



W E S T C H I C A G O  
**CITY BULLETIN**

WINTER 2024



## ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE

Last November marked my 25th year serving the remarkable West Chicago community and several colleagues asked what that benchmark meant to me. Truth be told, I never contemplated I would be celebrating such a milestone at this time in my life. Looking back, I realize how fortunate I've been to pursue my passion as a city manager—a dream sparked by random chance in high school and brought to life in West Chicago.

But to answer that question about the importance of this milestone truly surpasses individual achievements. It's a privilege to work with an amazing staff team, dedicated elected officials and a community that cherishes the place we call home. Together, we have triumphed over challenges, none perhaps larger than removing the last railcar of thorium and being just a few years away from turning that brownfield into a state-of-the-art Community Park. Our collective resilience navigated recessions, a pandemic, and the closure of key economic engines, emerging stronger each time; the staff's and City Council's fiscal responsibility and stewardship over the last few decades are unmatched by our municipal peers.

I was honored and humbled by the unity displayed during the 2011 microburst and proud of the remarkable reduction in crime since 1998. Consider the transformative changes to City Hall, reflecting our commitment to improving work environments. The recent update to our Personnel Manual underscores our values—flexibility, diversity, inclusion, integrity, equity, and empathy. These are just a few of the countless issues that our West Chicago team has conquered, together, over the last 25 years.

Internally, we've evolved too. In 2001, we embarked on a desperately needed cultural transformation, enhancing professionalism, replacement planning, and adding structures to improve fairness and confidence in handling employee issues. While proud of those accomplishments, we recognize the need for ongoing cultural progression.

To be successful, we must change with what is happening outside of our small world and as our employee composition evolves. Key leadership additions in the last two years signal a promising shift with extraordinary staff who are able and eager to assist us in getting our culture to the next level. The feedback received from recent employee surveys mirrors my excitement.

A soon-to-be-formed Employee Wellness and Engagement Committee will allow new ideas to grow from all levels of the organization. Our focus will remain on succession planning and creating a leadership institute, nurturing our current and future managers into successful organizational leaders. In fact, I encourage any employee interested in shaping a leadership development program to share ideas directly with Tia and me. Finally, stay tuned for a quarterly opportunity to speak with Tia and me about organizational and community issues, outside of economic benefits, in a new "Ask the Administrator" Program.

One never knows how long opportunities will last, but I can honestly say that my enjoyment in West Chicago is a testament to the incredible co-workers and elected officials with whom I serve the community every day. I am honored to be part of this team, and that is truly something worth celebrating. Thank you for 25 wonderful years.

Sincerely,  
Michael Guttman, City Administrator



## QUARTERLY QUOTABLES

# Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.

Helen Keller



## EMPLOYEE MILESTONES

Please extend a warm welcome or offer congratulations to the following employees who have achieved a significant milestone with the City this season.

### New Employees

- Michael Frommert; Lateral Hire Police Officer (12/01/2023)
- Sofia Gonzalez; Social Services Coordinator (10/02/2023)

### Retirements

- Rosie Valencia; Social Services Coordinator – 20 Years of Service (12/29/2023)

### Work Anniversaries

- 15 Years of Service*
  - Ron Milam; Maintenance Worker II – Street (12/16/2008)
- 1 Year of Service*
  - Matthew Lukaszek; Lateral Hire Police Officer (11/14/2022)
  - Robert Leonard; Maintenance Worker I – Utilities (10/10/2022)

# Council Adopts FY 2024 Budget



The City Council approved the 2024 Annual Budget on Monday, December 10, with a total budget of roughly \$58.3 million—an approximate 11% increase from the previous year's \$52.6 million budget, due primarily to scheduled capital improvement projects.

While most of the budgeted amounts for each of the City's Funds reflect modest decreases or increases, noteworthy changes are observed in the Motor Fuel Tax Fund, which has seen a significant increase of approximately \$4.5 million to support several upcoming projects, including the installation of a traffic signal at IL-38 and Technology Boulevard and the reconstruction of Harvester Road using Rebuild Illinois (grant) funds.

Aside from these projects, the Budget addresses overall increases in contract and service costs and highlights various key project and initiatives, including the following:

**Downtown Transformation:** The downtown area will undergo a transformation with new art and landscaping enhancements, featuring large-scale interchangeable murals and an update to the City's monument sign at IL-59 and Main Street. Additionally,

several City-owned buildings are expected to be demolished by the end of summer.

**Technology Integration:** The Community Development Department staff aim to explore the feasibility and potential costs of acquiring and implementing a new online permitting software to align with emerging technology trends.

**Improved Communication:** The City Administrator's Office staff will evaluate an employee intranet for distributing Human Resources materials. There are also plans to migrate towards an agenda management software that will transition the City from printed documents to a digital format for its public meetings.

**Long-awaited Grant-Funded Projects:** Finally, Grant Agreements with the State of Illinois have been secured, and work may begin on the painting of the Fremont Street Water Tower and also the final environmental remediation of the City's West Washington Street properties.

City staff are encouraged to visit [westchicago.org/budget](http://westchicago.org/budget) to [access the 2024 Annual Budget](#) and explore upcoming projects while staying informed about the City's plans for the year ahead.



## AFLAC to Offer Cancer Protection Assurance Coverage

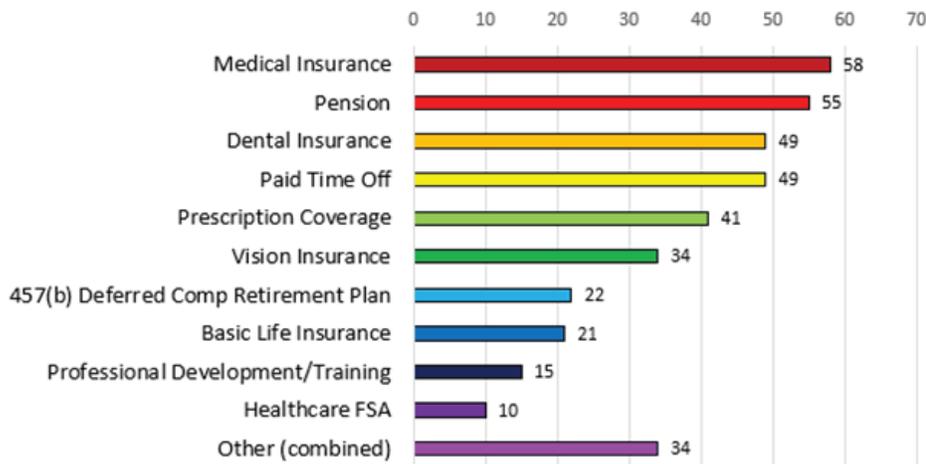
As of January 1, 2024, all employees can enroll in voluntary Cancer Protection Assurance coverage offered through AFLAC.

Through AFLAC, the City already provided Short Term Disability Insurance, which provides income replacement for when you are unable to work, in addition to Accident Advantage, which covers out of pocket medical expenses following an accidental injury.

As stated in the AFLAC Cancer Protection Brochure, "The unfortunate reality is cancer touches almost everyone at some point in their lives, whether it's yourself or a loved one. But each person has a unique story, especially when it comes to cancer treatment. We believe if faced with a cancer diagnosis, you need real solutions that help you face the financial, physical and emotional challenges often experienced by cancer patients and their families – before, during, and after treatment. Health insurance was never intended to cover the cost of things like deductibles, co-pays, lost work time, or even travel. AFLAC Cancer Protection Assurance can help with cancer-associated costs like these."

For more information, visit the employee shared drive for AFLAC plan highlight sheets at: P:\1. HR Documents for City Staff\Benefits\AFLAC. Questions and enrollments can also be directed to the AFLAC representative: Amy Watson Shine at [amy\\_shine@us.aflac.com](mailto:amy_shine@us.aflac.com) or by phone at (708) 648-3588.

# Benefits Survey Results Align with National Trends; Staff Seek More Information About Voluntary Benefits



The top five most important benefits as of this survey were Medical Insurance (95%), Pension (90%), Dental Insurance (80%), Paid Time Off (80%) and Prescription Coverage (67%).

In October 2023, a survey was distributed to employees to gather feedback on the insurance and benefits provided by the City. As part of the initiative, staff members were given an opportunity to share their experiences, highlight concerns, and suggest ideas for improvements.

The results of the survey yielded highlights that align with national public and private sector trends, which included employees rating health-related benefits such as medical (95%) and dental (80%) insurance as being most important to them, with retirement benefits (e.g., employer pension at 90%) following closely behind. Additionally, time off, flexible schedules, and paid leave (80%) continue to be a significant point of emphasis.

Ultimately, based on the results of the survey, the majority of employees expressed appreciation for the City's robust benefits plan.

A notable finding unique to the City, is that approximately 25% of respondents indicated that they were unaware of some City-offered voluntary benefits. This specific finding underscores the need for education about these benefits, a priority the City intends to address in the future.

Regarding desired benefits, respondents highly rated options such as converting a sick day into a health and wellness reimbursement, flex time and remote work, and paid parental and caregiver leave. Notably, vision insurance had a higher-than-average dissatisfaction rate (24%). In response to this and earlier feedback, the City added a stand-alone vision plan to the benefits package made available January 2024.

In conclusion, the survey has provided invaluable feedback and serves as another element that showcases the City's continued dedication towards enhancing the development and well-being of our employees. In conjunction with this survey, the City is initiating the implementation of an Employee Wellness and Engagement Committee, which will utilize results from these types of surveys and general feedback from employees to make recommendations that may contribute to the City's organizational development. Further information about this new Committee is included within this Bulletin.

A summary of the survey results is located on the employee shared drive at: P:\1. HR Documents for City Staff\City Bulletins\2024\Winter.

## Employee Engagement & Wellness Committee

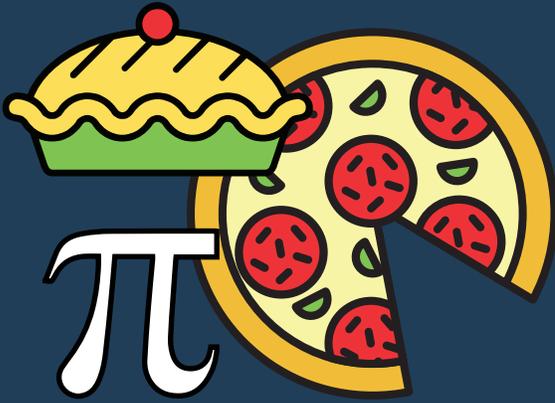
In the new year, the City is creating an Employee Engagement and Wellness Committee. This Committee will be comprised of staff members at all levels of the organization. Members will work together to enhance the City's engagement and wellness initiatives, including events, education, and offering new ideas. Current events which will be managed or improved by this Committee include Pi Day, Holiday Luncheon, training events, and more. This Committee will need members who are committed to initiating positive changes in the City and are willing to do the work to make the changes a reality. If this opportunity sounds good to you, keep an eye out for the recruitment period in the coming months.

## Email Login from Website Now Available for Office 365 Users

Users who have completed the migration to Office 365 can log in by visiting [www.office.com](http://www.office.com) or by using the link provided at the bottom of the City's website. To access their accounts, users should use their Microsoft account ID, which is the same ID used for computer login or when using Finance Plus. The login ID should be followed by the email domain name 'westchicago.org' (i.e., `jdoe1@westchicago.org`).

For employees hired after December 2022, the username should follow the format of the first name, first initial of the last name, and the number one. Employees hired before this date may have a different format. For future prospective employees, the login will be their email address, following the format of the first initial of the first name and their last name.

# 'Pi Day' Returns Thursday, March 14



Please join us on March 14th to once again celebrate the mathematical constant  $\pi$ , the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. To round out this special day, we are hosting a Pi Day luncheon and potluck from 11:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. You can choose from a variety of sweet and savory options at our pie buffet, including apple, chocolate crème, pizza pie, and more.

We hope to see you at one of the following locations: City Hall, Police Station, or Water Plant. Let's come together to celebrate this wonderful mathematical constant and indulge in some delicious pies! For event questions, please contact Assistant City Administrator Tia Messino at [tmessino@westchicago.org](mailto:tmessino@westchicago.org).

## Set the Tone for Positive Change in the New Year

New Year, new you! Planning for the new year is a great way to set the tone for positive changes. Here are some ideas for new habits and goals you might consider:

### **New Habits:**

- 1. Morning Routine:** Start your day with a consistent morning routine that includes activities like meditation, stretching, or journaling.
- 2. Regular Exercise:** Incorporate physical activity into your routine, whether it's going to the gym, taking walks, or practicing yoga.
- 3. Healthy Eating:** Adopt a balanced and nutritious diet by incorporating more fruits, vegetables, and whole foods into your meals.
- 4. Mindfulness Practices:** Practice mindfulness or meditation to reduce stress and improve your overall mental well-being.
- 5. Reading Habit:** Set aside time each week for reading books that interest and inspire you.
- 6. Digital Detox:** Limit screen time and take breaks from social media

to promote mental clarity and reduce information overload.

**7. Gratitude Journal:** Keep a gratitude journal to reflect on positive aspects of your life regularly.

**8. Learn a new skill:** Challenge yourself to acquire a new skill, whether it's learning a language, playing a musical instrument, or taking up a hobby.

### **New Goals:**

- 1. Career Development:** Set specific career goals, such as acquiring new certifications or taking on challenging projects.
- 2. Financial Planning:** Establish financial goals, such as creating a budget, saving for a particular purpose, or investing for the future.
- 3. Travel Plans:** Plan Trips to new destinations or explore local places you've never seen before.
- 4. Personal Growth:** Focus on personal development by setting goals for self-improvement, whether it's building confidence, enhancing communications skills,

or overcoming fears.

**5. Community Involvement:** Get involved in your community through volunteering or participating in local events.

**6. Health and Wellness:** Prioritize your health by setting specific goals related to fitness, nutrition, and mental well-being.

**7. Relationship Building:** Strengthen relationships with family and friends by setting aside dedicated time for meaningful interactions.

**8. Environmental Impact:** Set goals to reduce your environmental footprint by adopting sustainable practices in your daily life like shopping locally, using reusable totes, and turning off lights that are not in use.

Remember, the key to success is to start with small, manageable changes and gradually build on them. Breaking down larger goals into smaller, achievable steps can make the process more attainable and less overwhelming. Good luck with your new year pursuits.

# Be Prepared for the Winter Season Ahead

As winter descends upon Northern Illinois, it's vital to prepare for the challenges brought by snow, ice, and frigid temperatures. Here are some tips to keep you safe and secure during the winter months:

**1. Dress Strategically:** Combat the cold by layering with a moisture-wicking base, insulating mid-layer, and a waterproof outer layer. Invest in quality, slip-resistant footwear, and keep an extra pair of socks and gloves handy. Did you know you can even invest in cold weather accessories like heated hats or vests?

**2. Travel Safety:** Winterize your vehicle by checking tires, maintaining a half-full gas tank, and carrying an emergency kit with essentials like jumper cables, a

blanket, and snacks. Stay informed about weather conditions and adjust travel plans during severe weather.

**3. Safe Outdoor Activities:** Practice safe snow shoveling by warming up, using proper techniques, and taking breaks. Over-exertion when shoveling in cold weather has been linked to an increased risk of heart attack. You should also look out for signs of frostbite and hypothermia during outdoor activities.

**4. Power Outage Preparedness:** Equip yourself with a flashlight, extra batteries, and a portable phone charger. Keep blankets accessible, avoid candles or other fire hazards, and opt for battery-powered lights. Never use fuel-burning devices like generators or

grills indoors or too close to doors and windows as they increase risk of carbon monoxide poisoning for you and your pets. Install carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home, and test them regularly. If you suspect carbon monoxide exposure, leave the area immediately and seek medical attention.

**5. Space Heater Safety:** Keep space heaters three feet away from flammable materials. Turn them off when leaving the room or sleeping. Ensure proper ventilation to prevent carbon monoxide buildup.

Remember, a little preparation goes a long way in ensuring a safe and cozy experience during our chilly winter months. Stay warm, stay safe.

## Frostbite & Hypothermia: Know Your Actions



If someone might have frostbite or hypothermia, **seek medical attention immediately!**



**Get to a warm area**



**Remove wet clothing**



**Warm up with dry layers** of blankets or clothing



Place skin affected by **frostbite in warm water** (NOT hot)



**Frostbite Caution:** Do not use fireplaces or artificial heat sources for warming. Do not rub or put pressure on areas with frostbite.

