

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST  
VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MINUTES  
September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

A regular meeting of the Village of River Forest Board of Trustees was held on September 8<sup>th</sup> 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, Keskitalo, Vazquez, O'Connell, Gillis and Village Clerk Castellano

Absent: None

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

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

President Adduci led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS**

None.

**4. CITIZEN COMMENTS**

None.

**5. ELECTED OFFICIAL COMMENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Trustee Bachner began her comments with a land acknowledgment and wished everyone a happy summer.

Trustee Gillis commended Trinity High School for its recent achievements and acknowledged the appointment of Dr. Tina Taylor-Ritzler as the school's new principal. She then reminded everyone of the upcoming deadline for household hazardous waste collection.

Trustee Vazquez had no comments.

Clerk Castellano had no comments.

Trustee Brennan had no comments.

Trustee Keskitalo highlighted a library reading program.

Trustee O'Connell had no comments.

President Adduci had no comments.

## **6. CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. Village Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- b. Village Board of Trustees Executive Session Meeting Minutes – August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- c. Monthly Department Reports
- d. Administration Department Report
- e. Accounts Payable – August 2025 – \$1,964,948.35
- f. Film Permit Regulation Amendments – Ordinance

President Adduci noted that the Village Attorney and the Village Clerk suggested Item B be tabled for future consideration due to minor errors.

**MOTION** by Trustee O'Connell to approve consent agenda items A and C through F. seconded by Trustee Keskitalo

Trustees Brennan and Bachner each stated their intention to recuse themselves from voting on Consent Agenda Item A, as they were not present at the meeting.

**Roll call:**

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

Absent: None

Nays: None

Recusals from Item A: Trustees Brennan and Bachner

Motion Passes.

**7. CONSENT ITEMS FOR SEPARATE CONSIDERATION**

None.

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

a. Development Review Board

i. River Forest Park District – Priority Park Improvements – Ordinance

**MOTION** by Trustee Vazquez to approve an Ordinance granting the Planned Development Permit for general improvements at the River Forest Park District, Priory Park (7354 Division Street). Seconded by Trustee Bachner.

Administrator Walsh provided background information on the agenda item.

Trustee O'Connell inquired whether the request for cameras and an AED was included in the proposal.

Administrator Walsh responded that the Park District indicated these items would be incorporated into the plans but a condition requiring those items was also included in the Ordinance.

Trustee Vazquez then asked Police Chief Greenwood if he was comfortable with the proposed camera plan.

Chief Greenwood stated yes.

Trustee Brennan asked if the AED would be accessible to all users of the park with signage that identifies it.

Mike Sletten stated yes and then fielded questions from the Village Board on the project.

Trustee Brennan requested a minor revision to the ordinance in Section 4, Part 5, related to landscaping. She recommended that the word “removed” be added to the section.

Trustee Vazquez agreed to amend his motion to include the request from Trustee Brennan. Trustee Bachner agreed to second as well.

Trustee Bachner asked for clarification on the tree removals at Constitution Park.

Director Sletten provided an explanation regarding the tree removals at Constitution Park, noting that several of the removed trees were either already dying or diseased.

Trustee Bachner asked if there were any trees that were removed that were not already dying or diseased.

Director Sletten stated no and offered an explanation on trees proposed to be moved at the Priory.

President Adduci and Director Sletten discussed the difference between relocating and replacing trees.

**Roll call:**

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

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

**9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

## 10. NEW BUSINESS

### a. Discussion Regarding term Limit Referendum

Administrator Walsh provided background information on the agenda item and explained that staff are seeking consensus on potential next steps related to term limits. He then invited Village Attorney Malina to present the available options moving forward.

Village Attorney Malina provided background and mentioned that his firm's primary recommendation when the petitions were filed was for the Village Clerk to not certify the question due to the confusion over which type of question it was. He outlined the possible actions the Village could take in response to the petition. Attorney Malina stated the options are to do nothing, although there could be an issue in the future if a candidate seeks a third term. The other option is for the Village Board to place a binding referendum on an upcoming ballot.

Trustee Vazquez asked for clarification on the timeline for placing a referendum question on the ballot in upcoming elections.

Attorney Malina explained that the question could be included in the general election in November 2026 or the local election in 2027.

Trustee Brennan inquired whether it could also appear on the March 2026 primary ballot and, if so, what the submission deadline would be.

Village Attorney Malina confirmed that it could be placed on the March 2026 primary ballot and said he would follow up with the exact deadline for submission.

Administrator Walsh added that he believed the deadline would be the last week of December.

Attorney Malina noted that regardless of when the referendum is placed on the ballot, it will take effect the same way based on the designated start date of the term limits. He reminded everyone that the referendum question must be constitutionally and statutorily prospective in nature.

Trustee Keskitalo asked what the deadline would be for the candidates seeking election in 2027 to file their petitions.

Village Attorney stated it would be the December, after the general election.

President Adduci stated that the Village Board has three opportunities to place a question on the ballot: the March 2026 primary, with a submission deadline of December 29, 2025; the November 2026 general election, with a deadline of August 17, 2026; and the final option, the April 2027 local election.

President Adduci reminded everyone that each election brings different levels of voter turnout and other varying factors and asked Attorney Malina to elaborate.

Village Attorney Malina agreed, noting that each election typically sees different turnout levels, with the primary election usually having the lowest participation.

Trustee Bachner asked what the next steps would be for the Village Board if the most recent ballot question is considered advisory. She added that, based on her understanding, since the Clerk certified the question, it is at minimum considered advisory. Attorney Malina agreed with that understanding.

Attorney Malina stated that, for the purposes of this discussion, he would respond as though the question is clearly advisory. He explained that the next step would be for the Village Board to decide whether to act on the results of the election or disregard them, as the outcome of an advisory referendum is not legally binding.

He then highlighted that the only way to enact on term limits is via a binding referendum, thus the Board would have to agree to place a binding referendum question on the ballot. Attorney Malina stated that the Village would not be able to enact term limits by simply adopting a local ordinance, as it is a change in the form of government. The only way to change the form of government is by a clearly binding referendum.

Trustee Bachner inquired whether the requirement to place a binding referendum in order to implement term limits is based on River Forest's local laws or mandated by state law.

Village Attorney Malina stated it is due to the Illinois Municipal Code.

Trustee Bachner stated that she found a section of the Municipal Code that appears to indicate a municipal government can implement term limits by passing an ordinance. Trustee Bachner stated she did not believe there was any ambiguity in this section of municipal code.

Village Attorney Malina responded that this is not his interpretation of the state statutes and that he would need to investigate the matter further. He then provided background, explaining that the Illinois General Assembly specifically enacted legislation to allow term limits to be implemented through binding referendums.

Trustee Bachner pointed out that a 2016 change is what she believes allowed for the implementation of term limits, and that a term limit implementation was no longer considered a form of government change.

Attorney Malina noted that is not his understanding of state statutes.

Trustee Bachner asked Attorney Malina to determine whether her interpretation is accurate and requested that he report back to the Village Board once he has clarified which interpretation is correct.

Village Attorney Malina confirmed that he would follow up and report back.

Trustee Vazquez asked whether a municipality's home rule status affects the implementation of term limits.

Attorney Malina responded that being home rule or non-home rule should not impact how term limits can be implemented.

Trustee Bachner clarified that recent changes have clarified home rule municipalities and their authority to implement term limits.

Attorney Malina added that, constitutionally, term limit measures cannot be applied retroactively.

President Adduci then asked for clarification regarding the concerns Trustee Bachner raised about the different avenues for implementing term limits.

Village Attorney Malina explained that Trustee Bachner is asserting that municipalities have the authority to enact term limits through an ordinance.

Trustee Keskitalo stated that Tinley Park implemented their term limits through a combination of an advisory referendum and an ordinance.

Attorney Malina noted that he is not familiar with that Tinley Park's actions.

Trustee Bachner stated that it appears to be the easiest path for the Village Board to take.

Trustee O'Connell reminded everyone that there is still the outstanding question of whether the recent referendum was binding or advisory.

Trustee Bachner explained that if the referendum is binding, the Village must implement the term limits. However, if it is advisory, it strongly suggests that the Village Board should move forward with implementing term limits, as the voters clearly expressed their preference through the vote.

Village Attorney Malina noted that there may be a potential issue with taking action based on this particular petition based on the ambiguity surrounding the petition documents.

Trustee Vazquez suggested that the Village Board refrain from taking any action on this matter tonight and wait to hear back from the Village Attorney.

Village Attorney Malina noted that once he completes his research, he will propose whatever solution the legislation allows.

President Adduci asked if the Village Board could simply codify the question into the Village's code.

Attorney Malina responded that while the Board could choose to do so, it would have little practical effect since, legally, term limits must be established through a binding referendum.

Trustee Bachner noted her interpretation is that the Board could implement term limits via passing an ordinance.



Trustee Keskitalo stated she had the same question whether the Board could pass an ordinance.

Village Attorney Malina stated that the Board could pass an ordinance as if it were binding, although the legal effect of that ordinance would need to be investigated further.

Trustee Bachner stated that the section of the code she is referencing is 65 ILCS 5/3.1-10-17. She added that she is not sure whether there are other sections of the Illinois Municipal Code that may also be relevant to this issue.

Trustee Brennan noted the legal memo shared with the Village Board has not been shared with the public.

Village Attorney Malina stated the memo is confidential because it has to be.

Trustee Brennan asked if the memo provided to the Village Board on this topic could be shared with residents to help provide greater clarity and transparency. She suggested that staff could create a synopsis of the memo to share with residents.

Attorney Malina stated that could be done.

Trustee Bachner asked why the memo needed to remain confidential.

Village Attorney Malina explained that it is considered confidential because it contains his legal advice to the Village Board. However, he noted that the Board has the option to waive that confidentiality if it chooses.

Trustee Bachner raised a point that there have been several memos from Attorney Malina that were made public, including an Ethics Commission memo recently. Attorney Malina responded that the Village Board discussed that at the time.

Trustee Bachner then asked who has the authority to waive confidentiality.

President Adduci recommended that the Village Board should hold that authority and offered that the Board could agree to release the memo if it wanted.

Trustee Bachner and Trustee Brennan noted being in support of releasing the memo, or some version of it.

Trustee Vazquez stated he was not comfortable waiving attorney-client privilege at this time.

Trustee O'Connell encouraged the Village Board to take their time with this topic.

Trustee Gillis asked if a different summary version could be shared, rather than the full memo. President Adduci stated that it would be good to add the new information to the memo. Trustee Vazquez agreed that the memo needs to be updated with all options based on the information raised tonight by Trustee Bachner.

Trustee Keskitalo stated that information should be shared with the public sooner rather than later.

Trustee O'Connell shared his thoughts that the memo needs to include new information before sharing. Trustee Bachner agreed that it would be best to wait for additional information. Trustee Bachner asked that the updated memo be received soon. President Adduci added that they would discuss when the memo is completed.

Trustee Vazquez asked if every Board member can attend the upcoming Board meetings.

Trustee Gillis noted she would not be at the next Board meeting.

Administrator Walsh noted that October 13<sup>th</sup> appears to be the next meeting where all the members of the Board will be in attendance.

Trustee Brennan noted she needed to reference her calendar before saying she was available.

President Adduci noted that October 13<sup>th</sup> is a regularly scheduled meeting.

Clerk Castellano asked if the Village Board chooses to interpret the referendum as advisory, would the ambiguity of the petition still leave it vulnerable to legal

challenge.

Attorney Malina stated he could not eliminate any possible legal outcomes.

Trustee Bachner reminded everyone that nearly everything can be challenged legally, and the Clerk did certify the question.

Attorney Malina cautioned the Board against thinking it is merely a one-or-the-other situation, noting that legal issues are still present.

Trustee Gillis noted that she would like to act on this with the goal of minimizing risk to the Village.

Trustee Bachner noted that it is possible the Board doesn't even need another question on the ballot.

President Adduci noted that the main question at hand is whether Attorney Malina can determine if the Illinois Municipal Code allows for term limits to be implemented via an ordinance, with no referendum needed.

Attorney Malina noted that he understands what his role is in the task at hand.

President Adduci summarized the Board direction, stating that Attorney Malina would update his confidential memo and share with the Village Board. Attorney Malina added that he would include the updates to the memo separately to create a timeline.

Trustee Brennan reiterated her request that the Village provide some information or a synopsis of the options the Board can take for public dissemination. President Adduci stated there is no problem with creating a synopsis and that staff would work on that.

## **11.EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None.

## **12. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** to adjourn by Trustee O'Connell. Seconded by Trustee Vazquez.

**Roll call:**

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

Absent : None

Nays : None

The Village Board of Trustees Meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.



Rosa Castellano, Village Clerk

Date:

