VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MINUTES
September 28th, 2026

A regular meeting of the Village of River Forest Board of Trustees was held on September 28th, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room at River Forest Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:12 p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present:	President Adduci, Trustees Brennan, Bachner, Gillis, O'Connell, Keskitalo, Vazquez, and Village Clerk Castellano
Absent:	None
Also Present:	Village Attorney Lance Malina, Village Administrator Matt Walsh, Assistant Village Administrator Jessica Spencer, Fire Chief Tom Gaertner, Director of Public Works and Engineering Jack Bielak, Police Chief James Greenwood, Deputy Police Chief Michael Swierczynski, Finance Director Rosemary McAdams, Police Commander Martin Grill, HR Manager Trish Ivansek, and Deputy Clerk Luke Masella.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Adduci led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

a. Fire Department Company Citation – Lt. Quentin Boyd, FF Adam Seablom, FF Brian McKenna, and FF Jonathan Rouse

Fire Chief Tom Gaertner provided background information on the agenda item and invited Mr. Rutman, whose life was saved by the Department's actions, to speak.

Mr. Rutman made remarks regarding the incident and the actions of the first responders and thanked the Fire Department for its work.

4.CITIZEN COMMENTS

President Adduci asked residents wishing to make public comment to wait until the appropriate agenda item was called for discussion.

5. ELECTED OFFICIALS' COMMENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee O'Connell had no comments.

Trustee Keskitalo began her comments with a land acknowledgment and thanked residents for their recent engagement with Village matters.

Trustee Brennan asked about the timeline she requested regarding the Village's interactions concerning the proposed O'Hare Flyer train. Administrator Walsh directed her to correspondence posted on the Village's webpage and provided clarification regarding documents in the Village's possession. Trustee Brennan reiterated her request for a record of the Village's contacts and discussions.

President Adduci noted that no significant information was shared during the meetings and stated that a calendar was not necessary. Trustee Brennan stated that a calendar would help provide context for current conversations.

Trustee Keskitalo noted that she had reported her conversations with residents to Administrator Walsh.

Trustee O'Connell asked for legal clarification regarding trustees' interactions with resident-led groups through apps or social media. Attorney Malina provided clarification regarding trustees' interactions with residents in person and through social media.

Clerk Castellano had no comments.

Trustee Vazquez noted an upcoming O'Hare Flyer meeting in Forest Park and recognized the Police Department for work in the Village.

Trustee Gillis thanked the Fire Department for its work and highlighted the upcoming household hazardous waste collection deadline.

Trustee Bachner thanked the firefighters for their work and the resident for sharing their perspective.

President Adduci noted that she did not attend the IML conference and thanked the staff and elected officials who attended. She provided an update on the O'Hare Flyer and raised concerns regarding the posting of resident-run group websites on Village webpages due to potential legal issues. She also made remarks regarding the passing of a resident.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

a. A Resolution Supporting River Forest's Bird City Illinois Certification
~~b. Village Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – September 14th, 2026~~
c. Purchase Approval – Carlton 7500 Stump Grinder – Alexander Equipment Company – $85,252.00
d. Contract Approval – Vertex One (Watersmart) – $12,512.00
e. Invoice Approval – Lama Software – $32,239.07
~~f. Contract Amendment – Safebuilt Plan Review Services~~

President Adduci requested that consent agenda item 6.b Village Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – September 14th, 2026, be tabled until next meeting.

Trustee Brennan requested that item 6.f be pulled for separate consideration.

MOTION by Trustee O'Connell, seconded by Trustee Bachner, to approve Consent Agenda Items a, c, d, and e.

Roll call:
Ayes: Trustees O'Connell, Bachner, Vazquez, Gillis, Brennan, and Keskitalo
Nays: None
Absent: None

Motion Passes.

7. CONSENT ITEMS FOR SEPARATE CONSIDERATION

b. Village Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – September 14th, 2026

MOTION by Trustee Keskitalo, seconded by Trustee Vazquez, to table consent agenda item 6.b Village Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – September 14th, 2026.

Administrator Walsh recommended tabling the item until the next meeting.

Trustee Bachner asked for the reason for tabling the item.

President Adduci noted that there had been significant back-and-forth regarding the minutes and recommended moving the item to the next meeting.

Roll call:
Ayes: Trustees O'Connell, Bachner, Vazquez, Gillis, Brennan, and Keskitalo
Nays: None
Absent: None

Motion Passes.

f. Contract Amendment – Safebuilt Plan Review Services

MOTION by Trustee O'Connell, seconded by Trustee Gillis, to approve a Consent Agenda Item f.

Trustee Brennan asked for clarification on the relationship between the contract and the Madison Street Development property and whether the Village had outsourced similar services in the past.

Assistant Village Administrator Jessica Spencer provided an explanation of the services and their connection to developments in the Village.

Trustee O'Connell asked if the vendor was the Village's current provider for ongoing permit review.

Assistant Village Administrator Spencer confirmed that it was.

Roll call:
Ayes: Trustees O'Connell, Vazquez, Gillis, Brennan, Bachner, and Keskitalo
Nays: None
Absent: None

8. RECOMMENDATIONS OF BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

None.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

10. NEW BUSINESS

a. Contract Approval – Proposed O'Hare Flyer Consultants
   i. Contract Approval – Communications Consultant – Jasculca Terman Strategic Communications
   ii. Contract Approval – Government Relations – Prescott Group – $45,500.00
   iii. Contract Approval – Legal Representation – Daniel Elliot (GKG Law) – $25,000.00

MOTION by Trustee O'Connell, seconded by Trustee Gillis, to approve the professional services agreements with Jasculca Terman Strategic Communications for Critical Issues Strategy and Management services and ongoing Village communications services through April 30, 2027; The Prescott Group, LLC for federal governmental affairs services related to the O'Hare Flyer at a rate of $6,500 per month for 7 months, in a total amount not to exceed $45,500; and GKG Law, P.C. for specialized railroad and transportation legal services related to the O'Hare Flyer in an amount not to exceed $25,000; and authorize the Village Administrator to execute the agreements and any necessary related documents on behalf of the Village pending final attorney review.

Following discussion with staff, the Village Board agreed to extend the Jasculca contract to a full 12-month term at a cost not to exceed $160,000.00

Trustees O'Connell and Gillis agreed to amend their motions regarding the Jasculca contract.

Board members asked clarifying questions regarding the contracts, including

costs, duties, and Village budget funding sources.

Administrator Walsh and Assistant Village Administrator Spencer explained the charges and duties associated with each contract and their relation to the Village's work regarding the proposed O'Hare Flyer.

AMENDED MOTION by Trustee O'Connell, seconded by Trustee Gillis, to approve professional services agreements with Jasculca Terman Strategic Communications for a full 12-month term in an amount not to exceed $160,000.00.

Roll call:
Ayes: Trustees O'Connell, Bachner, Vazquez, Gillis, Brennan, and Keskitalo
Nays: None
Absent: None

Motion Passes.

b. Resolution Approval – Consolidation with the River Forest Civic Center Authority

Margie Cekander provided public comment regarding the proposed consolidation and raised a multitude of concerns, including an apparent lack of information surrounding the item.

MOTION by Trustee O'Connell , seconded by Trustee Vazquez, to approve a Resolution accepting the responsibilities and functions of the Civic Center Authority

Three tenants of the Civic Center at 8020 Madison Street provided public comment in support of the proposed consolidation: Opportunity Knocks, River Forest Township, and the River Forest Community Center.

Trustee O'Connell asked Village Attorney Lance Malina to provide background information on how the item came before the Village Board and the Village's options regarding the Civic Center.

Administrator Walsh responded to Trustee O'Connell's questions and noted that if no action were taken, the property would return to its current owner. He also

highlighted other variables the Civic Center could consider.

President Adduci noted her support for the proposed consolidation.

The Village Board and staff discussed the Village's proposed role as the new owner and landlord of the Civic Center, including landlord responsibilities, short- and long-term financial considerations, tenant stability, insurance matters, and the potential impact on TIF funds.

The Board also discussed incorporating the building into the Village's financial planning documents and future Capital Improvement Plans. Trustees raised concerns regarding the amount of information provided to the Board prior to the meeting and emphasized the importance of community engagement.

Staff and the Board then discussed the Village's existing leases with Civic Center tenants. Trustees raised concerns regarding the lease with the River Forest Community Center and its childcare center.

The Board continued discussing differing perspectives regarding the Civic Center, including the building's financial stability, tenants and existing leases, the Village's role as owner, and TIF funds. Trustees expressed differing views regarding the Village's use of funds for the property, the adequacy of the information provided by staff prior to the meeting, and how garbage and snow removal services would be provided.

Trustee Brennan explained her no vote at this point in the discussion regarding the Civic Center, raising concerns about the potential financial implications of rent increases on the River Forest Community Center, the lack of public discussion on the matter, and the lack of documentation provided by Village staff.

Trustee Bachner voted no and stated that her reasoning was the same as Trustee Brennan's.

Trustee Keskitalo voted yes and explained her vote, while also raising concerns about the use of TIF funds, the General Fund balance, the limited information available about the building, and the lack of information regarding what residents would like to see for the building. She requested that a plan be developed to address both the building's future and resident input.

Roll call:
Ayes: Trustees O'Connell, Vazquez, Gillis, and Keskitalo
Nays: Trustees Bachner and Brennan
Absent: None

Motion Passes.

c. Proposed Madison Street Neighborhood Relief Fund – Ordinance

Debbie Borman commented on the proposed agreement, noting that she appreciated the proposed ordinance but had concerns about certain provisions, potential loopholes or omissions, and how the agreement would apply to her property, which does not have a garage. She also asked whether previously completed work could be covered and provided the Board with a memo outlining her concerns.

MOTION by Trustee Gillis, seconded by Trustee O'Connell, to approve an Ordinance establishing the Madison Street Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program in the amount of $300,000.

President Adduci provided background information on the agenda item. Village Administrator Walsh explained how the proposed agreement was developed, highlighted differences between it and the neighbor agreement in the RDA and answered questions from the Board.

Board members asked how the agreement, as written, would ensure equitable treatment of all seven neighbors and raised concerns that some neighbors could submit expenses first and exhaust the available funds. The Board and staff discussed the reasoning behind the proposed ordinance and, with input from Village Attorney Malina, clarified which expenses are TIF-eligible.

The Board further discussed whether dividing the funds equally among the seven homeowners would be more equitable and whether to increase the total funding amount, with members sharing differing perspectives.

The Board continued discussing the relationship between the original project vote and the proposed funding agreement, with members sharing differing perspectives on the matter.

Administrator Walsh and Trustee Vazquez provided perspective on Trustee Vazquez's role in the agreement. The Board discussed Trustee Vazquez's position, and Trustee Vazquez stated that he would be comfortable being removed from the agreement if his fellow Board members wished to do so.

Trustee O'Connell asked that the Village ensure appropriate oversight of the funds, noting that residents in previous development projects had received funds but may not have completed the required work.

The Board, staff, and Village Attorney Malina discussed whether the Board should have final approval of all reimbursement requests and appeals or whether staff should have final approval. Trustee Brennan discussed creating an appeal process and what decisions would be subject to appeal, noting that Administrator Walsh should not serve as the sole appeal decision-maker.

The Village Board agreed to allow appeals to the Board regarding the eligibility of proposed projects under the program.

Trustee Bachner raised concerns about whether work completed prior to the building's construction should be eligible. Administrator Walsh noted that, as currently written, the program is forward-looking. Village Attorney Malina noted that it may be possible to allow funds for previously completed work. The Board, staff, and Attorney discussed the advantages and disadvantages of allowing reimbursement for work previously completed by homeowners.

Trustee Brennan raised concerns about proposed work that may not comply with Village building or zoning codes. Administrator Walsh explained that an applicant would need to seek a variance from the ZBA and, if required, the matter would subsequently come before the Village Board, as with other variances.

The Board discussed whether lead service line work would be eligible under the agreement.

Board members shared differing perspectives on how their prior votes on the overall project affected their votes on the funding agreement.

The Village Board agreed to divide the funds equally among the seven property

owners and create an appeal process limited to the eligibility of proposed projects based on TIF eligibility.

Village Attorney Malina explained how the proposed program and appeal process would work in practice, including Administrator Walsh's role in the process.

Trustee Keskitalo raised the possibility of using forgivable TIF loans. Village Attorney Malina and the Board discussed the viability of this option, and Trustee Brennan asked about a time limit. Attorney Malina noted that the time limit would be the life of the TIF.

Trustee Brennan explained her reasoning for voting yes.

The Board, staff, and Village Attorney clarified which items previously discussed would be included in the Ordinance and which would be addressed outside of the agreement.

Roll call:
Ayes: Trustees O'Connell, Bachner, Vazquez, Gillis, Brennan, and Keskitalo
Nays: None
Absent: None

Motion Passes.

d. Discussion of Proposed Resident Finance Committee – No Action

Thomas Lamm made public comment regarding several Village matters, including the Fire Department, O'Hare Flyer, Civic Center, and Village financial oversight. He thanked the Fire Department and Village staff for their work, expressed support for establishing a timeline for the O'Hare Flyer effort, and raised concerns regarding the Civic Center, financial oversight, consultant costs, and the potential benefits of a finance committee. He also noted that he had intended to speak earlier in the meeting, and President Adduci apologized for not calling on him sooner.

Administrator Walsh provided a summary of the history of various Village committees and commissions.

President Adduci addressed several of Mr. Lamm's comments, raised concerns about the potential politicization of a new committee, and stated that she did not believe one was necessary.

Trustee Brennan asked about the differences between a commission and a committee. President Adduci and Administrator Walsh provided background on the creation, composition, roles, and responsibilities of various Village commissions and committees. Trustee Bachner asked about the level of involvement of former commissions and committees and how frequently they met. President Adduci and Administrator Walsh responded to questions from the Board regarding the various commissions and committees.

Trustee Brennan expressed support for creating a proposed finance committee or commission, citing the number of current and future Village projects and the potential for such a body to provide guidance and advice before matters reach the Village Board. She also raised concerns about the number of consultants hired by the Village for work she believed had previously been handled by staff and suggested a finance committee could provide additional guidance in this area.

Trustees discussed the potential advantages and disadvantages of establishing a finance committee or commission.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION to adjourn by Trustee O'Connell, seconded by Trustee Bachner.

Roll call:
Ayes: Trustees O'Connell, Bachner, Brennan, Vazquez, Gillis, and Keskitalo
Absent: None
Nays: None

Motion Passes.

The Village Board of Trustees Meeting adjourned at 10:31 p.m.

Rosa Castellano, Village Clerk

Date: 10-12-26