

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

September 4, 2024

A special meeting of the Village of River Forest Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, September 4, 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 6:02 p.m. Meeting started by calling roll. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Chairman Cuyler Brown, Commissioners Carr Preston, Commissioners Walter Wahlfeldt, Katie Lowes, Robert Graham, and Raj Chiplunkar

Commissioner Tim Brangle joined the meeting via Zoom.

Absent: None

Also Present: Village Administrator Matt Walsh and Deputy Clerk Luke Masella.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 10, 2024

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wahlfeldt and seconded by Chairman Brown to approve the minutes of the July 10th meeting.

MOTION PASSED by unanimous voice vote.

Chairman Brown noted that at last month's EDC meeting, the Commission did not have a quorum. He reminded everyone that the Commission is made up of volunteers and sometimes people cannot attend meetings.

4. DISCUSSION REGARDING TIF SMALL BUSINESS INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Administrator Walsh introduced the topic, explaining the staff's interest in developing a façade grant program for small business owners in the Village. He explained there are various methods of programs available to be seen in other communities that can be used as examples for the Village.

Pending further discussion and development by this Commission, Administrator Walsh noted that the end result would be adopted by the Village Board.

Discussion ensued regarding the guidance the Comprehensive Plan might provide regarding the potential for the vacancies on North Avenue.

Chairman Brown mentioned the current list of vacancies in the Village, Administrator Walsh stated that Assistant Village Administrator Spencer could share that list again as its been recently updated by the Fire Department. Discussion ensued regarding the benefits of similar programs in the experience of some Commissioners.

Commissioner Lowes inquired about the status of the North Ave Streetscape program. Administrator Walsh explained that the project is still in Phase 1 – Engineering Design and Development, as there are grant funds that have yet to be released for the next step of the project.

Chairman Brown stated that he wanted to be sure to list the eligibility requirements of the business, such as tax-paying businesses only.

Administrator Walsh clarified that staff will determine a rough structure of the plan to be presented at a future meeting.

Chairman Brown discussed, in his experience, a reviewing committee of each application to approve the projects submitted by business owners. Discussion ensued regarding various ideas for the program; Administrator Walsh reiterated that staff would have additional suggestions soon.

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

Chairman Brown recapped a recent meeting that he, Executive Director Darion Marion-Burton and Assistant Village Administrator Spencer participated in with the Park District regarding future Memorial Day events. He explained the hope is to include food trucks, booths for businesses to advertise their services, and some family-friendly activities.

Commissioner Graham expressed his concern about having food trucks as well as free hot dogs. Discussion ensued regarding the various ways that the businesses can be involved. Chairman Brown expressed his appreciation for the progress being made in supporting the local businesses.

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

Administrator Walsh recapped the recent updates for these developments. He said that conversations continue to move forward on the North Ave Streetscape project. Chairman Brown pointed out that he would appreciate if the police would be extra observant to the traffic that would inevitably be directed away from North Ave during the construction project. Administrator Walsh emphatically agreed and stated there would be a plan communicated to residents prior to the traffic changes.

Administrator Walsh stated there was no interest by the Village Board to revisit the commercial text amendment for the business districts at this time. He stated that currently, staff is meeting with residents through the Neighborhood Dialogues in an attempt to learn more about the residents' interests for economic development in the Village. Discussion ensued regarding the merits of text amendments for developers. Discussion moved to the strength of communication from the Village (and previous missteps) and the neighborhood dialogues; a commissioner offered to host one in his home.

Regarding Lake and Lathrop, Administrator Walsh stated that Sedgwick had sued the Village for not approving a new building permit for the site, due to the breach of the redevelopment agreement last year. The court date would be in the next few weeks. The Village is also communicating with Wintrust, Beverly Bank, and Lake and Lathrop Partners. The Village is considering actions to move this process forward. A question came up regarding a fence around the site, Administrator Walsh said that was part of the options being considered at the site. Discussion ensued regarding the potential options for the property. Commissioner Lowes suggested updates to the Village website regarding the waiting status of the project.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

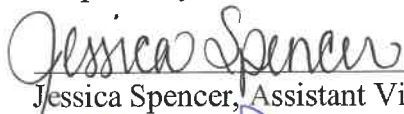
None

8. ADJOURNMENT

A **MOTION** was made by Chairman Brown and seconded by Commissioner Graham to adjourn the September 4, 2024, meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 7:16 p.m.

MOTION PASSED by unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted:



Jessica Spencer, Assistant Village Administrator



Cuyler Brown, Chairman Economic Development Commission

Date: 10/2/2024

