

**MINUTES OF THE  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING  
VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD  
TUESDAY, July 19, 2022**

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order by Village President Greg Lungmus on Tuesday, July 19, 2022, at 5:30 PM. Village Clerk Stacy Sigman called the roll as follows:

Committee Members Present:

Trustee Barnaby Dinges

Trustee Tom Whittaker

Trustee Matt Galin

Trustee Tracey Mendrek

Trustee Charles Orth

Absent:

Trustee Todd Fowler

President Greg Lungmus

Others Present:

Village Attorney Buzz Hill

**Approval of the June 21, 2022 Report of Proceedings**

Trustee Orth made a motion, seconded by Trustee Whittaker to approve the June 21, 2022 Report of Proceedings. Approval was unanimous.

**Review and discussion of automated license plate readers and a 20th police officer**

Village Manager Sigman noted that over the past several years, there has been a rise in crimes on the national and regional levels. This disturbing trend has been exacerbated by nationwide staffing shortages and the inability to hire new police officers. To help address these situations here in Northfield, staff recommended that the budget be amended to provide for automated license plate readers at key intersections and to hire a 20<sup>th</sup> police officer. Chief Lustig, Deputy Chief Hutensky, Sergeant Hanus, and Josh Thomas, Vice President of External Communications at Flock Safety (Provider of Automated License Plate Readers) presented the attached PowerPoint presentation.

Deputy Chief Hutensky stated that in conjunction with the other municipalities in our region, seven Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs) are proposed in Northfield at the key entrances and exits to our community. The readers will be used to help our officers solve and prevent crimes. The cost to deploy this new technology is very reasonable with a first-year cost of \$24,450 and then an annual ongoing cost of \$20,000. If approved, Northfield's ALPRs will be part of a much larger regional network of ALPRs. Northbrook, Kenilworth, and Palatine have ALPRs in place; while Wilmette, Winnetka, Glencoe, Morton Grove, Niles, Skokie, and Highland Park are all in the process of approving or implementing them. Regionally, the police departments worked together to assess the pros and cons of the various ALPR providers. Based on that due diligence, the Flock system was selected.

Josh Thomas noted that a common concern with ALPRs is privacy. To help alleviate those concerns the Village would plan to operate the system as follows:

- All images and information captured by the cameras would be owned by the Village. Flock would not be able to share or sell them to any outside entity.
- The system would automatically delete images after 30 days. Any images that are part of an active investigation would be downloaded and stored locally.
- The system does not have access to any registration information (vehicle owner name and address). The system only checks the plate number against the current “hot list” to determine if the vehicle is stolen or involved in an alert like AMBER or SILVER.

Sergeant Hanus stressed that Northfield will only use the system as an investigative tool. Officers will not automatically receive alerts in their squads and access will be limited to the Investigations Supervisor, Detective, Chief, and Deputy Chief. Over time, as the department becomes more familiar with the technology, and the hot notices are more refined, the department may expand the use to include officer notifications.

President Lungmus noted that the Flock system was reasonably priced.

Trustee Dinges inquired about the maintenance of the cameras. Josh Thomas replied that his company would be responsible for any maintenance and that there has been very little vandalism with the cameras in other communities.

Trustee Whittaker thanked the Police Department for everything they did surrounding the Highland Park 4<sup>th</sup> of July tragedy.

Village Attorney Hill explained that the Leads Policy allows the Police Department to run a license plate through a law enforcement database. He noted that there needs to be probable cause to be able to run a license plate and stressed that the Leads protocol is very tight.

Josh Thomas reiterated that the Flock system did not have the capability to run a license plate but rather just took an image of the back of the car capturing the exact time, license plate, and make and model of the car.

Trustee Galin requested annual updates and statistics on the ALPR program and Flock system.

Resident Kathy Estabrooke inquired about training on the Flock system and the police replied that only the Investigations Supervisor, Detective, Chief, and Deputy Chief would be trained. She also asked since the cameras were solar-powered, would there be an issue on cloudy days. The Flock representative replied the cameras could be powered for approximately 7 days with backup batteries based on data from surrounding communities that experience similar weather.

The Board was supportive of the proposed ALPR program and deploying a Flock system as it would allow Northfield to be part of the larger regional network, thus maximizing its effectiveness.

Chief Lustig remarked that since 2008, the Village has budgeted 19 sworn police officers, including the positions of Chief and Deputy Chief. These 19 individuals are charged with covering 3 shifts a day – 365 days a year. When all of the positions are filled, the 19 positions work effectively. However, over the past 2 ½ years, due to several retirements, extended worker compensation leaves, numerous family medical leaves, and COVID leaves, the department has been continuously short-staffed. In 2021 and 2022, the department has been short officers, for one of these reasons, for 350 days. In order to ensure these shifts were covered, officers have had to work double shifts, work one or both of their days off, or been mandated to stay 4 hours late and/or come in 4 hours early. These sorts of accommodations, and their overtime cost implications, are sustainable for short periods, but longer term can result in employee fatigue, morale issues, and an increased risk of injury. The hope was that once the worst of the pandemic was over, the situation would stabilize but that has not happened.

Chief Lustig stated that unfortunately the employment market has remained very challenging, and recruiting quality police officers has become more difficult than ever before. The department is currently down one officer due to retirement, has one officer out on an extended duty disability, and has several others out on various medical/family leaves. To help address this situation in the near term, staff requested that the Board consider an amendment to the budget allowing the hire of a 20<sup>th</sup> police officer. If approved, staff would use the active recruitment process to try to hire 2 new officers - the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup>. The 20<sup>th</sup> officer position would not be a permanent increase but rather used to help staff the current and anticipated vacancies and upcoming retirements. If the officer who is out on disability is unable to return to work, the new officer would fill that vacancy. If the officer returns to work, the 20<sup>th</sup> position would be phased out through attrition since 4 out of 18 officers are eligible for retirement. The annual cost to add a 20<sup>th</sup> officer is \$175,000/year (salary, benefits, pensions, etc.) and it is estimated that the 20<sup>th</sup> officer position will be needed in the department for about 1-3 years.

In the interest of public safety, the Board fully supported a budget amendment for \$200,000 for a 20<sup>th</sup> officer and the ALPR program/Flock system. The costs will be covered by a draw down on reserves. Sales taxes have been better than expected and with cannabis sales tax coming, staff is optimistic that a draw down on reserves might not even be needed. These two budget amendments will be prepared for formal consideration at the upcoming August Village Board meeting.

### **Review and discussion on the Village Board 2022-23 Core Objectives and Village Board Procedural Guidelines**

President Lungmus stated that annually the Board establishes Core Objectives that reflect the current community priorities. These Core Objectives are then used by the Village Manager to prioritize staff and resources.

Village Manager Sigman stated that under Financial Strength the COVID impact models could be omitted as no longer applicable. She recommended that the Core Objectives be broader and less granular with the goal they become guiding principles that translate better to all departments in the Village. She noted that the details under each objective would be addressed in the budget

planning process. Village Manager Sigman also stressed that during her performance review, she outlines how the needle has been moved within each of these objectives for the Board to provide feedback.

Trustee Mendrek was in favor of making the Core Objectives broader in nature.

Trustee Dinges was in favor of keeping more details in the objectives. He noted how the water system was important to focus on since water is getting more expensive and there are things such as water main breaks so the Board should emphasize and look for ways to improve upon this. He noted that he would like an economic development goal of adding a restaurant to the downtown. Under green initiatives, he recommended adding an anti-litter campaign that would be sustainable by potentially working with the local businesses. He also recommended signs stating, "Welcome to Northfield. Please do not litter."

President Lungmus remarked how Trustee Whittaker had recently organized students to pick up litter and Trustee Whittaker replied that the students wanted to do it again next year.

President Lungmus noted that he also would love to have another restaurant in town but was concerned about making it a goal.

Trustee Mendrek stated that ultimately the owners of the real estate in town control those entities and decide if a new restaurant is a viable tenant. She was concerned about adding a new restaurant as a goal since it might be unattainable for the Village staff to ever achieve.

Village Manager Sigman noted that the 2040 Vision Plan has a strong goal of increasing the vibrancy of the downtown and thought this was a great Core Objective to continue making positive strides.

Trustee Whittaker was in favor of paring down the details but wanted to ensure that each objective was reassessed thoroughly.

Trustee Orth believed that keeping the objective broad-based in nature would serve the Village well.

President Lungmus noted that Trustee Dinges had championed way-finding signage throughout the town and believed that this should be incorporated into the Core Objectives.

Trustee Mendrek stated that signage was more than a one-off project and needed to be thought about and incorporated within bigger initiatives, so it should be included in the Core Objectives.

Trustee Dinges stressed that Northfield had an identity issue. He wanted to have something like a fair that features Northfield restaurants, businesses, police, fire, etc. so more people become aware of this great town and thus want to live and work here.

Trustee Mendrek asked whether the identity issue was a function of Northfield's relationship with the Chamber of Commerce and how they represent the Village in the greater picture

because that is their role. She noted that the Village provides funding to the Chamber of Commerce so it might be worth meeting with them to see what they are doing and determine whether there are additional ways to highlight Northfield.

Village Manager Sigman remarked that the theme of identity could definitely be a Core Objective by finding ways to increase the visibility and character of the Village. She stated she would incorporate all of these ideas surrounding Core Objectives and bring them back to the Board for their review next month.

Trustee Galin noted that he wanted to add two categories to the Core Objectives. The first category would be Cost Savings and Efficiencies for Residents so there is cognizance of this guiding principle. The second would be Communication to Residents so the residents know what the Village is doing and why - resulting in awareness of everything so they become active and engaged.

Trustee Dinges noted that the communication should remind the citizens of the programs they have and the improvements that the Village is making.

President Lungmus remarked that in the budget, there were plans to refresh the Village's webpage. He noted that a Village newsletter refresh might also be prudent.

Trustee Whittaker stated that most Northfield residents are happy with what is happening in the Village and do not go to the website frequently. He recommended using social media more frequently and communicating the same messages on all platforms, especially to reach the younger residents.

President Lungmus stated that last year Trustee Whittaker had requested the development of the Northfield Village Board Procedural Guidelines. He then asked if any updates were needed.

Village Attorney Hill noted that under Agenda Development and Board Meetings, it states "If an individual trustee's agenda request is not supported by the Village President, the trustee can seek to have two additional trustees, (3 total) make the agenda request, in writing, to the Village Clerk and it will be scheduled." He stressed that only one additional trustee is needed, so two total, are needed to make an agenda request in accordance with the Northfield Village Code.

Trustee Dinges requested that the trustees be copied on any outgoing responses to the vgroup messages.

Village Manager Sigman noted her outgoing responses to the vgroup messages would be forwarded to the Board.

### **Other Business**

### **Public Comment**

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

AYES: Dinges  
Whittaker  
Galín  
Mendrek  
Orth

NAYS: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

ABSENT: Fowler

The meeting adjourned at 7:14 PM.