

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 21, 2019**

A meeting of the Village of River Forest Plan Commission was held on Monday, October 21, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. in the First 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 7:00 p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Commissioners Armalas, Fishman, Kilbride and Chairman Crosby

Absent: Commissioners Cragan, Gottlieb, and Kirk.

Also Present: Assistant Village Administrator Lisa Scheiner, Village Attorney Carmen P. Forte, Jr., John Houseal, of Houseal Lavigne Associates

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 7, 2019

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kilbride and SECONDED by Commissioner Fishman to approve the March 7, 2019 meeting minutes of the Plan Commission.

Ayes: Commissioners Armalas, Fishman, Kilbride and Chairman Crosby

Nays: None

Motion Passed.

3. DISCUSSION REGARDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLANNING AND APPEALS ACT AND RIVER FOREST AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN

Chairman Crosby explained that the Village Board directed the Plan Commission to develop an Affordable Housing Plan for the Village Board's Approval. Commissioner Kilbride asked Chairman Crosby if the Village previously had an affordable housing plan, which he confirmed the Village did not at this time.

John Houseal, Houseal Lavigne Associates, introduced himself and stated that he is the Village's planning consultant. He described the purpose of an Affordable Housing Plan and the process that would be followed to develop the plan. Mr. Houseal described that the State requires the Village to develop an affordable housing plan, and that he would summarize the Village's options

for doing so. Mr. Houseal displayed a PowerPoint presentation, which has been attached to the meeting minutes.

He discussed that the requirement for an affordable housing plan comes from PA093-059, the Illinois Affordable Housing and Appeals Act of Illinois (the "Act"), introduced in 2004 and later updated in 2013. He noted that the Act does not provide a method for implementing affordable housing strategies, but sets minimum requirements for affordable housing for municipalities within the state. He noted that the intent and purpose of the Act is to increase the amount of affordable housing within the state.

Mr. Houseal explained that counties or municipalities with less than 10% affordable housing within their borders are considered "non-exempt" and must prepare an affordable housing plan to comply with the minimum requirements of the Act. Counties and municipalities with 10% affordable housing or more are considered "exempt" from the provisions of the Act to have a plan in place. The Village currently has 9% of its housing stock considered affordable, and therefore is 1% shy of the State's requirement under the Act. He noted that the Village's newly adopted Comprehensive Plan requires the Village to prepare and adopt an affordable housing plan as required by the State, and to preserve and improve the quality of the Village's current affordable housing stock.

Mr. Houseal noted that the Village's affordable housing plan must do four things: 1) provide a calculation of the total number of affordable housing units that are necessary to exempt the Village from the Act's requirement to have an affordable housing plan (which would require the Village to bring the amount of affordable housing units to 10%); 2) include a statement of a goal for the Village with regard to affordable housing; 3) identify opportunities for the development of affordable housing; and 4) specify incentives the Village may provide for the creation of affordable housing.

Mr. Houseal noted that, according to the State, the Village had 3,788 housing units in 2018. Of those units, 340 were considered affordable by the State, which amounts to 9% of the total housing units. According to the Act, the Village will need 39 additional affordable housing units to meet the minimum requirement of 10% affordable units.

Mr. Houseal explained that in 2013, the State opined that the Village had 3,886 housing units, compared to 3,788 housing units in 2018, despite no actual decrease in the amount of housing units in the Village over this time period. In 2013, the State opined that the Village had 172 affordable units, compared to 340 affordable units in 2018, despite no affordable housing developments occurring from 2013 to 2018.

Mr. Houseal stated that, under the Act, a municipality can take three different approaches to meet the requirements of the Act: 1) increase the number of affordable housing units to 10% of the current housing stock; 2) increase the level of affordable housing stock by 3%; or 3) require that 15% of all new residential construction or redevelopment be affordable.

Mr. Houseal noted that the State does not take into consideration the specific characteristics of a fully built-out community, such as the Village, when determining a municipality's exempt status. He explained that 70% of the Village's residential units are classified as single-family detached. Limited land is available in the Village for residential development, and is extremely expensive. Creating new single-family affordable housing properties for redevelopment would be very difficult, due to economic constraints. New multi-family affordable housing units would be easier to create, but are still constrained by the Village's lack of available land to develop.

Mr. Houseal explained that if the Village were to attract the development of new affordable housing units, the units would have to be sold at well below market rate. He noted that some entity would have to subsidize the difference between market rate and the price for which the unit is sold or rented. The owner or developer would need an offsetting financial incentive to sell or develop property at or under market rate.

Mr. Houseal described the average income and housing cost requirements to make housing affordable across the various counties in Illinois. Compared to the median income level in the Village, and the cost of the current housing stock, the ability to offer much of the current housing stock as affordable is challenging. Commissioners Armalas and Kilbride asked about the calculations of the income levels presented by Mr. Houseal, which he explained were prepared by the State.

Commissioner Armalas noted that in the recent Chicago teachers' strike, it was explained that most of the entry level teachers in the City of Chicago were at the average income level for what the State considered appropriate for a consumer of affordable housing. Mr. Houseal explained that affordable housing is sometimes market rate housing available within a community, where in other communities it is well below market rate.

Mr. Houseal discussed that the Village may want to consider identifying potential incentives to developers to incentivize the increase of affordable housing in the Village. This may include zoning incentives, such as allowing for increased residential density on a project, reducing the required parking spaces for a development, reducing permit fees, or other various options. He discussed the use of targeted taxes or fees to new developments, with the funds received to be applied towards subsidizing other affordable housing developments. He also discussed the use of third-party funding for affordable housing projects, such as grant money or sponsorship from not-for-profit organizations.

Mr. Houseal noted that he believes a more regional approach to affordable housing should be considered by the State in its overall goal of increasing affordable housing. He described that within a short distance of the Village there is a considerable amount of affordable housing in the Village, and that this should be taken into consideration by the State.

Commissioner Kilbride asked Mr. Houseal the penalty for the Village not having 10% affordable housing. He indicated that there is no penalty for not having 10% affordable housing, but that the Act requires the Village to have a plan in place to bring the amount of affordable housing up to 10%. However, he noted that the State could take into account the Village's failure to have a plan in place if the Village were to apply for state funding via a grant program in the future.

Mr. Houseal stated that he felt he could prepare the plan in a short timeframe, unless the Commission and the Village Board were to recommend the increase of affordable housing by a specified amount via significant zoning changes that would require public hearings on these issues.

Chairman Crosby asked if there were any organizations that would make a recommendation as to what is a healthy amount of affordable housing within a specific municipality. Mr. Houseal noted that many people had differing thoughts on the proper amount of affordable housing, but was cautious not to cite any numbers, and he does not have a benchmark number that he believes is proper for the Village. He did note that, in his opinion, the State likely believes 10% is founded on considerable empirical data on the effects of levels of affordable housing, and that it is not just an arbitrary amount.

Chairman Crosby asked if the State considers the Village's university housing figures into its affordable housing calculations. Mr. Houseal did not believe that it was included in the calculations. Attorney Forte confirmed that it was not.

Mr. Houseal asked the commissioners which of the three goals that the Village should consider for complying with the Act, and what, if any zoning incentives the Village should consider to attract more affordable housing developments.

Commissioner Fishman stated that she would propose raising the level of affordable housing in the Village to 10%, through the use of zoning incentives. Commissioner Kilbride agreed, and noted that she was not in favor of raising or creating a new tax in the Village to meet that goal. Chairman Crosby agreed and was in favor of the use of zoning incentives to attract new affordable housing developments. He asked how specific the plan must be to delineate the terms of potential zoning incentives.

Mr. Houseal explained that it might be difficult to prepare a very specific plan with regard to the types of zoning incentives to give to a potential development, because each development is highly specific on its individual needs. He felt that it would be best to indicate in the plan that the Village

would consider general types of zoning relief with regard to each project, and include a list of incentives that were not exhaustive. Chairman Crosby agreed with this approach.

Commissioner Armalas pointed to a section of the Act in which he felt that the Village could coordinate with a neighboring community to provide the required amount of affordable housing. Commissioner Kilbride pointed out the nature of the Village as an affluent community, which over the years has attracted higher wealth individuals and resulted in larger homes with a lack of available space for other housing developments.

Chairman Crosby asked Commissioner Armalas to speak more about his thoughts on the level of affordable housing in the Village. Commissioner Armalas stated that he moved to the Village for its ease of access to amenities, and its proximity to the City of Chicago. He is very proud of the fact that the Village has great diversity as well. Commissioners Armalas and Kilbride discussed the potential additional locations for affordable housing in the Village.

Commissioner Armalas asked Mr. Houseal how the Village would protect the current affordable housing stock. He had concerns that requiring property owners to maintain or improve their properties would drive up rental rates and make the property less affordable. Mr. Houseal explained that supporting the existing affordable housing, while maintaining their condition, is a delicate process. He explained that the existing affordable housing locations in the Village are currently fairly concentrated in some areas in the Village, and that these areas should be preserved, while also identifying additional areas for affordable housing to locate in the Village. He indicated that most new affordable housing would likely be multi-family or mixed-use, just due to the high median cost of single-family residences in the Village.

Commissioner Armalas asked if it were possible to enter into an intergovernmental agreement with another Village to reach the goals of the Act with regard to affordable housing. Attorney Forte responded that the provisions of the Act that allow these types of agreements require that the partnering community is within 10 miles from the Village, and has less than 25% affordable housing within its housing stock. He noted that it may be more effective to enter into an agreement with another community that is currently non-exempt, and that of the current list of non-exempt communities, there are only a few that are potentially within a 10-mile radius of the Village.

Commissioner Fishman agreed that it would be improper for a more affluent community to partner with a community that has a significantly lower median income level, to take advantage of the higher level of affordable housing within that community. She agreed with the State's requirement that the partnering community have under 25% affordable housing, for this reason. Commissioner Kilbride agreed that this would be unfair. Commissioner Armalas noted that an intergovernmental agreement might not be the best idea.

Chairman Crosby asked Mr. Houseal what else he needed from the Commission. Mr. Houseal reiterated the Commissioner's decisions to formulate a plan to raise the affordable housing percentage to 10%, to identify potential areas for new affordable housing to be located, and to provide general incentives to applications for new developments. He noted that the plan that is eventually approved can later be amended to include additional strategies to attract affordable housing, but that the only requirement under the Act is to put a plan in place.

Mr. Houseal noted that he would draft the Affordable Housing Plan and provide a copy to Assistant Village Administrator Scheiner for review and distribution to the Commissioners.

The Commissioners discussed a future meeting date to review the draft plan, and to provide opportunity for community involvement. The Commissioners decided on the next regularly scheduled meeting date of November 19, 2019 to review the draft plan. The Commissioners agreed to have the draft plan available for public viewing on November 11, 2019.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

6. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kilbride and SECONDED by Commissioner Fishman to adjourn the Plan Commission meeting at 8:12 pm.

MOTION PASSED by voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted:

Lisa Scheiner, Secretary

David Crosby, Chairman