

VILLAGE OF GERMANTOWN HILLS

216 Holland Road
Germantown Hills, IL 61548

Spring 2008



Dear Resident of Germantown Hills:

Once each year the Village Board writes a letter to residents and businesses providing newsworthy information we hope will be of interest. We also use the letter to explain some of the Village ordinances that are intended to keep Germantown Hills a great place to live. We would be grateful if you would take a few minutes to read this entire letter carefully.

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New address for Germantown Hills

Since the Village was first incorporated in 1967, our mail has been delivered by the Metamora post office, and we've had to use "Metamora, IL 61548" in our mailing address. Last November, we worked with the Metamora Postmaster to get this changed. We can now use "**Germantown Hills, IL 61548**" as our last address line. This not only lets us be proud of our Village name on our mailing address, it solved several problems that resulted from the address. More information about this change is available on our web site.



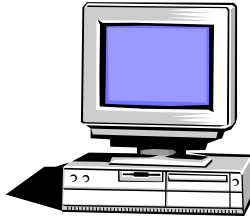
Shop Germantown Hills First! (How Does Shopping in Germantown Hills Help You)?

You have no doubt seen "shop locally" advertising. You may have thought that it was just a nice gesture to support local businesses. But it doesn't just benefit the businesses, it benefits you, too. When you shop locally, a portion of the sales tax you pay goes to your Village. That money is used for street repair and other Village services. (If you shop elsewhere, that tax just goes to another city or county). Unlike most other local governments, our Village does not levy property taxes at the maximum permissible rate. Sales and property taxes from local businesses are a big reason we don't. If we had more sales tax, we could lower residential property taxes further.

We've heard some people say, "I'd shop locally, but we don't have as much selection here as in other places." Think about that statement. If fewer people shop here, fewer businesses locate here. If more people shop here, more businesses will locate here, right? Furthermore, driving to other communities means paying more for gas to get there. Are you really always saving money?

But sometimes you may need to go elsewhere to find something. So what should you do if you'd like to shop locally, but cannot find what you need at one of our local stores? The answer is easy: Just **Shop Germantown Hills First!** Buy all that you can locally, and then buy the rest elsewhere. Our existing businesses will do better, and more businesses, perhaps even a "big box" store, will see that it makes sense to put more stores in Germantown Hills.

Please consider shopping at our local stores **first**, because supporting them may be the easiest thing you can do to help our community thrive. And as you can see, it will help you, too.



Village Internet Website provides Alerts and Keeps You Informed

The Village has a new internet based **Alert and Messaging System**. We are using this to inform citizens of important information such as instructions during heavy snowfalls, public health alerts, and on road construction. The system also allows members of the public to ask questions or post your own announcements on Village topics. The Village will post answers to the questions. Discussions about community issues sometimes takes place between residents.

To obtain maximum benefit from the alerts and announcements, you'll need to go to the system and sign up for an account. Then you choose one of the options to have it e-mail messages to you. As more people sign up, we anticipate this being a primary method of keeping the public informed on Village information, much quicker and more accurate than the news media.

Users of this interactive site speak very highly of its capabilities. You can find more about how it works, how to use it, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on the website itself.

The new interactive site can be reached by searching with a search engine like Google for "**Village of Germantown Hills Google Group**," or typing in <http://groups.google.com/group/GermantownHills>

The Village also has a regular website where you can find contact information, schedules, maps, and minutes of Village Board Meetings. To go to the regular site, search for "**Village of Germantown Hills, IL**," or type in <http://www.germantownhills.com/village>. Both websites are cross linked to each other.

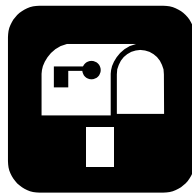
If you are one of the many people who are a intimidated about "computer stuff", send us an e-mail or call the Village Hall, and we'll provide you with detailed instructions on how to get set up.

Sump Pumps/Downspouts Must be Disconnected from Sewer

We know that it is tempting for a homeowner to connect the output from sump pumps or roof downspouts directly into the sanitary sewer system. Unfortunately, this results in huge problems at the sewer plants, because when it rains a very large amount of excess flow enters the system, even from a single downspout or pump. In fact, the water from only 20 connected sump pumps all running at once is enough to exceed the entire plant capacity. This not only increases the cost of plant operation (electricity and chemicals to pump and process the extra water), but during heavy rainfall it has the potential to result in costly damage to the sewer treatment plant, which also drives up sewer rates. It is because of these problems that such hookups are illegal. Those of you who know that you have an illegal hookup should disconnect it immediately. If you are unsure of a possible illegal connection, contact the Village Sewer Plant at 383-4200, and we will help you identify if you have an illegal hookup. We will not impose fines on those who cooperate to help us with this problem. Occasionally our employees will come door-to-door to perform inspections. Please understand and cooperate, as this is an important part of controlling your sewer costs.

Water Company

The Village does not provide your drinking water. Please contact Caterpillar Trail Public Water District at 383-4002.



Mailbox Ordinance

Mailboxes or supports that are placed too close to the roadway pavement, and mailbox supports that do not break away readily when struck, interfere with the Village's snow plowing operations and present a hazard to motorists. The Mailbox Ordinance prohibits the use of brick mailbox enclosures, and the Village has set a dollar limit on the Village's reimbursements if your mailbox is struck by a snowplow. Your cooperation in addressing these safety issues will be appreciated.

Recycling

We are happy to report that the Village has an on site recycling service at the Village Hall. This service is being provided by the Association for the Developmentally Disabled of Woodford County (ADDWC). ADDWC can take paper, cardboard, newspapers, books, aluminum, and plastic. They cannot take glass, styrofoam, gift wrap, motor oil, and other metals (but they do have a handout telling where some of these can be taken directly). Please do not leave items when the bins are full. If this happens we may be forced to close down the recycling area.



Burn Ordinance

Open burning is permitted only of “landscape waste” which means grass or shrubbery cutting, leaves, tree limbs, and other materials accumulated as a result of the care of lawns, but shall **not include freshly cut grass clippings**. There shall be no open burning of tires, furniture, garbage, refuse, or other waste. Burning is permitted only between sunup and sundown, at which time the fire must be completely extinguished. A competent person shall constantly attend to the fire until it is extinguished. Burning shall not be done on Village Streets.

Small bonfires for wiener roasts or other recreational purposes, or for ceremonial purposes, are permitted with some requirements. Please contact the Village Hall for those or if you would like a copy of the Ordinance.

ESDA

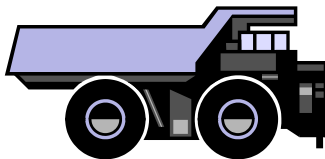
In 2000 the Village of Germantown Hills established an early storm warning system. These two systems are located at the J.R. White Park and the Middle School. **These sirens are outdoor warning devises only**. Persons wishing to receive early notification of severe weather should invest in a NOAA weather radio. These radios are available with an automatic warning alert ranging in cost from \$30.00 to \$80.00. The sirens are tested the first Tuesday of each month at 10:00 a.m.

ESDA still needs volunteers for storm spotting, especially during the daytime hours. Free training is available. Please call the Village hall if you are interested.

Annual Sewer Bill Rate Adjustment

The amount of your sewer bill is revised annually, and is partly determined by your water meter reading taken during the winter. (During winter months, nearly all water ends up in the sewer system. By using a winter reading, customers who water their lawns or fill swimming pools in the summer are not unfairly penalized on their sewer bills). New residents, those on wells and others who did not have a valid winter reading will be charged based on the average usage of all other residences.

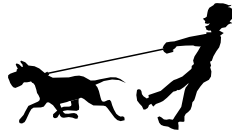
The sewer bills will go out in July with the new rates for the year. Remember, however, that your own sewer bill might go up or down, depending on your particular winter water usage this last year.



Road Construction This Year on Village Streets

Each summer we conduct maintenance of some streets in the Village. We cannot control exactly when this work will start. At the request of some of our residents, we will try to place signs indicating where the work will be done, shortly before it begins.

When there is road construction in your area, please slow way down and observe traffic control signs and barriers. We know that the construction is inconvenient, but some drivers have sped past our workers, putting them in danger. Nobody wants an accident to happen, especially you.



Unleashed Pets are Against the Law

It is illegal within the Village to allow your pets to run free. The Village has an Ordinance prohibiting stray animals and severe cases of barking dogs. Please contact the Woodford County Animal Control Department to impound stray dogs. Please be considerate to other property owners when walking your dog.

Homeowners Insurance Information on Sewer and Sump Pump Backups

Please note that sump pump failures and sewer backups caused by power failures are typically not covered under your standard homeowner's insurance. If you are concerned about this, you should contact your insurance agent to see if you should have special rider coverage for this potential loss.

Grinder Pumps

Certain areas of the Village require some Village residents to be on a grinder pump sewer system. If you have a grinder pump unit, there are several things that you need to know. The system is designed to handle NORMAL sanitary sewage. Please, DO NOT pour oils or greases into the system. Also prohibited are so-called disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, plastic tampon containers, flushable wipes, articles of clothing, rubber goods, gravel, and flushable toilet brushes etc. A resident may purchase an audible alarm that would be connected to the control box. This would provide a noise along with the red light when there is a problem. These alarms are an additional cost to the resident in the amount of \$150.00, which is installed by the Village. Please call the Sewer Plant at 383-4200 if you are interested in having an audible alarm installed or if you have additional questions. If you would like a complete listing of instructions, please contact the Village hall. In an emergency please call the Village hall at 383-2209 and follow the instructions.

New Construction at Your Home or Business

Remember that if you intend to construct any structure on your property, including fences, pools, garages, sheds, installation of a sign, or a roadside underdrain (culvert), you must contact the Village before you begin. We'll assist you in determining how you can plan your construction so that it is consistent with the Zoning Ordinance. Calling first will avoid confusion, and prevent a disastrous situation where your new construction might have to be moved or torn down. Also remember to contact JULIE (Joint Utility Locating Info for Excavators) at 1-800-892-0123, prior to doing any digging. Otherwise you could be held responsible by the utility companies for any damage done to their underground utilities.

Home Occupation Permits

If you wish to conduct a business from your home, you must apply to the Village for a home occupation permit. The process explains how you can legally conduct your business, and avoids complaints by neighbors.

Swimming Pool Fences

The Village Board has an ordinance requiring that swimming pools are fenced and hot tubs covered, to prevent tragic drownings such as those that have occurred in recent years. The ordinance is similar to ones in effect in surrounding communities. All new pools or tubs must abide by the ordinance as soon as they are built. Please contact the Village for a copy of the ordinance if you have a pool or hot tub.



Park Vandalism

Do you enjoy spending your summer in the sun and having a family picnic? The parks in Germantown Hills are a great place to make this happen. Let's not let vandals ruin that experience for you and your family. We need your help! Please notify the village hall (phone or e-mail) or police if you see or know of anyone who has been involved in vandalizing your parks.

Sign Ordinance, Lighting Regulations: Homes and Businesses

Most people in Germantown Hills have indicated that they like the clean, open, country like appearance of our Village. To keep it this way, the Village has adopted a Zoning Ordinance that regulates advertising, identification signs and commercial lighting levels. A permit is required for any sign, in both residential and commercial zones. When you are issued the permit, we'll work with you to insure your sign meets the zoning requirements. The Zoning Ordinance also prohibits the advertising of cars or any other material parked or

displayed on Village roads and road shoulders along Rte. 116. Also, it is your responsibility to remove all signs after your garage sale has concluded.

Don't Ruin Your New Driveway

If you decide to construct a paved driveway all the way to the street, you'll want to be sure that the end of the driveway is at least a little lower than the edge of the street. If your driveway is higher at this point, it will very likely be struck by the Village snowplows in the winter. Not only is this hard on your Village equipment, it will almost certainly damage the end of your new driveway.

Also, while we don't discourage completion of paved driveways all the way to the street, we do want people to understand that their property line usually ends 10-15 feet from the edge of the street, and that this portion of the driveway is really sitting on public property. If the Village needs to do road or ditch maintenance that would damage or destroy this section of your driveway, the Village is not obligated to replace the pavement.

J.R. White Park-Bike/Walk Path

A local developer has contributed money towards the construction of a bike/walk path at J.R.White Park. Additional funding is needed to make this a reality. When completed, it will be a significant improvement to the Park and to the Village of Germantown Hills.

If anyone else is interested in donating funding to help bring it to completion sooner, please send or bring a check to the Village Hall, payable to the Community Fund. Designate that you wish the funds to go toward completion of the bike/walk path at J.R.White Park. Thank you for your help.

Village Meeting Schedules/Hours

The Village Hall is located at 216 Holland Road (next to the fire station). It is open to serve you 5 days per week, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The Village phone number is 383-2209. The Village fax number is 383-4171 and the sewer plant is 383-4200. Regular Village Board Meetings are generally held on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m., at the Village Hall (Note that hours and schedules may change due to summer schedules, vacations, or holidays). Planning Commission Meetings are scheduled for the 3rd Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Village Hall. The Zoning Board of Appeals meets as needed.



Germantown Hills Village President and Board of Trustees

<http://www.germantownhills.com/village/index.html>

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