

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

May 1, 2024

A meeting of the Village of River Forest Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, May 1, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the 1st Floor Community Room of Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, Illinois.

**1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. Meeting started by calling roll. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Chairman Cuyler Brown, Commissioners Carr Preston, Bob Graham, and Raj Chiplunkar, Commissioner Katie Lowes arrived at 6:08 pm.

Absent: Commissioners Walter Wahlfeldt and Tim Brangle.

Also Present: Assistant Village Administrator Jessica Spencer and Deputy Clerk Luke Masella.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 6, 2024**

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Graham and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Preston to approve the minutes of the March 6 meeting.

**MOTION PASSED** by unanimous voice vote.

**4. DISCUSSION REGARDING REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) FOR BROKER SERVICES**

Chairman Brown opened the conversation with a summary of the events from the April 11 Zoning Board of Appeals meeting. He discussed his attempts to encourage businesses to review the RFP and was hopeful that there will be strong interest. He reiterated the feeling that the broker needs to have a vision for the Village.

Assistant Administrator Spencer explained the process of reviewing the RFP submittals and the eventual presentation to the Village Board for approval.

Discussion continued around the Zoning Board's April 11<sup>th</sup> meeting and the feedback from residents during public comment, including the opinions regarding Village communications and how various residents have different opinions about its efficacy.

Commissioner Chiplunkar asked if Administrator Walsh had met with the 000 blocks, as mentioned in the April ZBA meeting. Assistant Administrator Spencer said that yes, Administrator Walsh met with homeowners near Madison Street at various points in 2022 and 2023 to discuss the now-vacant land. She mentioned that while the various viewpoints have been louder than the Village's message lately, it would be helpful for those who know the Village's position to discuss with those who are interested in learning. Commissioner Brown said there was a small group who were the loudest to spread the misinformation.

Commissioner Preston asked if there was another way to encourage the Zoning Board of Appeals to meet and discuss the process.

Chairman Brown said that he is hearing that the Village is intentionally making Madison look bad. However, he knows no one wants to change the Village drastically. Assistant Administrator Spencer confirmed that the Village has worked to address the drainage issues at the site while also being sensitive to the costs of such repairs.

Discussion ensued regarding the importance of the standards set forth in the Village Code, including the variance process.

Commissioner Chiplunkar asked if there were plans developed for Madison. Chairman Brown explained that Village Planner Houseal Lavigne had developed some suggestions. Discussion ensued regarding the Comprehensive Plan and the suggestions made during the development of that Plan.

Assistant Administrator Spencer informed the commission about the Meet with the Village President event to be held on May 18<sup>th</sup>.

Discussion ensued regarding various methods for continuing the conversation with residents and those who have questions and concerns regarding the proposed text amendments.

Commissioner Lowes went back to the Request for Proposals (RFP) process. She suggested inviting the public to the meeting when the applicants present to this committee. Commissioner Graham suggested inviting the most outspoken members of the public to provide their opinions during public comment prior to the presentation, and then listen to what the developer proposes for the project sites, when the time comes. Chairman Brown liked the suggestion and said he would like to find a way to reach out to those spreading misinformation.

Discussion then turned to the communication occurring on social media, specifically Facebook. Several suggestions were made about how to best communicate the Village's messages through groups and other channels on social media. The discussion continued regarding methods of how to spread the word regarding the commercial text amendment and its importance to the Village. Assistant Administrator Spencer said the April newsletter addressed the topic if people are looking for a simple version. Chairman Brown said that this has been a long conversation but it's important

to communicate with residents. Commissioner Lowes suggested updating the image used on Facebook.

Chairman Brown said he will investigate sending the RFP for brokers to more potential partners. He will reach out to Village President Adduci and see if they can reach out to those small groups who are spreading the misinformation. Chairman Brown asked for the minutes of the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting on April 11<sup>th</sup>. Assistant Administrator Spencer explained the next steps for the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Village Board.

Chairman Brown thought it was good that there were so many people attending the April 11<sup>th</sup> meeting and hopes that the community can hear the conversation and changes can be made.

## **5. CONTINUED DISCUSSION REGARDING BUSINESS COMMUNITY RETENTION/ SUPPORT STRATEGIES AND COMMUNICATION**

Chairman Brown asked about the Whole Foods application for expansion. Discussion ensued regarding the efforts the Village can make to draw new businesses into the currently vacant locations. Assistant Administrator Spencer explained that it might be something to work on but explained a few of the challenges.

Assistant Administrator Spencer mentioned that Cava has recently submitted a permit for the old Boston Market space.

Discussion ensued regarding strategies to help those currently vacant properties to attract new tenants.

Chairman Brown said he was recently speaking to someone inquiring about a dispensary in the Village. Assistant Administrator Spencer said that the Board had previously expressed an interest in hearing a proposal.

Commissioner Lowes suggested a New Business Packet for new organizations to the Village.

Discussion ensued regarding having representation from the Chamber of Commerce at the end of the Memorial parade, on May 27<sup>th</sup>. Assistant Administrator Spencer said that is a Park District event, Commissioner Graham said Kiwanis too, and widely attended. Deputy Clerk Masella suggested having the post cards to hand out during the parade. Chairman Brown suggested having the Chamber run with the idea and will reach out to the Executive Director. Assistant Administrator Spencer will connect Chairman Brown and the Village's Park District contact.

## **6. NORTH AVE/MADISON ST/LAKE & LATHROP UPDATE**

Assistant Administrator Spencer stated that there was no update regarding these three properties at this time.

Commissioner Graham provided a brief update of his understanding of the Lake and Lathrop project. Chairman Brown and Commissioner Graham discussed the possibilities of the development and property.

**7. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

Chairman Brown stated his appreciation of this commission and the feedback provided.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Graham and SECONDED by Commissioner Preston to adjourn the May 1, 2024, meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 7:28 p.m. MOTION PASSED by unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Jessica Spencer, Assistant Village Administrator

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Cuyler Brown, Chairman Economic Development Commission