

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
April 9, 2021**

A meeting of the Village of River Forest Economic Development Commission was held on Friday, April 9, 2021, at 7:30 a.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 7:30 a.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Lee Neubecker, Timothy Brangle, Cuyler Brown, Robert Graham, Donna Slepicka, Liz Holt

Absent: Carr Preston

Also Present: Acting Village Administrator Lisa Scheiner and Trustee Robert O'Connell

All members participated electronically.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES - A MOTION was made by Mr. Brown and SECONDED by Mr. Graham to approve the meeting minutes from January 8, 2021. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

4. UPDATE ON VARIOUS PROJECTS

Chairman Neubecker stated that the developer at Lake and Lathrop would provide an update to the Village Board of Trustees on the status of the project.

In response to a question from Chairman Neubecker, Ms. Scheiner confirmed that The Sheridan was nearing its opening date with a final Certificate of Occupancy anticipated in the very near future and a ribbon cutting ceremony scheduled on April 28, 2021.

Chairman Neubecker and members of the Economic Development Commission expressed their condolences on the passing of Nancy Strand.

In response to a question from Chairman Neubecker, Ms. Scheiner stated that the Village has been working with Speaker Welch's office regarding the status of funding under HB 64 for demolition activities on Village-owned properties on Madison Street. Members of the Economic Development Commission stated they were in favor of demolishing buildings on Village-owned properties but would defer the recommendation until funds are received from the State. Ms. Scheiner stated that residents near this property would be engaged before releasing an Expression of Interest to the development community.

5. DISCUSSION RE: BUSINESS RETENTION/ATTRACTION STRATEGIES

The Economic Development Commission discussed options for potential use of a portion of the \$1.34 million the Village expects to receive under the American Rescue Plan Act to support the local business community and economy. The Economic Development Commission discussed the following ideas:

- A desire to engage with the business community in a facilitated group discussion by sector (for example retail, restaurant, service businesses, real estate, fitness facilities, home based businesses) to understand their needs when determining how best to utilize this financial resource;
- A desire to identify immediate, near term, and long term strategies to support the business community;
- The need to address consumer confidence and encourage people to leave their homes to patronize River Forest businesses;
- A desire to supplement the Village's existing efforts to raise awareness of, and encourage consumers to support, local businesses including home-based businesses through, for example, a branding campaign;
- Assisting with efforts to stabilize businesses that are still struggling with near term infusions of cash from consumers who may then return to patronize those businesses in the future (e.g. "cash mob" shopping events, "take-out 25", etc.) in lieu of one-time direct contributions from the Village;
- Giving consideration to possible grant programs (e.g. façade improvement), understanding, however, that administering these programs can be resource and process-intensive;
- A desire to identify near term recovery and longer term future growth within the business community can be supported;
- Engaging in conversations with companies, such as Mid America, that are working to lease commercial space in River Forest to understand their marketing efforts;
- Giving consideration to utilizing the funds over a longer period of a few years as opposed to a large one-time push;

6. OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Neubecker solicited the Economic Development Commission member's thoughts on the State and County's anticipated reduction in permitted occupancy in businesses.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Graham and SECONDED by Mr. Brown to send a letter of support for the businesses urging Cook County Chairperson Preckwinkle and Governor Pritzker not to restrict occupancy at restaurants. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Trustee O'Connell suggested that Chairman Neubecker work with the Acting Village Administrator and Village Attorney when drafting the letter.

7. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** – None
8. **NEXT MEETING** – The next meeting was confirmed for May 14, 2021
9. **ADJOURNMENT** – A MOTION was made by Mr. Brown and SECONDED by Mr. Graham to adjourn the Economic Development Commission meeting at 8:40 a.m. MOTION PASSED by unanimous vote.