

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
January 10, 2024**

A meeting of the Village of River Forest Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, January 10, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the 1st Floor Community Room of Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, Illinois.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m.

Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Chairman Cuyler Brown, Commissioners Robert Graham, Carr Preston, and Raj Chiplunkar. Katie Lowes joined via Zoom.

Absent: Commissioners Tim Brangle and Walter Wahlfeldt

Also Present: Village Administrator Matt Walsh (via Zoom) and Assistant Village Administrator Jessica Spencer.

A MOTION was made by Chairman Brown and SECONDED by Commissioner Carr to allow Commissioner Lowes to attend the meeting via Zoom.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ranier Ramos spoke on behalf of Mosaic Montessori school, explaining that he is hopeful that the text amendment will allow a special use application to be allowed for the property located at 7777 Lake Street.

Margie Cekander thanked everyone for moving the meetings from 7am. She raised concerns about the audio of the room. She mentioned the Lake and Lathrop development, asking about the data supporting the higher density in the Lake Street Zoning district. She also provided some feedback on proposed Zoning amendments currently under discussion with the Zoning Board of Appeals. She also spoke of her concerns about the public hearing notification process and how she feels there should be a focus on developing “empty spaces” within the Village.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – OCTOBER 4, 2023

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Graham and SECONDED by Commissioner Preston to approve the minutes of the October 4, 2023 meeting. MOTION PASSED by unanimous voice vote.

4. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION REGARDING PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT FOR CHILD DAYCARE CENTERS AS A SPECIAL USE IN C-3 CENTRAL COMMERCIAL ZONING DISTRICT

Chairman Brown asked if the text amendment would just be for this property or any in this district. Administrator Walsh clarified that the text amendment would not be specific to a particular property but would apply to the C-3 District.

Chairman Brown asked how to restrict other day care centers from applying for a special use permit in this same district if this text amendment is permitted. Discussion ensued regarding what these text amendments could mean in the future. Commissioner Graham stated that the public comment earlier this evening reminded the committee that it was formed to bring economic development to the Village.

Commissioner Chiplunkar asked how this request had made its way to this committee. Administrator Walsh explained that representatives for Mosaic Montessori school had approached the Village Board during a November meeting and the President thought having input from the Economic Development Committee and the Zoning Board of Appeals would be valuable in the Board's future decision. At its December meeting, the Zoning Board of Appeals unanimously recommended approval of the text amendment.

Commissioner Chiplunkar asked if the property owner would be applying for the special use application. Ariel Pang, representing the owner of the building at 7777 Lake Street, stated that she was acting on behalf of the property and this application. Commissioner Chiplunkar was concerned about having the legal representative present in the meeting. Administrator Walsh stated that for the text amendment under discussion this evening, the Village Board was the applicant, not this particular property or business owner.

Discussion ensued regarding the status of other vacant properties in the surrounding areas. Commissioner Chiplunkar asked Administrator Walsh if, in the future, this special use is approved, what happens if Mosaic Montessori School tries to move out in a few years? Administrator Walsh answered that he believed a special use is specific to the applicant, not the property, but he would have to verify and report back. Commissioner Chiplunkar asked what may happen if the property owner sells the property to Mosaic? Administrator Walsh stated that, unless there were operational changes or zoning needs, that would be allowed. Commissioner Preston pointed out that this committee is being asked to discuss the application for the whole district, not this one property. Commissioner Chiplunkar discussed the potential for another developer to purchase the building and develop the whole site as a daycare center. Administrator Walsh stated he would look into these concerns and get back to the committee.

Commissioner Lowes clarified the purpose of the committee, as published on the Village's website, for consideration of this discussion. Commissioner Graham reminded the group that the purpose of the committee was to bring economic development to the Village, and, in his

opinion, there are other locations for schools in the Village. Commissioner Preston asked if this text amendment was something that could be reversed in the future. Commissioner Chiplunkar doesn't want to "open pandora's box" and then find there is no space for economic development in this district, in the future. Commissioner Chiplunkar reminded the committee that it is a recommending body, and the Village Board would have the final say.

A MOTION was made by Chairman Brown and SECONDED by Commissioner Lowes to recommend to the Village Board a text amendment allowing the special use of child daycare centers in the C-3 district.

Cuyler Brown	Y
Robert Graham	N
Raj Chiplunkar	N
Katie Lowes	Y
Carr Preston	N

Chairman Brown mentioned that he wants to meet on a regular basis, with a quorum. Commissioner Preston asked if the committee could consider other days. Chairman Brown asked for staff to send out a Google Doc with some options. Commissioner Chiplunkar recommended future Committee packets come via invitations.

5. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION REGARDING REVISED DRAFT COMMERCIAL ZONING DISTRICT AMENDMENTS

Administrator Walsh updated the Committee on the status of this discussion, clarifying the purpose of the zoning district amendments were to incorporate recommendations from the Economic Development Committee including increasing building height to accommodate an additional story, increasing allowed residential densities, and decreasing parking requirements for residential uses in the C1, C2, C3, and ORIC districts. He clarified that no discussions have taken place on this topic by the Zoning Board of Appeals, as that would occur the following night.

Discussion ensued regarding the existing guidelines compared to the suggested changes. Commissioner Graham stated that these recommendations were provided by Houseal based on research of other communities and practices. Chairman Brown stated he agrees with Houseal recommendations, but he is particularly focused on the C-3 district (Lake Street) and the C-2 district (Madison Street). Chairman Brown stated that he understood that these changes were being made so that future variations would not be necessary and that if the ZBA doesn't approve, then the developers may pass on the opportunity to building the Village due to the additional time needed to request a variation from the code. But, Chairman Brown asked, do the residents really want 65 foot tall development in the C-2 and C-3 areas? Discussion ensued regarding the various height restrictions and the

language which might capture the intention of this committee. Commissioner Chiplunkar agrees with Chairman Brown. Commissioner Lowes reminded the group that previously, the committee chose to accept Houseal's proposal without a formal recommendation.

Commissioner Graham suggested accepting the proposal with a strong recommendation that the two properties, located near Lake & Lathrop and Lake & Park, should be allowed to be 65ft while the other properties in the C-3 District maintain the 50ft height requirement.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Graham and SECONDED by Chairman Brown to recommend the Zoning Board of Appeals consider the Houseal recommendations but also shares concerns regarding the height restrictions for C3 and ORIC districts.

All in favor, motion passed.

6. DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Chairman Brown asked if Administrator Walsh had any updates of developments in the Village, specifically regarding Madison Street. Walsh stated that staff has had conversations with some developers interested in the properties but the draft for RFPs are still in the works. Administrator Walsh also reported regarding Lake and Lathrop: the court appointed receiver has hired a broker to market the site and they have received a fair amount of interest thus far. The "final call for bids" at the end of this month/early next month. The legal process is still moving forward with the previous developer, however Wintrust and the receiver are still moving forward with a new owner for the site. Commissioner Graham asked if the receiver was responsible for upgrading the fencing around the site. Administrator Walsh clarified that they had provided security on the site and repaired the sidewalks; this is an ongoing conversation with the receiver. Chairman Brown asked about the Village's leverage to beautify the site. Administrator Walsh stated that the Village can and does enforce code violations, however, there have been none thus far. Chairman Brown was optimistic that there was interest in the purchase of the property at this time and asked that this committee continue to be provided updates at future meetings.

Chairman Brown recommends the Village talk to brokers about possible development sites. Administrator Walsh reported that there have been discussions with the Board, but he will seek to make this a priority. Chairman Brown wants to ensure that the Village's interests are considered by the developers. Commissioner Graham asked about Madison Street regarding the TIF funds being available for other land acquisition of adjacent properties; Administrator Walsh responded there may be some funds available, otherwise it would come from the General Fund. However, there have been no discussions of purchasing additional land at this time.

Chairman Brown inquired about the Chamber President being invited these committee meetings. Assistant Administrator Spencer will confirm the invitation is extended to Mr. Marion-Burton.

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

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Graham and SECONDED by Chairman Brown to adjourn the January 10, 2024, meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 7:37 p.m. MOTION PASSED by unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted:

Matt Walsh, Village Administrator

Date: _____

Cuyler Brown, Chairman Economic Development Commission