708) 299-7387.



JACK PHELAN



DODGE

CHRYSLER

Jeep



Economic Development Updates

Caraways 6562 Joliet Road will be a new neighborhood bar soon. Owner and resident, Derek Molis and his sister have been involved in the family bar business for years. They are looking to create a welcoming establishment with an outdoor patio. We look forward to their grand opening.

Duckee's 10000 75th Street has made significant progress this fall. They are remodeling the old Eddie Z's building (in Hodgkins) into a convenience store, restaurant and truck stop. This facility will have showers and resting areas for the truckers.

The property located in Countryside is being improved with new storm sewers, retaining wall, fuel tanks, canopies and fencing. The City has an intergovernmental agreement with the Village of Hodgkins to share all the revenue generated from this site 50%/50%. The City estimates annual revenues from sales tax, restaurant tax, gaming, and fuel tax of approximately \$1.2 million.



Gerald Honda 5901 La Grange Road is in the midst of a major renovation project to their showroom, offices and service area. This dealership will look completely different next year. We appreciate Gerald's confidence in making such a huge investment in Countryside.



Illinois Harley Davidson 9950 Joliet Road plans to purchase the Aldi property to expand their inventory and bring back the Route 66 motorcycle rental program. Improvements planned include roof and parking lot repairs, façade improvements and interior buildout.

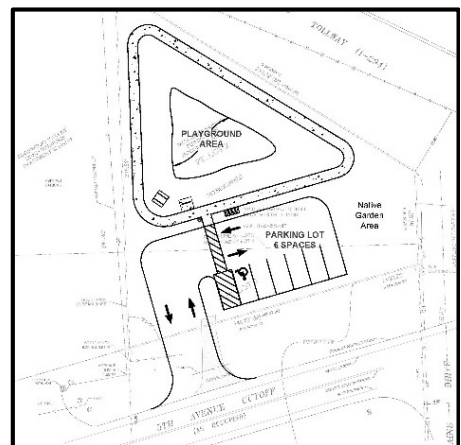
Jack in the Box 5656 La Grange Road will replace the iconic Arby's restaurant. Plans to renovate the interior and exterior including signage have been reviewed. A few modifications are required before permits are issued. This restaurant does operate 24-hours a day. In an effort to reduce noise from the drive up speaker Jack in the Box has agreed to install sound panels along the fence to the west to address resident concerns.



Revel Supper Club 5403 La Grange Road formerly Tavern on La Grange has a new owner. They are upgrading the interior and creating a new menu. They plan to be open 6 days a week for dinner and Sunday brunch. Entertainment is also in the works with a closing time of no later than midnight. This should be a nice improvement for the neighborhood.

Ward 2 Park 10701 5th Avenue Cutoff is the planned site for a new neighborhood park. The City purchased this property through a Sheriff's sale in 2022. Aldermen Tom Mikolyzk and John Von Drasek have petitioned the City Council to develop the property into a park for the underserved area on 5th Avenue Cutoff. The preliminary design to the right includes a playground with separate play areas for children 2-5 years old and children 5 - 12 years old, a walking/biking path around the playground, a permeable paver parking lot and a pollinator garden.

The cost of these improvements has been included in the next fiscal year budget. The City has applied for an Open Space Land Acquisition and Development grant to assist in the costs of designing and constructing the park. Grants will be awarded by the end of January.



Police Department Updates

Welcome to Countryside's Newest Police Officer

Mayor Sean McDermott swore in Nicholas Maslanka at the City Council meeting on December 11, 2024, in the presence of many of the new Officer's proud friends and family members.

Officer Maslanka will spend his first two weeks with the department in orientation, after which he will attend a 16-week basic recruit program at the Suburban Law Enforcement Academy at the College of DuPage. After his graduation on April 25, 2025, Officer Maslanka will complete a minimum of 12 weeks of additional, rigorous training with Countryside Field Training Officers to further familiarize him with the best practices, policies, and procedures employed by CPD personnel. **Welcome Officer Maslanka!**



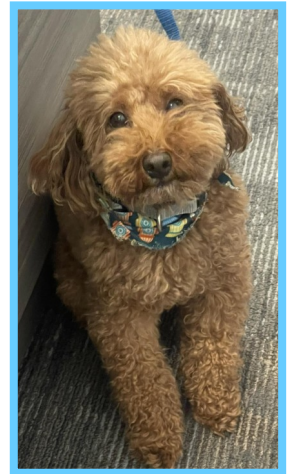
Pet Registration for Countryside Critters

Some of the saddest faces seen at the P.D. are those of dogs and cats that have been separated from their loving homes. Many bewildered creatures, have spent a lonely and scary time in our care as we attempt to identify who its owner might be. Pet registration provides residents the greatest chance of reuniting with beloved family members who may have lost their way. Any dog or cat over 4 months of age should be registered with the City. This process is free, easy, and can be done at the police department desk at any time. All we need is:

- Name and description of the pet
- Owner contact information
- Microchip status & number, if available
- Rabies inoculation certificate



The number on the back of the license tag we provide connects your animal to your contact information, thus ensuring our ability to notify you promptly if we find your missing pet.



Shop with a Cop enjoys another successful year!

On 12/14/24, ten students from District 105 teamed up with Countryside Police and City personnel to shop for Christmas gifts for themselves and family members at one the department's perennial favorite events—Shop with a Cop. Through the generosity of various local businesses, we were able to share a few hours of holiday cheer with an incredible group of boys and girls. We would like to particularly thank T.J. Maxx, Westfield Ford, and Ledo's Pizza for their continued support of this classic Christmas outreach program.



Water Department

Water Main Break Notification Procedures

If a break occurs during normal waking hours, City staff will generally attempt to notify the affected homes and businesses in person. If the break affects a large number of properties, a "Reverse 911" call will be initiated. If the break occurs after 10 p.m., the Water Department will make repairs and generally request a "Reverse 911" call in the morning (5 a.m.) if repairs are not complete.



The Reverse 911 system is an important tool for notifying residents of problems or conditions. ***It is important to remember that Reverse 911 calls go only to listed phone numbers.*** If you have an unlisted phone number and want to be added to the call list, contact the police non-emergency number

Help Keep Fire Hydrants Clear of Snow

The City asks that you help to keep fire hydrants accessible for firefighting operations by keeping space clear around sides of the hydrant as you do your shoveling or snow blowing. With 446 fire hydrants in Countryside, it is not possible for the City's employees to clear them all after a major snow storm when the priority is snowplowing the roads.

If you notice a damaged or leaking fire hydrant, please call the Public Works Department at (708) 354-3390.



Sump Pump Discharge

Winter is here and with that comes ice. City code prohibits sump pumps and downspouts from discharging into the street since the water freezes and creates hazardous situations. The ice can also create a dam that prevents melting snow from reaching the storm sewers. Please take a moment to ensure that your sump pump and downspouts are in compliance. City Code section 7-7-5 states that sump pumps and downspouts shall discharge the water at least 25 feet from the front or rear property line and at least 15 feet from the side property line.

If you are unsure about your property, please feel free to contact the Community Development Department at (708) 354-1860 and we will assist you.

Don't forget to disconnect any hoses that may have been connected to outside spigots to prevent frozen pipes.

Owners of vacant properties are reminded to have enough heat in their buildings to keep pipes from freezing.

Reminder...Parking After 2" of Snowfall

Per the City code, there is **NO** parking on any public street in the City at any time within twelve hours after a snowfall of two inches or more has occurred, unless the snow has been plowed off or otherwise removed from the street.



Holiday Decorations Reminder

Please be cognizant of how long your holiday decorations stay up.

We ask that all holiday decorations be removed no later than January 31, 2025.

Sign Up Today

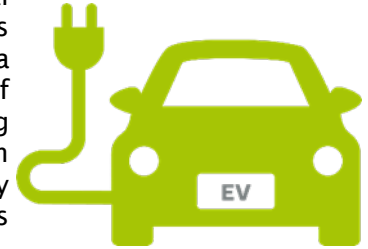
Countryside residents can receive City News updates via email. To join the list, click on "Sign Up for E-News" on the home page of the City's website, www.countryside-il.org, and follow the easy onscreen instructions.

Countryside Joins EV Readiness Program



The City's Sustainability Committee directed staff to apply for the Electric Vehicle "EV" Readiness Program through the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. We are happy to report that we were accepted as a member of the third cohort of 20 communities. The EV Readiness Program is a unique initiative which helps communities plan for the growing demand of electric vehicles and charging stations. ComEd is working with the Mayors Caucus to assist in expanding access to EVs and charging for all communities across northern Illinois.

There are 4 public charging stations in Countryside (Countryside Nissan, Ettleson Hyundai, Hooters, and the City's Municipal Complex). There are 467 EVs in the 60525 zip code with anticipation this number will increase. Mayor Sean McDermott said, "We all have a responsibility to protect our environment and to mitigate the impact of climate change. Our net-zero Municipal Complex features EV charging stations for public and facility use, to encourage the use of non-pollution emitting vehicles, and prime parking spaces reserved for high-efficiency vehicles. We hope that our work in the EV Readiness Program helps us extend access to clean transportation across the City."



How to tell if your thermostat is bad?



A bad thermostat can be detected when your AC or furnace is not turning on, your HVAC systems are not turning off, the thermostat is not responding, your HVAC system is short-cycling, the room temperature is not matching the temperature displayed on the thermostat, and if the programmed settings are resetting themselves. Also, remember to change your batteries for your thermostat.

Healthy Countryside

Check out more free health education and resources to support your healthy lifestyle choices.

Health Benefits of Plant-Based Nutrition. Watch replay of October 17 presentation here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNN8aSpEqYQ>. Eat MORE whole plants (beans, vegetables, fruits, seeds, nuts) and LESS ultra-processed and "added-sugar" food to feel better and prevent chronic disease.

Mental Health & Wellness: January 22, 2025, see details to the right.

Healthy Aging Presentation & Resource Fair: April 10 at Helping Hand in Countryside. Visit *Healthy Countryside's* webpage under the Residents tab of the City's website at www.countryside-il.org for more information.

Seek Help if Needed

Winter time can be mentally challenging. If you find yourself having negative thoughts on a regular basis, consider **sharing your concerns with a medical professional**, like a family doctor or licensed therapist.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS
PRESENTATION & RESOURCE FAIR

FEATURING KEYNOTE SPEAKER
DR. JOHN DUFFY
PSYCHOLOGIST,
BEST SELLING AUTHOR AND
TEEN MENTAL WELLNESS
EXPERT



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22
6:30-8 p.m.

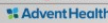
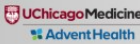
Lyons Township High School - Reber Center
100 S Brainerd Ave, La Grange

- Mental health conditions impacting kids and adults
- When and how to seek support
- How to build emotional resilience
- Strategies for managing stress, anxiety, and depression
- Live Spanish and ASL interpretation

REGISTRATION & EVENT DETAILS
MENTALHEALTH2025.EVENTBRITE.COM



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



Local nonprofits provide behavioral health support at a reduced fee. Call 988, chat via 988lifeline.org, text HOME to 741 741, or chat via crisistextline.org for 24/7 mental health support with a trained counselor.

Community Happenings



WHERE: *Flagg Creek Golf Course*
DATE: *Saturday, January 18, 2025*
TIME: *1 - 4 P.M.*



The City of Countryside and Flagg Creek Golf Course are pleased to announce that Winterfest will be back in 2025! Join family and friends for fun filled winter activities on Saturday, January 18, 2025. The event kicks off at 1:00 p.m. with Bingo for the kids, a balloon twister, face painter, a craft project by Home Depot, a fire pit with the fixings for s'mores, and indoor kids games. There will also be food and beverages available for purchase.

Children's Holiday Celebration

The 2024 Children's Holiday Party was held on Saturday, December 7th at Premiere Catering and Events. 180 children attended. Magician AJ Sacco left guests of all ages spellbound as he wove his unique brand of holiday magic into the festive celebration. Two girls and two boys from each age group were awarded a specialty wrapped gift, presented by Alderman Von Drasek, Alderman Benson, and Alderman Finn. Two grand prize winners were each given a \$200 gift certificate from Terry's Bike Haus. Thanks to Santa and all his helpers and a big thank you to Premiere Catering and Events and their staff for helping make the event such a success.



Tree of Hope Update



Thank you to all of the generous "Angels" who participated in our Tree of Hope Program. This award-winning holiday program is designed to assist our residents who are experiencing a hardship during the holiday season. The generosity and goodwill of the community make this program a success!

This year, we were able to assist 77 individuals from 18 families. Wish lists included items such as winter coats, snow boots and gloves, along with requests to assist with the payment of utility bills. Clerk's Office staff members coordinate this program each year. They work diligently to identify families and individuals who qualify for the program. Happy Holidays to all of our Tree of Hope participants!

Western Springs Recreation Programs Available

The City of Countryside entered into an Intergovernmental agreement with the Village of Western Springs. This agreement allows Countryside residents to sign up for Western Springs' recreational programs at resident rates. In turn, Western Springs has the ability to use our parks for recreational activities. Please visit their recreation department at <https://www.wsprings.com/recreation>. If you have any questions about programs please contact Ryan Harris at 708-246-9070 or rharrison@wsprings.com.



In addition to recreation programs, Western Springs also offers a Senior Center. There are different membership levels which allow for various classes and activities including bridge, canasta, scrabble, mahjongg, Seniorcise, tai chi, knitting circle, library, etc. There is something for everyone.

City Employees Service Recognition in 2024



Robert Sodt	25 years
Paul Klimek	20 years
Kelly Kalker	20 years
April Bisignani	20 years
Karen Melone	15 years
Jesse Serna	10 years
Mike Rojas	10 years
Matt Murray	5 years
Chris Laux	5 years

Upcoming City Meetings

January

7	Plan/ZBA Commission	7:15 p.m.
8	City Council	7:30 p.m.
21	Flagg Creek Admin. Board	7:00 p.m.
22	City Council	7:30 p.m.

February

4	Plan/ZBA Commission	7:15 p.m.
12	City Council	7:30 p.m.
18	Flagg Creek Admin. Board	7:00 p.m.
26	City Council	7:30 p.m.

March

4	Plan/ZBA Commission	7:15 p.m.
12	City Council	7:30 p.m.
11	Fire & Police Commission	5:00 p.m.
18	Flagg Creek Admin. Board	7:00 p.m.
26	City Council	7:30 p.m.



EASTER EGG HUNT

Saturday, April 19, 2025
10 a.m. at Countryside Park

Over 1,000 hidden candy filled eggs.

For more info. call (708) 354-7270



Welcome to Countryside

Securely Storage
411 E Plainfield Rd
Self Storage Units



Host a Party or Special Event

Flagg Creek clubhouse is available for holiday parties, reunions, showers, birthdays, office gatherings or any other excuse you need to celebrate. We offer a full bar, flat screen TV's, ample space, and great service! Find more information on the website under "Private Events" or call (708) 246-3336.



Host a Party



City of Countryside
803 Joliet
Countryside, IL 60525

Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
So Suburban, IL
Permit No. 928

OFFICIALS

Mayor

Sean McDermott

Clerk

Elizabeth Kmet

Treasurer

Courtney Bolt

Aldermen

Mark Benson

John Finn

Tom Frohlich

Thomas Mikolyzk

Scott Musillami

John Von Drasek



WEBSITES TO KNOW

City of Countryside

www.countryside-il.org

Cook County Clerk

www.cookcountyclerk.com

Flagg Creek Golf Course

www.flaggcreekgolfcourse.org

Pleasant Dale Park District

www.pdparks.org

Pleasantview Fire Protection District

www.plvw.org

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

EMERGENCY 911



City Hall/Clerk's Office:

Main: (708) 354-7270

Fax: (708) 354-9445

Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Community Development:

Main: (708) 354-1860

Fax: (708) 354-9445

Police Department:

Main: (708) 352-2171 (non-emergency)

Fax: (708) 352-1032

Public Works:

Main: (708) 354-3390

Fax: (708) 354-9445

Water Billing:

Main: (708) 485-2465

Fax: (708) 354-9445

Disclaimer: If you attend a local festival or City function and the event is photographed, your image may be used for news and promotional purposes.