

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
REGULAR VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MINUTES
November 13, 2023**

A regular meeting of the Village of River Forest Board of Trustees was held on Monday, November 13, 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 7:02 p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: President Adduci, Trustees Vazquez, Brennan, Johnson, Gillis, O'Connell (Virtual), Village Clerk Keller

Absent: Trustee Bachner

Also Present: Fire Chief Thomas Gaertner, Deputy Fire Chief Bochenek, Police Chief James O'Shea, Deputy Police Chief Greenwood, Police Commander Swierczynski, Finance Director Rosemary McAdams, Assistant Finance Director Keke Boyer, Village Attorney Lance Malina, Human Resources Manager Trish Ivansek, Assistant Village Administrator Jessica Spencer, Village Administrator Matt Walsh.

MOTION by Trustee Vazquez to allow Trustee O'Connell to participate in the meeting via Zoom due to work obligations. Seconded by Trustee Johnson.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Vazquez, Johnson, Gillis, Brennan

Absent: Trustee Bachner

Nays: None

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Adduci led the pledge of allegiance.

3. CITIZEN COMMENTS

President Adduci invited Pierangela Murphy up to the podium to give public comment.

Ms. Murphy made public comment on the Lake and Lathrop development site. She noted being pleased about the project being stopped by the Board and asked the Board to please continue to inform the residents via project updates on the website and social media.

Margie Cekander made public comment regarding the Lake and Lathrop property. She noted what she interpreted as discrepancies in Village communication surrounding the development site. She asked for substantive monthly updates regarding the site and reminded the Board that residents would like a quality project on the site.

Beth Cheng gave thanks to Village Staff and Board for allowing her to serve on the Village's Sustainability Commission.

Ms. Cheng also made public comment on Agenda item 7.b. Ms. Cheng asked the Village to make further considerations on the proposed zoning changes before approving said changes.

Maura Zinni made public comment regarding two trees in front of her home. Ms. Zinni shared photos she claimed showed a negative impact on the parkway tree canopy due to the trees positions and reiterated that while she understands the trees are healthy, the problems arise due to their placement along the driveway and the damage to sewer lines.

Village President Adduci asked Village Administrator Walsh to provide an update on staff's position.

Mr. Walsh stated that Davis Tree Care agrees with the Village Arborist' opinion and that the impact on the sewer line isn't uncommon, thus staff's opinion is that the tree should not be removed.

Trustee Brennan asked for clarification on the extent of the damage caused by the tree root damage and if it was consistent with root damage seen in other areas of town.

Mr. Walsh confirmed that the root damage is similar to other areas of town and that the Village Public Works Department takes yearly steps to prevent root damage.

Trustee Brennan asked if the tree being so close to the curb and driveway apron is common in the Village.

Mr. Walsh stated that while there are similar examples across town, this tree is particularly close to the apron.

Mark Zinni made public comment and disagreed with some of the comments made by Mr. Walsh. He stated that to the best of his knowledge, the Village does not take care of private sewer lines.

Mr. Walsh stated that is correct, the Village does not work on private sewer lines.

Mr. Zinni also noted that any damage to the apron portion of the driveway would be the responsibility of the resident.

Mr. Walsh stated that is correct.

Mr. Zinni reiterated his concerns regarding safety.

Trustee Gillis noted being worried about the precedent that would be set by the removal of these trees.

Ranier Ramos made public comment surrounding a Special Use Permit for a new location for a Montessori school. Mr. Ramos requested the Board allow the school to begin the special use process.

Ariel Pang, the realtor for the property, made public comment in support of the requested Special Use permit. She noted that the owner of the property is in full support of Montessori school.

Laura Maychruk made public comment in support of the proposed Montessori school. She suggested the Village consider reviewing their Zoning Code to be more business friendly.

President Adduci provided background on the Special Use application process and also suggested the Economic Development Commission research the topic.

Trustee O'Connell suggested the Village allow the applicant to move their application on a parallel path through the Economic Development Commission and the Zoning Board.

Village Administrator Walsh provided background on the options the Board could take to update the zoning code.

Trustee Brennan stated she received a letter from a daycare located at the Priory that reportedly needs a new space as well.

Trustee Brennan asked if the Village had heard anything regarding the Montessori school located along North Avenue.

President Adduci stated they are currently open and operating as a Montessori school.

Trustee Vazquez asked if the Special Use permit would come before the Village Board.

Village Attorney Lance Malina stated yes, both portions of the proposed changes would have to come before the Board.

Trustee Vazquez raised some concerns regarding placing non-commercial properties in one of the Village's main commercial strips.

Trustee Brennan asked if the school is looking to purchase the property or lease.

Ms. Maychruk stated they are looking to lease.

Trustee Johnson asked if there was any discussion happening between the Montessori school at Dominican and the applicants.

Ms. Maychruk stated no.

President Adduci thanked the school representatives for attending the meeting and told them that Village Administrator Walsh will be in contact with them.

4. ELECTED OFFICIAL COMMENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee Gillis wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving and encouraged all residents to participate in the 25th Anniversary of the Oak Park River Forest Infant Welfare Society Holiday House Walk and Market.

Trustee Vazquez wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving.

Village Clerk Keller had nothing to add to the record.

Trustee Brennan thanked Beth Cheng for her service to the Village.

Trustee Brennan suggested the Village continue to offer monthly updates to residents regarding the Lake and Lathrop project.

She also reported attending the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Center Luncheon at Dominican University and asked that the Village put more Dominican content out on the Village website.

Trustee Johnson wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving and reminded everyone to be aware of the leaf pick up policies.

Trustee O'Connell wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving.

President Adduci thanked Beth Cheng for her service to the Sustainability Commission.

a. Recognition of Donna Petrulis - Police Records Supervisor

Police Chief James O'Shea read the Proclamation thanking Donna Petrulis for her work with the Village and then presented the plaque honoring her retirement.

President Adduci thanked Ms. Petrulis for her work.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Village Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – October 23, 2023
- b. Village Board of Trustees Executive Session Meeting Minutes – October 23, 2023
- c. Administration Department Report
- d. Monthly Department Reports
- e. October Financial Report
- f. Accounts Payable – October 2023 – \$1,854,072.04
- g. Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) Replacement Program Purchase – Air One Equipment – \$26,000.00
- h. Automated License Plate Reader Systems – Minuteman Technologies – \$32,432.00
- i. Authorization to Donate Bicycles in Police Custody – Ordinance
- j. Accessible Parking Space Request – 7607 Vine St. – Ordinance
- k. Right of Way Encroachment Agreement – 935 Franklin Avenue
- l. Change Order – 2022 Green Alley Improvements – Professional Engineering Services – \$12,130.96 – Resolution

MOTION by Trustee Gillis to approve items A - L. Seconded by Trustee Vazquez.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Vazquez, Johnson, Gillis, O'Connell, Brennan

Absent: Trustee Bachner

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

6. CONSENT ITEMS FOR SEPARATE CONSIDERATION

7. RECOMMENDATIONS OF BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

- a. Board, Commissions and Committee Appointments
 - i. Sustainability Commission – Louise Mezzatesta (Cheng Vacancy), 4-year term expiring 2027
 - ii. Sustainability Commission – Jamie Hayley, 4-year term expiring 2027

MOTION by Trustee Vazquez to consent to the Village President's appointment of Louise Mezzatesta & Jamie Hayley to the Sustainability Commission. Seconded by Trustee O'Connell.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Vazquez, Johnson, Gillis, O'Connell, Brennan

Absent: Trustee Bachner

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

b. Economic Development Commission

- i. Motion to Direct the Village Administrator to propose text amendments related to commercial zoning districts to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a Public Hearing and Recommendation

MOTION by Trustee Johnson to direct the Village Administrator to propose text amendments related to commercial zoning districts to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a Public Hearing and Recommendation. Seconded by Trustee Vazquez.

Village Administrator Walsh provided background on this agenda item. He reported that last year, the Village started working with Houseal Lavigne Associates on updating the Zoning Code for the Commercial Zoning Districts within the Village. The intent was to alter the code to make the zoning code more appealing to developers.

Mr. Walsh noted that there are no proposed changes to the Special Use Permits or the Planned Development Process.

Trustee Johnson asked how the Village will spread the word about these proposed changes to residents.

Mr. Walsh stated the Village could promote the item in the Village Newsletter or Social Media.

President Adduci asked Mr. Walsh how many meetings took place surrounding these proposed recommendations.

Mr. Walsh reported around five meetings took place.

Trustee Brennan asked for clarification on some issues raised by a resident in public comment earlier surrounding this agenda item.

Mr. Walsh stated that the Economic Development Commission (EDC) was only tasked with analyzing the two TIF districts. After the EDC made their recommendations, staff and Houseal Lavigne Associates realized it would be a good idea to consider all commercial districts at the same time.

Trustee O'Connell noted that he felt these changes would help kickstart initial conversations with potential developers.

Trustee Brennan asked for clarification on how this will change the variance process.

Trustee O'Connell provided clarification on the proposed changes.

Trustee Brennan asked if Trustee O'Connell thought developers were not entering River Forest due to the zoning requirements.

Trustee O'Connell stated yes.

Village Administrator Walsh noted that these proposed changes would help create consistency across commercial zoning corridors in the Village and eliminate more speculative conversations with proposed developers.

Trustee Brennan commented that she is considering requesting the EDC review all the commercial districts at once and then adopting the changes later.

Village Attorney Malina reminded the Board that they already agreed to work with Montessori school on a parallel track for zoning updates, thus passing this tonight may not be a bad idea as the Village Commissions can address these items together.

Trustee Brennan asked if the recommendations from Houseal Lavigne changed at all after the resident meetings.

Mr. Walsh provided examples of how resident feedback altered the recommendations.

Trustee Gillis asked for clarification on how these changes will be adopted.

Mr. Walsh stated the Zoning Board of Appeals will have a public hearing regarding the changes and then make a recommendation to the Village Board. Mr. Walsh noted the amendments may change.

Trustee Brennan asked if the resident input received during the EDC meetings will be shared with the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Mr. Walsh stated yes and that the EDC had requested they be shared with the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Vazquez, Johnson, Gillis, O'Connell, Brennan

Absent: Trustee Bachner

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

8.UNFINISHED BUSINESS

9. NEW BUSINESS

- a) An Ordinance Creating a Reduced Rate Vehicle License Classification for Military Personnel and Veterans

MOTION by Trustee Vazquez to approve an Ordinance amending the Village Code to add an additional classification of vehicle licenses to recognize active duty service persons and veterans. Seconded by Trustee Johnson.

Trustee Gillis recused herself from this vote as she stated she has an active military person in her family.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Vazquez, Johnson, O'Connell, Brennan

Absent: Trustee Bachner

Abstain: Trustee Gillis

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

- b) An Ordinance Amending the River Forest Village Code Regarding Commemorative Ribbons on Village Parkway Trees

MOTION by Trustee Gillis to approve an Ordinance Amending the Village Code Regarding Commemorative Ribbons on Village Parkway Trees. Seconded by Trustee Johnson.

Mindy Credi made public comment in support of the proposed ordinance. Ms. Credi provided the Board with examples of trees around town that have items placed on them in a fashion she felt violated the existing and proposed ordinance.

She asked that the Village take a proactive stance in enforcing this ordinance.

President Adduci thanked JuliAnn Geldner for attending the meeting.

Trustee Vazquez asked who would be responsible for the removal of the ribbons.

Village Attorney Malina stated the Village would contact the owner and ask that the item be removed.

Trustee Gillis suggested that Public Works can take down ribbons that negatively impact trees during their regular tree trimming.

The Board discussed how to define items that are negatively impacting trees.

The MOTION was amended by Trustee Gillis to allow ribbons to be removed if they are determined by the Village Staff to be in poor condition or are otherwise detrimental to the health of the tree. Seconded by Trustee Johnson.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Vazquez, Johnson, Gillis, O'Connell, Brennan

Absent: Trustee Bachner

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

- c) An Ordinance Approving Paid Leave Benefits Required for Employees Working Within & For the Village

MOTION by Trustee Vazquez to approve an ordinance to provide required paid leave benefits for employees working within and for the Village. Seconded by Trustee Johnson.

Village Attorney Malina provided background information on this agenda item.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Vazquez, Johnson, Gillis, O'Connell, Brennan

Absent: Trustee Bachner

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

- d) Acceptance of the Estimate of the 2023 Corporate (aggregate) Property Tax Levy
– \$9,354,865.00

MOTION by Trustee Vazquez to accept the estimate for the 2023 Corporate (Aggregate) Property Tax Levy in the amount of \$9,354,865. Seconded by Trustee O'Connell.

Finance Director McAdams provided background information on this agenda item. She reported that the requested increase is less than the 5% increase that would trigger a necessary public hearing. She noted the Village increase will be a 4%.

Director McAdams also reported that property taxes on new construction with an estimated value of two million dollars were not included. By not accounting for new construction dollars, Ms. McAdams stated the overall tax rate should decrease.

Village President Adduci gave thanks to Director McAdams for keeping the levy as low as possible and pointed out that the Village had shared content in their social media showing River Forest's tax rate compared to surrounding towns.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Vazquez, Johnson, Gillis, O'Connell, Brennan

Absent: Trustee Bachner

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

- e) Village Hall Second Floor Furniture Improvements – Vari Sales Corporation – \$112,494

MOTION by Trustee Johnson to authorize the Village Administrator to execute the necessary agreements and approve payment in the amount of \$20,000 to effectuate the order with Vari Sales Corporation. Seconded by Trustee Brennan.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Vazquez, Johnson, Gillis, O'Connell, Brennan

Absent: Trustee Bachner

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

10.EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION to adjourn by Trustee Vazquez. Seconded by Trustee Johnson.

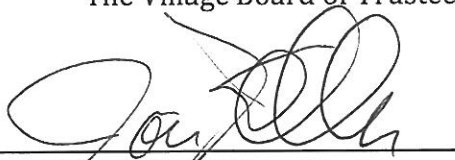
Roll call:

Ayes: President Adduci, Trustees Vazquez, Johnson, Gillis, O'Connell, Brennan

Absent: Trustee Bachner

Nays: None

The Village Board of Trustees Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.


Jonathan Keller, Village Clerk