



THE BEECHER BULLETIN

"Your Village Newsletter"

Fall 2023

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2023 HOLIDAY EVENTS INCLUDE BRINGING BACK OUTDOOR HOME DECORATING CONTEST



This year there will be even more fun holiday events for the whole family! One of this year's events is the return of the Holiday Decorating Contest. The Beecher Chamber of Commerce, in conjunction with the Village and the Township, is sponsoring the holiday decorating contest. Any home or business located in the Beecher School District is eligible to apply.

Ten of the best outdoor holiday display applicants will each be receiving a \$50 prize, a special yard sign to display in front of their home or business, and recognition on the Village's social media platforms.

The application form can be found on Page 5 and will be available on the Village website in November. Applications will be received until noon on Friday, December 1st at the Village Hall. A judging team will view all the displays the first weekend of December, and winners will be announced on Monday, December 4th.

For details on upcoming holiday events, go to Pages 4 & 5

PENFIELD STREET IMPROVEMENT PROJECT STATUS (Final surface coming in the Spring)

If you are into home improvements, you know that a project never goes as planned. This is also true with large construction projects, and Penfield is another example. Despite all of the delays and re-shuffling of the work, the project is still under budget. As of this printing, here is the latest schedule.

Penfield is currently closed from the bridge to Maxwell and from the post office west to Gould Street. The Fire Department will utilize Maxwell Street for all of its calls. Post office customers are now using the new parking lot off Maxwell Street and walking behind the Post Office around to the front door. There will be a two-week period when Maxwell at Penfield will be closed for reconstruction, but the Fire Department will be able to access Woodward. Once the first layer of asphalt is laid, Penfield west of the bridge will then re-open. This is scheduled to occur by Friday, November 3rd.

A special parking area has been provided for the affected Penfield Street businesses on Reed Street by the caboose. Please use this parking area to patronize these businesses. This has been a very difficult and inconvenient year for those that live along and use Penfield Street, but the end result will be a brand-new road that should last for several decades.

The final surface (or finish coat) on the roadway will now most likely be completed in the Spring of 2024. This also includes Gould Street from Hodges south to Indiana Avenue. This will bring to a close the Penfield Street project, which began its engineering phase back in 2013. The total project cost is \$5.3 million, with \$4,240,000 being paid by the USDOT and \$1,060,000 being paid by the Village using motor fuel tax funds.



Village of Beecher

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Marcy Meyer
President

Trustees:

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Benjamin Juzeszyn

Joseph Tieri

Roger Stacey

Joseph Gianotti

Erik Gardner

Janett McCawley
Clerk/Office Mgr

Donna Rooney
Treasurer

Robert O. Barber
Administrator

Terrence Lemming
Chief of Police

Matt Conner
Supt. of Public Works

VILLAGE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

WELCOME TO THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT THAT NEVER SEEMS TO END

Doesn't it seem as though every day when you wake up and think the Penfield Street project is going to be complete, it turns out we're back to square one? I feel like we're living on the set of "Groundhog Day". As with all major projects, Penfield Street has been riddled with setbacks, and they continue. When this newsletter arrives in your home, the largest phase of this project should be almost over. If all goes as planned (and that's a big "if") the street should reopen by November 3rd, but it won't have a final coating of asphalt until Spring. The resurfacing of Gould Street will also take place in the Spring. We have been at the mercy of IDOT, utility company delays, the State, railroad flaggers, and just about anything else you could imagine. Keep your fingers crossed for November 3rd!



Marcy Meyer
Village President

On the upside, there are a few projects we **were** able to complete. Thanks to federal ARPA funds, the pickleball, basketball, and futsal courts are open and very busy. The paths, lighting, and footbridge in Firemen's Park are complete, as well as the new playground equipment. The upgrades to Welton Stedt Park near the junior high are also finished.

It's been an incredibly busy summer and that will continue into the Fall and Winter.

The biggest change in Beecher won't have to do with pavement and park equipment. It will be the retirement of Bob Barber, our Village Administrator of 35 years. Bob was our first Village Administrator. He was hired as a recent college graduate, and created and built onto the position as the town grew. We are currently recruiting our next Administrator, but Bob has spoiled us with his knowledge, history, and tireless dedication to his post and to this Village. For those who are unaware of what a Village Administrator does, I'll touch on just a few of his tasks.

He oversees our staff, and all department heads report to him daily; he is our Zoning Administrator; he writes our grant applications and sends out information to the various Economic Development organizations in the State to bring businesses to town. He creates our budgets and five-year forecasts; oversees our banking and fund transfers; writes agendas and provides technical back-up information for our Village Board meetings. He provides our political outreach to County and State officials, and even utility companies when we need intervention; he attends IML conferences and Lobby Day every year to speak with state representatives and the Governor. He led every construction management meeting with our engineers regarding Penfield as well as every planning meeting for the new police station. He completed hundreds of pounds of paperwork over a 10-year period to complete Penfield Street which is the largest road infrastructure project in our history. He attends local meetings and provides agendas and information to many of our Village commissions and helps administer those meetings. He works at the park before, during and after the 4th of July and helps plan and then attends every Village festival. He is our liaison with Laraway Emergency Communications Center, and in the case of local emergencies, Bob is the first one at the Village Hall coordinating our response to any disaster with our local first responders; opening Village Hall as a warming center, making sure we are staffed and ready for blizzards, major power outages and other emergencies.

I truly don't have room in this newsletter to describe everything he does, and I won't trivialize it by trying to squeeze it into a few paragraphs. From his complete dedication to duty to his inability to go casual to any event, ("No, no, NO, Mayor; you HAVE to wear a suit to this!"), he is one of a kind. I have worked for and with Bob for 17 years and all I can say is that he will truly, truly be missed.



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Sat. 8:00-12:00
Evening by appointment only





VILLAGE ADMINISTRATOR BOB BARBER SET TO RETIRE

Beecher's first and only Administrator leaving after 35-year run

It was May 30, 1988, and Police Chief Mervin Bewsey was given the job by Village President Landis Wehling of driving this 24 year old kid from up north around and showing him the ropes on his first day on the job. The Village Board room in the rear of the police station at 724 Penfield doubled as Mr. Barber's first office. The population was 2,023 and there was only farmland north of Church Road. There were no computers, no cell phones, and no social media. There was a local newspaper, a bulletin board in the post office and the daily get-togethers at Margie's Café up the street from the Village Hall where all of the local news was relayed. Everybody knew each other. The town would shut down on Thursday afternoons and everything was open for business on Saturday morning. The Village had rotary phones and a money sack for deposits which was tracked by the Clerk using a green bar spreadsheet and a pencil. "Working in that environment was much different than it is today," stated Barber. "I am not saying it was any better or worse, just very different. I came from a more urban environment, so I had to adapt really fast."

Then came Hunters Chase and Prairie Crossings Subdivisions, Doc's Pharmacy (now CVS,) and the relocation of First Community Bank and Knuth's Country Market (now Walt's) to the north end of town. A few years later came first National Bank of Grant Park (now Midland), Huey's Phillips 66 (now Circle K), Prairie Crossings South, Hunter's Chase East and West, Nantucket Cove, and the Preserves at Cardinal Creek. "Before we knew it we doubled in size, and there were legitimate concerns that we were growing too fast," Barber said. Then, in 2007, the Great Recession hit Beecher. Housing starts plummeted to just one per year for two years. Many homes became vacant. The community and the Village government struggled to survive. "Those were some lean years. I remember having emergency Board meetings to cut the budget in the middle of the fiscal year because cashflow was not keeping up. It was an awful time and it affected the morale of our staff. We did survive and made a full recovery. We are in great shape now. Some towns never recovered from that recession," Barber said.

There have been many other challenges over the years. The wastewater treatment plant is the largest capital asset on the books, and is expensive to operate. "We are one of the few municipalities left in our area that still owns our own plant," stated Barber. "The Board never wanted to relinquish that plant to another party and lose control of the rates residents pay. Since I have been here, we have spent close to \$16 million to keep the plant in regulatory compliance. But sewage is not sexy so few people even know about it. You flush the toilet and it is goes away. I have had to worry about it every day for 35 years."

Another big problem is aging watermain. "Some mains we replaced were over 125 years old. Pipes will not last forever and you have to replace them, but it is not cheap. Somehow we found a way to do this over time but we still have a way to go," stated Barber.

Barber has lived in the Village since he started. He and his wife Donna have two children: Steven and his wife Jenna, who also live in town, and Michael and his wife Shelby who live in Louisville, Kentucky.

Greatest accomplishments? "I have been here way too long to point to any one thing, but I am proud of our intergovernmental cooperation and the concept of joining together to save money. We all serve the same taxpayer, so it makes sense to solve problems between local taxing bodies and also on a regional level. The "Iron Ring" communities banding together around the proposed South Suburban Airport was pivotal in protecting our interests, and the joint fuel system we share with the Township, School and Fire Districts has saved taxpayers many thousands since its inception. The Village donated land to the Township and School District for their joint facility in 2000, and we jointly share a parking lot owned by the Fire District at Firemen's Park. The School District gave us land for a retention pond on the west side of town, and we provided land to the Fire District for their training facility. The Village has also been able to obtain over \$15 million in grants since I have been here, and we have been able to borrow over \$13 million at ridiculously low interest rates below 2%. The Village also reached a AA+ bond rating in 2013 as we limped out of the recession. The Village is now in the best financial shape since I have been here. I am proud of that."

Any regrets? "Sure. We never had enough money to resurface roads. This has been a struggle for us. Some of these roads are over 50 years old. Every time we come up with a plan some other crisis pops up and sucks our funding. I hope the next Administrator is more successful in this regard."

What about your future? "I would rather talk about the Village than myself, but I do plan on staying in Beecher and getting in all those golf rounds I have missed over the years. We also have our first grandchild on the way. I might even watch some old sitcoms I have never seen due to all those night meetings. Believe it or not, I have never watched a complete episode of 'Friends'. I guess there is some WE TV in my future."

DON'T MISS BEECHER'S 3RD ANNUAL HOLIDAY CELEBRATION SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26TH



We're excited to announce the 3rd Annual Village of Beecher Holiday Celebration and Christmas Tree Lighting to be held at Firemen's Park!

The Village, Township, Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, 4th of July Commission, and several local churches are planning a full day of festivities on Sunday, November 26th for all Beecher residents to enjoy.

A light parade will kick off at 5 p.m., followed by the official tree lighting. Santa will then make a personal appearance and the kids can enjoy his workshop activities.

The Beecher 4th of July Commission will be providing free food as a thank you to the residents for their support, and there will also be free cookies, hot chocolate and goodie bags for the kids provided by the churches. Washington Township is sponsoring a toy collection drive with the drop off being at the bingo stand in Firemen's Park.

TENTATIVE HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

- 1:00 p.m.** ★ Holiday movie sponsored by Washington Township at the Community Hall
- 1-3:30 p.m.** ★ Pop-up Christmas Market sponsored by Peace Lutheran Church
- 4:30 p.m.** ★ Line up for holiday light parade - begins in gravel lot of grain elevator on Gould St. (Advance registration for the parade will be accepted at the Village Hall)
- 5:00 p.m.** ★ Parade begins at grain elevator and ends in Firemen's Park (route will be available in the coming weeks)
- 5:15 p.m.** ★ Santa arrives in Firemen's Park. Food Stand and Santa's Workshop opens
- 5:20 p.m.** ★ Tree lighting ceremony
- 5:30 p.m.** ★ Santa and his workshop will be in the north pavilion

The event will run until approximately 7:30 p.m. We hope to see you there!

Beecher
Chamber
of
Commerce

5th Annual
Lighting Up
Dixie Hwy.



Decorate a Tree In Memory or Honor of your loved ones. Decorating Contest with \$75, \$50, & \$25 Cash Prizes
Go to www.BeecherChamber.org for all the info.

BEECHER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LIGHTING UP DIXIE HIGHWAY

The Beecher Chamber of Commerce will be having their annual "Lighting Up Dixie Highway" again this year. Anyone can decorate a tree placed along Dixie Highway to honor a loved one and the top three decorated trees will be awarded cash prizes. (Tree purchase required to be eligible for decorating contest.)

Trees must be paid for on or before 11/10/23, decorated before dark on 11/26/23, and decorations removed by 1/8/24.

For more information visit Beecherchamber.org

BEECHER HOLIDAY LIGHTS DECORATING CONTEST

**LET'S LIGHT UP BEECHER &
CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAY SEASON!**

- * Any home, business or organization located in the Beecher School District is eligible to apply.
- * Ten of the best decorated outdoor holiday display applicants will be awarded a prize of \$50, a sign to display in front of their home or business, and recognition on the Village's social media platforms. Award winners will not be ranked.
- * A judging team will visit all applicant's homes or businesses after 5pm on either Saturday, December 2nd or Sunday, December 3rd. Winners will be announced Monday, December 4th.
- * If you have any questions, please call the Village Hall at 708-946-2261.

Address of Display: _____

Homeowner's Name: _____
(award checks will be made out to this name)

Homeowner's Phone # _____

Applicant's Name & Phone# _____

This is not required to apply for the contest, but is there a story behind your display, a type of theme that you are trying to convey, or any side notes of interest?

Submit Application To:
Beecher Decorating Contest
625 Dixie Highway / P.O. Box 1154
Beecher, IL 60401

The form may also be faxed or emailed
Fax to 708-946-3764 or Email to clerk@villageofbeecher.org

FORM MUST BE RECEIVED AT VILLAGE HALL BY FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1st AT NOON



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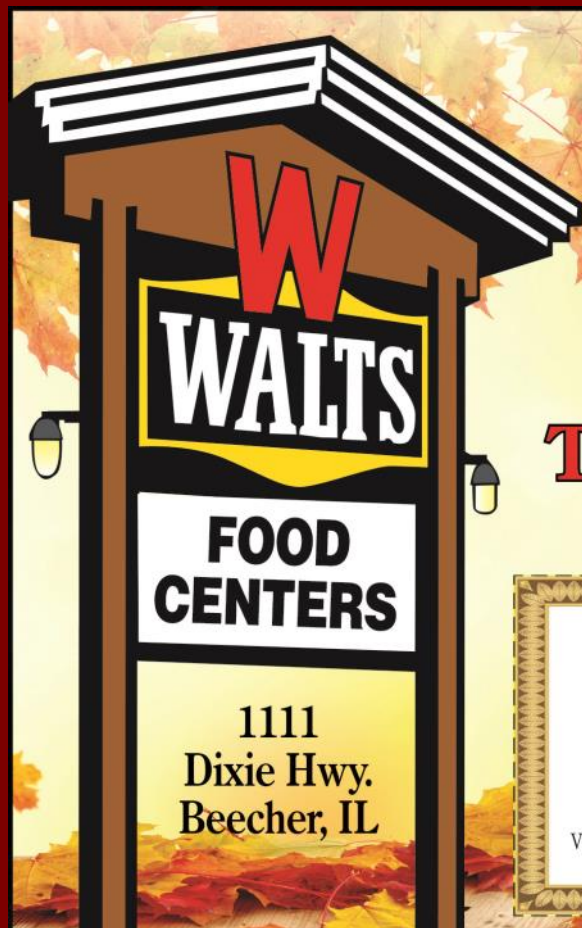
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Members of the Village Board and School Board were present at the ribbon cutting for the new pickleball courts

VILLAGE USES COVID 19 FUNDING TO MAKE PARK IMPROVEMENTS

***\$600,000 in ARPA funds dedicated to Parks,
Capital Improvements & Watermain Replacement***

Since last Spring, there have been several improvements made to the Village's parks thanks to COVID 19 funding provided by the federal government for lost revenue. Since the Village was able to cut its operating expenses to cover the lost revenue from the pandemic, the decision was made to take this one time grant to improve parks and recreation in the community with the remaining funds be placed into the Watermain Replacement Account. Here are the projects which were completed:

Re-purpose tennis courts at the high school for pickleball, basketball and futsal	\$105,000
New footbridge for Firemen's Park	\$ 21,500
New lighting around pathways in Firemen's Park	\$ 73,000
Tear out two ballfields in Welton Stedt Park and replace with soccer field	\$104,000
Replace HVAC in food stand in Firemen's Park	\$ 27,500
Firemen's Park playground expansion	\$ 25,000
New park benches, tables, refuse containers, installed on concrete pads in Firemen's Park	\$ 28,000
New paved paths in Firemen's Park	\$ 16,000
Replace electrical panels in Firemen's Park	\$ 8,400
Repair playgrounds in all Village parks	\$ 15,000
TOTAL PARKS AND RECREATION IMPROVEMENTS:	\$423,400

An additional \$80,000 was provided by Fieldgate, LLC to improve Welton Stedt Park so the remaining \$256,600 will be used for watermain replacement, more specifically to replace the old mains that cross and parallel Dixie Highway.



Welton Stedt Park (by Jr. High)



Pickleball Courts by High School

**VILLAGE RECEIVES \$500,000 GRANT FROM
WILL COUNTY TO REPLACE WATERMAINS**
(money is earmarked to replace mains along and across Dixie Highway)

The Village's water system operates in two zones; one east and one west of Dixie Highway. This is due to the lack of watermain cross connections between each side of the highway. There is also several sections of very old unreliable main that parallel the west side of Dixie Highway that can be abandoned if more crossovers are provided. The Village has had this project designed and permitted but the \$1.2 million price tag has kept the project on the shelf.

In the Summer of 2023, the Village applied for and received a \$500,000 grant from the Will County ARPA Infrastructure Grant Program to help complete this project. An additional \$256,000 in Village ARPA funds has also been dedicated. The remaining \$444,000 will be coming from the \$2/1,000 gallon rate being applied to customers of the Village water system.

Completion of this project will improve water quality and reliability of the water service and equalize water pressure and flows throughout the system. "In terms of water quality and pressure, everyone in town will benefit," stated Matt Conner, Public Works Superintendent.



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VILLAGE BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The following actions were taken by the Beecher Village Board since Spring of 2023:

- ✓ Appointed Kelly Phipps, Rachel Espinoza and Phil Espinoza to the Beecher Youth Commission.
- ✓ Approved one year contract pricing for the local intergovernmental fuel system of \$3.12 per gallon for unleaded and \$3.71 for diesel. These prices run to March of 2024.
- ✓ Received a grant of \$26,500 from Will County to install a new HVAC system in the food stand at Firemen's Park.
- ✓ Entered into an intergovernmental agreement with the school district to re-purpose the tennis courts at the high school for pickleball, futsal and basketball.
- ✓ Approved a proposal from Irwin Construction to rehabilitate the footbridge linking Firemen's Park to the school district properties.
- ✓ Extended the moratorium on all impact and tap-in fees for new home construction until December 30, 2024. The permit fee for a new home is \$1,500 in 2023 and \$1,750 in 2024.
- ✓ Waived all building permit fees and first year license fee for any new business locating in the Historic Downtown Business District through December 31, 2024.
- ✓ Accepted a donation of a vacant commercial lot valued at \$112,000 located at 419 S. Dixie Highway.
- ✓ Approved a military flag display on Dixie Highway street poles and allocated \$10,000 for this project with inventory lasting several years. This display will be replacing the hanging flower baskets which dried out too quickly in hot, dry summer conditions.
- ✓ Approved a fire inspection program for Village businesses taking over those responsibilities from the Fire District. Inspection reports and corrective actions taken will be provided to the district.
- ✓ Adopted a new personnel manual for Village employees.
- ✓ Approved a final plat of subdivision and a TIF incentive agreement with Union Electronics for the construction of a 100,000 square foot distribution center on Church Road west of Dutch American Way.
- ✓ Recognized Terry Lemming for being awarded "Police Chief of the Year" in the State of Illinois by the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police.
- ✓ Adopted an asset Management Plan for the Village to be updated every three years.

Continued on next page

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Board Meeting Highlights Continued

- ✓ Authorized the purchase of a 50G John Deere mini-excavator for \$90,000 and authorized the sale of a smaller 35G mini-excavator for \$47,000.
- ✓ Supported a civility pledge for the appropriate behavior of Board members.
- ✓ Approved a policy on the use of incentives for the Illiana Crossroads Business Park.
- ✓ Approved a contract with Teska Associates to re-write the Village's zoning ordinance. This project will take about 18 months.
- ✓ Approved an agreement with Will County for the reimbursement of Village sidewalks replaced along Indiana Avenue for ADA compliance. The Village will repay the County \$65,000 over two years.
- ✓ Approved a proposal from Iroquois Paving to include the resurfacing of the 600 block of Gould Street in the Penfield Street rehab project in the amount of \$170,000. This will allow for the paving of all of Gould from Hodges to Indiana.
- ✓ Approved a proposal from Iroquois Paving in the amount of \$17,500 to install approximately 400 feet of storm sewer on Birch north of Penfield to address an ongoing issue in that neighborhood.
- ✓ Amended the liquor code to reduce the number of available licenses so that there are no open licenses available.
- ✓ Approved a \$125,000 resurfacing program which included Orchard west of Dixie, Meadow and Country Lanes.
- ✓ Learned that the Police Department received a grant of \$4,000 for solar-powered speed control signs, \$50,000 for the purchase of new radios, and \$22,000 for officer retention pay.
- ✓ Authorized a plat of vacation for vacating a portion of Country Lane between Catalpa and Trim Creek.

The Beecher Village Board meets on the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Beecher Village Hall, 625 Dixie Highway. Residents are invited and encouraged to attend.

Video recordings of the meetings are available to be viewed on the [Village's YouTube Channel](#) and are shared on the Village of Beecher Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/beecher.il.60401/>. A link to our YouTube Channel may also be found on the Village website.



Protect Water Quality in Your Own Yard this Fall!

- ◆ Gardens need bedcovers. When cleaning out vegetable and flower gardens, don't leave the soil bare for the winter. Use chopped leaves as mulch or plant a "green mulch" to add nutrients and organic matter to the soil.
- ◆ Plant! Early autumn is the best time to transplant shrubs and other perennials and to reseed lawns. Choose grass seed mixes that match your site. Consider adding a little clover seed for a free source of nitrogen fixation. Early autumn is the best time for a single dose of fertilizer for good grass root growth and a healthy lawn next spring. Slow-release or organic fertilizers stay where plants can use them and out of the local waters and wells. Keep watering all new plantings until the ground is frozen to give the roots plenty of opportunity to grow.
- ◆ Save the leaves. Leaves have lots of landscaping uses. Make a compost pile, chop them and mulch the landscaping and garden beds, or create new beds under the trees from which they fell. If your property is just too small and the town has community composting, use it, but go back for your leaf mulch next spring.

To learn more or report possible illegal discharges to the storm drain system, call the Village of Beecher at 708-946-2261.

(Source: Clean Water Fact Sheet, produced by NEMO and Sea Grant Connecticut)



CURBSIDE LEAF COLLECTION

The cooler weather has arrived and leaf raking season is here again! Leaves raked in rows along the curbside are picked up by a large vacuum machine used by Public Works crews until the end of November (depending on the weather).

Residents should place leaves in a pile or row in the parkway, between the sidewalk and curb as near to the street as possible. Leaves should not be placed in the streets because it will clog storm drains when it rains, potentially causing flooding. In areas without curbs, leaves should be placed in long rows on the grass or parkway at the edge of the street. Do not mix leaves with branches or grass clippings. These things will damage the leaf machine.

BE AWARE OF SNOW PARKING REGULATIONS DURING WINTER WEATHER

Even though many of us don't want to think about that white stuff, with winter approaching, the Village wants to remind residents that "It shall be unlawful to park any vehicle on any public street in the Village at any time within a twenty-four (24) hour period following a snowfall of two inches (2") or more. Such prohibited parking on any public street shall include the paved portion of any roadway or thoroughfare and also the paved portion of any Village-owned right of way adjacent to such roadway in a business district." This does not include parkways maintained by residents.



It is also illegal to deposit snow onto public streets. When clearing your driveway, direct the snow into the yard and not the street. Remember, the snow will end up back in your driveway anyway when the plow comes back by! The Police Department may issue tickets to those that deposit their snow onto the street.

DOG TAGS GO ON SALE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1ST



Dog tags go on sale Friday, December 1st. The price is \$10 per dog and the deadline for purchase is March 15, 2024. After the March 15th deadline, the price of dog tags increases. Tags may be purchased at the Village Hall or online by clicking on the "ePay" option on the Village website. The dog's name, breed, color and date of last rabies vaccination will be required to purchase the tag. If you pay online, the tags will be mailed to you.

Dog tag fees are used to pay for the services provided by the Beecher Veterinary Clinic for picking up, feeding and boarding stray animals and lost pets.



HALLOWEEN

Trick-or-Treat hours

4-7 p.m.

Monday, October 31st

Have a Safe and Happy Halloween!

(Rain or Shine)



Presented by the Beecher Lions Club



HALLOWEEN IN THE PARK



Join us on Halloween after "Trick or Treat" for our annual FREE HOT DOG roast (rain or shine), fun and games (weather permitting). Activities start at 6:30 pm at Firemen's Park in Beecher.





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Village of Beecher

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946-2261

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Web Site: www.villageofbeecher.org
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Newsletter Editor: Janett McCawley, Village Clerk



BLOOD DRIVE & WELLNESS EVENT

Saturday, October 28th

8 am - 2 pm / Blood Drive

9 am - noon / Lions Hearing & Retinal Screening Bus

9 am - 2 pm / Healthcare & Service Providers Fair

Beecher Fire Station / 711 Penfield

Sponsored by:

Washington Township, Beecher Lions Club & Beecher Fire District

HALLOWEEN TRICK-OR-TREAT HOURS

Tuesday, October 31st 4 - 7 pm

ANNUAL HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

Lighted Parade / Tree Lighting / Santa / Santa's Workshop

House Decorating Contest

Sunday, November 26th (rain or shine)

2 - 7 pm (see page 4 for details)

Firemen's Park / 675 Penfield