

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST  
VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MINUTES  
January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

A regular meeting of the Village of River Forest Board of Trustees was held on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room of Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue – River Forest, IL.

**1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: President Adduci, Trustees Brennan, Bachner, Gillis, Keskitalo, Vazquez, O’Connell, and Village Clerk Castellano

Absent: None

Also Present: Village Attorney Lance Malina, Village Administrator Matt Walsh, Assistant Village Administrator Jessica Spencer, Fire Chief Tom Gaertner, Deputy Fire Chief Dave Bochenek, Director of Public Works and Engineering Jack Bielak, Deputy Police Chief Michael Swierczynski, Finance Director Rosemary McAdams, HR Manager Trish Ivansek, Assistant to the Director of Public Works Seth Jansen, Assistant Finance Director KeKe Boyer, and Deputy Clerk Luke Masella

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

President Adduci led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3.SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

- a. Presentation of Proclamation to Honor Fenwick High School State Champion Football Team

President Adduci read a statement recognizing Fenwick high school’s recent championship title.

The team’s coach, Matthew Battaglia, along with players, offered brief remarks

about the championship team and their relationship with the village.

Trustee O'Connell noted that he is an alumnus of Fenwick and congratulated the coach and players on their win.

**4. CONDUCT PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE PROPOSED ISSUANCE BY THE VILLAGE OF NOT TO EXCEED \$600,000 GENERAL OBLIGATION LIMITED TAX BONDS TO FINANCE CERTAIN CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS WITHIN THE VILLAGE**

The Village Administrator, Matt Walsh, read into the record the following statement.

This hearing will come to order. Let the record reflect that this is a public hearing being held pursuant to the requirements of Sections 10 and 20 of the Bond Issue Notification Act of the State of Illinois, as amended ("BINA"). Notice of this hearing was published on December 29, 2025, in the Chicago Tribune, a newspaper of general circulation in the Village. This is a hearing regarding a plan to issue not to exceed \$600,000 in aggregate principal amount of the Village's Bonds. The proceeds of the Bonds will be used to pay for (i) public infrastructure projects within the Village and (ii) certain costs of issuance of the Bonds.

The Bonds will be issued by the Village in accordance with the provisions of Section 15 of the Local Government Debt Reform Act of the State of Illinois, as amended, and shall constitute a general obligation of the Village, payable from non referendum bond proceeds in accordance with provisions of Section 8 5 16 of the Municipal Code, which will not exceed one half of one percent of the assessed value of all taxable property located within the Village.

This public hearing is required by Sections 10 and 20 of BINA. At the time and place set for the public hearing, residents, taxpayers, and other interested persons will be given the opportunity to express their views for or against the proposed plan of financing, the issuance of the Bonds and the purpose of the issuance of the Bonds.

There were no public comments, written or oral.

Administrator Walsh closed the Public Hearing and noted that at the next Village Board meeting, the Village Board will formally vote on the approval of the bonds.

## **5. CITIZEN COMMENTS**

Mark Hosty provided public comment, beginning by congratulating Fenwick on its recent win and thanking the Village for the reminder regarding the upcoming leaf pickup. He suggested that Public Works prioritize areas near the schools early in the process so leaves can be collected before teachers and staff park in those locations. He then addressed the Ethics Commission complaint, stating that although some have characterized it as an attack on the character of the Development Review Board members, he does not agree. He explained that his concerns focus on the process and on avoiding situations in the future where commissioners are placed in a position of having to decide whether to recuse themselves and face potential questions about their integrity.

Margie Cekander provided public comment regarding the Ethics Commission complaint listed on the agenda. She made several comments on the matter, including the following. She expressed concerns about Commission procedures and certain findings, as well as the guidance given by the Village, the Village Attorney, and the Village President allowing Mr. Yanaki to present on behalf of the River Forest Tennis Club before the Development Review Board. She also raised questions about how commissioners acknowledge the Village's Ethics Ordinance and highlighted remarks made by Ethics Commission members at their most recent meeting. Ms. Cekander concluded by requesting that the Village retain an independent expert to assist with revising the Ethics Ordinance to ensure it is properly constructed.

Paul Harding made public comments regarding the Ethics Complaint he filed with the Ethics Commission. He thanked the Village for its work over the years, noting that he generally feels the local government has performed well and that this is his first major issue with the Village. He then outlined his complaint and raised numerous questions about the Village's handling of the Ethics Commission, the Ethics Ordinance, and ethics in general within the Village.

## **6. ELECTED OFFICIAL COMMENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Trustee Bachner wished everyone a happy New Year and offered a land

acknowledgement.

Trustee Gillis wished everyone a happy New Year and said she looks forward to working with everyone in the Village in 2026.

Trustee Vazquez wished everyone a happy New Year.

Trustee Brennan thanked the Public Works Department for the additional leaf pickup and asked whether the January 12 deadline was final, including for residents on the north side of town who had not yet been serviced.

Administrator Walsh encouraged residents on the north side of town to place their leaves out if they had not already done so.

Trustee Brennan again thanked the Village for the cleanup efforts.

Trustee Keskitalo wished everyone a happy New Year and thanked Village staff and residents for their work within the Village. She highlighted a recent River Forest resident who helped save a life at a Chicago Bears game. She also noted that January is Poverty Awareness Month and highlighted a River Forest Township program that provides youth hygiene products.

Trustee O'Connell congratulated Fenwick on its recent championship and thanked the Fire Department for its response to a fire near his home.

President Adduci wished everyone a happy New Year and thanked the Public Works Department for its pristine leaf cleanup throughout the Village.

## **7. CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. Village Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- b. Village Board of Trustees Executive Session Meeting Minutes – December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- c. Administration Department Report
- d. Monthly Department Reports
- e. Account Payable – December 2025 – \$2,046,253.44
- f. Authorization to Donate Lost, Mislaid, and Abandoned Property – Bicycles – Ordinance

**MOTION** by Trustee O’Connell to approve consent agenda items A through F. Seconded by Trustee Keskitalo.

**Roll call:**

Ayes: Trustee Vazquez, Gillis, O’Connell, Bachner, Brennan, and Keskitalo

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

**8. CONSENT ITEMS FOR SPEARATE CONSIDERATION**

None.

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS OF BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES**

- a. Ethics Commission: Review and Acceptance of Ethics Commission Recommendation to Dismiss Complaint Against Development Review Board Members Fishman, Lucchesi, McCole, and Yanaki

**MOTION** by Trustee Bachner to accept the Ethics Commission findings and recommendation to dismiss the complaint against Development Review Board members Fishman, McCole, and Lucchesi, and to further accept the Commission’s determination that while Mr. Yanaki’s presentation before the Development Review Board was inconsistent with the Ethics Ordinance, the complaint against Mr. Yanaki was not sustained. Seconded by Trustee Keskitalo.

Trustee Brennan asked if the Village would reevaluate the Ethics Ordinance as requested by the Commission in their recommendation.

President Adduci recommended that the Board move forward with accepting the recommendation that evening, with the understanding that the Ethics Ordinance would be revisited at a later date following a thorough review by the Administration and the Village Attorney. She emphasized that this marks the third time the ordinance has undergone review, underscoring the importance of ensuring it is done correctly. She also noted that the Village is a close-knit

community, and that careful consideration is necessary when drafting the ordinance, given that many individuals who serve on boards or commissions are also engaged in other aspects of community life.

Trustee Keskitalo noted that the membership of many members on a single Village board or commission should also be reviewed, as is currently the case with the Development Review Board.

Trustee Brennan noted that the Ethics Commission should be the place for this additional review to occur.

President Adduci noted that since this would be the third try of the rewrite, that she thinks it should be the Village Board.

Trustee Brenan noted that the Ethics Commission has reviewed the matter twice but stated that she does not believe the Commission was entirely responsible for the recent events surrounding it. She indicated that she would support allowing the Ethics Commission to first add its recommendation, after which the Village Board would conduct a final review, consistent with the typical process for board and commission recommendations to the Village Board.

President Adduci noted that the Commission will be involved in the process.

Trustee O'Connell stated that he believes it should be a collaborative process and that all parties need to be involved to ensure it is done correctly.

President Adduci agreed.

Trustee Brennan asked what the process would look like and when it is expected to begin.

Village Attorney Malina provided a legal explanation of why the current situation regarding membership and potential conflicts of interest is particularly complex to review.

Member Keskitalo asked whether simply being a member creates a duty of loyalty to the organization.

Village Attorney Malina responded no, outlining the legal reasoning behind his

answer. He further clarified how different types of membership can affect this legal issue.

Trustee Keskitalo cautioned that this issue could affect someone's 501(c) status and urged the administration to take it into consideration.

Trustee Bachner asked how a potential application would proceed if a majority of a quorum of a Village Board or Commission recused themselves.

Village Attorney Malina addressed additional questions from the Village Board, outlining how the application would proceed in the scenario and emphasizing that no boards or commissions exist between the Village Board and the Development Review Board. He explained why the application was reviewed by the Development Review Board rather than other Village boards or commissions. Attorney Malina also commented on Mr. Yanaki's role as a presenter on behalf of the River Forest Tennis Club, noting that his legal position in that capacity is somewhat unclear.

Trustee Keskitalo inquired whether Mr. Yanaki had been instructed to refrain from presenting before the November 15 meeting.

Administrator Walsh confirmed that Mr. Yanaki had not received any such instruction.

Trustee Brennan then asked how the Village should address the language in the current Ethics Ordinance, which advises covered individuals to avoid even the appearance of impropriety and to act in accordance with the spirit of the law.

Attorney Malina offered an explanation in response to Trustee Brennan's question.

President Adduci acknowledged the complexity of the questions and the responses provided by Attorney Malina and Board members, and reiterated her position that the Village Board, the Ethics Commission, the Administration, and legal counsel must work together to resolve the matter appropriately.

Trustee Brennan requested clarification on the next steps.

President Adduci then outlined the process for the re-review of the Ethics

Ordinance.

Trustee Keskitalo reaffirmed her support for the proposed rewrite and emphasized that the Village should take all possible steps to be proactive in addressing complaints involving volunteers on Boards and Commissions.

President Adduci agreed.

**Roll call:**

Ayes: Trustee Vazquez, Gillis, O'Connell, Bachner, Brennan, and Keskitalo

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes

Trustees Gillis and Keskitalo and President Adduci thanked Development Review Board members Fishman, McCole, Yanaki, and Lucchesi for their service.

**10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

**11. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Presentation of Draft Capital Improvement Program FY27 – FY31 – No Action

Village Administrator Walsh presented the draft Capital Improvement Plan and answered questions from the Board.

Trustee Bachner asked how and where the Village insurance costs come from.

Village Administrator Walsh noted that the Village is a member of IRMA, with membership/insurance costs included in the general budget. He explained that any vehicle or property damage costs are typically reimbursed by IRMA.

Fire Chief Tom Gaertner introduced a proposed new Fire Department vehicle and answered questions from the Board about it.

Trustee Bachner asked for clarification on when the proposed vehicle would be deployed.

Chief Gaertner explained that it would be used in situations where a full fire truck is not necessary.

Trustee Brennan asked when the vehicle will be delivered.

Chief Gaertner stated Fiscal Year 2027.

Administrator Walsh noted that selling some of the Village's existing fire vehicles will help offset the cost of the proposed purchase.

Trustee O'Connell asked for clarification on the model year of the truck.

Chief Gaertner explained how the vehicle is acquired and built.

Trustee Gillis inquired whether these vehicles will be electric.

Administrator Walsh noted that electric options are not feasible for many of these vehicles due to torque and heavy-duty requirements.

Trustee Bachner asked for clarification on the vehicle purchasing schedule in the document.

Administrator Walsh provided an explanation of the vehicle purchase dates.

Village Clerk Castellano asked how the proposed wing plow would be used.

Administrator Walsh and Director Bielak explained how the wing plow would operate.

Trustee Keskitalo asked if any additional cameras would be purchased.

Administrator Walsh noted that the camera purchases are for maintenance and repair of existing cameras.

President Adduci asked staff to research whether there is any history of the

Village painting or otherwise maintaining the viaducts for aesthetic purposes.

Trustee Bachner asked why some projects are listed contingent.

Administrator Walsh explained that these projects depend on grant funding and are not among the most urgent.

President Adduci asked for a breakdown of all proposed project categories, which Administrator Walsh then provided.

Trustee Brennan noted a scrivener's error on the slides.

Trustee Bachner requested an update on current traffic control work in the Village. Administrator Walsh reported on the status of the projects, noting ongoing discussions with IDOT regarding portions of the work.

Trustee Bachner and staff discussed the option of maintaining the existing water reservoir as well as the potential cost of constructing a new one.

Trustee Keskitalo asked if the proposed Village watermain replacement on Franklin is lead and encouraged staff to give residents advanced notice surrounding the project.

Administrator Walsh responded no, and Director Bielak explained how lead service lines could affect the installation.

Trustee O'Connell asked where the Village is with survey responses for the Lead Service Line program.

Director Bielak stated around 700 responses.

Trustee Bachner requested an update on the Village's basement protection program and the sewer lateral repair program.

Director Bielak provided updates on both programs.

Trustee Bachner suggested that the Village promote these programs to ensure residents are aware of them.

Administrator Walsh confirmed that would be possible.

President Adduci recommended that staff consider elevating some of the contingent projects to a higher priority, given the frequency of resident feedback on traffic and safety issues.

Trustee Keskitalo expressed concern about delays to the Police firing range project and, citing officer lead exposure, urged the Village to expedite the project.

Administrator Walsh explained that mechanical issues have caused the delays but confirmed the Village will continue to advance the project.

## **12. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**MOTION** by Trustee Vazquez to enter into Executive Session pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2)&(6) to discuss Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees and to discuss the setting of a price for the sale or lease of property owned by the public body. The Village Board will adjourn after executive session and will not return to open session. Seconded by Trustee Gillis.

**Roll call:**

Ayes: Trustee Vazquez, Gillis, O'Connell, Bachner, Brennan, and Keskitalo

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes and the Village Board entered executive session at 8:42pm.

## **13. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** to adjourn by Trustee O'Connell, Seconded by Trustee Bachner.

**Roll call:**

Ayes: Trustee Vazquez, Gillis, O'Connell, Bachner, Brennan, and Keskitalo

Absent: None

Nays: None

The Village Board of Trustees Meeting adjourned at 9:46 p.m.



Rosa Castellano, Village Clerk

Date: 01/26/26