

VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
April 5, 2023

A meeting of the Village of River Forest Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, April 5, 2023, 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 6:05 p.m.

Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Chairman Cuyler Brown, Commissioners Robert Graham, Katie Lowes, Rajendra Chiplunkar, Carr Preston, Walter Wahlfedlt.

Absent: Commissioner Brangle.

Also Present: Interim Village Administrator Matt Walsh, Village Planning Consultant John Houseal, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Liz Holt.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Margaret Daley of the 1300 block of William expressed opposition to the traffic barriers in the northeast neighborhood and requested their removal. Daley also expressed opposition to traffic enforcement in the area.

Chairman Brown and Administrator Walsh explained the role of the Economic Development Commission and directed concerns on the traffic barriers to the Village Board and Traffic & Safety Commission.

Renee Duba of the 000 block of Franklin encouraged the Commission to consider developments outside of four or five story mixed used structures. Duba stated their belief that development is difficult and that developers will be expecting more density to make profit. Duba encouraged the Village to consider social mobility, sustainability and transit access for any development.

Renee Duba continued their comments with a letter from the Lathrop Ashland Franklin neighborhood group. Duba shared that the group wants a development that is charming and friendly to neighbors. Duba added that zoning changes are not required to attract a positive development. Duba added that developments should be reasonably sized.

Annette Madden, of the 000 block of Ashland, began their comments by comparing River Forest's zoning code adoptions with other nearby communities. Madden stated there may

be support for decreasing the size of units, however would not support the elimination of the bedroom requirement.

Cal Davis, of the 000 block of Franklin, stated that the proposed changes are not acceptable. Davis expressed concerns for light blockage and the elimination of setbacks.

Beth Cheng, of the 000 block of Franklin, asked that the Economic Development Commission take more time to consider the proposed changes and to allow for additional community input. Cheng added that variations should be considered on a case by case basis, and believes there is no need for a global change. Cheng asked for more background on the zoning recommendations.

Teresa Peavy, of the 000 block of Ashland, asked for more background for why this topic is being discussed at this time and for data on what developers need. Peavy also asked if there are any assurances that variations would not be requested.

Administrator Walsh read a letter from Kathleen and Daniel Corcos of the 100 block of Franklin. The letter stated opposition to changes to square foot requirements, parking minimum decreases, cul-de-sacs and asked that sufficient space be included for any retail space.

Administrator Walsh read a letter from Angie Grover of the 7600 block of Vine. Grover expressed opposition to increasing building height, decreasing parking requirements, eliminating setback requirements and asked that traffic be considered for any changes.

Administrator Walsh read a letter from Megan Sanfillippo. Megan encouraged the Commission to recommend zoning practices that allow for the highest and best use of the corridor parcels. Megan explained that this means neighborhood amenities and a mix of uses. Megan asked that consideration be given to neighbors concerns on traffic, privacy and light.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – February 1, 2023

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Graham and SECONDED by Commissioner Lowes to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2023 meeting of the Economic Development Commission. MOTION PASSED by unanimous vote.

4. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE UPDATE

Director Holt promoted the upcoming Health and Wellness Fair at FFC in Oak Park.

5. DISCUSSION OF MADISON STREET & NORTH AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

Administrator Walsh introduced John Houseal of Houseal Lavigne and provided some background on the corridor planning process. Walsh explained the process for zoning code amendments, and the requirement that any changes are scrutinized and discussed by the

Zoning Board of Appeals. Walsh also summarized relevant comments from the February stakeholder meeting.

John Houseal, of Houseal Lavigne, introduced himself and provided additional background.

Houseal explained that every planned development proposal has required significant allowances and waivers from the underlying zoning code. The examination of zoning codes was prescribed in the Comprehensive Plan. Houseal reiterated that there are no proposed developments and explained that the concept renderings are meant to show scale and facilitate discussion.

Houseal began the presentation and reviewed the opportunity sites for the North Avenue and Madison Street corridors. Houseal explained the concept renderings. Houseal and Walsh confirmed that the primary concern from the stakeholder meeting for North Avenue was providing enough parking onsite for any uses on the corridor.

John Houseal discussed the newer mixed-use building on the Forest Park side of Madison Street and used it as a comparison for some of the zoning proposals. Houseal explained the rationale for the rendering that included a cul-de-sac. Houseal explained the challenge with matching the setback for the commercial corridor to the residential neighborhood on a different street. Houseal stated the current code does not require it.

Houseal then reviewed the existing code language and the proposed revisions and considerations for building height, floor area ratio, density, average unit size, parking standards and the bedroom requirement. Houseal then reviewed the standards with Elmwood Park and Forest Park.

Chairman Brown stated that he agrees with many of the public comments about the types of development but believes that zoning changes are necessary. The zoning changes will allow for the Village to have appealing options.

Commissioner Chiplunkar asked about the impact of the cul-de-sac as shown. John Houseal explained that the cul-de-sac is not proposed, it is just shown for consideration. Commissioner Chiplunkar then asked about the potential traffic impacts when zoning changes are made. Houseal responded that traffic would be analyzed when a planned development application is received, and the specific uses are known. Chiplunkar expressed concern for the impact on the neighborhood and asked whether projections could be made based on the proposed code revisions.

Commissioner Chiplunkar asked about the impact on schools, and stated that this process starts the ball rolling for more development. Commissioner Wahlfeldt stated that the goal is to invite proposals, and there is no promise for approval of specific projects. Wahlfedts added that he shares concerns about neighborhood impacts as a resident. Based on his professional

experience, the Village needs to be more welcoming to developers so that the Village can choose the right options.

Commissioner Chiplunkar reiterated his concerns and expressed doubts about the process. Chairman Brown stated that the goal is to attract charming amenities by being flexible with the zoning code. Brown reiterated that the approval process for any development is rigorous.

Commissioner Graham stated that commercial areas are bound to have impacts on adjacent neighborhoods. Graham added that development will not come without changes to zoning and that traffic flows will depend on the specific proposals. Graham stated that less people are driving, so the proposal for reducing parking makes sense. Graham continued by expressing agreement with the height increases and the density proposals.

Commissioner Lowes asked about the next steps and proposed waiting to make final decisions. Administrator Walsh responded that the Commission could decide to wait for final decisions, however the Village Board is interested in continued progress on the discussion. Chairman Brown proposed that no decisions be made tonight. The Commission expressed agreement.

Chairman Brown made a motion to table a vote on recommendations to the next Commission meeting, Member Lowes seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

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

None.

7. DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

None

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Brown and SECONDED by Commissioner Lowes to adjourn the April 5, 2023, meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 8:00 p.m. MOTION PASSED by unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted:

Matt Walsh, Village Administrator

Date: _____

Cuyler Brown, Chairman Economic Development Commission