

**CLOSED SESSION MEETING MINUTES
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD**

Thursday, March 16, 2023 - 5:30 PM

The Board of Trustees of the Village of Northfield met in the Executive Session Room of the Village Hall on Thursday, March 16, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was called to order by President Greg Lungmus. The roll call was as follows:

PRESENT:	President	Greg Lungmus
	Trustees:	Todd Fowler
		Barnaby Dinges
		Tom Whittaker
		Matt Galin
		Tracey Mendrek
		Charlie Orth

ALSO PRESENT:	Stacy Sigman
	Buzz Hill

Trustee Orth made a motion, seconded by Trustee Whittaker to adjourn to Closed Session, pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21), to discuss (1) the setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the public body pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(6) and (2) the performance of a specific employee and legal counsel pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1).

Upon completion of the Closed Session, Trustee Orth made a motion, seconded by Trustee Whittaker, to re-open to the regular meeting session at 6:45 PM.

The meeting was called back to order by President Greg Lungmus. The roll call was as follows:

PRESENT:	President	Greg Lungmus
	Trustees:	Todd Fowler
		Barnaby Dinges
		Tom Whittaker
		Matt Galin
		Tracey Mendrek
		Charlie Orth

President Lungmus stated that he would answer any questions Board members had.

Trustee Galin inquired if the Board was allowed to talk about issues that were not on an agenda. Village Manager Sigman replied that they were allowed to talk but not take action.

President Lungmus stated that he took full responsibility for his actions. He noted that if you had witnessed what he witnessed, anyone of us would have reacted similarly. He stated he

underhanded a speaker to a guy and fully expected him to catch it. He indicated that he asked the driver nicely three times to move the truck forward a few feet so that the roadway was not completely blocked. Each time he got out of his car to ask the guy, got back into his car, and did this in five-minute intervals. He stated on Thornwood Lane, it was rare for someone to completely block the lane. Normally the UPS, Fed Ex, and garbage guys all try to accommodate others and it is understandable to have to wait a couple of minutes. This had been fifteen minutes and this guy was deliberately ignoring his request and being belligerent and he had no idea why. He stated that as he walked by the cab there was loud music playing and he picked up the speaker and said something like, "Turn the f-ing music down and move your truck." For whatever reason, when he tossed the speaker to the guy, he did not catch it. He then indicated that January 25th was a really bad day for him as he was actively working to put his aunt into a memory care clinic and he was already delayed for a meeting as he had been on the phone with that facility. He was running late and he found the total road blockage, and the driver's unwillingness to move, extremely frustrating. He admitted that he can lose his temper but noted that the incident was something that occurred on a private lane and did not relate to any public business.

President Lungmus noted that he takes full responsibility for his actions but is not apologizing for them. He stressed that he does apologize for bringing in the two people that were discussed in Closed Session because they did nothing wrong. He stated that being Board President was never a job that he aspired to, but he does the best he can every day working with dedicated leaders. He noted that he is a very busy guy with a lot going on and with some really good department leaders and the staff, a lot of great things were being done at the Village. He noted that being Board President is an unpaid position and that he sits on five different boards, two of which are paid positions. He stated that he was doing the best he could. He admitted that he has a temper but what happened was very out of character. He said that when he is having a bad day and some guy is messing with him for fifteen minutes, he can lose his cool.

Trustee Orth commented that anyone can have a bad day and he felt that President Lungmus' story was heartfelt. He believed being in public office means you are held to a higher standard. He noted that somehow that the press got involved in this situation and he was not sure if it was a smear campaign against him or Village. He thought the bottom line was as a public official and leader, he set the example and encouraged him to apologize at the upcoming March 21st Board meeting. He noted that M. Smith had written to the Board and asked if President Lungmus has responded. President Lungmus indicated that he replied directly to this individual. Trustee Orth noted that although no charges had been filed, an incident report had been done, the press had written an article about it, and there was a podcast. Therefore, he felt an official response on this would be a positive thing.

President Lungmus asked each Trustee if they were involved in any way in introducing this issue to the press. Each Trustee replied, "No." President Lungmus indicated that he felt someone on the inside had to have leaked it – as in the FOIA report all names and personal information were redacted. President Lungmus noted that he was contacted by Joe Coughlin, the author of the article, who said several individuals shared the story with him. He noted that he hoped the trustees were being honest with him and noted that he did not know that the article was going to be published before it was published. He gave Joe Coughlin a lengthy statement on what happened and the article and headline sensationalized things.

Trustee Mendrek responded to Trustee Orth's suggestion that President Lungmus make a statement in a public forum – by noting that this was a public forum and meeting. She stressed that the record is available to any citizen that requests it.

Trustee Orth noted he appreciated President Lungmus responding to the press with more than just “no comment”.

Trustee Mendrek asked to talk about FOIA requests. She said that after doing research and getting legal advice from Trustee Galin and Village Attorney Hill, she is proposing a new protocol for FOIA logs. Currently, the Board is unaware of FOIA requests and who is requesting what. She suggested that at a future Committee of the Whole meeting, the Board discuss creating a log of recent FOIA requests that can then be included in the monthly Board packet. The log could include the date, whom the request came from, the requested record, and the action that was taken by the Village. She noted that from a transparency perspective, the action that was taken is important because there are many reasons under the statute that a FOIA request can be denied or shared in a redacted form. She was hopeful that this would help the Board better understand requests that might generate questions. This would also allow the Board to have more knowledge and create a higher level of transparency. She requested that it be placed on the April Committee of the Whole agenda.

President Lungmus noted that some schools do this. Attorney Hill remarked that when this has come up in other towns they created similar protocols to so that people would know who the chronic requestors are. President Lungmus remarked that some people use FOIA requests as a harassment vehicle. Village Manager Sigman did not believe that it was an overly burdensome request and that if it was in a Board packet, it would also be available to the public.

Trustee Whittaker noted that in School District #29's board packet, there is always a FOIA log. He found it very informative and noted that it initiated a lot of discussions.

Village Manager Sigman stated that numerous staff members responded to FOIA requests and so the Village will just have to find an easy way to put all of them in one spot. Trustee Whittaker noted there is one place on the Village's website for FOIA requests. Village Manager Sigman noted that is true but requestors are not, and can't be, mandated to use that.

Village Attorney Hill stated that he liked the idea because it lets the Board know how many FOIA requests are made. He noted the FOIA law was a wonderful thing, however, requests can invade people's privacy and therefore about 75% of them have to go to Village Attorney Milluzzi so she can review and redact exempt personal information. Trustee Mendrek stressed that staff time and printing costs were involved, and most Board members did not know how often these requests happen. She believed it gives the Board another window into the Village's business activities and what the public is asking for.

Trustee Orth agreed that this would give the Board a heads-up on what is going on regarding FOIA requests. He asked how many FOIA requests the Village gets. Village Manager Sigman replied she did not know the exact figures – but that they are listed in the budget as part of the Key Performance Indicators for each department.

President Lungmus remarked that he was bothered by Trustee Orth packing the room with his neighbors at the February Board meeting to present something without talking to any of the other Board members. He noted that several residents stated that Trustee Orth had told them not to tell anyone they were coming. He stressed that the Board has adopted guidelines

that all Board members had agreed to follow, and that Trustee Orth's actions broke about 9 of those.

Trustee Fowler remarked that he talked to one of the neighbors and they actually said it was meant to be a "sneak attack". He noted that the stuff that Trustee Orth did was great work but that it should have been done with the rest of the Board, instead of saying, "I did this, we don't have staff so I am taking this on myself." He completely supported the project but was not sure that the public understands that it is a County road and the Village doesn't have the right to just put something up. He felt many in the room were not told about the legal process necessary to get this done. He noted that he didn't feel stabbed but was just surprised.

President Lungmus said that it might have been an innocent move on Trustee Orth's part, but felt that it made the organization and particularly Village Manager Sigman look like they are not doing their job. He noted that the Board had put money in the budget for this exact project and that Trustee Whittaker and Trustee Fowler had explored this option and had determined it was much more expensive and complicated to execute than originally hoped. He said that following the February meeting, he had asked Trustee Orth to continue to work on this with Melissa Jewett. He noted that Trustee Orth's heart is in the right place but the mechanism and approach were wrong. He said that Trustee Orth surprised everyone and the showmanship was obvious. He wondered if he was in campaign mode to be the next Village President. He remarked that he felt blindsided by it.

Trustee Galin stated there were two halves to it. The first is what is on the agenda and the other is bringing people to a meeting. He felt there should be no apology for bringing people to a meeting and stressed that people should be encouraged to attend Board meetings.

Trustee Whittaker said that he appreciated what Trustee Orth has done but he and Trustee Fowler spent a ton of time trying to get something done over there and it did not happen because it was too expensive and then there were other complicating County factors that needed to go into it. He thought Trustee Orth's actions made them look like buffoons for not doing their job when they tried very hard. He stated that is why he said to one of the residents that they were not forgotten and they were working on it. He said that it took him totally off guard. He stressed that the Board was here to serve the entire Village of Northfield, not just the east or west sides. He emphasized that the Board does not want to alienate anyone but rather bring everyone together in the community. He stated that he respected Trustee Orth's passion for Northfield and noted that he also shared that. He said the Board wants to do what is right for every resident of the town, but that it was imperative for the Board to function as a whole. He felt the Board could get so much done as a team, instead of saying, "I did it".

President Lungmus inquired if there were any updates regarding the costs of the project. Trustee Orth replied there was a price from Mead Electric for approximately \$6,000, the engineering costs at approximately \$10,050 with Clark, Dietz Inc., and the price with Tapco for the equipment at about \$10,000, for a total cost of approximately \$26,000. He felt confident that he could get the project done for the \$30,000 - \$35,000 estimate he had quoted at the February meeting and stressed that it was currently well under that. He noted that he had received dozens of calls and emails from residents that had contacted Stacy Sigman on this, and the response was that we don't have the time or money and it is a County Road. He said that many people are sick of these responses and he brought this up because he feels that they need to give Stacy Sigman the staff, money, and time to get these projects done. He believes the Village might need to hire additional people and there is a fine line between running the organization extremely lean and being able to do more and get things done. After researching it

and figuring out if there needed to be a Phase I and Phase II done, it did not take a lot to work with the County to get it technically approved.

Trustee Orth remarked that he represented the entire Village but noted there was a strong feeling from some residents on the east side that they do not get the projects/things they need. He said that he took this project on to get a huge safety issue done and he was not doing it to pat himself on the back. The videos presented by Mr. Graf prove there is an extensive safety issue there. The hope is to have this solar device by summer, dependent on the pending legal work, supply chain, and permits which will all take some time. He noted that it was Government by the People, For the People and that was what he had done. He stressed that what he did was for the residents and the safety of the kids. He stated he would not do this all of the time and had learned a great deal. He believed more of these devices could be incorporated into next year's budget and that grants could possibly be obtained to help pay for them.

Trustee Mendrek thanked Trustee Orth and remarked that if it comes to fruition and can be done cost-effectively, it is amazing work. The only issue she had was that he did not even inform President Lungmus that he planned to do this. Trustee Orth replied that he did not do that because he constantly gets shut down.

Village Manager Sigman noted that the approach upset staff because this project had been researched in detail. The team members, engineer, along with Trustees Whittaker and Fowler had examined the options, walked the area, looked at the grants, developed a very detailed cost estimate, and talked to Cook County. The way this was presented at the February meeting was opposite to how the Board Policy and Procedures say the trustees are supposed to operate. She also stressed that she has not received dozens of calls or e-mails on this. She stated she can only recall one, in recent months, and that she let them know that it was something that had been budgeted, staff was working on it with Cook County, and staff had also requested that IDOT include the study of several of these safety devices as part of their Phase I work that was underway on the Winnetka Avenue and Eden's bridge. The letter to IDOT and Cook County on this matter was shared with the resident who inquired. Finally, she noted that this past year all of this detailed information was shared with the Village Board, along with the detailed engineering costs from Gewalt Hamilton. The Board decided that given the costs and traffic study implications, it was better to undertake this work in conjunction with a Phase I or Phase II process for the roadway. Since then, there has never been a request made to her or the Village President to place this back on a Committee of the Whole agenda for further consideration.

President Lungmus stressed that for the Village and Board to function properly there is a process that needs to be followed. He re-emphasized the Board's adopted Policies and Procedures – stating nobody wants to be surprised by a packed boardroom.

Trustee Dinges noted that there is a theme of collaboration and communication that he encourages the entire Board to be better focused on.

Trustee Fowler thanked the Board for accommodating his schedule since he will be out of town next week.

Trustee Orth thanked Trustee Fowler for his work on the library and said he was sorry but, that he felt like this was the only way to get the safety device installed. President Lungmus

stated that he did not need an apology from Trustee Orth but did need him to work through the normal procedures and channels.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Trustee Dinges made a motion, seconded by Trustee Mendrek to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 PM.

Upon the following roll call vote, the motion was approved.

AYES: Fowler NAYS: 0 ABSTAIN: 0 ABSENT: 0
Dinges
Whittaker
Galín
Mendrek
Orth