

**MINUTES OF THE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD
TUESDAY, May 16, 2023**

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order by Village President Greg Lungmus on Tuesday, May 16, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. Village Clerk Stacy Sigman called the roll as follows:

Committee Members Present:

Trustee Todd Fowler
Trustee Barnaby Dinges
Trustee Tom Whittaker
Trustee Matt Galin
Trustee Tracey Mendrek
Trustee Charles Orth

Absent:

President Greg Lungmus

Others Present:

Village Manager Stacy Sigman, Director of Administrative Services Melissa Jewett, and Village Attorney Buzz Hill.

Approval of April 18, 2023 Report of Proceedings

Trustee Whittaker made a motion, seconded by Trustee Fowler to approve the April 18, 2023 Report of Proceedings. Approval was unanimous.

Discussion on the Happ Road design elements

Village Manager Sigman noted that over the past several years, the Village has been working with Cook County on the Phase I and II plans for the Happ Road corridor, between Willow Road and Winnetka Avenue. Along with the numerous vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle safety enhancements for the corridor, the plans have focused on aesthetic upgrades (matching what was done on Willow Road) and some unique place-making features in the downtown. The Village has been able to secure the Federal Surface Transportation Program and matching County funds to cover almost 100% of the costs associated with the Phase I, II, and III work. However, that funding will not cover the more decorative project enhancements. In 2022, the Village applied for Main Street and Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) grants, to cover these items. In April the Village learned that this project was not chosen for funding under either grant. With the project construction (Phase III) being delayed a year, the Village had hoped it could reapply for the ITEP funding in the fall of 2023. Unfortunately, when staff spoke to IDOT they indicated that they have decided to skip a year, and will not do another call for ITEP projects until the fall of 2024 – with the award in 2025.

The Happ Road project is currently scheduled, and funded, for a fall 2024 bid, with construction starting in 2025. Under that timeline, it will not be possible to apply for another round of ITEP funding before going out to bid. That means that the Village will have to decide which if any, project enhancements it wants to fully fund and include these in the project bid. Village

Manager Sigman noted that they were looking for direction from the Board on three things. 1) Some elements can only be done in conjunction with the road project. 2) Some elements can be done and bid as an alternate bid but these often come in at a higher cost. 3) Other elements can be done later if/when grant funding is secured.

The Phase II landscape architect, Jodie Mariano, from Teska Associates, and the project engineer Jarrod Cebolski, from Patrick Engineering, were at the meeting to review each of the enhancement items (see Attachment A) and discuss how they fit into the bid process and their anticipated costs.

President Lungmus stated he believed it was necessary to go forward with the elements that could only be done in conjunction with the project. He was optimistic that the Village would receive the grant funding in the future. He stressed that the Village had reserves and believed that the project needed to be done right. He felt the proposal was good and it would short sided not to pursue the entire package.

Trustee Fowler believed it would be incongruent not to do the entire project. He noted that \$1.5 million with 5500 residents and an expected life of 30 years equated to about \$10 a year per person. He stressed that this project would be iconic in Northfield's downtown and it would be a mistake not to move forward with it.

Trustee Dinges stated that he was not a big fan of the fountain feature. He thought it was like a big brick in the center that needed a lot of maintenance. He preferred less stone and lighter, airy, vertical, and striking art for the center of the roundabout. He did like all the elements that involved people sitting and engaging since Northfield is the comfortable corner of the North Shore. He also liked the plantings because he wanted people to pause and spend time in the area.

Village Manager Sigman pointed out that when design work was being done with Cook County, they expressed a lot of concern about putting anything in the roundabout that could attract people into the roundabout. They were concerned about art because they were afraid that people would want to pose by it for photographs. They also wanted something vertical that blocks the headlights. Jarrod Cebolski noted that a roundabout expert had advised on the project, stating they wanted the center to gently slope upward to block headlights from going through. The low profile masonry does not attract people emphasizing the safety importance of deterring people from crossing the circular roadway and occupying the middle area of the roundabout. Jodie Mariano stated that when the roundabouts do not have the things such as gentle slopes, cars have just driven straight through. She noted that a fountain was not the only solution and that other alternatives could be investigated. She said that Cook County was happy with something low, hunkered down, and filled with plants deterring people from crossing over.

Trustee Dinges asked about the height of the roundabout feature. Jodie Mariano replied that the tallest portion was approximately four feet. Dinges believed that a fountain would be inviting to people, especially on a hot day.

Village Manager Sigman noted that if the consensus of the Board was art in the center of the roundabout, they could go back to Cook County with this request.

Trustee Mendrek asked who ultimately makes the decision on the design. Village Manager Sigman replied that Cook County has final jurisdiction. Cook County would give great latitude to the design, as long as it meets the safety and low maintenance standards mandated by their roundabout team.

Trustee Whittaker noted that there would always be an annual cost of maintenance, especially running a fountain. He stated that he loved the design but believed running water would attract people. He believed that keeping the designed structure with alternatives to the fountain would be better.

Trustee Mendrek inquired about the timing of getting alternate ideas and the overall design completed. Jarrod Cebolski replied there was sufficient time noting that Cook County would do thorough reviews from all their internal departments and then IDOT would need to review the designs at both the 90% level and final plan level. He did not anticipate having the final reviews done for about a year.

Trustee Galin inquired about the payment options. Village Manager Sigman replied that reserves could be used to fund this if sufficient funds were available. She said that the Village could also issue infrastructure bonds to pay for it over a 10 or 15-year period. She noted that typically the Village had avoided that due to the high-interest rates currently available but in the past, this was a preferred method.

President Lungmus noted to get this funding, the project goes through a scoring scenario with IDOT. Village Manager Sigman said that she and Jarrod Cebolski had a meeting with IDOT the following week to go through the application and various components to find out their scores in hopes of improving the score for the next round.

President Lungmus stated that he liked the fountain concept but knew that it needed to be refined. He thought the overall design was great and appropriate for the Village.

Trustee Fowler noted that he thought the plazas surrounding the roundabout would be an ideal place for featured artwork where people will be sitting and gravitate. He mentioned that when the Skokie Valley Trail comes through the Village, there will be a lot of bike traffic so the design needs to be iconic. He stressed that if the design is initially messed up, it will be that way for generations.

Trustee Orth asked if it was a single lane around the roundabout. Jarrod Cebolski replied that it was a single lane. Trustee Orth stated that could go either way with or without a fountain in the roundabout. He agreed that there was only one shot at the design noting it should be an attraction that could help bring more people to the downtown area.

President Lungmus asked the Board to give their opinion about the water feature and the direction on funding.

Trustee Mendrek stated that she really liked the water feature but she also is in favor of looking at alternative designs for the roundabout, especially since the Village might have to fund this on

their own. She was concerned that the water could attract people creating a safety hazard. She also noted that fountains can malfunction frequently and inquired about their ongoing maintenance.

Jodie Mariano replied that fountains have mechanical and electrical systems along with pumps that need ongoing maintenance and replacement parts. She noted that the fountain would not need a permit for public use but would need to be winterized and could only function when weather permitted.

Trustee Whittaker agreed that any excavating design elements that needed to be done in the initial phase should be completed. He was not in favor of the fountain but stressed that he loved the design but preferred plants over the water feature.

Jodie Mariano noted that substantial money could be saved if the fountain feature was eliminated from the design. She stated that there could be additional lighting effects added if the fountain features were deleted.

Trustee Mendrek reiterated that she would like to see alternative designs but believed it was important to try to do everything at once.

Trustee Galin agreed that the project should be done right with or without the grant funding. He liked the looks of the fountain but would be interested in seeing alternatives to the water aspect of it.

Discussion on the Village's website redesign

Director of Administrative Service Jewett stated that for the past several months, staff has been working with CivicPlus, the Village's current web host, on a completely new website design. The initial work included reviewing the existing site analytics to ensure that the new site is developed so users can easily access the most popular pages. In addition, staff studied other municipal websites, provided CivicPlus with the Board's suggestions, and shared the Village's branding materials and community photos to help guide the new design. In April, staff received the first design concept for review. Along with staff input, the concept was reviewed by Trustee Galin and Chandlerthinks (our branding specialist) for artistic direction to ensure that the new site remained consistent with the Village's brand identity. The concept that was discussed at the meeting incorporates all of the suggestions made by Trustee Galin, staff, and Chandlerthinks.

Trustee Mendrek stated that she liked the site redesign a lot. She liked the photography and clean buttons and felt it was very straightforward.

Trustee Whittaker noted that anything would be better than the existing website. He thought the site redesign was fantastic because it was user-friendly and easily understood. He asked how this would look on a mobile device. Director of Administrative Service Jewett replied that everything was designed with even numbers to make it optimal for mobile viewing.

Trustee Galin liked the color and branding but stated that he preferred home pages that are less busy with more uniformity. President Lungmus replied that a lot of research went into it and

what was designed was what was needed and nothing more. Director of Administrative Service Jewett noted that municipal websites are unique to other types of websites because a breadth of information is hosted there and it is hard to condense further.

Trustee Whittaker inquired if it would be hard to add tabs to the website. Director of Administrative Service Jewett replied it is easy to switch out information but adding tabs would create an odd number that would negatively affect mobile device viewing.

Trustee Dinges stated that the committee had done a great job on the site redesign. He asked where alerts would be featured. Director of Administrative Service Jewett replied that alerts were featured on a running bar with a red flashing icon at the very top and only done for emergencies, such as COVID. Village Manager Sigman noted that it would be used for things such as extended power outages, water boil alerts, or dangerous weather.

Trustee Mendrek asked if the analytics determined the order of the six buttons on the site. Director of Administrative Service Jewett replied the six circles were the most looked for but the order was somewhat random.

Trustee Orth thought the site redesign was nice, easier to navigate, and a huge improvement. He asked when the new website would go into effect. Director of Administrative Service Jewett replied that once given the go-ahead, CivicPlus will start the site build-out. It is expected to take approximately two months and will include migrating the current site structure, content, and links to the new design.

Trustee Mendrek asked if there would be a testing period to make sure that links work, etc. Director of Administrative Service Jewett confirmed that she would go through each page to ensure that they work.

Josselyn Center Request

Village Attorney Hill noted on May 4, the Village received a memorandum from the Josselyn Center requesting to be placed on the May 16 Committee of the Whole meeting. They are requesting to expand to a 24-hour program to get state grant funding. The Village staff has determined that a new crisis center program (“The Living Room”) instituted by the Josselyn Center is inconsistent with its Zoning Ordinance. The staff issued a letter to Josselyn notifying them that they had 30 days (to May 11) to discontinue the unpermitted use. Josselyn is requesting an extension of the Village’s 30-day enforcement action while their applications are being considered by the Plan and Zoning Commission and Village Board. The Village staff has no authority to grant such an extension. In addition, Josselyn has requested that the Village Board authorize the Plan and Zoning Commission to concurrently consider its applications for a text amendment and special use permit for The Living Room program.

Based on the short time frame between receipt of these requests and the Committee of the Whole meeting, staff suspended normal protocols and added this belated request to the agenda. Village Attorney Hill noted that the Board should primarily consider the Josselyn Center’s request for an extension of the May 11th deadline to get through the process. He stressed that periodic progress reports from the Josselyn Center would be important if the extension was granted. The applicant

has not yet submitted a detailed application for the text amendment or the special use so the Board could consider that at a later date. Village Attorney Hill said there were also medical offices in that area that also would need to be evaluated to determine if they were allowable uses.

President Lungmus inquired about the timing of the extension.

Brendan Penny, Associate at Meltzer, Purtell, & Stelle LLC, stated they intended to submit applications to the Village in the next day or so for the text amendment and special use for the Living Room program and medical offices.

Harold W. Francke, attorney at Meltzer, Purtell, & Stelle LLC, clarified that they were looking for a time extension that would take them through the entire process, noting that it would be more than 30 days. He stated that progress reports would not be an issue. He reiterated that they planned to submit applications in the next day or two to get on the Plan & Zoning Commission's agenda on July 5th. Village Manager Sigman stressed that after the applications have been submitted, the process to approve the code amendment and special use could take 2-3 months. Francke asked due to the nature of the not-for-profit, trying to do goodwill for the community Living Room crisis center if both the code amendment and special use could be considered at the same meeting.

Trustee Mendrek stated that having served numerous years on the P& Z Commission, there have been situations in the past where both a code amendment and special use were considered in this fashion. She was concerned that there was some state funding issue contingent on the Living Room being open for 24-hour service.

Village Attorney Hill stated that the Board could mandate that if the extension is granted, the Living Room program would continue operating during its current timeframe with no expansion of hours.

Susan Resko, CEO and President of the Josselyn Center stated that they had been in the Village since 1969 running a community mental health facility. Due to demand, they have been expanding their locations over the past six years. The facility provides all outpatient services, primarily therapy to children, adults, and families, which accounts for 80% of what they do. Psychiatric service is the medical component accounting for about 15% of what they do and this has been done over the past 50 years. Psychiatric service entails the evaluation of whether people would benefit from medication and if so, receiving a prescription and there are no medical procedures beyond that. The facility also provides supportive employment so people experiencing mental health symptoms can receive help to find competitive jobs and stay employed. About 40% of their client base are under the age of 18 so the family and child components are a large part of what they do.

Susan Resko remarked that they ran the Living Room program initially at 405 Central and moved it to 1779 Maple about 4 years ago. The Living Room is not a crisis center but rather a crisis prevention center. It is 150 square foot room that simulates a living room with comfortable chairs and soft music, providing a safe space, instead of going to the emergency room or calling the police. These Living Room facilities are strategically located throughout the state. They are

a recipient of this grant due to their proximity to the highway and public transportation. The state is currently asking them to expand their hours and that is why she reached out to the Village. That is when it was discovered that it was an unpermitted use. If awarded, the state grant would be effective on July 1st and they would have 6 months to work through any zoning issues. She does not believe there is demand for something in the Village that is open 24/7 or from a cultural perspective from her staff. She was told by the state to apply for the grant and they would work to address zoning regulations in their particular community. They have applied for the grant and will have until December 31st to address the zoning issues. She anticipated that there would be compliance with the hours the Village mandates.

Trustee Mendrek asked how much money would be lost if the grant was not approved. Susan Resco replied that currently, they receive \$250,000, 1,500 people come to the Living Room annually, and they employ 9 individuals. This would be eliminated without the grant money.

Trustee Mendrek asked if the Living Room was open to individuals outside of Northfield. Susan Resco replied that it served people from the surrounding communities.

Trustee Fowler asked if the employees were licensed. Susan Resco replied that they were certified peer specialists to model and listen but it is not a doctor/patient relationship. It is a peer-to-peer relationship that has been shown in numerous studies to be very effective. Trustee Fowler was open to granting the extension but stressed that a more thorough understanding and public safety should be addressed if the hours were to be extended. Susan Resco noted there is a crisis counselor and certified and licensed counselor on the premises at all times.

Trustee Galin asked what region the Northfield office served. Susan Resco replied that there were Living Room facilities in Waukegan, Skokie, and Arlington Heights.

Trustee Whittaker inquired if the other surrounding facilities were open 24 hours. Susan Resco responded that none of them were 24/7. Trustee Whittaker stressed that the mental health crisis in the country was out of control and he felt the Board needed to do their due diligence to make it work. He thanked the Josselyn Center for the work they do for the community.

Susan Resco stressed that communities with mental health centers have been shown to be safer with fewer domestic disputes, incarcerations, and school failures.

Trustee Dinges asked if it was busier on weekends. Susan Resco remarked that is less busy on the weekends. Trustee Dinges thought it was an asset to the Village.

Trustee Orth noted that the mental health crisis in the country is escalating and felt the Board needed to support this.

Trustee Galin stated that he supported an extension but wanted to see more details in the future.

President Lungmus stated that he supported an extension but staff needs to work with the Josselyn Center to better understand what the code amendment would need to be.

Other Business

Trustee Whittaker made a motion, seconded by Trustee Mendrek to adjourn the meeting.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.