

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

March 5, 2025

A special meeting of the Village of River Forest Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the 2nd Floor Conference Room of Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, Illinois.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Meeting started by calling roll. Upon roll call, the following people were:

Present: Chairman Cuyler Brown, Commissioners Carr Preston, Tim Brangle, Laura Maychruk, and Dorota Szerszenowicz. Commissioner Raj Chiplunkar joined via Zoom at 6:08pm

Absent: Commissioners Katie Lowes

Also Present: Assistant Village Administrator Jessica Spencer and Executive Director Marion-Burton of the Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JANUARY 15, 2025

Chairman Brown called for a vote on the minutes. The vote was post postponed.

Chairman Brown stated his appreciation for the Commissioners who had recently resigned: Wally Wahlfedlt and Robert Graham. He said that the Commission might not always agree, the residents might not always agree, but questioning someone's integrity without knowing them "doesn't sit well". Commissioner Brangle seconded the statement, as Commissioner Preston did. Chairman Brown then invited the new Commissioners to introduce themselves.

Commissioner Szerszenowicz explained her background, stating she and her family moved to the Village in 2019 and provided some of her professional background. She pointed out that she also volunteered with Hepzibah. Commissioner Szerszenowicz also noted other organizations that she volunteers with in the area. Chairman Brown thanked her for the introduction and agreed that her background should prove to be quite useful in future Commission projects.

Commissioner Maychruk explained her background, stating that her family moved to the Village 20 years ago. She owned a business in Oak Park and currently owns a brokerage firm. She also runs the business association in the Arts District of Oak Park. She hopes to be helpful on this Commission.

Chairman Brown asked the existing Commissioners to introduce themselves as well.

Commissioner Preston began by sharing that he has been serving on this commission for nearly 10 years. He works in private equity and has lived in various parts of the county before settling his family in the Village 22 years ago.

Commissioner Brangle introduced himself as a founding member of the commission. He is a professional architect, urban planner, and development consultant in private practice. He and his family have lived in the Village for 20 years, and he is eager to assist in finding viable developers for the vacant properties.

Commissioner Maychruk asked who was not present at this meeting. Chairman Brown said that Commissioner Lowes was not present. Assistant Administrator Spencer noted that Commissioner Chiplunkar was present on Zoom.

Chairman Brown made a motion to allow Commissioner Chiplunkar to participate virtually. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Preston.

The Motion passed by voice vote.

Commissioner Chiplunkar noted that he and his family have lived in the Village for 21 years. He is an intellectual property attorney and currently attending a conference for work in India. He is finishing his first term on the commission.

Chairman Brown has been a resident of River Forest since college, working as a commercial lender in the financial industry. He also has professional experience with development projects.

Executive Director Marion-Burton introduced himself and shared his enthusiasm about working with the businesses in River Forest. He also mentioned his familiarity with Maychruk, as she was his "first boss" when he worked for her business.

Assistant Administrator Spencer introduced herself and explained her role as the Assistant Village Administrator, liaison for the commission, and head of the Building Department. She shared her excitement about working with the Chamber and collaborating with business leaders.

Commissioner Maychruk inquired about the Commission's goals. Chairman Brown provided an overview of its mission. Commissioner Brangle shared some historical context from the early days of the Commission. Assistant Administrator Spencer mentioned that she had sent an email to the

new commissioners with the Village Code and background information about the Commission. Chairman Brown also offered to address any further questions.

Commissioner Szerszenowicz asked what has been accomplished by the Commission in the past 12 months. Commissioner Brangle gave a summary of some recent projects and topics.

Chairman Brown reiterated the role of this Commission is to recommend suggestions to the Board.

Discussion ensued regarding the characteristics of the recommendations and that process.

4. DISCUSSION REGARDING TIF SMALL BUSINESS INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Assistant Administrator Spencer informed the Commission that the Façade Improvement Grant Program will be introduced to the Village Board on March 10th. Any comments provided will be incorporated prior to the request for approval at the March 24th Board meeting. She invited the new Commissioners to please familiarize themselves with the Program if they hadn't already and provide any feedback to her so it can be incorporated.

Chairman Brown clarified that the expectation is to split the total qualified expenses up to \$5,000 evenly (50/50) with the applicant. He also expressed hope to expand the program to other areas of the community in future years.

There was also discussion regarding the methodology of the advertisement.

Commissioner Maychruk asked about the status of the TIF on Lake Street, Commissioner Brangle provided the background on that TIF which expired several years ago. Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of development along Lake Street. Commissioner Brangle discussed the ideas around development in the Village.

Assistant Administrator Spencer stated that she would provide the Commission with the latest draft of the program.

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

Commissioner Szerszenowicz asked what this was, Chairman Brown explained this is the opportunity to discuss how the Village helps local businesses. He invited Executive Director Marion-Burton to explain the services of the Chamber and how River Forest businesses become members. Executive Director Marion-Burton explained the plan for the Memorial Day Business Fair.

Commissioner Preston asked about the expected number of vendors, Executive Director Marion-Burton said that he hopes for 20-30.

Chairman Brown expressed his excitement for the event and how this is coming together and thanked Executive Director Marion-Burton for his contributions.

6. GENERAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Chairman Brown stated that he is grateful that JLL has decided to move forward with the Village as the broker. He explained how qualified they presented themselves in the selection process. Discussion ensued regarding the next steps with JLL. Commissioner Maychruk asked if anyone was aware of the intentions for 7756 Madison Avenue, no one was aware at this time.

Discussion ensued regarding the status and intention of the buyer. Chairman Brown stated that he has every confidence in JLL to find the right developer for the Village. Commissioner Brangle agreed, sharing his hope to work with the neighboring communities to develop the corridor cohesively, considering what would work best in the area.

Assistant Administrator Spencer provided an update regarding the Lake & Lathrop property, Chairman Brown asked if there was an update on the foreclosure case. Assistant Administrator Spencer stated there was no update available at this time as the Village is between court dates at this time. Chairman Brown commented that he would love to get something appropriate at that location as well as Madison Street.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Assistant Administrator Spencer invited the Commissioners to bring forward any ideas for projects or tasks for FY26 as staff is currently working on the budget.

Commissioner Maychruk asked what advertisement is being done to support businesses. Assistant Administrator Spencer said they are advertised weekly and monthly in the Village newsletters. Discussion ensued regarding various methods of reaching members of our business community.

A MOTION was made by Chairman Brown and seconded by Commissioner Preston to see the Village to hire someone to create a database of village businesses. By a voice vote, the motion passed.

Executive Director Marion-Burton expressed his experience with creating a database of businesses for Oak Park. Chairman Brown said that he is aware of advertising in the newsletter for businesses and hopes to increase our communication strategies. Discussion ensued regarding the data the Village currently possesses from the Business License database, found on the Village's website.

Chairman Brown appreciated the new ideas that were presented tonight.

Executive Director Marion-Burton updated the group about the growth of the Chamber in recent days. He also expressed how they are looking to promote River Forest businesses at the Chamber, in addition to changing their IRS tax status so that they can support businesses in new ways.

8. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Preston and seconded by Commissioner Brangle to adjourn the meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 7:35 p.m.

MOTION PASSED by unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted:



Jessica Spencer, Assistant Village Administrator

Date: 4/2/25

Cuyler Brown, Chairman Economic Development Commission