

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES  
Monday, September 21, 2020**

A Committee of the Whole meeting was held on Monday, September 21, 2020 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 Bachner, Brennan, Cargie, Henek, O’Connell, Vazquez

Absent: None

Also Present: Village Clerk Kathleen Brand-White, Village Administrator Eric Palm, Assistant 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, Public Works Director John Anderson

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**3. DISCUSSION: CULTURE OF EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

President Adduci expressed her excitement about this conversation and, quoting Ruth Bader Ginsberg, stated that she is hopeful that if the community or Village Board of Trustees has a blind spot today, its eyes will be open tomorrow. She also shared a story about a new resident who had called the police regarding someone walking in her backyard and how she had asked whether that resident would have had the same reaction if the person had looked like her. President Adduci stated the community has to have a dialogue around equity and inclusion and look at internal, administrative workings to ensure the Village is striving for equity and inclusion. She noted that the bigger part of the community conversation will be at the next Village Board meeting on September 29 with Dominican University. President Adduci stated the conversations will be difficult and uncertain, but she is hopeful that they will be constructive and result in actionable initiatives and change. She reiterated that the Village Board is not afraid of disrupting the status quo and asked that this be done in a constructive and collegial way.

Administrator Palm walked through the [presentation](#). He highlighted sections of the 2017 Welcoming Resolution, noting that while its genesis related to immigration, Staff recommends updating it to affirm and reflect contemporary issues. He stated this discussion will focus on two areas: the internal Village government and external with the community through its partnership with Dominican.

Mr. Palm reviewed the definitions of equity and inclusion, noting the Village's goal is to build upon the positive culture of the community by continuing its commitment to inclusion and equitable treatment in all aspects of civic life. He proposed creating an advisory group of approximately 12 members, one selected by each trustee and one member from the Economic Development Commission, one from the Development Review Board, and one from the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners, who would work with Staff to create an action plan that focuses on viewing things like purchasing or training opportunities through the lens of equity and inclusion, and focusing its efforts on Village operating departments.

Trustee Bachner discussed the working group she and Trustee Brennan began forming after the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and others. She stated they have a set of candidates who can do this work who have lived experiences or critical knowledge around the issues of policing. She expressed her pride in this group based on the work they have done to identify residents with diverse backgrounds. Trustee Bachner stated she thinks this makes sense for the internal working group and offered to introduce these individuals to the Village Board to provide their backgrounds and why they would be important voices working with the Village on these issues. She further stated that it makes sense to have one or two from the working group to work with the broader community group.

Trustee Brennan stated that she and Trustee Bachner were slow and thoughtful about the way to put together the working group. She stated the group was formulated with the thought of looking at equity in the processes and systems in order to make recommendations to the Village Board. She remarked that they had one meeting already and that is what the members are expecting, and that she would like to see what this group of residents comes up with.

Trustee Henek agreed that this was her understanding and stated that she liked the idea of reaching out to residents to share their lived experiences. She commented that that is what is going to help internal practices and that there is a difference between what is on paper and what people are really experiencing. She stated that hearing these examples will guide the Village and that work has already been done to put this together.

Trustee Cargie expressed concerns that this was not a democratic process. He stated he knows people who have lived experiences and asked why it was Trustees Bachner and Brennan who get to decide on the members. He commented that if Board members act individually, they cannot expect their actions to become Village Board actions.

Trustee Bachner stated it was informal and they were given the go-ahead to begin having conversations with people.

Trustee Henek stated she had specifically asked in other meetings how this was going to work.

Trustee O'Connell expressed his agreement with Trustee Cargie, stating that President Adduci is the only one who has the authority to make appointments. He stated that if the Board wants to form a commission, they should do it the way it is supposed to be done.

President Adduci stated she does not see it as something that was done behind closed doors and expressed her support for the working group that is being put together. She stated these groups are not mutually exclusive and that there is common ground. She remarked that she did not want to get into whether it was authorized because that is not productive. She asked how can the Board move forward with this group and make it equitable, noting that what she is hearing is that Trustees Cargie and O'Connell would like to be a part of this process.

Trustee Bachner commented that her group has been informal and that it makes sense to have others involved. She reiterated the importance of having the voices of those who have been marginalized and real intentions around who is participating so that not one group is over represented. She suggested having someone from her group be the liaison between the internal group and community-wide discussion.

Trustee O'Connell stated he did not know what their group had already discussed and deferred to the plan Administrator Palm is presenting. He stated it involves purchasing and fire and police employees, and noted that it is different when the discussions include spending money.

Trustee Brennan stated she sees the group's intentions in the presentation. She reiterated Trustee Bachner's request to introduce the residents in the group to the Village Board, and she stated she thinks they will be impressed by the individuals' lived experiences and expertise they would bring to the group.

Trustee Cargie stated that there are two members of the Board who object to the process of two trustees selecting all the people in this group.

Trustee Henek stated she wanted to reiterate that this was a public conversation.

Trustee Cargie stated that at the time, the group was being discussed along with the Twin Village Covenant. He stated that it was never suggested this group would review the policies and procedures of the Village.

Trustee O'Connell stated it sounds like a committee has been established outside of the Village Board. He stated he is happy to sit down and meet with the individuals and that a lot of them will fit into what they are trying to do.

President Adduci stated she did not think they had to exclude the group already formed by Trustees Bachner and Brennan, and she welcomed a larger group so that other trustees would feel they have contributed. She stated she would like to see one member from the Board of Police and Fire Commissioners and one from the Economic Development Commission. She further stated she thinks the Board can come to a more cohesive and inclusive group.

Trustee Vazquez stated he appreciates the concerns of all the trustees, and that he also understood that this group was focused on the covenant. He identified an internal and external prong and stated the Board needs to be more aligned. He clarified that he is not against whoever the group is but that after they are introduced to the Board, that may

alleviate some concerns. He stated that he would like to know who these individuals are and shared his experience with the D90 committee. He remarked on the importance of being coordinated and eventually setting goals, parameters, and expectations.

President Adduci stated these individuals are welcome in the group as well as the commissioners mentioned. She noted the Board will begin to have a conversation with Dominican next week, and that if the group needs to be larger, it can be.

Trustee Bachner stated she did not disagree and that when recalling the Twin Village Covenant, those items dovetail well together with the review of internal processes. She commented that had there been more coordination between the working group and the slides, that message may have been smoother. She recalled a conversation with Administrator Palm saying that none of this is going to look perfect and that everyone will make mistakes around these issues. She emphasized that it is critical to have community engagement and voices with different experiences.

President Adduci commented that they have talked long and hard about these issues and that if the presentation could have been more robust, she wished it would have been brought up.

Trustee Cargie shared that in his experience with the Deer Committee, the bigger it is, the more difficult it is to manage.

Trustee Vazquez recalled his experience with D90 and stated he would not recommend 45 individuals. He stated that group has different perspectives with a comprehensive mixture of parents, teachers, and community members. He stated that part of this involved training on equity and inclusion, and they were trying to also have more people trained in this area so they can understand equity and inclusion.

President Adduci emphasized that they will get through it and that she did not think this issue would drive a wedge going forward.

Trustee Brennan stated there is something unique about this topic and advisory and working groups being discussed. She highlighted the importance of having a majority of marginalized individuals on the working groups and that it is different from other groups, noting it is unique to the topics this group will be working on.

President Adduci commended Trustee Brennan's statement and emphasized that everyone on the call would agree to that. She further stated she thinks the Board can agree that this is going to be part of the working group that is informally gathering, and she asked each trustee to look for someone to bring forward to be part of these dialogues.

Trustee O'Connell asked Trustees Brennan and Bachner to bring forth the names of these individuals, and he stated that having 12 people out there with knowledge that at least four members of the Board do not have is not fair.

President Adduci stated they will get the names and be introduced to the Board and reiterated she is looking for one recommendation per trustee, plus the three commissioners, as well as Staff, with Administrator Palm leading the discussions. She stated that they will always come back to the Village Board for updates.

Administrator Palm introduced the Dominican University framework, which involves partnerships that have engaged the community at large to have a greater impact. He stated that Sheila Radford-Hill will join the Board next week to provide more detail.

President Adduci stated Concordia will be working as part of this discussion as well.

Administrator Palm stated the two advisory groups will report back to the Board for updates, feedback, recommendations for changes to policies and ordinances. He affirmed that Staff is looking forward to moving the needle.

#### **4. DISCUSSION: FOLLOW-UP ON POLICE FORUMS**

Trustee Vazquez thanked Mr. Palm for taking the lead on this and acknowledged that difficult discussions are not unique to the Village. He noted that the Board has more similarities than differences and that some members just did not have all the information. He emphasized these are difficult discussions but not to attribute that to aggression in pursuing this.

Mr. Palm acknowledged that there will be difficult discussions and that today was more process than content. He acknowledged his position as a white male leading this effort and reiterated this will be difficult at times but that this is how the community moves forward.

Chief O'Shea reviewed the policing forums held earlier in the year and read a statement regarding the state of society today. He noted the River Forest Police Department will continue to build trust with the community to better serve residents and visitors, as well as be receptive to the realities or perceptions that both diverse and devalued populations have and want to share. He noted reforms and best practices the Department follows, and he stated the community as a whole, including Village government, need to work in concert to cultivate the moral and ethical courage to form a framework of ethical outcomes. He emphasized that the Department supports creating a community of advocates to raise the bar for current and future generations, and that the Department is excited to participate in the Culture of Equity and Inclusion Initiative.

Chief O'Shea and Commander Greenwood presented on the Department's policies, trainings, and services. They also reviewed staffing and department demographics, as well as technology used in policing. There was a discussion about street cameras and recordings in the squad cars. President Adduci noted her support for continuing to upgrade technology.

In response to questions from Trustee O'Connell, Chief O'Shea noted there is a nationwide shortage of police officers due to a combination of mid-level officers retiring and the number

of candidates testing, and he noted some municipalities are relying on lateral transfers. Mr. Palm confirmed there is a budget of \$34,000 for training.

In response to a question from Trustee Vazquez about the higher number of Latinx applicants compared to African American, Chief O'Shea stated the Latinx population is growing and that sometimes African American applicants are more interested in servicing communities that are hardest hit. He stated there is a national discussion about how to recruit people of color to this profession. Chief O'Shea also noted that 5 of the last 6 hires in the Police Department have been people of color.

Trustee Bachner commended the work being done to actively recruit people of color. She asked how many officers live in River Forest.

In response to a question from Trustee Bachner about follow up questions from the forums, Chief O'Shea stated the feedback was positive and some individuals reached out to Officer Ransom and others did not.

Trustee Bachner expressed concern about police departments having military grade equipment.

Chief O'Shea explained the Law Enforcement Support Office is the state hub for surplus federal equipment and reviewed the rifles in the Department's inventory, noting that some are non-operable and others are used for training. He stated the Department has personnel with military backgrounds. Chief O'Shea emphasized that high caliber weapons are only carried and utilized when the Department is responding to a threat involving multiple weapons, a bank robbery, or home invasion.

Chief O'Shea discussed the use of body cameras, noting their primary use is to preserve evidence and secondary use is transparency and officer accountability.

In response to a question from Trustee Henek, Chief O'Shea reviewed State law and what areas of Village Hall are filmed. He stated there is a posting in the squad cars regarding cameras and explained the policies outlined by State statutes of where and when the cameras can be and begin recording. In response to a follow up question from Trustee Henek, Chief O'Shea stated the squad car cameras are triggered by turning on the lights. He stated he is happy to provide the general orders which, governed by State law, outline the use of cameras.

Chief O'Shea also provided an update on the crime statistics.

Administrator Palm congratulated Fire Chief Bohlmann for his 30-year anniversary with the Village. He also reminded the Board their next meeting is Tuesday, September 29, not Monday.

## **5. ADJOURNMENT**

Trustee O'Connell made a motion seconded by Trustee Vazquez, to adjourn the Committee of the Whole meeting at 9:13 p.m.

Roll call:

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

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

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Kathleen Brand-White, Village Clerk

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [VBOI](#)  
**Subject:** Response to agenda item for board meeting  
**Date:** Monday, September 21, 2020 5:32:21 PM

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Dear Members of the Board,

I reviewed the packet for tonight's meeting and noticed the presentation following up the Police Forums. The language used in these slides indicates to me that there is much work to be done in terms of cultural competency and racial sensitivity. The word "Caucasian" is an inaccurate and offensive term. The word caucasian is based on an antiquated anthropological category created at the end of the 18th century. The categories used for hiring targets need to be made clear. The use of the word Latino, implies that you would not hire women who are Latinas. How is Asian different from Mille Eastern?

The simple fact that these categories were used demonstrates a severe lack of understanding of the issues at stake.

Mary Hope Griffin

Mary Hope Griffin, Ph.D.  
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