

**MINUTES OF THE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD
TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2019**

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order by Village President Joan Frazier on Tuesday, March 19, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. Village Clerk Stacy Sigman called the roll as follows:

Committee Members Present:

Trustee Tom Roszak
Trustee Allan Kaplan
Trustee Greg Lungmus
Trustee Thomas Terrill
Trustee John Gregorio
Trustee John Goodwin

Absent:

President Joan Frazier

Others Present:

Village Attorney Everette M. Hill, Jr., Village Manager Stacy Sigman, Assistant to the Village Manager Melissa DeFeo and Public Works Director Mike Nystrand

Approval of the February 19, 2019 Report of Proceedings and the March 5, 2019 Budget Workshop Report of Proceedings

Trustee Goodwin made a motion, seconded by Trustee Terrill to approve the February 19, 2019 Report of Proceedings and the March 5, 2019 Budget Workshop Report of Proceedings. All said aye.

Discussion on the Skokie Valley Bike Trail

Assistant to the Village Manager (“AVM”) Melissa DeFeo said that the Village has been eyeing the completion of the Skokie Valley Trail since the feasibility study was completed in 2008. When completed, the trail will provide an uninterrupted linear multi-modal connection between Lake Bluff and Chicago, running primarily along the discontinued Union Pacific corridor, ComEd right-of-way, and Village right-of-way. The trail is regionally significant and has been identified as a priority by a number of agencies, including the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and the Northwest Municipal Conference. Since 2008, communities along the trail have submitted a number of collaborative grant applications to fund the Phase I Engineering, and each was denied. Over the years, some communities left the group to work independently on grants and construction funding, and through these independent efforts, a majority of the trail has been constructed. The only section remaining to be constructed is the 4.15 mile stretch from Northfield’s northern border through Wilmette and Glenview to Old Orchard Road in Skokie. Of this segment, a large majority, approximately 2.36 miles, is in Northfield.

AVM DeFeo indicated that in 2017, the Village teamed up with these communities and were finally successful in receiving a grant for the Phase I Engineering for the remaining segment.

Cook County is providing 65% of project costs in grant funding, with the remaining amount being split equally between the four communities, at \$25,500 per community. The Phase I Engineering study is almost complete. There will be a public meeting on May 29th to solicit community feedback, and we plan on communicating with residents along the trail, and will encourage all residents to attend. The engineers anticipate completing the Phase I study in June.

Moving forward, Skokie, Glenview, and Wilmette have all indicated interest in trying to get grants for the Phase II Engineering and the Phase III Construction costs. Northfield agreed to submitting Phase II grant applications; but due to budget constraints, we have not committed to the Phase III application. Our group of communities is currently in the process of completing two grant applications for the \$300,000 Phase II Engineering. One of the grants requires a local contribution of 20%, and the other requires 50%. If we are awarded the grant requiring a 50% match, the plan is to break the project into two fiscal years to lessen the annual budget implications. The financial implications of these two grant opportunities are included in the cost estimate in your packet.

AVM DeFeo indicated that once the Phase II Engineering is complete, the next step will be construction. The construction cost for Northfield's segment, if no grants are received, would be approximately \$2 million. If Northfield receives a grant, depending on the grant, our contribution would likely be between \$400,000 and \$1 million. This project hasn't had any momentum since 2008, but now that it's rolling we need to decide where to take it. Before moving further, staff wanted to discuss this project with the Board for funding direction. Other than grants, there is no source of funding for this project, so any match to grant funding would likely have to come out of our General Fund reserves.

Trustee Lungmus indicated we can't afford it, but asked if there is anything in between that we can do such as crushed limestone rather than the asphalt. He said that we don't want to be the Village that doesn't complete the trail, but is there something that we could afford. He thinks that amount is very high, but AVM DeFeo indicated that the amount includes half of the bridge over Skokie River which is our border with Wilmette.

President Frazier asked for an explanation of the difference between the North Branch Trail and the Skokie Valley Trail. AVM DeFeo explained that the North Branch Trail is a Forest Preserve Trail that runs through the Forest Preserve all the way from Foster in Chicago up to the Botanic Gardens. The North Branch Trail runs southwest to northeast and intersects at the fire department where the trail would continue on the spur of the North Branch Trail and at the west side of the fire department and would cross and hop back on the regular corridor.

Trustee Lungmus said that people are taking the North Shore Trail and will take Northfield Road to Happ and then shift to the blue trail, so instead of shifting to the blue trail, they go down Northfield Road and up Happ Road and pick up the yellow trail again. AVM DeFeo responded that the current trail terminates at Winnetka Road. She then showed the Board members the different trails on a map. VM Sigman explained that the existing trail system ends around New

Trier and then crosses over to the east side of the Eden's Expressway. The proposed trail which is being discussed stays on the west side of the Eden's. Trustee Lungmus asked President Frazier if she thinks it's redundant to have two trails. She indicated it is a lot of money but she offered to meet with the other Village Presidents in the group to see if they would pitch in more, but she doesn't see how Northfield can come up with that amount of money. Trustee Goodwin asked how much the bridge is to build. AVM DeFeo said its \$600,000 and would be split 50/50 between Northfield and Wilmette. VM Sigman indicated that she hasn't seen a cost estimate from Phase II and Phase III go down. It is almost always higher. So it is likely the numbers that we have here will only go up. Construction costs go up. To get funding, the trail will have to comply with ASHTO standards. These are the federal standards for a bike trail and require a minimum 10' wide asphalt path. Those construction standards must be followed to be eligible for grants.

President Frazier said perhaps people could continue using the North Branch Trail and we could create a spur around Tower Road over to the Skokie Valley Trail and would be a lot less expensive. VM Sigman responded there is no access from the north or south to Tower Road. AVM DeFeo indicated that there isn't anything constructed there now. The only way to connect to the existing trail from Northfield would be south by New Trier. There isn't any trail in between New Trier High School and north of Tower Road on the west side of town. Essentially, the entire length of Northfield doesn't have a bike lane except on the east side of the Eden's Expressway. The only way to get over to that trail by the high school, south of Winnetka Road.

Trustee Roszak asked where it would connect on the north side. AVM DeFeo said the blue line is hidden under the tree and would terminate at about Voltz Road. The Village of Northbrook has an existing trail that we would connect to and it would then go all the way up to Wisconsin. Northbrook is in the Phase II engineering now. Trustee Roszak questioned whether there is any way to get additional grants to supplement the other grants. VM Sigman said no. The only way is to find another entity like Cook County, who will agree to provide the matching funds. We are not aware of any entity that has matching share funds for a bike path. In the prior grants the four towns split the matching costs evenly. The trail itself benefits the whole region and our part is a very small portion of that larger regional system. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the trail gap is physically in Northfield. Our share could be at least \$400,000 to \$500,000 or could be over \$1 million. VM Sigman said President Frazier's suggestion is a good one. The benefit is very regional and from a population standpoint we are a very small percentage. Maybe there would be some leverage politically to talk to the other towns to see if they would split the costs up differently. However, nobody so far likes the idea except for Northfield. The bike connection has been in the Comprehensive Plan and on the radar for over 20 years. We wouldn't likely have any success getting a grant on our own.

President Frazier asked if we are permitted to solicit funds. Attorney Hill indicated that could be done. President Frazier thinks the funding would have to be a combination of grants with the other villages. Trustee Roszak said that if it's going to be more like \$400,000, that we should try to do something. VM Sigman stressed that if we are going to apply for these grants, part of the application says that if you are issued the grant, you are committed to providing the path. We

would have to certify that we will pay the \$400,000 matching share. Trustee Goodwin asked if the bike path has come up in the new Comprehensive Plan study. President Frazier indicated it has been discussed. She said years ago, the question was whether the railway would donate or lease the land to us for \$1 and Elaine Necritz didn't get anywhere. She asked what the expectation is now for using the railway land. AVM DeFeo said most of it would be on the ComEd right of way and they have recreational leases. VM Sigman said Phase I work didn't have very specific cost breakdowns on the right of way. AVM DeFeo said that the right of way acquisition and easements are estimated at \$150,000 for our segment.

Trustee Kaplan suggested finding someone who would champion this project and go to the community to raise the funds. We built the huge building in Clarkson Park with the community stepping up. There are many bike clubs and if you find the right guy, who would love to have a path through Northfield, you might find a lot of interest. He said maybe Stepan or Medline would do something. If it comes through town, it would elevate the real estate values for all the commercial properties in downtown Northfield. We might even get an ice cream store or a bike rental company. He feels that this could make money for the Village. AVM DeFeo said this would be more of a neighborhood trail. That is intended for the more recreational rider. This trail would hook up to Tower Road and then the North Branch trail.

VM Sigman liked Trustee Kaplan's idea and mentioned the Northfield Parks Foundation. It might be worth having a conversation with them to see if they would get behind it. If we know the 50% level is a non-starter, staff can focus our grant efforts on those in the 80-90% range. AVM DeFeo is already working on the Phase II grant which is a \$20,000 or \$30,000 commitment. We wanted to get the Board's thoughts before we started looking for the construction funding. Trustee Gregorio asked how much was raised for Clarkson Park. VM Sigman believed it was well over \$1 million.

Discussion on Holiday Lighting

AVM DeFeo indicated that staff was asked to review alternative holiday lighting solutions, so she has worked closely with Public Works to identify issues and opportunities to improve our holiday lighting program. Public Works is excited to continue decorating the community for the holidays, but has concerns with the current practice of hanging lights on trees and bushes in the Central Business District. The primary concern is that it unsafely overloads the electrical system. In some locations, there is only one power supply and staff has to use as many as 15 extension cords and drape those over sidewalks, which is dangerous. In addition to overloading outlets, multiple breakers trip every week because of the moisture in the air and snow melting into extension cord connections. Throughout the season, Public Works is constantly out there resetting breakers.

AVM DeFeo added that the current practice is also not environmentally friendly. It requires cutting and throwing away over 1,200 strands of lights at the end of the season. Each tree is decorated with 30-60 strands. Those get tangled throughout the winter, and attempting to remove them without cutting them out would damage the trees and be incredibly time-intensive.

She has worked closely with Public Works to develop an alternative holiday decoration plan that would mitigate these concerns and provide a clean and festive look.

AVM DeFeo proposed a plan that would eliminate the use of most string lights and limit the scope to the Central Business District to provide that “WOW” factor. The proposed plan includes affixing wreaths to the banner arms on the decorative light poles along Willow, Central and Happ. The fixture would also be wrapped with garland and lights. There were examples in the packet. It also includes hanging garland and lights on the pedestrian bridge and the Willow Road bridge, hanging lights on the trees in the Willow Road medians, continuing the practice of placing the topiary deer at Village Hall; wrapping the Village Hall pillars, and hanging wreaths and lighting the evergreen tree at the Willow and Happ intersection. The new plan would be cost-neutral and will take the same amount of Public Works time to install. President Frazier asked how much the lights cost each year. VM Sigman believes it is around \$15,000. President Frazier asked if the wreaths and garlands would be reusable. AVM DeFeo indicated if they were real, they would not be reusable.

Based on the direction provided at the Budget meeting, staff also planned to move forward with securing IDOT permits and installing electric, within the \$50,000 budget the Board allocated to include holiday lighting on the east side of the Village. There are eight trees in the Village Center District east of the Eden’s that can accommodate lighting. All of these trees are in front of the Krasny building. Staff is suggesting a one-year trial of the alternative holiday plan.

AVM DeFeo noted that it’s important to state that we don’t have the staff time to complete the new plan and light the trees and bushes as we have done in the past. If we move forward with the trial, it would be the only decorating done this coming season. Public Works Director Mike Nystrand added that Public Works would like to have an alternate plan for the next holiday season to see what it looks like.

President Frazier indicated she likes the alternate plan and thought it could be very nice just to have something simple, elegant and cost effective. She doesn’t want it to look too junky.

Trustee Lungmus said he likes the idea of decorating the light poles. It would be a nice touch and would like to see the alternate plan pursued. There are 60 light poles. He asked if the majority of the poles are on Central Avenue. VM Sigman said the decorated light poles go from where Frontage Road connects at Central and then run south to the end of the commercial district in the Village Center. Along Willow, they would start at the bridge and go east to the Eden’s. There currently aren’t any decorative light poles on the east side. Trustee Roszak asked where the globes and rain lights will be. AVM DeFeo indicated they would be in the two Willow Road medians. She has not pursued the cost of those yet. VM Sigman said we will only light the trees in these medians. The thought is to hit the core of the Village Center. If we also want to light the east side, it will cost about \$50,000 to get power. We tried the solar lights this year, but they didn’t have enough illumination. Trustee Roszak thinks an alternate plan could also be used for the Village Hall decorating. VM Sigman again said there is no option on the

east side for garland. Trustee Roszak said we need to use the same lights on the east side as we do in the medians. VM Sigman agreed that we need to be consistent.

Trustee Gregorio asked what happens with the lights from year to year. Director Nystrand indicated they cut them off the trees and throw them away. With the pole lights, they will be able to unwrap and re-use them. Trustee Gregorio asked if anyone has seen the rain lights and globes. VM Sigman indicated she saw the globes in Steamboat and in Phoenix she has seen the rain lights. She said staff has been trying to find ways to make the town look festive while getting away from the cords and wrapped trees. Trustee Lungmus doesn't think the globes and icicles are right for Northfield. Every strand of light is about \$1.30 and there are 1,200 strands and we spent \$15,000, so it's not that expensive.

Trustee Goodwin said he has seen them in Kohler, Wisconsin and they do a nice job. He said he would be willing to try the globes, but doesn't know about the rain lights. He fully understands that the lights could potentially damage the median trees by wrapping.

Trustee Terrill felt that the point is that we are trying to do something. It will be an evolving situation where it will be one thing one year and try something else the next year. He thinks we should get started. President Frazier said she wasn't sure about the globes either but thinks we should try it for one year and see if we like them. She would still like to make provisions to get the east side lit as well. She just wants something beautiful for the Village.

Trustee Roszak thinks this idea is artistic, but would like someone to be a curator of the holiday décor and lighting. He said this person would create a drawing public works could work from. If it's not done right, it will look bad. AVM DeFeo informed the Board that the public works staff is very excited to try the new alternative. Trustee Goodwin suggested having someone from the Architectural Commission oversee the project. Trustee Lungmus would like to see quality. Trustee Roszak pointed out that the photos show are asymmetrical and go up and down in an artistic manner. Someone needs to make sure that happens, otherwise if they are all crooked and the same sizes, they won't look good. VM Sigman stated the manufacturer may have a suggested way to string them.

President Frazier asked how far south the lights go on Happ. VM Sigman responded that we are not proposing to light any trees except for those in the median on Willow Road. The only thing that would be decorated on Central and Happ is the light poles. President Frazier wondered if it is worth doing all the light poles on Central. VM Sigman felt that is the gateway into downtown. President Frazier then wondered how the businesses on the east side of Happ Road will feel not having any lights. Director Nystrand said all the poles will be wrapped and there are some on the east side of Happ.

Trustee Kaplan summarized the discussion by using globes and rain lights in the medians. AVM DeFeo pointed to the plans in the packets. The wreaths on the banner arms and decorative light poles will be wrapped with garland and lights. Hanging garland and lights at the pedestrian bridge and on the Willow Road bridge and hanging specialty lights on the trees in the

Willow Road median. The menorah would be moved to the other corner to make it more visual and then we would continue with the deer, wreaths and lit grapevine balls. Trustee Kaplan asked if the cost would be the same and AVM DeFeo indicated it would. VM Sigman suggested removing the lighting on the pedestrian bridge because it's not very visible from all locations. Director Nystrand indicated there are a lot of people who would see it from Mariano's and pedestrians walking to Mariano's. Public Works felt it would be a good idea. The Willow Road bridge would have the garland and lights and also the main entry sign at Waukegan and Willow with garland, wreaths and lights.

President Frazier asked if the menorah would block the community events sign. AVM DeFeo said no. Trustee Roszak questioned whether the lights on the light poles could be reused. Director Nystrand indicated he thought they could.

Trustee Kaplan feels that \$50,000 for electric to the eight (8) trees is a waste of money. 95% of the people who would see it live in Winnetka. He thinks Mr. Krasny should decorate his building. He also pointed out that any work we do over there might get taken out if that site is redeveloped or changed. President Frazier said from the beginning she wanted to bring the east side more together with the rest of the Village. She thought some lights would help do that but agrees it is expensive. Once the electricity is in, it will be in permanently. Trustee Roszak suggested doing temporary extension cords with the rubber speed ball things. Then require the new developer, as part of their permit, to put in the permanent GFI's. For the next few years, this won't cost much by just pulling an extension cord from the building. VM Sigman indicated that in the past, most businesses don't want to let the Village tying into their electrical. She also doesn't know if IDOT would allow that in their right of way. Director Nystrand said there used to be trees in the median where the salon is and Northfield Foods used to be, but when the state reconfigured Willow Road, they were taken out.

Trustee Lungmus would like to see more decorations on that side, but since they are not our trees, its \$50,000, and we don't know what the property will be like in the future, he thinks we should hold off. It's also likely a spaghetti bowl of wires in that area. Director Nystrand agreed that there were a lot of utilities conflicts. Trustee Lungmus suggested someone reaching out to Mr. Krasny to see if he would be willing to allow us to use his electricity in exchange for the Village decorating the trees in front of the building. President Frazier asked if IDOT would allow us to do that provided Mr. Krasny agrees. Director Nystrand indicated we wouldn't need IDOT's permission to just hang lights on those trees. Trustee Roszak wanted to confirm that they would be decorated with the same type of light in the rest of the Village.

There being no further discussion or issues to come before the Board, Trustee Gregorio made a motion, seconded by Trustee Roszak to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.