

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
REGULAR VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MINUTES
Monday, November 9, 2020**

A regular meeting of the Village of River Forest Board of Trustees was held on Monday, November 9, 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 7:03p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: President Adduci, Trustees Bachner, Brennan, Cargie, Henek, O’Connell, Vazquez, Village Clerk Kathleen Brand-White

Absent: None

Also Present: 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, Finance Director Rosemary McAdams, Fire Chief Kurt Bohlmann, Village Attorney Greg Smith

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Adduci led the pledge of allegiance.

3. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Suzanne Morrison, 7205 Iowa. Ms. Morrison commented about the Bicycle Plan implementation and expressed concern about the inclusion of paths along Harlem and North Avenues. She noted the limited space and expressed concern that the homeowners’ property would be needed to accommodate such a path. She requested that these paths be removed from the Plan and that the homeowners be involved in any future discussions about installing paths on these streets.

Administrator Palm noted the Bicycle Plan adopted in 2019 looks at all the major arterial routes in town and includes a regional approach. He stated Harlem Avenue was identified because of its connectivity to the region. He stated he would want to confirm with the Village’s consultant on the project that it was included as part of a long-term vision, and he clarified that there are no plans currently or in the future to install bike routes on Harlem Avenue.

Lisa Gillis, 1043 Keystone. Ms. Gillis expressed her support for the Bicycle Plan and stated that all plans evolve over time. She expressed that the Plan is important and encouraged that it needs to be implemented due to the increase of cyclists on the streets.

4. ELECTED OFFICIAL COMMENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee O'Connell reported that he attended a call regarding the River Forest Community Center project. He also stated he is looking forward to the continued conversation about flooding issues on Keystone.

Trustee Henek provided update regarding the Holiday Food and Gift Basket fundraiser, noting they have about \$12,000 left to raise. She stated donations can be made at www.communityofcongregations.org.

Trustee Brennan thanked everyone who participated in the Great Pumpkin Smash and thanked Lisa Gillis for providing the numbers on the event, noting 805 pumpkins were composted. She explained that keeping organics out of landfills reduces greenhouse gases and this event provides financial savings for residents. She thanked Lauren Behan for her work on the event. Trustee Brennan also noted that the Village has a corrugated plastic sign recycling bin available since these signs cannot go in the regular recycling.

Trustee Vazquez wished everyone a good evening.

Trustee Cargie stated the Deer Management Committee will have its next meeting on November 17 and stated the Committee has been collating responses to the questionnaire. He asked that Staff share the maps that were created with the Village Board.

Trustee Bachner read a statement to acknowledge that this land was once inhabited by indigenous people and stated that River Forest continues to be a place that people from diverse backgrounds live and gather. She reported that she met with Administrator Palm and President Adduci regarding the internal advisory group and what it would look like. She expressed hope that it could be presented at the next meeting.

Village Clerk Brand-White stated her appreciation for how everyone handled Halloween. She commented about the COVID-19 numbers and urged everyone to use caution.

President Adduci commented about how well the community did with Halloween and stated everyone was very welcoming. She reported that last week the mayors of WCMC had a meeting regarding the indoor dining restrictions and discussed how to address that. She stated they also agreed not to defy the Governor's requirements and to continue working hard to wear masks and ensure social distancing. President Adduci also reported that she was asked to introduce Michele Weldon, resident and author of *Act Like You're Having a Good Time* for an event at the Library. She echoed Trustee Brennan's comments about the Great Pumpkin Smash and stated that Lauren Behan and her family picked up pumpkins around town. She stated this is an awesome volunteer effort and expressed her appreciation for the Sustainability Commission and their work.

It was also noted that the closing of Panera Bread was just temporary.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Village Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - October 26, 2020

- b. Amendment to Intergovernmental Agreement and Sub-Recipient Agreement with Cook County for an Additional \$12,000 in CARES Act Funding
- c. Monthly Department Reports
- d. Accounts Payable – October 2020 – \$2,063,611.29
- e. Village Administrator’s Report

Trustee Bachner made a motion, seconded by Trustee O’Connell, to approve the Consent Agenda items A-E.

Roll call:

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

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

6. CONSENT ITEMS FOR SEPARATE CONSIDERATION

- a. Accounts Payable from the General Fund to McDonald’s-Karavites for \$140.09
(Trustee O’Connell Common Law Conflict of Interest)

Trustee Brennan made a motion, seconded by Trustee Vazquez, to approve payment from the General Fund to McDonald’s-Karavites for \$140.09.

In response to a question from Trustee Bachner about the dollar amount, Administrator Palm noted this is meals for those who are detained and that the increased amount was not reflective of an uptick in activity.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Bachner, Brennan, Cargie, Henek, Vazquez

Abstain: Trustee O’Connell

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS OF BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES

None.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. Project Update: Revised Bicycle Plan Implementation

Administrator Palm noted Staff took the Board’s direction to remove the wayfinding signs from the implementation plan and that reduction netted \$46,000. He stated the project cost is just under \$148,000 and the Village has a grant from the County for approximately \$30-35,000. He noted the rest of the funds would come out of the Capital Improvement Fund.

Trustee Henek noted that at the last meeting there was a discussion about phasing the project. She stated she had raised the point about spending conservatively during COVID and that she had expected something more phased to be presented. She reviewed the phasing already included in the plan. She emphasized she wanted to encourage bike riding and suggested prioritizing the implementation in terms of safety and encouraging bike riding. She referenced the survey results in the plan and noted people already feel comfortable biking in the community but one barrier is bike racks. She asked whether there were infrastructure pieces the Village could spend money on that would add more value, and she emphasized helping to encourage bike riding and making sure safety issues are addressed.

In response to a question from Trustee Cargie, Mr. Palm stated there is typically a loss to economies of scale when the implementation is broken up.

Trustee Cargie commented that there were still a lot of signs but that he was ok with it if they were all determined to increase safety.

In response to a follow up question from Trustee Cargie, Mr. Palm stated the signs are based on designated routes and making sure the bicyclists are on the right streets. He advised against paying for biking facilities on private property, such as Jewel.

Trustee Henek asked whether the Plan went through the Traffic and Safety Commission.

Trustee O'Connell stated that he was communicating with a Commission member who stated that it had.

Bicycle Task Force member Andy Basney stated one of the objectives of the Task Force was getting the input of people already bicycling. He noted safety is a primary objective and discussed cost restrictions.

In response to a question from President Adduci, Mr. Basney stated some of the signage could be phased in and that getting markings on the streets would be a good start. He expressed concern that when the work stops, there is a question of when it starts again.

Trustee Henek stated she asked about the Traffic and Safety Commission because she is not sure why the Village wants to encourage more bikes on Chicago or Lathrop. She noted other routes for north-south instead of main streets, and she stated that bicyclists have raised concerns about the bump outs on Chicago Avenue. She considered pushing the plan out to residents to take a look at it.

Trustee O'Connell stated this has been discussed already and it sounds like they are going back to square one.

President Adduci stated this started several years ago and noted the various levels of review. She stated Ms. Morrison's issue is separate and the Village can work on that to ensure there are no issues on Harlem.

Trustee Henek stated residents on Harlem, for example, were not aware of this plan until recently and that while discussions have been had and the concept of a plan has been in place for a while, the specifics of what it actually looks like have not been out there.

Trustee Brennan stated this specific plan has been presented to the Village Board several times and it was voted on in 2019. She stated she did not know what else they could do to get this information out to residents and that it has been on the agenda multiple times.

Trustee Vazquez stated that putting Ms. Morrison's issues aside for now, this would balance safety for all the current cyclists who are riding and that it also helps drivers. He stated he is ok with moving forward.

President Adduci stated there was consensus from the Village Board to move forward.

9. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Acceptance of the Estimate of the 2020 Corporate (aggregate) Property Tax Levy - \$8,130,737 (\$8,401,366 including Debt Service)

Trustee Vazquez made a motion, seconded by Trustee O'Connell, to accept the estimate for the 2020 Corporate (aggregate) Property Tax Levy in the amount of \$8,130,737.

Administrator Palm reviewed this item and noted that President Adduci asked Staff to look at the budget to see if the Village could rely on a flat levy for this year in light of the economy and COVID. He noted the Village has a healthy amount of reserves and that the property tax levy mirrors what the Village did last year. He stated the only difference is the Library is still taking its CPI amount.

President Adduci thanked Mr. Palm and Finance Director McAdams for taking on this challenge. She stated she is pleased with where they are at and noted they discussed economic development and giving back to the taxpayers. She stated Mr. Palm has done a phenomenal job with cutting back spending. She stated they are in this position because of good fiscal policies over the last 8-10 years. She noted they have done what the taxpayers want the Village to do, which is spend money wisely. President Adduci acknowledged this only affects the Village portion of the property tax bill, but that wherever they can save any amount to the taxpayers, they should do it. She emphasized that now is the time to give back to taxpayers.

Trustee Cargie commented the most important part is to not levy against new construction, noting that it only increases revenues and does not benefit taxpayers. He stated the point of economic development is to increase the tax base to lower the tax burden on residents. He expressed hope that all the taxing bodies choose to decline to levy against the new construction of the senior living facility when it comes online next year. He applauded President Adduci and Staff and stated he thinks this is a long time coming and that he heartily agrees.

President Adduci stated that one of the Village's goals is stabilizing property taxes. She noted the hope is that new development will produce more revenue for all of the taxing bodies, and she emphasized that if the Village is going to create development, they need to give it back to the taxpayers.

Trustee Vazquez stated he is happy to see this and that it is consistent with what he is working on at Elgin Community College – freezing the levy and tuition rates to give a break to taxpayers and students.

President Adduci noted one of the things the Village has been doing over the last 8-10 years is to build a rainy day fund. She stated a lot of people are hurting and there is a lot of uncertainty.

Roll call:

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

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

b. Introduction: Amend Title 4 of the Village Code Regarding Changes to the Village's Sign Regulations Regarding Elimination of Content Based Regulations

Trustee Brennan made a motion, seconded by Trustee Vazquez, to direct the Economic Development Commission to review and provide a recommendation to the Village Board on the proposed Sign Ordinance amendments.

Assistant Administrator Scheiner [presented](#) the proposed changes. She noted the goal is to introduce the issue and take the Board's input, then direct it to the Economic Development Commission. She explained content-based sign regulations and that a United States Supreme Court decision made them unenforceable. She clarified that directional signage can still be regulated in terms of placement, size, quantity, and illumination. She also reviewed prohibited signs.

In response to a question from Trustee O'Connell about interior or exterior lighting, Village Planner John Houseal stated if it is designed, placed or displayed with the intent of being viewed outside as a sign or attention-getting device, it counts as a sign.

Ms. Scheiner noted there is a reference table that shows which signs are allowed in which zoning districts and reviewed sign types that do not require permits.

Trustee Henek asked whether these changes would allow a business owner in town to now put up a sign in front of a house where he is doing business.

Mr. Houseal affirmed this. There was clarification that yard signs do not have a limited time and that post signs do.

In response to a question about sandwich board signs for schools from Trustee Bachner, Ms. Scheiner stated they would need to be limited to special events. Mr. Houseal clarified that the Village can have provisions for safety or traffic management purposes.

In response to a question from Trustee Cargie about accommodating sandwich board signs along Lake Street, Ms. Scheiner stated sidewalk width was taken into consideration and that 3-ft of sidewalk would be preserved here for pedestrians and the ADA. Mr. Houseal noted it would be one sign per tenant space and that they are supposed to be on sidewalks.

Ms. Scheiner reviewed permitted signs that do not require permits. She noted Staff is proposing to allow projecting/blade signs for the goal of sight identification for pedestrians. She reviewed the sign types including pylon and wall signs.

Mr. Houseal noted that the intent is not to have something like window opacity count as a sign, noting that some ground floor commercial spaces may need screening.

Ms. Scheiner discussed foot candles and controlling the intensity of lighting, noting that they want to limit sources of conflict.

Ms. Scheiner also reviewed violations and temporary signs.

In response to a question from Trustee Henek, Ms. Scheiner noted the temporary sign regulations are intended for non-residential districts. She stated yard signs and post signs are intended for residential and further noted banners are not permitted in residential districts.

In response to a follow up question from Trustee Henek, Ms. Scheiner reviewed the permit fees and regulations for banners.

There was some discussion about the Village's banners, and Ms. Scheiner noted they are operating within the regulations.

In response to a question from Trustee Henek about home-based businesses, Village Attorney Smith stated that under the Village's Zoning Ordinance, home-based businesses cannot advertise with signage from the home. Mr. Houseal explained this regulation is to maintain the residential character of a neighborhood, and he noted the distinction between not regulating content vs. saying there cannot be a sign.

Mr. Smith noted the Village Board can expect further tweaks to the sign ordinance because this topic is still in litigation. There was a brief discussion about the ruling and its implications.

Ms. Scheiner noted the Economic Development Commission would review and offer any amendments and their recommendation.

Roll call:

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

Absent: None

Nays: None
Motion Passes.

The Village Board reached a consensus to hold a Special Village Board of Trustees meeting on November 30 and planned to meet next on January 11, 2021.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Cargie made a motion, seconded by Trustee Brennan, to adjourn the regular Village Board of Trustees Meeting at 8:48 p.m.

Roll call:

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

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

Kathleen Brand-White, Village Clerk