Over the weekend I had the pleasure to work with about forty representatives from The Nature Conservancy, Lexmark and the PGA of America on a program the PGA sponsored to plant trees at Penfield’s Rothfuss Park. These trees will help offset the impact of printing and paper products generated over the course of the seven day 2013 PGA Championship at Oak Hill Country Club this week. Penfield has had a long-standing relationship with The Nature Conservancy and has collaborated on many projects and programs over the years. The purchase of the Rothfuss property was a joint venture by the Town and the Nature Conservancy in an effort to keep a valuable piece of farm land, part of Penfield’s rich agricultural heritage, as a passive and active park while also adding land to the Thousand Acre Swamp Preserve. I was delighted that The Nature Conservancy selected the Rothfuss Park site to plant 18 oak trees and 15 disease-resistant elm trees, and I want to thank Lexmark and the PGA of America for their positive commitment to the environment. I would also like to recognize our DPW staff for having all the holes prepared to complete the plantings. Over the next several years it will be exciting to see these trees grow and develop, which will add even more beauty to this wonderful park.

2014 budget update…last week I discussed run-away pension costs; this week I would like to update you on medical costs. As I have mentioned in the past, Penfield is part of a twelve-member health care consortium with several towns, villages, small cities and the Rochester Housing Authority. By forming this consortium we were able to better leverage and manage overall costs. For 2014 our group was able to keep the increase to 9%, however, there is more to this story! What we recently learned is that while we were able to keep these costs below double digits, which will not be the norm for many other communities, we were hit with the reality of the impact of the increased fees and taxes to be charged by the federal government to pay for the new Health Care Act…REALLY! On top of the 9% increase we planned for, these additional fees and taxes by the federal government adds 3.5% of costs to our medical premiums…UNBELIEVEABLE! Our department heads and Town Board continue to look for ways to help offset these growing and unfunded costs being pushed down by the state and federal governments. Our commitment remains the same to you our taxpayers: to look for ways internally to cut costs and reduce spending to minimize the impact. We continue to streamline all of our processes, selectively replace employees who have retired, and look for more ways to partner with other communities. As you have the opportunity to see your state and federal representatives, please take a moment and ask them what they are doing to help reduce costs and cut spending. I assume you might have the same experience as I did when you ask this question, which included the response “You can not appreciate the bigger picture that we are working on,” and the famous “Let’s change the subject so I do not have to answer the difficult questions!” We have to keep the pressure on and ask those difficult questions. Government has gotten too big and is spending money on many of the wrong things.

I was recently asked about the Penfield DPW performing work at the MCC campus. For the last 10+ years Penfield has been invited to bid on work at MCC for parking lot construction and maintenance, curbing and drainage. We will spend two to three weeks performing this type of work. This helps to generate additional revenue for projects in our community, which we may not have had the money to do otherwise. We are always sensitive to the amount of time we spend out of the community; however the revenue generated makes this a win/win for Penfield.

I would like you to mark your calendars for Saturday, September 14 for the 10th annual Tastin’ the Blues, to be held at Penfield Amphitheater and Kiwanis Stage from 12 – 4PM. Steve Grills and the Roadmasters will be on the stage, Dundee will be providing a line up of locally brewed beer for sampling, and chili contestants will have hot chili available for judging. I have already started to gather my materials for the award winning chili “The Pride of Penfield.” I hope to see you there!

Until next week - enjoy the wonderful weather ahead, it looks to be an almost perfect week!

Tony
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