

Conversation with the Mayor - June 6, 2011
Vicky Daly

Working with Village Government 101

Village government is the layer of government closest to the people. You see your elected officials all the time in the stores, at the sporting events, walking the dog, at the restaurant, the Community Center, school events – all over. Invariably, no matter where you chat with your elected officials, they are willing to answer questions and point you in the right direction for information. Sometimes, however, the conversation is about a more major topic and an informal chat won't suffice and the Village Board must be involved. It takes a majority of the Village Board, a minimum of 3 of 5 members, acting at a scheduled, public meeting to take any action. Neither an individual trustee nor the mayor can act alone. The Board is scheduled to meet on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month in the Village Hall, 144 East Main Street. In July and August, it is just the 1st Monday. Monday holidays like Labor Day and, this year, 4th of July necessitate a change of date. When that is the case, a legal notice is put in the paper, a sign is posted on the front door, and an announcement is made at the preceding Board meetings. Note also that village employees carry out the policy established by the Board and are neither responsible for enactment of policy nor able to modify it. Their role is to refer you to the Board.

Because of several recent requests, it occurred to me that it would be helpful to our local residents and business owners to provide an outline as to the most effective and efficient way to bring something to the attention of the Village Board. This same general procedure would work if you live in a town or city.

Start by putting your questions and concerns on paper and mailing or hand delivering them to the Village Hall, 144 East Main Street, Palmyra, 14522, or emailing them to vpalmyra@yahoo.com. In either case, add Att: Mayor or Highway Department or Police, whatever is appropriate. Your letter will get to the appropriate Board member who will see that it gets where it should be. Of course, you can call before that and talk about your concerns, but if you do and they require Board action, you will be asked to put your concerns and/or request in writing. There are a couple of reasons why. The whole Board has to know about the topic – and in your own words, not what the listener thought he or she heard. Also, research may be needed before the next Board meeting for discussion/ action at that time.

All Board meetings are public meetings, that is, open to the public (except executive session and that's another column) and we urge you to come. The Open Meeting Law affords you the right to come and listen to what your elected officials are doing and you should. You may request to be placed on the agenda by calling the Village Office, 597-4849. You will be asked to state the reason for your request. You may also come unannounced and, at the end of the scheduled agenda, be recognized to speak. We always conclude village meetings with the question "Is there anything from the public this evening?" This, however, is the least effective way to accomplish something because the Board will have no advance notice of your concern and may be unprepared to deal with it. Doing it this way just extends the time needed to address that concern as the next Board meeting could be 2 or 3 weeks later.

I hope this is helpful to you. We cannot know what is happening everywhere all the time, even in a village slightly more than one square mile in size. We need your eyes and ears to help us do our jobs. Your being informed is good for you, the Board, and the whole community.

By the time you read this, we will have kicked off a great summer and it isn't even summer yet. We have had the Bird Fest, Armed Forces Day; Memorial Day; the Grand Opening of the Palmyra Comfort Station; the Boys of Wexford Celtic Band; 'Stained Glass: Its Care and Repair', and Taking Flight Over Palmyra. But there is more to come: on Monday, July 4th, we will hold our fourth annual 4th of July Celebration in the Village Park, starting at 11:00 AM. Watch for details and enjoy a traditional patriotic holiday in our historic park. July will also bring concerts at the Port of Palmyra Marina. On Sunday, July 10, enjoy the return performance of 'The Boys of Wexford', 2 – 4 PM, and on Friday July 15 and again on July 29, the music of 'Over the Edge'. Bring folding chairs or a blanket and enjoy!

One last note: The Palmyra Fire Department is accepting applications for Fire Fighters and Fire Police. Stop in the Fire Hall any Thursday between 7:00 and 9:00 PM for applications. Thank you for considering this. This is an honorable and much needed service to the community.