

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

January 15, 2025

A special meeting of the Village of River Forest Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, January 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the 1st Floor Community Room of Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, Illinois.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Meeting started by calling roll. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Chairman Cuyler Brown, Commissioners Carr Preston, Walter Wahlfeldt, Raj Chiplunkar, and Tim Brangle

Director Marion-Burton attended via Zoom

Absent: Commissioners Katie Lowes and Robert Graham

Also Present: Village Administrator Matt Walsh and Assistant Village Administrator Jessica Spencer

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Margie Cekander spoke about the selection of Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) for broker services, expressing her concern for the selection process and ultimate recommendation to the Village Board.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – DECEMBER 4, 2024

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Preston and seconded by Commissioner Brangle to approve the minutes of the December 4 meeting.

MOTION PASSED by unanimous voice vote.

4. BROKER SERVICES PRESENTATION

Chairman Brown thanked the representatives Tom Kirschbraun, Jack Hubbard, and Dan Reynolds from JLL for coming in and turned it over to them for their presentation.

Chairman Brown explained the process from publishing the RFP to the selection of JLL. He reiterated that the Village is interested in the best fit, not necessarily the one looking to pay the

Village the most. He expressed his appreciation for getting to this point in the process and how he has pushed this contract for several years.

Commissioner Brangle asked about the window of time that proposals will be submitted by future developers. He also referenced the details outlined in the Comprehensive Plan and how much that will be referenced in the proposals. Mr. Kirschbraun responded that there will be directives provided in the proposal documents which will direct developers to the Comprehensive Plan for reference. He also explained the various ways that the JLL advertising documents can reference historical documents that the Village might compile from public meetings and hearings.

Commissioner Preston asked, knowing River Forest as much as you do, what concerns might you have about this endeavor? Mr. Kirschbraun responded that the market has its challenges, but there is still an appetite for projects like this and hopes the right developer will be able to move quickly.

Chairman Brown stated that he would suggest casting a “wide net” when looking for developers for the Village property. Mr. Reynolds stated that this is a market that requires active engagement to find the right developers. Mr. Kirschbraun agreed and intends to cast as wide a net as makes sense.

Commissioner Chiplunkar asked why Mr. Reynolds believes this is a great opportunity. Mr. Reynolds explained that the neighborhood that can afford the project here helps to justify a meaningful return for the developer. In addition, the small size of the project is attractive to developers given the current market. Mr. Kirschbraun added that this is an “infill” project and lowers the competition of the property.

Commissioner Wahlfeldt stated that he can understand the questions about a potential conflict of interest. He stated that he receives no compensation from the contract and until tonight, he has seen no specific presentation from JLL for the Village.

Commissioner Brangle reiterated that JLL’s presentation and proposal hit on all the things that the Village would want for a broker. Chairman Brown agreed.

Commissioner Chiplunkar asked if it would be worthwhile to have the Village Attorney provide an official opinion regarding any conflict. He stated that he was concerned this topic might “fester” and having this opinion might be helpful. Commissioner Wahlfeldt stated that he had no problem with this suggestion and understands the reasoning. Chairman Brown asked about the technical direction of how to seek this out. Administrator Walsh said that a statement from the Village Attorney could be requested. He also reminded the Commission of the fact that this Commission is not the approving body, rather it provides recommendations to the Board. Commissioner Preston added that he also feels that a legal opinion would make sense too. He believes that the conversation is important to have with the Board. Chairman Brown concurred.

Commissioner Chiplunkar asked about economic return future projects at this site. Commissioner Brangle clarified that he believes the Village is looking for projects that match and align with the existing Comprehensive Plan, which will provide a benefit to the neighborhood and Village overall, in addition to price. Chairman Brown added that he would also hope to see the neatest, best use of the space.

5. DISCUSSION REGARDING BROKER SERVICES CONTRACT RECOMMENDATION

A **MOTION** was made by Chairman Brown and seconded by Commissioner Preston to recommend a contract with JLL for the purposes of broker services be presented and approved by the Village Board at a future Board meeting.

Aye: Chairman Cuyler Brown, Commissioners Carr Preston, Raj Chiplunkar, and Tim Brangle

Nay: None

Abstain: Commissioner Walter Wahlfeldt

MOTION PASSED by unanimous voice vote.

6. DISCUSSION REGARDING TIF SMALL BUSINESS INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Executive Director Marion-Burton provided an update regarding recent conversations with business owners about the Facade Grant program. Members of the Chamber met with business owners to discuss the TIF Grant program and he received some positive feedback. Specifically, there were compliments about the consideration for accessibility improvements. Chairman Brown thanked Executive Director Marion-Burton for working on this project.

Chairman Brown asked about any updates on Memorial Day, he stated that he hopes to meet with members of Kiwanis in the coming weeks to discuss the Chambers' intention.

Commissioner Preston asked about the next steps for the Façade Grant program. Administrator Walsh said that he intended to provide the Board time for feedback, giving the Commission the opportunity to respond, prior to approval. This will also work out well, he said, in the schedule with the approval of the FY26 budget.

Commissioner Wahlfeldt asked what the reasonable timeframe for approval from the Board might look like – April? Administrator Walsh stated yes, he believed so. He also discussed the marketing of the program to the business community, specifically with the development of the webpage. Chairman Brown also suggested looking for contact information for those business owners as this is published.

7. CONTINUED DISCUSSION REGARDING BUSINESS COMMUNITY RETENTION/ SUPPORT STRATEGIES AND COMMUNICATION

There was no update.

8. GENERAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Administrator Walsh updated the Commission regarding Lake and Lathrop, explaining the steps the Village has taken to demolish the structures currently on the site. He explained the latest update regarding the lawsuit over the building permit that Lake Lathrop Partners submitted last fall. He also updated the Commission regarding the Neighborhood Dialogues final report that was made public earlier this week. Administrator Walsh updated that Whole Foods has submitted plans and their building permits are under review. Assistant Administrator Spencer added that Jewel has submitted plans for building permits as well.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Brown stated that there are several vendor stands along Keystone and a friend would like to run them. Administrator Walsh stated the best point of contact would be the Park District.

10. ADJOURNMENT

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wahlfedlt and seconded by Commissioner Brangle to adjourn the meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 7:01 p.m.

MOTION PASSED by unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted:



Jessica Spencer, Assistant Village Administrator

Date: 3/5/25

Cuyler Brown, Chairman Economic Development Commission