



Winter 2026

The ANCHOR

VILLAGE OF FOX LAKE NEWSLETTER

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From the Desk of Mayor Donny Schmit

January 1, 2026

Hi all,

Winter is here and I hope everyone is enjoying the holidays with family and friends. As a person who enjoys all four seasons, I am looking forward to the beauty of the season and all the winter activities.

This time of year, it is always good to look back on the past year and review our accomplishments, challenges and to make a plan for the upcoming year. Our Village Board and staff have listened to our residents and did our best to meet the needs of residents. As I have stated before, we are facing many challenges, including pension demands, the loss of revenue and unfunded mandates from the state, an aging regional sewer treatment plant and streets in need of repair.

Over the course of the past year, we have been able to achieve many of the goals set by our residents. Below are just a few of the accomplishments of each department.

The Administration Department achieved nearly \$50,000 in projected savings for FY 2026 with Alliant Insurance Services for Workers Comp and Liability Insurance with ICRMT, successfully negotiated the Waste Management contract, reducing the annual cost increase for 2026 from 5% to 3.5%, resulting in long-term financial benefits for the Village and successfully concluded AFSCME and FOP union contract negotiations, securing two four-year agreements that support workforce stability and positive labor relations.

The Finance Department is fully compliant with all applicable requirements and seeks opportunities to maximize revenue while reducing costs and improving ways to be more efficient for residents and businesses including

online services as a convenient method to file and pay. The Department developed and maintained the annual budget as well.

Our Public Safety Department completed the consolidation of its 911 services by joining the countywide LAKECOMM 911 system, which will result in cost savings for the Village. The Police Department increased its training and focus on DUI enforcement by adding Drug Recognition Expert and Phlebotomy certifications for specialized officers. DUI arrests increased to 90 from January through November 2025; however, we are seeing our lowest traffic crash fatality rate in the last 25 years. The department has focused on increasing their community outreach programs and has partnered with the Parks Department to completely overhaul the annual Bicycle Rodeo. This free event allows families to ensure their bicycles are in safe operating condition while children participate in activities and prize raffles. This year's Bicycle Rodeo saw the highest public participation to date. In addition, Hank, the Police Department's therapy dog, has become a beloved member of the community. He now participates in monthly school visits, library reading sessions, annual community outreach events, and provides comfort to individuals whenever the need arises.

Our Public Works Department finished Phase I and started Phase II of the lead pipe replacement project, oversaw the installation of a new well, eliminated the use of Well # 4, which tested positive for traces of PFAS, paved over one and a half miles of local roads, maintained our buildings and supported other departments. *(continued on page 2...)*



Mayor Donny Schmit Continued...

This year, Community & Economic Development lead the process for the Comprehensive Plan & Downtown Master plan. These documents will serve as the long-term vision for the Village guiding staff & the Board through their decisions and next steps. The Department secured over \$100M in private development. The two larger developments will bring a total of 302 new residential units to town, helping to position Fox Lake for long-term economic strength. Increased quality housing drives commercial interest to town while increasing the customer base for our local business community. Over the last year, Community Development has also increased their Code Enforcement efforts and will continue to do so to make Fox Lake a community to be proud of.

The Fox Lake Parks & Recreation team through surveys, in person feedback, social media posts, and more, provided programs and events that have helped people feel more connected to community, supported local businesses, attracted new visitors, provided opportunities for people to give back, and built community pride. In 2025, we provided a host of events and programs for all ages, launched Fox Lake Friday Night Live Market and Music bringing over 13,065 visitors to the community from June through August, creating online registration options for Village programs and events to make it easier to do business with the Village and to streamline administrative efficiency.

The Northwest Regional Water Reclamation Facility made important strides to strengthen the long-term reliability of our regional sewer system. The team completed a new five-year Capital Improvement Plan focused on replacing aging equipment and improving system performance. They also conducted a comprehensive rate study — the first since 1992 — to ensure future operating costs are responsibly covered. In addition, staffing levels were restored for the first time since 2016, improving day-to-day operations and supporting long-term sustainability of this critical facility.

While we are proud of all our accomplishments, we realize that there is still much to do to make Fox Lake the best it can be. Our focus for the next year will be to develop our downtown, continue our road repair program and to meet the needs of our community, keep Fox Lake an affordable place to live, and a great place to raise a family. As always, you can reach me at (847) 587-3943 or schmitd@foxlake.org.

I hope to see you at the Village Board meeting or one of our many events.

Happy Holidays!


Donny

ANCHOR AWARD

**ANCHOR AWARD RETURNS TO
HONOR LINDSAY SZAFRAN FOR
EXEMPLARY SERVICE TO FOX LAKE**



After a brief hiatus, the Village of Fox Lake is proud to bring back the Anchor Award, our community's recognition of outstanding individuals and organizations who go above and beyond in service to our residents. The last Anchor Award was presented in 2022, and we are thrilled to resume this tradition by honoring a truly exceptional leader: Lindsay Szafran.

Lindsay Szafran, who served as the 911 Center Director with the Village of Fox Lake, was recognized with the Anchor Award for her nearly two decades of dedicated service. Hired on May 22, 2006, Lindsay's last day with the Village was October 8, 2025, marking the end of a remarkable 19+ year career with the Village of Fox Lake, as she heads into the role as Deputy Director for LakeComm.

Throughout her tenure, Lindsay has been a driving force behind innovation, professionalism, and compassion in emergency communications. Under her leadership, the FoxComm 911 Center achieved Accredited Center of Excellence status, one of the highest honors in emergency response. She also established the Wellness Committee to support dispatcher health and morale, and played a key role in the creation of the new LakeComm 911 Center.

Lindsay's impact on the community is immeasurable. Her commitment to ensuring that every call for help is met with a swift, professional response has saved lives and strengthened public trust. She has consistently championed high standards, continuous training, and a culture of care within the department.

In her own words, Lindsay shared:

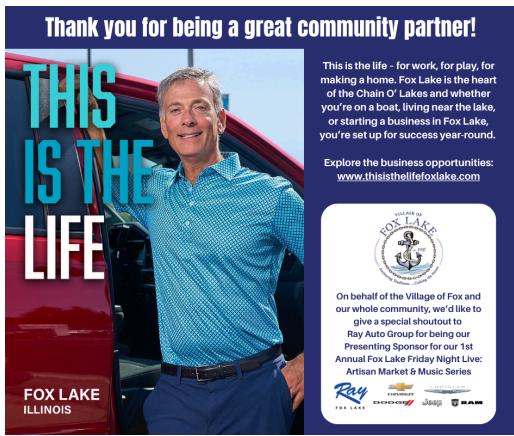
"The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things." – Ronald Reagan

We thank Lindsay for her unwavering dedication and leadership. Her legacy will continue to shape the future of emergency services in Fox Lake, Lake County, and surrounding areas for years to come. Lindsay Szafran was formally presented with the Anchor Award and recognized for her outstanding contributions at the October 14, 2025, Board Meeting, alongside a brief presentation and recognition of her staff from the Mayor and Village Board of Trustees.

ANCHORED IN FOX LAKE



Newest Onboarded Businesses



- Antioch Pizza (*New Ownership*) 20 S. Rt 12
- Arte Azul Salon 34 W. Grand Ave.
- CR Mechanical Holdings 60 Eagle Point Rd.
- Hampshire Funeral Home (*relocation*) 74 E. Grand Ave.
- Los Perez Supermarket (*new ownership*) 17 Towne Center Ln.
- Magic Pool Services 855 S. Rt 12
- Nano Auto Repair 128 Sayton Rd.

Businesses Under Construction

- Advantage Honda, 91 S. Rt 12
- Ashley's Café, 514 Rollins Rd.
- AW Auto, 710 Grand Ave.
- Fusion Salon & Spa, 7231 State Park Rd.
- Living Roots Farm, 104 Sayton Rd.
- Mind Wise Counseling, 34 W. Grand Ave.
- Shell Gas Station, 511 E. Grand Ave.
- Tobacco & Smoke, 17 S. Rt 12
- Trio's Sport's Bar & Grill, 88 E. Grand Ave.
- Second Time Treasures, 28 E. Grand Ave.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Payment Update: Card Processing Fees Begin February 1, 2026

Starting February 1, 2026, the Village of Fox Lake will implement a new payment policy for utility bills and all other debit/credit card payments. Customers who choose to pay by credit or with debit card will now be responsible for covering the service fees associated with those transactions. This change helps the Village manage service costs while continuing to offer multiple convenient payment options.

What to Expect

If you pay by card, here's a breakdown of the new fees:

- Credit/Debit Card Fee: 3.5% of the total bill
- Automated Phone Payment (IVR): Card fee + \$0.25
- Live PSN Representative (Phone): Card fee + \$1.00
- Bills Under \$100: Card fee + \$0.50

Example: A \$100 payment made via the automated phone system (IVR) would include:

- \$3.50 card fee + \$0.25 IVR fee = Total charge: \$103.75

ACH Payments Remain Free!

Residents can avoid fees by signing up for ACH (Automated Clearing House) for utility payments. This option allows payments to be withdrawn directly from your checking or savings account, at no extra cost.

How to Sign Up for ACH

You can enroll in ACH payments in one of two ways:

1. *Village Hall:* Pick up and submit the ACH application in person with a voided check.

2. *Online:*

- Visit www.foxlake.org
- Click on Pay Online
- Select Auto Pay
- Print and complete the form
- Include a voided check
- Submit the signed application



Prefer to Use PSN?

You can also pay online through PSN (Payment Service Network):

- Go to www.foxlake.org
- Click on Pay Online
- Select Utility Payment – Water/Sewer/Refuse
- You'll be redirected to the PSN login page
- Log in or create an account
- Choose Checking or Savings to avoid card fees

Questions?

For assistance, please contact the Utility Billing Department:

- *Phone:* (847) 587-3945
- *Email:* utilitybilling@foxlake.org

Thank you for your continued support as we work to provide secure, efficient, and cost-effective payment options for all Fox Lake residents!

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Comprehensive & Downtown Master Plans

Fox Lake Adopts “Community Reflections” - A Vision for the Future

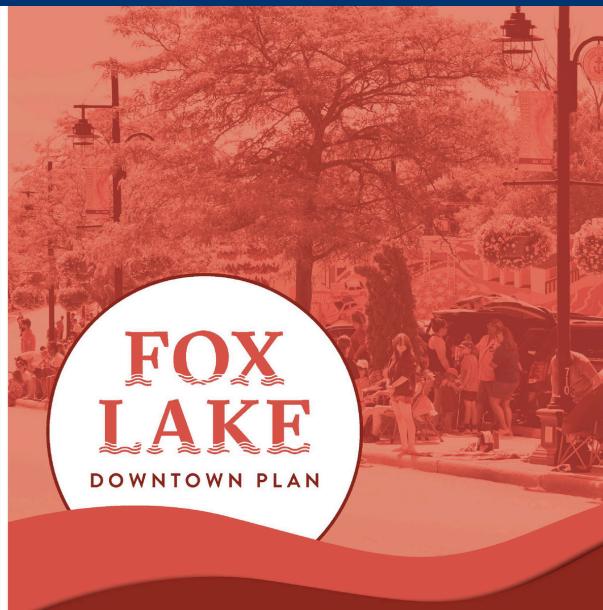
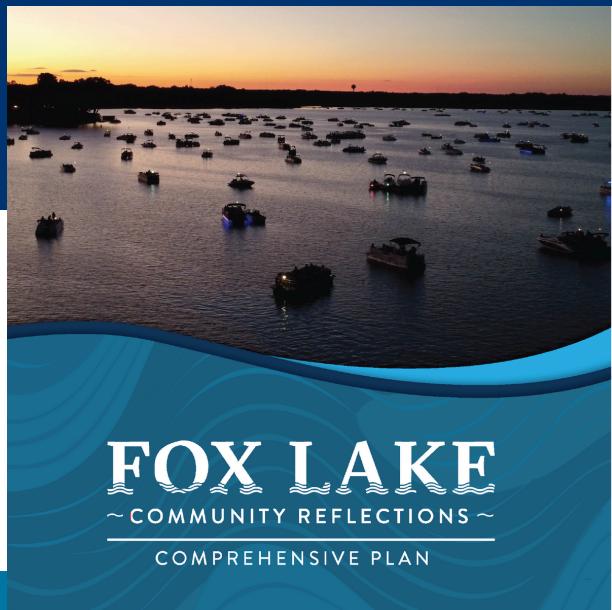
After 18 months of collaboration, creativity, and community input, the Village of Fox Lake is proud to announce the adoption of Community Reflections: The Fox Lake Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Master Plan.

This milestone marks the completion of an ambitious planning effort that brought together residents, business owners, and stakeholders to create a shared vision for the Village's next 15 years. The plans outline strategies for revitalizing the downtown, enhancing lakefront connections, supporting local businesses, and guiding smart, sustainable growth throughout the community.

Community Reflections represents Fox Lake's collective vision for a stronger, more connected, and vibrant future. These plans will serve as a roadmap to guide investments, redevelopment, and quality-of-life improvements across the Village.

The Village extends sincere thanks to everyone who participated in public workshops, surveys, and open houses throughout the planning process. Your feedback and ideas shaped the vision that will guide future decisions and projects.

The planning is done—now it's time to turn vision into action. You can read the full plans and learn more at www.foxlakecomplan.com.



Community Development Streamlines Permit Process with New Online System

The Village of Fox Lake Community Development Department is working to make the permitting process faster, easier, and more transparent for residents and businesses. To achieve this, the Village is implementing a new permitting, licensing, and land management software called Trimble.

Once launched, the Trimble system will allow applicants to apply for permits online, upload plans and documents electronically, and track the progress of their application in real time. This digital upgrade will improve communication between applicants and staff, reduce paperwork, and help streamline review workflows—resulting in quicker processing and better service delivery.

“Modernizing how we handle permits and licenses is a major step forward in improving customer service,” said Jodi Luka, Director of Community and Economic Development. “Trimble will bring greater efficiency to both applicants and staff while making the process more transparent and user-friendly.”

Obtaining the proper permits remains a critical step in any construction or renovation project. Permits help ensure that all work meets building, zoning, and safety codes, protecting the integrity of structures and the safety of residents and visitors. By following the permitting process, property owners not only comply with local regulations but also safeguard their investment and the long-term value of their property.

The new online permitting system is expected to be fully operational in the coming months. Updates and instructions will be shared on the Village's website and social media as the system goes live.



NWRWRF & POLICE DEPARTMENT UPDATES



The Village of Fox Lake owns/operates the Northwest Regional Water Reclamation Facility (NWRWRF), providing wastewater treatment services to Village residents, and several neighboring communities, businesses, and industrial users.

Over the years, the wastewater system has aged, and some infrastructure is approaching the end of its useful life. To ensure reliable service and continued compliance with environmental regulations, the Village must maintain, repair, and upgrade its facilities.

The cost of operating and maintaining the NWRWRF is funded through user rates. These rates have not been increased since the early 1990s. Due to rising costs, inflation, and aging infrastructure, current rates no longer fully cover the expenses needed to operate, maintain, and improve the facility.

After careful review, the Village has determined that a rate adjustment is necessary. Effective January 1, 2026, the wastewater rate will increase from \$2.23 per 1,000 gallons of wastewater treated to \$4.81 per 1,000 gallons.

This adjustment will help ensure the Village can continue providing safe, reliable, and environmentally compliant wastewater services to all customers.

Questions? Call (847) 587-3694



Winter Safety Tips

As winter settles in across Fox Lake, your safety remains our top priority. Snow, ice, and cold weather bring unique challenges to our roads and homes. The Fox Lake Police Department encourages everyone to take a few simple precautions to stay safe and prepared this season.

Winter weather can make driving dangerous, even for experienced motorists. Remember to slow down and increase following distance. Ice and snow reduce traction, so take extra care when braking or turning. Clear your vehicle completely by removing snow and ice from all windows, headlights, and mirrors before driving. Keep an emergency kit in your vehicle including blankets, a flashlight, jumper cables, water, snacks, and a phone charger. Always stay informed, checking the weather and road conditions before heading out can decrease the risk of being caught in inclement conditions. If travel is not advised, stay home until conditions improve if possible.

Winter weather can make even short walks hazardous due to icy conditions. Dress warmly in layers and wear moisture-resistant outerwear, hats, and gloves. Watch for ice, use handrails, walk slowly, and wear boots with good traction if you have to travel outdoors on foot. Always be visible if walking at dawn, dusk, or night, and wear reflective clothing and carry a flashlight.

Winter is also a time for community care and awareness. Check on your neighbors, especially seniors or those who may need extra assistance during snowstorms or power outages. Report hazards and suspicious activity to the Fox Lake Police Department if you see something concerning. The holiday season creates increased opportunities for crime. If you plan to receive holiday packages by mail, always plan to have a neighbor or family member collect them to avoid package thieves. Scams also increase during the winter holiday season. Scammers often pose as utility companies or government agencies during winter. Never provide personal or financial information over the phone or online without verifying the source. If you believe you are the victim of a scam or have been contacted by a scammer, report it to the Fox Lake Police Department.

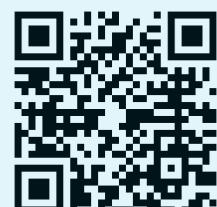
New Online Vacation Watch Program

The Fox Lake Police Department is introducing a new, user-friendly system for submitting vacation watch requests. This streamlined service, provided by Frontline Public Safety Solutions, makes it easier for residents to request additional patrol checks of their homes while they are away.

A link to the program will be available on the Village of Fox Lake website at www.foxlake.org under the Police Department tab. Residents will be redirected to the Frontline Public Safety Solutions public portal, where vacation watch requests can be quickly and securely completed.

The Fox Lake Police Department also reminds residents to follow these simple vacation safety tips while away from home:

- Avoid posting vacation plans on social media until after returning
- Use interior light timers to give the appearance of occupancy
- Ensure all doors and windows are securely locked
- Ask a trusted friend, neighbor, or family member to collect mail, packages, and newspapers



PUBLIC WORKS & NWRWRF DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Winter Prep Reminders from Public Works

Snow Removal Tips

Help Public Works keep roads safe:

- Avoid street parking during/after snowfall (Ord. 8-4-9)
- Shovel snow to the right side of your driveway
- Clear sidewalks and nearby hydrants
- Keep bins off the street to prevent damage
- Be patient—main roads are plowed first

Mailbox Check Before Snow Season

Before snow arrives, inspect your mailbox for stability. The only replaces mailboxes physically struck by a plow, those already damaged won't qualify. If your mailbox is hit, report it within 48 hours.

If it's beyond repair, you may choose:

- Village replacement (*standard post/box when weather allows*)
- Up to \$150 reimbursement with receipt for your own repair

Prevent Frozen Pipes

- Let faucets trickle during extreme cold
- Open cabinet doors under sinks
- Disconnect outdoor hoses and shut off exterior faucets
- Insulate pipes in cold areas
- Know your shut-off valve location

Thanks for helping keep Fox Lake safe and running smoothly this winter!

NAVIGATING WINTER CHALLENGES

As winter sets in, wastewater plants face seasonal hurdles that can impact performance:

- **Biological Slowdown:** Cold temperatures reduce microbial activity, making it harder to meet treatment goals—especially for ammonia removal.
- **Frozen Equipment:** Ice and freezing strain pumps, valves, and basins. Insulation and routine maintenance are critical to keep systems running smoothly.
- **Surging Flows:** Snowmelt and winter rain can flood sewer systems, diluting wastewater and stressing plant capacity.

Bottom Line: Winter demands extra vigilance. Staying ahead of biological shifts, equipment strain, and flow spikes helps ensure reliable treatment all season long.



THIS IS THE LIFE FOX LAKE, ILLINOIS



Fox Lake isn't just a place on the map—it's a community full of character, charm, and entrepreneurial spirit. At the heart of our Village are the small businesses that make our streets come alive, from local shops and restaurants to service providers and creative artisans. These businesses are more than just storefronts; they're neighbors, friends, and the foundation of our local economy.

When you choose to shop local, you're investing in Fox Lake. Every dollar spent at a small business stays in our community longer, helping to create jobs, support schools, and fund the programs that make our Village a great place to live. Beyond economics, small businesses give Fox Lake its personality—unique shops, hometown restaurants, and distinctive services that you won't find anywhere else.

Whether you're stopping by a café for your morning coffee, picking up gifts for family and friends, or hiring a local contractor for your home project, your support matters. Every purchase helps our businesses grow, and in turn, keeps our Village vibrant, welcoming, and full of character.

So next time you're making a purchase, consider staying local. Together, we can continue to celebrate and sustain the small businesses that make Fox Lake the special place we all call home.

PARKS & RECREATION UPDATES



STAY IN THE KNOW WITH FOX LAKE PARKS & RECREATION!

Looking for the latest on programs, events, and seasonal fun?

Visit our Village website Parks and Recreation page at www.foxlake.org/120/Parks-Recreation to explore everything we offer!

From youth activities to community-wide celebrations, you will find our full **Program Guide** packed with exciting opportunities for all ages.

Want to plan ahead? Head over to the Events page for details on annual events—including dates, times, and locations—so you never miss out!

For real-time updates, behind-the-scenes sneak peeks, and fun reminders, follow us on **Facebook at @VFLparksandrec**. Hit that “Like” button and stay connected with your community!

*Find our
PROGRAM
GUIDE
Here*



UPCOMING EVENTS



Event	Date	Time/Location
Senior Luncheon	January 15, 2026	11:30 AM - 1 PM - Lakefront Park
Family Dance	February 7, 2026	6 - 8 PM - Lakefront Park
Senior Luncheon	February 19, 2026	11:30 AM - 1 PM - Lakefront Park
Senior Luncheon	March 19, 2026	11:30 AM - 1 PM - Lakefront Park
Polar Plunge	March 22, 2026	12 PM - Lakefront Park
Egg Citing Egg Hunt & Lions Club Bunny Breakfast	March 28, 2026	8 - 11 AM - Lakefront Park 10 AM - EGG HUNT
Pelican Palooza	April 1-17, 2026	Various Locations
Senior Luncheon	April 16, 2026	11:30 AM - 1 PM - Lakefront Park

Contact INFORMATION

Village of Fox Lake

66 Thillen Drive
Fox Lake, Illinois 60020
www.foxlake.org

Village Hall Hours

8 AM to 5 PM
Monday - Friday

Village Officials

Mayor Donny Schmit

Village Clerk

Michelle Runnion

Trustees

Bernice Konwent	Brian Marr
Jeff Jensen	Debra Vander Weit
David Gauger	Amy Driscoll

Village Contact List

Emergency.....911
Village Hall (Administration/Finance).....(847) 587-2151
Community & Economic Development.....(847) 587-3176
Police Department (Non-Emergency).....(847) 587-3100
Public Works Department.....(847) 587-8570
Parks and Recreation Department.....(224) 225-1404
Northwest Regional Reclamation Facility..(847) 587-3694

*****ECRWSS*****
POSTAL CUSTOMER
FOX LAKE, IL 60020

STAY CONNECTED *with the Village of Fox Lake*

Stay up to date with Village news through social media. The Village of Fox Lake is on Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, and LinkedIn using the handle @foxlakeil. Updates can also be obtained via email in our weekly e-newsletter—the E-Anchor—or can be found on the Village's website at www.foxlake.org.

For more information, please contact the Village at (847) 587-2151.

The Anchor is the official newsletter for the Village of Fox Lake.



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Instagram



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Notifications