

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
REGULAR VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MINUTES
Monday, February 22, 2021**

A regular meeting of the Village of River Forest Board of Trustees was held on Monday, February 22, 2021 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 7:00p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: President Adduci, Trustees Bachner, Brennan, Cargie, Henek, O’Connell, Vazquez, Village Clerk Kathleen Brand-White

Absent: None

Also Present: Acting Village Administrator Lisa Scheiner, Assistant to the Village Administrator Jonathan Pape, Management Analyst Sara Phyfer, Police Chief James O’Shea, Police Commander James Greenwood, Finance Director Rosemary McAdams, Fire Chief Kurt Bohlmann, Public Works Director John Anderson, Village Attorney Greg Smith

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Adduci led the pledge of allegiance.

3. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Laurie Gillard, 227 Forest. Ms. Gillard stated she is looking forward to presenting a constructive guide related to deer management. She requested the submission date be moved back to March 9 and stated the pandemic has prolong the issue long enough.

Askold Kozbur, 1235 Monroe. Mr. Kozbur stated he was speaking in support of John Grant’s recommendations regarding the advisory body member selection process. He commented about his experience in this process and about the risk of cronyism. He stated that having the Board intimately involved will go a long way to improve the process. He requested that Mr. Grant’s request be reviewed, considered, and implemented.

John Grant, 923 Thatcher. Mr. Grant reviewed his suggestions and noted his report which is in the packet. He requested that his suggestions be taken as a good faith effort and conversation starter and that the exploration of this topic go beyond a report. He stated it is clear there is wide support for undertaking these reforms and that residents have unique perspectives that will add value. He further stated he is happy to provide additional input.

Jan Saeger, 435 William. Ms. Saeger thanked Chief O’Shea and Commander Greenwood for their presentations at the last meeting. She noted her own research on the topic of boards and commissions and expressed interest in volunteering to help assess the process. Ms.

Saeger also requested that the words diversity, equity, and inclusion be more defined in the Resolution.

Mindy Credi, 1452 Park. Ms. Credi expressed hope that the Board would consider everyone's perspective including the Village administration before making any changes related to the Boards and Commissions process. She also asked that the words diversity, equity, and inclusion be more defined in the Resolution.

Clinton Nichols. Mr. Nichols stated he is a faculty member at Dominican and spoke in support of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion resolution and initiative. He stated he is looking forward to working with the group and having River Forest become a more welcoming community to all.

Sheila Radford-Hill, 414 Clinton. Dr. Radford-Hill stated she agreed with the remarks about defining diversity, equity, and inclusion, and she spoke in support of the DEI Advisory Group. She noted it advances the important work of the welcoming resolution and the Maywood covenant. She commented on the commitment to racial justice and having local leaders break down barriers with neighbors, noting the national struggle to define America. She stated the Board must choose to approve the resolution so River Forest can make good on its commitment to being a more welcoming community.

4. ELECTED OFFICIAL COMMENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee O'Connell welcomed everyone to the meeting. He congratulated the effort of executing the COVID-19 vaccine clinic. He noted that with melting snow and ice, there may be issues with backyard flooding and noted the Village has a pump loaner program. He also noted residents can sweep out catch basins to assist with flood prevention in streets.

Trustee Henek welcomed everyone and echoed Trustee O'Connell's comments regarding the vaccine distribution. She thanked Public Works for doing a phenomenal job with the snow recently.

In a response to a question from Trustee Henek, Director Anderson stated the Fire Department clears the hydrants from snow when they can and the Village also asks residents to do so. He noted that the Public Works Department is taking a bobcat to clear the crosswalks on major streets.

In response to a question from Trustee Henek about having just one March meeting because of spring break, President Adduci stated that is what they are looking to do.

Trustee Brennan stated she was acknowledging the grim milestone of 500,000 deaths from COVID-19. She encouraged everyone to keep wearing masks and social distancing. She thanked Public Works for their work with the snow.

In response to a question from Trustee Brennan, Director Anderson stated the Village will be applying to the ComEd grant partnership for powering communities after meeting with a vendor for an electric vehicle charging spot on Central.

President Adduci asked for a moment of silence to acknowledge the 500,000 deaths from COVID-19. She also asked Chief Bohlmann to lower the flag for 5 days.

Trustee Vazquez thanked Public Works for the work they did keeping up with the snow removal and ice. He offered kudos to the Police and Fire Departments for their work during challenging weather conditions. He thanked everyone who participated in the vaccine clinics, including Helen Kwan and the Senior Response Team and the clinic partners, noting he heard only good things. He reported that the Age Friendly Committee will be narrowing down their questions for their senior survey.

Trustee Cargie acknowledged Public Works for a job well done. He noted there were a number of streets that still had cars parked and that there does not seem to be a solution but that it seems to make it harder to plow.

Director Anderson stated the Police Department does ticket but it is difficult to locate the driver, and he noted they try to work with residents but acknowledged it is difficult to plow if the car is still parked on the street the next day.

Trustee Cargie also thanked everyone regarding the clinic and Helen Kwan and the Senior Response Team.

Trustee Bachner read a statement to acknowledge that this land was once inhabited by indigenous people and stated that River Forest continues to be a place that people from diverse backgrounds live and gather. She stated she does not have enough thanks for the community and departments regarding the snow removal and vaccine clinic.

President Adduci echoed the comments about snow removal and noted Public Works did a good job. She thanked Staff and D90, Jewel, and First Presbyterian for the vaccine clinic, and she acknowledged Helen Kwan and the Senior Response Team for their work. She reported that she met with the West Suburban CEO to discuss their facility in town and that they will be hosting an event on Thursday to announce the new technology they are bringing to their medical center.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Village Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – February 8, 2021
- b. Renewal of Intergovernmental Agreement with O’Hare Noise Compatibility Commission – Resolution
- c. Approval of Payment to Clark Baird Smith LLP for Legal Services in the amount of \$31,610.00
- d. Monthly Department Reports
- e. Monthly Financial Report
- f. Performance Measurement Report
- g. Village Administrator’s Report

Trustee O’Connell made a motion, seconded by Trustee Henek, to approve the Consent Agenda items A-G.

In response to a question from Trustee Cargie, Ms. Scheiner stated the bill detail for item 5C is confidential.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Bachner, Brennan, Cargie, Henek, O'Connell, Vazquez

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

6. CONSENT ITEMS FOR SEPARATE CONSIDERATION

None.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS OF BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES

None.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

9. NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion and Direction: Board, Committee, and Commission Appointments

President Adduci recommended gathering residents interested in improving this process and ensuring it is as open and transparent as possible, and then coming back with a recommendation for the Board to consider.

Trustee Henek stated she is pleased to begin this conversation and that it is clear residents agree it is time. She stated her experience with this process has not been open and transparent, noting that she has previously advocated to open the process and inform residents when positions are available and that she has not been notified in advance when seats are vacant. She also stated she was denied access to all the applications for the Deer Committee and expressed concern when those who were selected for appointment because the majority of the committee was drawn from the northwest area of town. She expressed dismay about the experience for the individual not appointed to the Committee. Trustee Henek stated she has had conversations with residents about this and the common theme is frustration, and she expressed concern that residents have felt disenfranchised or that their work was for naught due to a predetermined outcome. She stated this points to a broken process and recommended a full review of the process to advocate for greater transparency.

Trustee O'Connell stated he supports the work proposed and asked for Mr. Grant's sources on his recommendations.

Mr. Grant stated his report is taken as a first step and that they did not need to get too deep into the weeds, and he reviewed some of this sources.

President Adduci addressed the perception that something nefarious is going on. She reviewed the Village Code, noting the authority it gives her to provide appointments for the Board to vote on. She stated that never in the last 8 years has anyone indicated it is not an open and transparent process. She stated they have to work as a Board in good faith about this process. She stated she did not think the Board would ever stop looking at how to improve and that if it can improve on this process, they should, and that they are doing the right thing for the community.

Trustee Brennan stated she agrees it merits research by Staff, the Board, and residents. She stated she appreciates Mr. Grant's research and the letters from residents supporting this. She suggested checking with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus.

Trustee Bachner echoed Trustee Brennan's thoughts and thanked Mr. Grant for bringing this up. She highlighted the distinction between best practices and outside the box ideas and stated this is an opportunity for the Board to be dynamic.

Trustee Cargie stated that he and Trustee Henek were consulted about the last Deer Committee appointments.

President Adduci asked to keep the conversation productive and stated that everyone knows what the Code says and that she did everything within the Code granted to her. She stated they have to be clear about roles and what the Code says. She stated she welcomes those who say the Board should look at this and that she wants to hear everyone on this issue. She also stated that if the Board can improve it, they will.

Trustee Vazquez thanked Mr. Grant for the report and echoed Trustee O'Connell's request about sources. He agreed that this topic should be discussed and pursued and that Mr. Grant's document is something to start the conversation. He cautioned everyone about having a productive conversation and expressed concern over the use of the words patronage and cronyism. He stated that if the Village is going to look at this, it should be looked at objectively and professionally.

Mr. Grant stated he spoke with Vicki Scaman and Simone Boutet in Oak Park and listed his other sources. He stressed that he is not an attorney and that he is not claiming he has developed a perfect system, but that he is looking for this to be taken seriously. He stated he hopes there is more research.

Ms. Scheiner suggestion holding a Zoom meeting and stated she is happy to take any input, and that the best idea wins. She emphasized that any variety of things that can be done, Staff can prepare an analysis and present the findings to the Board. She asked for time to coordinate the meetings and stated it would take approximately 3 months to review and put together.

Trustee O'Connell suggesting putting a blurb in the newsletter.

President Adduci stated the Village is working very hard to keep processes open and transparent and that everyone works hard on behalf of residents.

- b. A Resolution Establishing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion *Ad Hoc* Advisory Group – Resolution

Trustee Bachner made a motion, seconded by Trustee Vazquez, to adopt a Resolution establishing a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion *Ad Hoc* Advisory Group.

President Adduci stated the Resolution is what the Board discussed and the membership is open. She suggested that the best place to define diversity, equity, and inclusion is once the advisory group is constituted.

Trustee O'Connell expressed concern about the Advisory Group's role in reviewing employment.

Village Attorney Smith stated that from a legal perspective, certain documents are confidential and that the Advisory Group would have no greater access than the general public.

Ms. Scheiner recalled her conversations with Trustees Bachner and Brennan and stated she did not believe that was their intent, and that the focus is on ensuring the utilization of best practices to capture wide diversity of qualified candidates. She noted confidential information would remain confidential. She stated the Group's role could be to evaluate things the Village can do to enhance operations, lived values, and the organization's culture more clearly, and that having that input is a wonderful opportunity and the organization would embrace that. She suggested there may be different policies and practices to review and noted the Board approves the Personnel Manual.

Trustee Henek thanked Dr. Radford-Hill for her statements and Ms. Scheiner for her comments about growth mindset. She stated they are looking at this together as a team with an open mind, noting it is about growth and doing better. She commented that she would love to see the Resolution get approved with an amendment later to include the definitions. She suggested adding a question on the application about availability.

Trustee Brennan concurred with Ms. Scheiner's statements about their conversation and that her comments prove she should be on the Advisory Group with her background and knowledge of the rules. She stated the Village would not be making any of the missteps Trustee O'Connell expressed concern about. She concurred with Trustee Henek regarding approving the Resolution and adding definitions later.

The Board reached a consensus to have the Advisory Group define diversity, equity, and inclusion for the Board to ratify as an amendment to the Resolution at a later date.

Trustee Vazquez stated that he agreed and highlighted Ms. Scheiner's comments, noting it is informative for the Village and Advisory Group. He noted the Village's bargaining agreements and the possibility of negotiations on employment matters but stated he thinks the Board should move forward.

Trustee Bachner concurred. She stated she appreciates Trustee O'Connell's concern and thanked everyone who has participated and provided insight. She noted the collective effort on this issue and that many people in the community have been working on this. She requested that the language in the Resolution be modified from "the Advisory Group shall submit a final report" to an "initial report" and instead of "no later than" to "as soon as possible" or "provide updates."

President Adduci stated this is a cause for celebration and the start of a journey. She stated she is energized, committed, and looking forward to it. She thanked Trustees Bachner and Brennan for their dedication and emphasized that everyone is on the same page and working together. She noted there is a lot to do and encouraged working with D90 and D200. She stated that hate is a virus and that she is personally proud of this undertaking.

The Village Board reached a consensus to accept the proposed changes.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Bachner, Brennan, Cargie, Henek, O'Connell, Vazquez

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

- c. Approval of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion *Ad Hoc* Advisory Group Application Form

President Adduci directed Staff to send out the application and ensure its reach is wide.

Trustee Cargie asked that it include the mention about availability suggested by Trustee Henek, and Trustee Bachner asked that it include language stating availability would not prohibit anybody from participation.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Cargie made a motion, seconded by Trustee O'Connell, to adjourn the regular Village Board of Trustees Meeting at 8:22p.m.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Bachner, Brennan, Cargie, Henek, O'Connell, Vazquez

Absent: None
Nays: None
Motion Passes.

Kathleen Brand-White, Village Clerk

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Board Meeting/Comment
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 11:30:53 AM

To all Trustees:

I think resident John Grant has identified an issue with the village government that is keeping us from being the best that we can be as a community. I appreciate the efforts John has made to bring this issue forward, and the work he has done to initiate discussions about tangible solutions.

I want to emphatically express my wish that the village board take up this issue of democratic reforms. I believe that the current lack of procedures and policies is under-serving the fantastic volunteer citizens of this community, including members of advisory bodies, as well as members of the village board. Strong democratic institutions will support all of our citizens, including volunteers and residents and voters. I believe stronger institutions will allow us to achieve things we have not been able to achieve in the past. And I think these institutions will increase harmony in the village as well.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Pete and Michele Batra
1010 Forest Ave, RF

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Support for John Grant's VRF Advisory Bodies Recommendations
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 12:02:33 PM
Attachments: [Report to RF Village Board re Advisory Bodies.pdf](#)

To the Board of Trustees of River Forest:

This is to express my support for Mr. John Grant's February 8, 2021 recommendations (attached) regarding River Forest Village Board of Trustees Advisory Bodies.

John Grant's recommendations merit careful reading and serious consideration. They will facilitate fairness and transparency in constituting advisory bodies that are essential to the well-being of the Village of River Forest and its residents. At a time that citizens all across the U.S. are insisting upon transparency, this is River Forest's opportunity to embrace an open and accountable process in a proactive way.

Thank you for your consideration,

Linda M. Bernas
1127 Jackson Avenue
RF resident for 29 years

Recommendations for RF VBOT advisory bodies from resident John Grant 2/8/2021

-compiled from conversations with municipal law attorneys, clerks, and elected officials in various Illinois municipalities as well as professionals in not-for-profit administration and oversight

Introduction:

Great things can be accomplished from simple, common sense ideas. I am proposing some common sense solutions which can then be developed by municipal law attorneys and professionals to create a guiding document, A DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION if you will, that will serve the people of River Forest by allowing for village board members to recruit engaged residents to be very productive on advisory bodies in an atmosphere of transparency and accountability and good faith, as well as efficiency and effectiveness.

1. Guiding principles:

My proposal relies on two simple ideas:

- power sharing / checks and balances
- transparency / accountability.

Power sharing: Trustees and the president must share power. This provides for checks and balances. All 7 board members (six trustees and the president) should have the ability to sponsor one candidate for consideration by the board. Whether one or several candidates are sponsored and brought forth, each board member may only vote for one. The candidate with the most votes is placed on the advisory body. If there is a tie, a run-off vote is immediately taken, and board members vote for their top choice of those who tied in the first vote.

Transparency with accountability: Open voting and full transparency is critical to voters having a voice, because voters can hold board members accountable for their actions in the sponsoring or voting processes. "Transparency" does not mean that voters need to see the personal data of volunteer candidates. Personal data on applications can be redacted/kept private. Applications can be kept confidential so that only board members see them. The public would see only a one-paragraph description written by candidates describing the professional or personal life experience or qualities that would be useful for a particular advisory body. The important part is not that voters know EVERYTHING about these volunteer candidates, but that voters know some relevant facts as described in the summary paragraph, and that voters can clearly and transparently see how board members handled the process. Volunteer candidates are not living in fear that they will not be selected, they only want the system to be fair and transparent. They want their village to be succeed. Residents can handle respectful open communication. What residents do not want, and what poisons the process, is a culture of unproductive chatter and suspicion that arises from a lack of transparency.

2. Sample schedule of the process for filling advisory body vacancies:

1. Robust outreach: ongoing vacancy reports are attached to the agenda/packet for all meetings, ongoing outreach to residents is made through the web site / village communications, and residents are always encouraged to apply, even when no vacancies exist, and all board members and all current advisory body members are encouraged to reach out to colleagues, friends, neighbors, or others to bring in new volunteer candidates
2. Notice of recruitment goes out when vacancies are upcoming, or terms are expiring
3. Applications come in to the village clerk for each specific vacancy. The clerk also reactivates applications which were received by the village at a time of no vacancies, as well as applications of existing members who wish to serve another term. The clerk opens a file and gives notice to board members regarding applicants in the file
4. Within a review period of at least 15 business days, board members may choose to sponsor a candidate from the file for a vacancy and notify the clerk of such sponsorship
5. Vacancy openings and sponsored candidates are placed on the board meeting agenda and board members vote at the meeting. There is no debate of the candidates, however sponsors may read the short description from the application of the candidate they are supporting. The focus is on the voting, not debating. The descriptions that

candidates initially provided as part of their application will speak (or not speak) for themselves. Board members have had access to information through the clerk for a sufficient prescribed time period, during which they have had time to ask questions of candidates or the clerk. As mentioned above, transparency is achieved not by the public seeing details about candidates, but by board members knowing of the pool of candidates and by the public seeing board members sponsoring and voting for candidates.

3. Volunteer application processing notes

- The application process should have a mechanism for determining if any conflicts of interest exist between the candidate and the business of the advisory body
- In an effort to verify that the candidate has interests that actually line up with the work of the advisory body (vs what candidates may imagine or assume is the work of the advisory body), applicants to committees should attend a meeting of the advisory body and speak with the chairperson of the body. Board members reviewing applications would have the ability to speak with the candidate or the chairperson about this meeting in order to gather information about whether the candidate is a good fit for the committee.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion principles should inform the process of crafting the ideal composition of the advisory body
- Any barriers to participation should be identified and mitigated. For example, Zoom or other remote cyber meetings, where possible, may allow residents, who cannot leave the house because there is a child at home and no child care substitute, to participate in a meeting.

4. Defining the mission and the makeup of the advisory bodies

- Clear charter/mission language for each advisory body will create an environment where members are enabled and supported to succeed, and where their work is appreciated because it is targeted and relevant
- A clear mission will also provide a clear mandate for the mix of individuals ideally sought for the body, considering professional or personal experience. Creativity should be used in developing this recommended composition: for example, a Development Review Board may be served well by a resident volunteer member who has lived through a development being built very near their home, etc.
- The missions/goals/action plans of each advisory body should be reviewed on an annual basis in order to keep work relevant and provide an environment where members feel their work is meaningful

5. Outreach

- Outreach to possible candidates should be continuous and multi-faceted, and specific requirements should be created for types and amounts of outreach, such as postings on the village web site, postings at village hall, village newsletters, emails, social media posts, etc.
- Communication/collaboration with other not-for-profit or volunteer groups in the community should be implemented and may create avenues for recruiting residents for advisory bodies

6. Trustee Liaison

- Each body could have a trustee liaison, but advisory body independence should be considered as well.

7. Drafting the ordinance/guidelines

- Bring together a small group of people who have intimate knowledge of how advisory bodies function and of municipal law to draft the rules for the system described in this document.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Support for John Grant
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 11:10:43 AM
Importance: High

Dear Village of River Forest trustees,

As a resident of River Forest, I hereby express my support for the transparency and clarity espoused by John Grant. Such clarity of role and transparency of process will benefit all involved in governing our Village. Please give thoughtful consideration to the proposals John will articulate this evening. They are worthy of adoption.

Shelby S. Boblick
417 Lathrop Ave., Unit 2E
River Forest, IL 60305

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Subject: for Monday board meeting
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 12:06:00 PM

Hello Board

Thank you for taking the time to read my email.

My wife Meg and I have been residents of River Forest since 2017.

I am writing to let you know that I support the effort by village resident John Grant to improve the management of the committees, commissions, and boards by the village board, including improving the transparency of the process for filling seats on these bodies, as well as the process for stating clear targeted goals for these bodies so that their work is respected and productive.

Thank you,

--

Jordan Chalmers

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Subject: Process and transparency for advisory boards
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 10:49:31 AM

I have been a River Forest resident for over twenty years. My interest piqued by the deer debacle, I have recently started to look more closely at some of the issues being faced by the village and the processes whereby decisions are made (or postponed). When I read John Grant's letters to the Wednesday Journal, I concluded that he had identified a concerning lack of defined process and transparency in the way advisory boards are composed and operate.

I support Mr. Grant's proposal to define processes for the functioning of advisory boards and to ensure that they operate with complete transparency. I would also like to see outreach efforts made to engage the community to contribute. Besides being good democratic practice, defined process and openness constitute the best protection against rumors or accusations of mismanagement or self-dealing.

Sincerely,
C. Ates Dagli
835 Keystone Ave.
River Forest, IL 60305

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]; [VBOI](#)
Subject: John Grant - support
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 1:31:56 PM

Good afternoon,

My husband Arno and I have been residents for 8 years of RF and have gotten to know John and his family very well over the years. He has our full support and we hope the Village Board to give careful consideration to the issues of democratic reform that John Grant has raised. He has been on top of everything including the management of the volunteer advisory bodies that report to the board, as well as asking tough questions about many other important polices. I believe the reforms he has asked for will make our village a more friendly and open place, as well as allow us to tackle issues that we have been unable to solve. We need more transparency now more than ever. We can work together to make River Forest as great as it can possibly be...we are so close.

Thanks for considering John.

Jenn and Arno

--

Jenn Gerbrecht
COMPASS Real Estate

[REDACTED]

Statement read by John Grant in “Public Comment” section of board meeting 2/22/21

Hello my name is John Grant, I have been a River Forest resident for approximately 14 years, and I would like to follow up tonight on the comments that I made at the previous two village board meetings, advocating for the village board to create more formal democratic institutions for many aspects of village government, including the governance of advisory bodies that report to the village board. I note that my two page report to the village board, which contains some initial suggestions on possible changes regarding advisory bodies, can be found in the packet for tonight’s meeting.

I want to clarify that my hope is that this report could provide the start of a conversation, not some type of final solution. I am not an attorney, and I do not have professional expertise on the inner workings of government, so my suggestions should be taken as a good faith effort to use what I have learned over the last several weeks as a conversation starter. It would not be productive at this early point to engage in a premature debate about the technicalities of particular aspects of this report. The truth is, the exploration of this topic should go well beyond the ideas in this report.

Having said that, I do want to say something about the overall approach. While I do think it would be very helpful for an attorney to provide consultation on the nuts and bolts of some of the operations of the village board and the village board’s governance of advisory bodies as early as possible, I would also urge to board and any consulting attorney to think outside of the box, with an attitude not of what can’t be done but what can be done. We have all seen times when somebody has said something can’t be done, and then somebody else figured out how to do it.

I am very grateful that the board has allowed me to come before them and present this issue, and I thank the board for placing this item on the agenda. I look forward to the board exploring this issue. I do want the board to know that if you would like further input from me, I am very happy to do so. I would be very willing to continue doing any research that is desired, or working with staff, or other municipalities, or further reaching out to residents, or otherwise advancing the work on this issue in any way that the board would ask.

I want to thank any residents who are making public comment tonight in support of reforming these issues, as well as the 20 or so residents who also submitted emails of support today to the village board. It’s clear from these comments and emails that there is wide support for undertaking these reforms. These emails and comments also show that residents have very unique perspectives that will add value to the discussions and solutions.

If the board has any questions for me tonight or any other time, I am always available. Thank you very much.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Comments - 2/22 Meeting
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 8:28:06 AM

I am writing to support fellow River Forest resident John Grant and his efforts to enhance transparency and objectivity in our many volunteer resident committees and advisory bodies. We are lucky to have so many wonderful residents eager to assist our village in improving our government and the quality of life in our village. Unfortunately, without better guidelines and transparency to help guide the selection of these valuable roles – there is the possibility that doubt and subjectivity creep into these roles and bodies about people’s motives. It seems prudent to make sure that the selection of these individuals is visible to all residents and measured against a set of agreed upon objective criteria. This is in the interest of the Village, the Trustees, and the volunteers. Thank you.

John Gruber
1334 Lathrop Avenue

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Subject: Comment for tonight's meeting
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 4:10:16 PM

Trustees,

First, I want to thank all of you for the time and effort you put into improving our village each and every day.

Secondly, I just want to make a quick statement letting you know that I do support a change in how we engage with and recruit community members to be on advisory boards.

In order to pull in residents with the right expertise and motivation to make positive change for our village, I feel it's important that we open up the process. I would like the entire board to be part of this nomination/selection process as well as the community to know pertinent information about the nominees. I also want the community to easily know how to apply and when there is a need to form a new subcommittee/advisory board or fill a vacancy.

Basically, I just want the process to be opened up with full transparency. This will only enhance the board's ability to bring in engaged and capable residents and will benefit River Forest far into the future.

Thank you for your time,
Jenny Kelly

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Subject: Letter of Support -River Forest Equity Advisory Group
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 7:56:30 PM

Hello,

My name is Christine Khaledan and I live at 1139 Keystone Avenue.

I'm writing to express my support of the formation of the proposed River Forest Equity Advisory Group.

I believe now is a crucial time for River Forest to convene a committee of residents and elected officials to take a look at how we can create a more inclusive, just and welcoming community in our culture, policies, attitudes, procedures and practices for all races, ethnicities and gender orientations.

I'd like to express my gratitude for the leadership that Erika Bachner, Katie Bachner, Cathy Adduci, Patty Henek and others who have initiated this and other efforts to push this needed meaningful change forward.

Thank you for considering voting in favor of this formation of this important group.

Sincerely,

Christine Khaledan

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

Askold Kozbur Public Comments to River Forest Board of Trustees.
22 February 2021

Good evening. My name is Askold Kozbur. I live at 1235 Monroe Ave.

Tonight, I am speaking in support of Mr. John Grant's recent recommendations to the River Forest Village Board for advisory body member selection dated February 8th, 2021.

Given my past experience of how members of advisory bodies are selected in River Forest, I fully support Mr. Grant's suggestions. Of particular importance is Mr. Grant's idea of power sharing with strong checks and balances.

Currently, as I understand it, the process of building advisory bodies in River Forest is primarily the purview of the village president selecting candidates from a candidate pool and presenting those candidates to the village board for a mass vote on the body. The pool of candidates and backgrounds is closely held by the village president. The village trustees do not get a chance to delve into the background of the candidates in the pool. This process has no safeguards against cronyism whereby the village president can select those candidates supporting the village president's agenda, but not necessarily be in the interest of the majority of River Forest residents. This leaves a dangerous situation in which a select few, hand-picked candidates influence the goings-on of the village. This clearly goes against the principle of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This cronyism risk must be corrected in the current broken process of advisory body selection. Having the village trustees intimately involved with selection of the candidates will go a long way to improve the process.

I respectfully and strongly request that Mr. Grant's suggestions be seriously reviewed, considered, and implemented by the Village Board in the very near future.

Thank you for your time. I ask that my comments be attached to the minutes of the meeting. I will submit them after this meeting.

Askold Kozbur

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: committees
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 11:03:24 AM

River Forest Board of Trustees:

I support John Grant's efforts to spell out committee goals, and clarify the processes of filling and managing committees.

Scott Krusinski
307 Ashland

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Cc: [John Grant](#)
Subject: Board Committee and Commission Appointments
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 12:57:25 PM

Hi Village Board,

As a resident of River Forest, I am writing in support of the recent calls for greater transparency on committee and commission appointments within the Village. I kam aware that this is on the agenda for tonight's board meeting, and from what I have witnessed improvement in the process is needed. Let's make sure we are doing the most to leverage the vast amount of relevant experience we have in our community for each of our committees.

Thanks,
Pete Kuzmich

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Subject: Email of support
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 8:58:47 AM

Dear Board of Trustees,

I admit that I have not engaged in local government nearly as much as I probably should have in the 21 years of being a River Forest resident. I have been very fortunate to not have had any reason to question the process, as my experience here has been wonderful. I have raised my kids in a safe neighborhood, made wonderful friends, and participated in local community events.

But through my recent participation with the ad hoc deer committee, and in conversations with active members of our community, I am surprised to learn that there has not been a democratic process of selection for volunteer positions. This email is to support John Grant's report and suggestions for fair representation and transparency. I have read his report carefully, and agree with all of his points.

I thank each one of you for your time invested and dedication to River Forest. I am certain that these past few years have been incredibly challenging, in many ways. This is an opportunity to set an example for future Trustees and to create a process that improves participation. I hope you agree.

All the best,

Ingrid Liu
931 Thatcher Ave
River Forest, IL 60305

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Grant Request
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 1:56:28 PM

I support John Grant's request that our village improve our democratic processes, including the management of the volunteer advisory bodies that report to the village board. I believe the common-sense reforms he has asked for will lead to increased transparency, trust and accountability in our community.

Matthew Madden
946 Forest Ave
River Forest, IL 60305

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Village of River Forest
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 12:40:10 PM

To Whom This May Concern,

We fully support John Grant's request that our village improve the management of volunteer advisory bodies that report to the village board. We believe his reforms will lead to accountability and increase trust within our River Forest community.

Sincerely,
Matthew and Therese Menezes

Sent from my iPhone

Public Comment for the River Forest Board of Trustees
February 22, 2021
Sheila Radford-Hill, PhD
River Forest Resident

Thank you, President Adduci. Trustees, residents, and guests. My name is Sheila Radford-Hill and I live in River Forest at 414 Clinton Place. I am the former CDO at Dominican University.

The resolution for the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Ad Hoc Advisory Group advances the important work of the Welcoming Community Resolution and the Maywood Covenant. As a River Forest resident, I support the resolution for the DEI Advisory Group. A fully functioning committee is needed to strengthen the antiracist work with DU. As River Forest analyses its policies and programs with an equity lens, the Village can meet our community's college students where they are and see them as assets that enhance our quality of life. The Advisory group demonstrates that our community is committed to racial justice and will actively embrace its pursuit with urgency, integrity, and transparency.

With DEI resolutions like the one the Village will hopefully approve tonight; local leaders can decide to break down barriers between neighbors and build bridges to connect us. Specifically, the Advisory group will allow local residents to share social capital and networks with those who have been historically marginalized, support the Maywood Covenant, and reap the benefits of diversity in our community. A vote for this resolution also validates the partnership with Dominican University and ensures that our community's educational institutions can support the Village's commitment to equity through innovation, relevance, and vibrancy.

Our recent and upcoming elections will be held in an America struggling to redefine itself. Will the nation embrace a multiracial, multicultural, multiethnic, intergenerational, interfaith future that welcomes people of different abilities, gender identities, and sexual orientations or will America become a nation more concerned with protecting itself from its neighbors? Make no mistake. The struggle over who Americans is, what our priorities are and whether our democratic values will prevail will be decided in local communities-- just like ours.

The Board must vote for this resolution so that River Forest can make good on its commitment to being a more welcoming community and to creating a more just America in the process. I will make these remarks available to the Village Administrator.

From Jan Saeger, River Forest Resident

February 22, 2021 Village Board Meeting

First, Thank You, Chief O'Shea for your fine presentation at the previous Board meeting on 5 African American police officers, giving us something to reflect on and consider during Black History Month. And thank you to Chief O'Shea and Commander Greenwood for introducing the River Forest Police Department adoption of the Ten Shared Principles between the NAACP and the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police.

Item 9a

When I researched the topic a few weeks ago, I found that River Forest and surrounding communities could all improve how relevant information is presented on their websites. I'll volunteer to be in a work group to go through a discovery process with the goal of improving the sharing of information on our Village web and report recommendations based on the findings.

Item 9b-c

Request to include Definitions in the DEI Resolution

I ask you to create clear definitions for the words Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, sooner rather than later to avoid future misunderstandings and miscommunications. For example, equity isn't equality, but the two words are at times used interchangeably in conversations and publications.

As a senior in an Age Friendly Village, I'm asking you to establish the definitions so people like myself may better understand what you're talking about.

Thanks for your consideration

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOT](#): [REDACTED]
Subject: Call for Village Transparency
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 1:52:01 PM

I support John Grant's proposal for village transparency and better defined processes to run for village positions and selection to advisory boards.

I've been a resident of RF for 5 years but wouldn't know how to run for a volunteer position in the village. By increasing transparency - we would recruit more volunteers and decrease the workload of current volunteers.

Thank you-
Nikki Schmidt
927 Thatcher Ave

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOT:](#) [REDACTED]
Subject: support for democratic reforms in River Forest
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 1:06:24 PM

Trustees,

My fiends Sara and David Smith are having an issue with their email getting through to the village board email address today, so I am forwarding their statement that they have tried to submit, and they are copied on this email with their statement below:

Dear Village Board of River Forest,

This is an open comment to say we support John Grant's call to improve the management of committees, commissions, and boards by the village board. These improvements include improving the transparency of the process for filling seats on these bodies, as well as the process for stating clear, targeted goals for these bodies so that their work is respected and productive.

*Sincerely,
Dave and Sara Smith
907 Thatcher
River Forest IL*

John Grant
923 Thatcher Ave
River Forest, IL 60305



From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Subject: my support
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 1:49:14 PM

Hello, this is to show my support of transparency and democratic reform.

Thank you,

Anna Sterk

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Subject: statement of support by Carrie Summy
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 3:17:58 PM
Attachments: [A statement in support of review of volunteer recruitment practices policies.pdf](#)

Board Members,

Attached is a statement from resident Carrie Summy that she said I could forward along to you. This statement addresses the agenda item for the board meeting this evening regarding advisory body governance. It was not clear to me if she wanted to have her email disclosed, but the attached statement does have contact information. I will inquire about sending her email along to you all. Thank you.

John Grant
923 Thatcher Ave
River Forest, IL 60305



February 21, 2021

Dear Board of Trustees,

I trust you are all feeling well and staying warm, and appreciate your volunteer service for our village in an incredible time. Without a doubt, we will all be thankful to see the coming spring just a little more this year.

I recently learned of village resident John Grant's request to pursue a more open and more robust volunteer recruitment process for our Village commissions. To be quite honest, I had never thought about any barriers to applying for a commission if I so desired, because I have the good fortune to know several of you on a personal and professional basis, and am thankful I have the relationships to pick up the phone and say "hey, I'm interested!" But it did beg the question, what if I were a resident without that relationship?

I think at the heart of John's request, and what I am most supportive of, is breaking down the barriers to those neighbors that do not know where or how to access information, and perhaps more important, if they do, is the process welcoming and inclusive? Like many companies and organizations, the village too is awakening to our world of traditional cultural norms and how those may not be best for all.

While I do not know the very best pathway to assure a streamlined process for our Village staff and board to responsibly vet potential commission members, I am pleased to see some improvements to our Village website - I understand in response to John's letter in January. However, I encourage all trustees to research and consider non-traditional means of communication that not only reach populations not quick to a website, or without the time and energy to fill out forms and jump through paperwork hoops, but that 1) *actively recruits* residents 2) *meets residents where they are*, and 3) truly listens to *their needs*. By doing so, you may discover we need a whole new commission or ad hoc cmte for an issue never before considered.

Consider *formally and intentionally* reaching out to various groups this spring as many seats vacate with a Q&A about commissions. Consider our houses of worship coffees/Zooms and newsletters for our older residents, consider working through the Chamber of Commerce with their Young Professionals affinity group for younger perspectives, consider reaching out to WSSRA and other nonprofits that serve adults with different abilities, and/or consider forming a BIPOC ad hoc committee to review current volunteer opportunities and recommend best practices and communications that are not only inclusive, but equitable. When our current system is made up of folks with pretty similar walks of life, we miss the forest for the trees.

Again, I appreciate all each of you are doing to make our Village stronger. We are truly lucky to live in such a community, with hearts that share the goal of an inclusive, warm, and welcoming River Forest. I hope you will consider some new pathways to seek additional representation in civic positions.

Sincerely,

Carrie Summy
710 Forest Ave


Trustee Henek's Comments from February 22, 2021 VBOT Meeting

I am pleased that we are starting conversations around improving the commission process. It is clear based on the many emails received today that residents agree it is time. Contrary to what was stated in President's Adduci's letter to John Grant, as a Village Trustee I can say my experience with the commission process has not been open and transparent. In fact, on more than one occasion, I have advocated to open the process and inform residents when positions are available. I was told that was not necessary because many residents had already applied for positions and were waiting their turn.

Also, as a Trustee, I have not been notified in advance when seats are vacant. Just this fall, we had a member of the Traffic & Safety commission step down. I was not aware of this until the appointed replacement to fill the seat appeared on our Board agenda for approval.

In another instance, prior to the appointments of the Deer Committee, I emailed President Adduci and staff asking to see all the applications. That did not happen. Instead, committee members were chosen by the President and only their applications were included in our Board packet. After quickly reviewing these, I emailed to share my concern that the majority of the committee was drawn from the Northwest area of town.

At the Feb. 24th meeting, the Board verbally agreed to add two members to the committee and formally confirm them at the March 8, VBOT, a meeting I was previously scheduled to miss.

After that meeting, I was dismayed to learn that one of the two additional members was not subsequently approved by the Board, a surprise to me as co-chair of the committee. I was further dismayed to learn of the unprofessional manner in which this resident was treated.

I have had extensive conversations with residents who have either been on our commissions or have tried to get an appointment. The common theme has been one of frustration. Most concerning is the feedback from commission members who became disenfranchised when they felt their input was not truly being valued. Or, that their

work was for naught when it was recognized that commission work was hamstrung because of a predetermined outcome.

In my opinion, the experience by many residents points to a broken process. By not opening the process and inviting broader engagement, we limit our potential. We miss opportunities to better inform and enhance our decision-making. I strongly recommend a full review of our commission process and advocate for greater transparency when it comes to future appointments

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Subject: advisory bodies
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 4:18:13 PM

Dear members of the Village Board of Trustees,

I know that John Grant has written a proposal on ways to reform the filling of Advisory Bodies and I am writing to support these initiatives. Is there the possibility of having a committee of residents review his proposal and seek a way to implement them? A few years back a series of talks about a strategic plan for the Village was held at Concordia and the conversations were great but poorly attended. Might the Village be willing to host these again with the topic of Advisory boards? I would love to see more people volunteer their time rather than complaining on social media and maybe this could be a good start.

Thanks,
Beth Vlerick

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Advisory Board Recommendations
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 12:01:35 PM
Attachments: [Report to RF Village Board re Advisory Bodies.pdf](#)

Dear Trustees,

As a resident and taxpayer of River Forest for 30 years, I would like to express my full support of Mr. John Grant's 2/8/2021 recommendations for River Forest Village Board of Trustees advisory bodies, as attached to this email.

His recommendations are sound and will facilitate fairness and transparency of constituting advisory bodies that are critical to the health of River Forest and its citizens.

Respectfully yours,
Lawrence C Vogel, MD
1127 Jackson Avenue
River Forest, IL 60305

Recommendations for RF VBOT advisory bodies from resident John Grant 2/8/2021

-compiled from conversations with municipal law attorneys, clerks, and elected officials in various Illinois municipalities as well as professionals in not-for-profit administration and oversight

Introduction:

Great things can be accomplished from simple, common sense ideas. I am proposing some common sense solutions which can then be developed by municipal law attorneys and professionals to create a guiding document, A DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION if you will, that will serve the people of River Forest by allowing for village board members to recruit engaged residents to be very productive on advisory bodies in an atmosphere of transparency and accountability and good faith, as well as efficiency and effectiveness.

1. Guiding principles:

My proposal relies on two simple ideas:

- power sharing / checks and balances
- transparency / accountability.

Power sharing: Trustees and the president must share power. This provides for checks and balances. All 7 board members (six trustees and the president) should have the ability to sponsor one candidate for consideration by the board. Whether one or several candidates are sponsored and brought forth, each board member may only vote for one. The candidate with the most votes is placed on the advisory body. If there is a tie, a run-off vote is immediately taken, and board members vote for their top choice of those who tied in the first vote.

Transparency with accountability: Open voting and full transparency is critical to voters having a voice, because voters can hold board members accountable for their actions in the sponsoring or voting processes. "Transparency" does not mean that voters need to see the personal data of volunteer candidates. Personal data on applications can be redacted/kept private. Applications can be kept confidential so that only board members see them. The public would see only a one-paragraph description written by candidates describing the professional or personal life experience or qualities that would be useful for a particular advisory body. The important part is not that voters know EVERYTHING about these volunteer candidates, but that voters know some relevant facts as described in the summary paragraph, and that voters can clearly and transparently see how board members handled the process. Volunteer candidates are not living in fear that they will not be selected, they only want the system to be fair and transparent. They want their village to be succeed. Residents can handle respectful open communication. What residents do not want, and what poisons the process, is a culture of unproductive chatter and suspicion that arises from a lack of transparency.

2. Sample schedule of the process for filling advisory body vacancies:

1. Robust outreach: ongoing vacancy reports are attached to the agenda/packet for all meetings, ongoing outreach to residents is made through the web site / village communications, and residents are always encouraged to apply, even when no vacancies exist, and all board members and all current advisory body members are encouraged to reach out to colleagues, friends, neighbors, or others to bring in new volunteer candidates
2. Notice of recruitment goes out when vacancies are upcoming, or terms are expiring
3. Applications come in to the village clerk for each specific vacancy. The clerk also reactivates applications which were received by the village at a time of no vacancies, as well as applications of existing members who wish to serve another term. The clerk opens a file and gives notice to board members regarding applicants in the file
4. Within a review period of at least 15 business days, board members may choose to sponsor a candidate from the file for a vacancy and notify the clerk of such sponsorship
5. Vacancy openings and sponsored candidates are placed on the board meeting agenda and board members vote at the meeting. There is no debate of the candidates, however sponsors may read the short description from the application of the candidate they are supporting. The focus is on the voting, not debating. The descriptions that

candidates initially provided as part of their application will speak (or not speak) for themselves. Board members have had access to information through the clerk for a sufficient prescribed time period, during which they have had time to ask questions of candidates or the clerk. As mentioned above, transparency is achieved not by the public seeing details about candidates, but by board members knowing of the pool of candidates and by the public seeing board members sponsoring and voting for candidates.

3. Volunteer application processing notes

- The application process should have a mechanism for determining if any conflicts of interest exist between the candidate and the business of the advisory body
- In an effort to verify that the candidate has interests that actually line up with the work of the advisory body (vs what candidates may imagine or assume is the work of the advisory body), applicants to committees should attend a meeting of the advisory body and speak with the chairperson of the body. Board members reviewing applications would have the ability to speak with the candidate or the chairperson about this meeting in order to gather information about whether the candidate is a good fit for the committee.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion principles should inform the process of crafting the ideal composition of the advisory body
- Any barriers to participation should be identified and mitigated. For example, Zoom or other remote cyber meetings, where possible, may allow residents, who cannot leave the house because there is a child at home and no child care substitute, to participate in a meeting.

4. Defining the mission and the makeup of the advisory bodies

- Clear charter/mission language for each advisory body will create an environment where members are enabled and supported to succeed, and where their work is appreciated because it is targeted and relevant
- A clear mission will also provide a clear mandate for the mix of individuals ideally sought for the body, considering professional or personal experience. Creativity should be used in developing this recommended composition: for example, a Development Review Board may be served well by a resident volunteer member who has lived through a development being built very near their home, etc.
- The missions/goals/action plans of each advisory body should be reviewed on an annual basis in order to keep work relevant and provide an environment where members feel their work is meaningful

5. Outreach

- Outreach to possible candidates should be continuous and multi-faceted, and specific requirements should be created for types and amounts of outreach, such as postings on the village web site, postings at village hall, village newsletters, emails, social media posts, etc.
- Communication/collaboration with other not-for-profit or volunteer groups in the community should be implemented and may create avenues for recruiting residents for advisory bodies

6. Trustee Liaison

- Each body could have a trustee liaison, but advisory body independence should be considered as well.

7. Drafting the ordinance/guidelines

- Bring together a small group of people who have intimate knowledge of how advisory bodies function and of municipal law to draft the rules for the system described in this document.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [VBOI](#)
Subject: Support for Advisory Board Transparency and Accountability
Date: Monday, February 22, 2021 11:58:39 AM

2/22/21

River Forest Village Board Members,

We are writing in support of resident John Grant's proposal to better clarify and codify the process by which the Village Board creates Advisory Bodies. From the initial posting to attracting and collecting applications, to nominations and voting, it is surprising that the Village doesn't already have a cogent and transparent process in place. Our village is replete with bright, industrious and accomplished individuals willing to contribute to improving River Forest. We should encourage this participation, beginning with making it clear how, when, where and in what capacity they can bring their skills to bear. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Mark & Sara Wienkes
1123 Franklin Avenue
RF