

Message from The Mayor: Parades, Picnics and Patriots' Day

Well it is now finally May and we are still getting April showers. But soon enough the better weather will be here. May is the month for the Memorial Day ceremonies throughout the country and our very own parade, which will be held on May 30, 2011. It is also the start of picnic season and certainly there will be many to attend over the upcoming weekend. Speaking of the parade...here are the official details:

Groups marching in the Memorial Day Parade will begin assembling at 9:00 AM near the Mestek Company property on North Elm Street. The parade will begin promptly at 10:00 AM.

The parade route will be as follows; beginning at Mestek, the marchers will march south down North Elm Street, continuing across the new Great River Bridge, continuing south down Elm Street, then turning west onto Franklin Street, proceeding then to Washington Street and continuing south to Court Street. Once at Court Street, the parade route will then turn left (or east) onto Court Street then turn right (or south) down Holland Avenue. The parade will end at Parker Memorial Park where a ceremony will be held in honor of Memorial Day.

May is also the time when the Westfield Public Schools host our hometown heroes. Our city's veterans travel to our schools and participate in various ceremonies with the school children so that they can see and meet these real life heroes. I know the veterans will tell you the real heroes are those that gave their lives on the fields of battle, and that is true, but I've always considered our men and women in uniform to be heroes among us as well. Serving in our armed forces is a very special honor and I admire all those men and women who have answered that call.

Memorial Day, was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868, by General John Logan. General Logan was, at the time, the national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic. The first observance was on 30 May 1868. Originally, it was referred to as Decoration Day. I have always thought our parade and ceremony at Parker Park is something very special and I encourage all citizens to come out and see it first hand.

I certainly couldn't let this upcoming Memorial Day come and go without acknowledging the long time master of ceremonies for our veteran's events and city ceremonies, Dr. Jim Dowd. Dr. Dowd, who I have known for a very long time, completed his last MC duty for our veteran's council at the Patriots' Day ceremony at Parker Memorial Park in April. Dr. Dowd, is a long time school committee and city council member and Marine Corps Veteran. His patience, attention to detail, kindness and professionalism made every event special. Dr. Dowd, job well done. We will all do our best to carry on your fine tradition. Thank you.

Now on to some pulse line tidbits...back on April 30, a caller claimed that city Chapter 90 highway funds were used to pay for the new clock tower. That of course is wrong and the funding source was Federal and state highway enhancement money. Funding that if not used for enhancements in Westfield, would have been used as enhancement money in another community. I would like to assure the caller, that since I have been in office, we have put nearly 4 million dollars directly into our city's roads. I stopped the practice of using highway funding for project designs. Last year, the council, at my request, financed design work for the next decade worth of road projects with a 5 year bond.

I also have made every attempt to communicate directly with the citizens. The caller seemed to believe that some mysterious good ole boy network is at work in the city. I would invite the caller to come into the office and speak with me directly as opposed to using the pulse line to make baseless accusations.

Another burning topic in that issue was the new school project. We are presently in the feasibility study phase of the project. During this phase we are working on siting the building on the site, land acquisitions and eventually schematic design. This effort is required to be done, to see if the project can be done at the site and be in position for state approval later this year. So until the state signs off on the financing of the project, it is still in the exploratory stage. The caller also made some reference to busing kids. This school is a replacement for Abner Gibbs, Franklin Avenue and Fort Meadow. The new building will be a neighborhood school for many of those children.

And lastly, in recent pulse line editions, there has been a lot of concern about the school committee's selection of the next superintendent of schools. The vote has been taken and now the school committee is in the process of negotiating a multi year contract. There is a lot of work to be done in the school system and if Dr. Scallion accepts the position, we must all give her our support. The most important job this city does, is educate its children. I see it first hand every day.

I have recently been told that the refurbished fountain for Park Square Green maybe in place in the park by mid June. With every day that goes by, we get closer to the finish line on all our projects. I also recently announced that the pavilion structure will be constructed by the students of Westfield Vocational Technical High School. The students are working from the original design that is inspired by the gazebo at Grand Mother's Garden. I would like to thank all those citizens who have sent me emails of back yard gazebos as an example of what we should build. This structure is nothing like the gazebo you buy at the garden store. Stay tuned, the kids likely will start construction in the fall.

I would also like to congratulate all the graduating seniors of Westfield State University. It was an honor to participate again in the graduation ceremony last weekend. The students of WSU provide the city schools, non for profits, service organizations and businesses with thousands of hours of labor. I would also like to thank Mrs. Jennifer Baymon, a graduating senior who headed up my monthly newsletter effort. Her handiwork can be found at http://www.cityofwestfield.org/pdfs/11+Whip_May%202011.pdf. Back issues are also available on the Mayor's home page.

In the coming days, you should soon be hearing more about our own Westfield High School Band. The Band has been invited to participate in the "Band of Pride" tribute in Times Square, NYC on November 10, 2011. This tribute will be honoring those lives lost in the 9/11 tragedy. Westfield lost three of its own that day and it is a great honor for our band to represent us at this tribute. If you are interested in sending a donation to help defray the cost, they can be mailed directly to Westfield High School Band, 177 Montgomery Road, Westfield.

Next week is graduation week in the city and our three high schools will be having their respective graduation ceremonies. Good luck to all the soon to be graduates in whatever they do in the future.

I also taped a new TV show this week. Tune in to see the two longtime downtown businesses featured this month. Also, Jeff Daley our city advancement officer, will soon be taping another show of his own highlighting one of our manufacturing businesses. My show can be seen on Channel 15, Sundays at 4PM, Wednesdays at 8PM and Thursdays at 10AM and 10PM.

As always if you have any questions call or email me at 413.572.6201 or mayor@cityofwestfield.org.

Respectfully,

Dan Knapik