

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MINUTES
February 10th, 2025**

A regular meeting of the Village of River Forest Board of Trustees was held on February 10th, at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room of Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue – River Forest, IL.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

- Present: President Adduci, Trustees Brennan (virtual) O’Connell, Gillis, Vazquez, Bachner, and Village Clerk Keller
- Absent: None
- Also Present: Village Attorney Lance Malina, Village Administrator Matt Walsh, Assistant Village Administrator Jessica Spencer, Police Chief James O’Shea, Fire Chief Tom Gaertner, Director of Public Works and Engineering Jack Bielak, Finance Director Rosemary McAdams, Deputy Police Chief James Greenwood, Assistant Finance Director Keke Boyer, Police Commander Michael Swierczynski, Deputy Fire Chief David Bochenek, and Deputy Clerk Luke Masella.

MOTION by Trustee O’Connell to allow Trustee Brennan to participate via Zoom due to travel. Seconded by Trustee Johnson.

- Roll call:**
- Ayes: Trustees Bachner, Johnson, O’Connell, Vazquez, Gillis
- Absent: None
- Nays: None

Motion Passes.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Adduci led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

a. Swearing in of Fire Lieutenant Paul Zipperich

Fire Chief Tom Gaertner gave a short speech about Paul and his service to the Village.

Village Clerk Keller swore in Fire Lieutenant Zipperich.

b. Presentation – Fire Department – Concordia University Chicago Partnership and Attendance at the 2025 International Meeting on Simulation in Healthcare

Deputy Fire Chief Dave Bochenek gave a presentation on a recent partnership with Concordia University Chicago. He also explained how this partnership led to the Department presentation at the 2025 International Meeting on Simulation in Healthcare.

President Adduci shared a story highlighting the significance of the training programs provided by the Fire Department.

Kristen Bayer, Director of Nursing at Concordia University Chicago, provided additional details about the partnership with the Fire Department.

4.CITIZEN COMMENTS

The Citizen comments were all related to agenda item 8.a. President Adduci stated the citizens could make their comments when that item is discussed.

5.ELECTED OFFICIAL COMMENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee Bachner stated a land acknowledgement.

Trustee Gillis reminded everyone about the upcoming electronic waste collections. She also noted that she will be preparing to speak to Lincoln School students about the importance of recycling.

Trustee Vazquez shared a positive experience he had with the Village's Public Works Department involving a water leak.

Village Clerk Keller had nothing to add to the record.

Trustee Brennan had nothing to add to the record.

Trustee Johnson had nothing to add to the record.

Trustee O’Connell congratulated the Fire Department on their program with Concordia and thanked them for their work. He then gave a shoutout to the Public Works Department for snow removal.

President Adduci reported attending a civic fair at Oak Park River Forest Highschool with Clerk Keller.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Village Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – January 27th, 2025
- b. Administration Department Report
- c. Monthly Department Reports
- d. Accounts Payable – January 2025 – \$2,073,334.39
- e. Change Order – 2024 Public Works Interior Remodel
- f. Proclamation Designating February 16 – 22, 2025, as National Engineers Week

MOTION by Trustee Gillis to approve Consent Agenda Items A through F. Seconded by Trustee Johnson.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Bachner, Johnson, O’Connell, Vazquez, Gillis, Brennan
 Absent: None
 Nays: None

Motion Passes.

7. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS FOR SEPARATE CONSIDERATION

None.

8. RECCOMENDATIONS OF BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

None.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Contract Approval – Broker Services – Jones Lang LaSalle Americas

MOTION by Trustee O’Connell to approve an Exclusive Listing Agreement with Jones Lang LaSalle Americas (JLL) and authorize the Village Administrator to execute the contract subject to final attorney review. Seconded by Trustee Vazquez.

President Adduci invited members of the public to give citizen comments.

Phyllis Rubin made public comments about the proposed contract with JLL, urging the Village Board to investigate the ethics complaint submitted regarding the contract and the Economic Development Commissioner.

She shared her experiences attending the Ethics Commission meeting on the complaint and called on the Village Board to grant the Commission the authority to investigate the matter. Ms. Rubin asked that the Board delay voting on the proposed contract until the Commission has completed its review of the complaint.

Tom Hazinski made public comment about the ethics complaint filed with the Commission about the JLL contract.

Mr. Hazinski stated that he believed the complaint was unwarranted. He also worried about the potential negative impact future ethics complaints could have on the Village's Board and Commissions members and future volunteers. He urged the filer to withdraw their complaint with the Commission.

Trustee O’Connell asked Mr. Hazinski what field he works in.

Mr. Hazinski stated he is a consultant involved in sports, convention, and entertainment facilities.

Trustee O’Connell asked if Mr. Hazinski has ever held a position on a Village Board or Commission.

Mr. Hazinski stated he was the Chair of the Economic Development Commission.

Margie Cekander made a public comment regarding the proposed contract with JLL and the ethics complaint she filed with the Commission. She also expressed

gratitude to Village Clerk Keller for submitting the referendum question to the County Clerk.

Ms. Cekander gave background information on her complaint and raised concerns about the Local Ethics Ordinance, claiming that parts of the Village's Ethics Code, specifically those related to the Commission's powers, had been removed. She also expressed frustration with how the Village Board has handled her complaint, stating it has not been addressed properly or thoroughly.

She emphasized that her complaint remains valid, even though the Economic Development Commissioner named in the complaint has resigned, as her complaint is directed at the Commission itself.

Ms. Cekander asked the Village Board delay the vote until her complaint is investigated thoroughly and also raised concerns about the Ethics Commission entering into executive session at their last meeting.

Patty Henek gave a public comment on the proposed contract and expressed concerns about the Ethics Commission's lack of jurisdiction over the complaint. She urged the Village Board to act on the Ethics Commission's requests: to enter and delay the complaint until it can be reconsidered by the Commission, to grant the Commission authority over such ethics complaints, and to abstain from voting until the Commission's requests are addressed.

Beth Cheng made public comment about the proposed JLL contract. She thanked the Village Board and staff for their work with the Neighborhood Dialogues.

Ms. Cheng requested that the Board provide the Neighborhood Dialogue report to any broker chosen by the Village.

She then expressed concerns about a section of the contract related to zoning variances for density and requested that the Board consider removing it. Ms. Cheng also highlighted issues with the Village's communication and urged the Board to provide more timely and meaningful information to the public to prevent last-minute frustrations from residents.

President Adduci stated that the Village Board did not remove any sections from the Ethics Ordinance following the Ethics Commission's recommendation. She clarified that any claims of a carve-out are false.

President Adduci provided an overview of the current ethics code and the changes made by the Ethics Commission. She reminded the Board that these changes were unanimously approved and pointed out that many municipalities, including River Forest, leave the investigation of conflicts of interest to the discretion of their elected boards. President Adduci also mentioned that she informed the chair of the Ethics Commission that they are welcome to propose any further changes to the code for the Village Board's review.

President Adduci expressed satisfaction with the information provided by Village staff and the Village attorney regarding the complaint.

Trustee O'Connell asked Village Attorney Malina what the status of the complaint is now that the Economic Development Commissioner has resigned.

Village Attorney Malina stated that the issue is still pending before the Village Board for consideration, as the complaint was filed regarding a section of the code outside the jurisdiction of the Village Ethics Commission.

Mr. Malina stated his opinion is there is no legal conflict of interest.

Trustee Johnson asked Administrator Walsh what services brokers provide.

Administrator Walsh stated the broker would act as the primary contact for the marketing of the Village owned properties near Madison Street. He then stated the broker could seek out possible developers as well.

Village Clerk Keller noted he had a question about the contract itself and also suggested the Board consider whether they are going to address the ethics complaint filed before voting on the contract.

Trustee Vazquez thanked President Adduci for her clarification on what occurred with the Ethics Ordinances and its origins. He reiterated that the Village Board did not alter the Ethics Ordinance after the Ethics Commission submitted it to them for approval.

Trustee Vazquez asked Village Attorney Malina if the Economic Development Commissioner had disclosed his work with JLL to the Commission and recused himself from the discussions.

Mr. Malina stated that, to his knowledge, that is correct. He then provided an explanation on how the conflict of interest was dealt with by the Commission and staff.

Trustee Vazquez asked if the Commissioner was involved in any of the reviews of the proposed contracts or proposals.

Administrator Walsh stated the Commissioner was not involved in any of the reviews of proposals.

Trustee Vazquez noted being comfortable in moving forward with the contract because he did not see a legal conflict of interest.

Trustee O'Connell addressed a letter received from a resident that afternoon regarding the ethics complaint. He urged the Village Board to proceed with the contract and emphasized that the Board should retain sole authority to review conflicts of interest complaints.

Trustee Bachner stated that she believed the Ethics Commission's decision to meet about the complaints indicates that the Village should wait to hear the decision from the Commission.

Trustee Bachner questioned whether the Village understood the differences between the jurisdictions of the Ethics Commission and the Village Board when the complaint was received.

Village Attorney Malina noted that when the complaint was filed, it was directed to the Ethics Commission. He stated that, given this, he believed it would be appropriate for the Ethics Commission to review the complaint even though it was technically outside of their jurisdiction and subsequently defer the complaint to the Village Board for review.

Trustee Vazquez asked Administrator Walsh if it was true that the Chair of the Ethics Commission had requested the Village Board defer their vote on the JLL contract until the Commission had an opportunity to review the complaint.

Mr. Walsh stated that is correct.

Trustee Bachner noted that President Adduci agreed to defer as well.

President Adduci stated that she would not have deferred the vote had the Commission not made the request.

Trustee Bachner asked if there is a specific process or rubric to follow when a complaint is filed with the Village Board. She expressed dissatisfaction that, if such a process exists, the complaint was not brought before the Village Board for discussion this evening. She added that adhering to a formal process may help reassure residents that the Village Board is taking the complaints seriously.

She noted that she would be willing to wait for a full review of the complaint, either by the Commission or the Village Board, before voting on the contract.

Trustee Vazquez reiterated that that the Ethics Commission never had jurisdiction over these types of ethics complaints.

President Adduci noted that while the Ethics Commission is free to convene and request changes to their role as they see fit, this is a separate issue from what is currently being discussed before the Village Board.

Trustee Brennan reminded everyone that the Madison Street site discussion is still in its early stages and encouraged the Village Board to pause and allow the Ethics Commission to thoroughly investigate the complaint received.

Trustee Brennan also inquired about when the Village became aware of the Ethics Commission's jurisdiction, or lack thereof, in this matter based on information she received from Administrator Walsh.

President Adduci reminded the Board that they had voted on the Ethics Ordinance and noted that Mr. Walsh was not the Village Administrator at the time of its implementation.

Trustee O'Connell asked if he is correct in understanding that the Ethics Commission is requesting a power that falls under the authority of the Village Board, a power that no other commission in the Village holds.

President Adduci stated that they are not necessarily requesting additional authority, but rather the ability to provide an advisory opinion on that section of the code. She noted, however, that this discussion is not currently before the Village Board.

Trustee Johnson stated that while he believes it is important to give boards and commissions deference, he does not see any issues with the process the Economic Development Commission and staff followed when selecting JLL. He also reminded everyone that all decisions ultimately come back to the Village Board for final approval. He expressed the view that the Village should not rush to change the Ethics Commission's powers at the last minute due to a disagreement over the code.

Trustee Bachner stated that she did not believe adhering to the Ethics Commission's requests would rush the process. She reminded the Board that the complaint is still pending discussion and encouraged them to follow a thorough and public process in reviewing it.

Trustee Johnson reminded the Board that they could wait for the Ethics Commission's requests, only to potentially reject them later, ultimately returning to the same point they are at now.

Trustee Bachner noted that she felt the Board had not been provided with sufficient information or clear steps to determine the legitimacy of the complaint before the Village Board.

Trustee O'Connell highlighted the information that he and the Board had received regarding the ethics complaint.

Trustee Bachner pointed out that, at the last meeting, the Village Board had not been explicitly considering the complaint at that time.

Board members referenced instances where they had recused themselves from discussions without explicit direction or agenda items.

Trustee Bachner reiterated her support for the Village Board to thoroughly investigate the ethics complaint and make a decision regarding its validity before voting on the JLL contract.

The Village Board discussed whether there are currently one or two outstanding complaints.

Mr. Malina stated that there are two complaints and provided background information on them, including how they could potentially be reviewed and some issues that may arise, due to the resignation of the commissioner.

Trustee Brennan stated that she did not believe the complaints explicitly accuse the former Economic Development Commissioner of wrongdoing. She reminded the Board that there could be unintended consequences, even when actions are made in good faith.

Trustee O'Connell stated that the most recent submission by the complainant specifically named the commissioner.

Trustee Vazquez noted that any potential involvement—whether real or alleged—by the former commissioner in the RFP process became public because the document itself was a public record. He reiterated his opinion that, based on the ordinance, there is no legal conflict of interest in either complaint. As a result, he is ready to move the discussion forward to the JLL contract itself.

Village Clerk Keller asked if something could be added to agenda at this point.

Trustee Vazquez stated no, due to the open meetings act.

Trustee Gillis stated that she believed the opinion from the Village Attorney addressed the complaint at that time. She also highlighted additional information from staff that helped her conclude that no further review is necessary. Additionally, she agreed with the comments made by Trustees Vazquez and Johnson regarding the RFP process and the timeline of asking the Commission for recommendations, only to end up in the same position the Board is currently in.

Trustee Bachner reiterated that the item on the agenda was the contract, not a review of the complaint. She expressed that she feels the Village Board has not yet completed its due diligence on the complaint.

The Village Board discussed whether the legal opinion received on the complaint should be made public.

Trustee Bachner noted that legal pieces have been in prior Village Board packets.

President Adduci stated that she is comfortable with the information she has received from staff and the Village attorney regarding the complaint.

Village Clerk Keller expressed concerns about a section in the contract related to the cooperating broker's commission and asked staff and the Village Attorney to ensure that the contract is updated to reflect recent changes in real estate law.

Village Attorney Malina stated he will review the concern prior to any final approvals.

Trustee Brennan asked if the contract is a JLL contract or a contract provided by the Village.

Village Administrator Walsh stated it is a JLL contract, but members of Klein Thorpe Jenkins reviewed and helped form the contract.

Trustee Bachner requested that the Village receive a letter from JLL confirming that the former commissioner will not benefit from the contract or have any financial interest in it.

Administrator Walsh noted that the request could be made.

Trustee Vazquez expressed support for the changes requested by Ms. Cheng and offered additional suggestions based on her comments.

Administrator Walsh stated that the contract with JLL does not involve ceding any Village powers.

Trustee Bachner expressed concerns about the confidentiality of the contract and the fact that it is being discussed at a public meeting.

Village Attorney Malina provided clarification on the legality of the confidential nature of the contract.

Each of the Trustees cast their vote and nearly all provided an explanation for their decision.

Trustee Brennan expressed discomfort and concern about how the ethics complaint had been handled by the Village, stating that even the appearance of a conflict of interest warranted the Board to slow down its actions. Out of respect for the Ethics Commission, she voted no.

Trustee Johnson stated that, based on his previous comments, he would vote yes. He reminded everyone that there were already controls in place within the Village's development process, with the possibility of adding more if needed. He also emphasized that the issue of the complaint and the lack of jurisdiction by

the Ethics Commission were two separate matters that should be considered independently.

Trustee O'Connell voted yes.

Trustee Bachner agreed with the points raised by Trustee Brennan and stated that if an issue was to be addressed in the future, it should be addressed promptly. Therefore, she voted no.

Trustee Gillis voted yes and stated that Trustee Bachner's suggestion about receiving a statement from JLL on the Commissioners' involvement was a good idea. She also mentioned that she would like the Ethics Commission to suggest any changes and present them to the Village Board for review later.

Trustee Vazquez voted yes and expressed support for the comments made by Trustee Johnson as well as for Trustee Bachner's suggestion regarding the statement from JLL.

President Adduci thanked everyone involved in the process for their efforts. She then asked the Village Attorney if there was a formal process for closing out the received complaint.

Village Attorney Malina stated he will help close out the documents.

Trustee Bachner requested it be noted that she believes the Village Board has not addressed the Ethics complaint properly. She reiterated that she feels it should have been listed as its own separate agenda item.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Johnson, O'Connell, Vazquez, Gillis

Absent: None

Nays: Trustee Brennan and Bachner

Motion Passes.

10. NEW BUSINESS

None.

11.EXECTUIVE SESSION

None.

12.ADJOURNMENT

MOTION to adjourn by Trustee O’Connell. Seconded by Trustee Vazquez.

Roll call:

Ayes: Trustees Bachner, O’Connell, Vazquez, Gillis, Brennan, Johnson

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

The Village Board of Trustees Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.



Jonathan Keller, Village Clerk

Date: 2/24/25