

# Meeting Minutes

Village of Downers Grove - Council Meeting

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Council Chambers

September 15, 2020

7:00 PM

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Public comment will be taken electronically and in person. To submit a comment electronically, please click on the “Submit Public Comment” link on the Current Week’s Meeting page of the Village website any time before or during the meeting. Thank you.

## 1. Call to Order

Mayor Robert Barnett called the regular meeting of the Village Council of the Village of Downers Grove at 7:01 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Downers Grove Village Hall.

Mayor Barnett led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

## 2. Roll Call

**Council Attendance:** Mayor Barnett, Commissioner Hosé, Commissioner Earl, Commissioner Walus, Commissioner Sadowski-Fugitt, Commissioner Kulovany, Commissioner Gray

**Absent:** None

**Non-Voting:** Village Manager David Fieldman, Village Attorney Enza Petrarca, Village Clerk Megan Miles

## 3. Presentations – Economic Development Corporation Quarterly Report

Mr. Michael Cassa, President and CEO of the Downers Grove Economic Development Corporation (EDC) discussed the sales tax revenues from June 2020 which were down 5% compared to June 2019. Home Rule sales tax revenues were down 17% over same period. The various retail segments for April, May, and June, within the commercial sector, were reviewed in detail, noting figures were down with much of it having to do with the pandemic. Lumber/home improvement sales were up 16.5%. Overall sales were down 18.36% for municipal tax in the second quarter of 2020 as compared to 2019. Hotels in the Village, the DoubleTree and the Marriott were significantly down during this time. Food and Beverage tax revenues for July were down 10% compared to 2019.

Discussing business retention, Mr. Cassa explained the goal was to minimize the number of business closures during the second quarter, which was kept to a minimum. Landlords and banks were assisting their tenants. The EDC was working on outreach to various retail and office businesses to notify them of what financial assistance was available. There was concern in the business sector about those businesses, especially Class A businesses who had employees working from home and whether they would continue to work from home. Industrial tenants appeared to be weathering the pandemic and remained open with minimal closures. Those businesses that hosted large events had basically closed.

Mr. Cassa reviewed the various grant and loan programs that were available to the businesses and posted on the Corporation’s web site. The Corporation was working with its national, state and county counterparts. Mr. Cassa closed his report by extending appreciation to the Village for their continued support.

Questions from the Council included how monthly sales tax information was being tracked over April, May, and June and the fact that in June the recovery was better because the State opened up during May/June and restaurant sales increased. Turning to Class A office businesses, Commissioner Gray was hopeful that businesses in the Village would not be pulling out any agreements for office space, wherein Mr. Cassa noted that Title Landmark was reducing its footprint, however it was in a long-term lease and would have to sublease its space. Also, as

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reported by Mr. Cassa, there was a large increase in subleasing. Examples followed. In fact, Mr. Cassa reported on the former trend for collaborative work space in Chicago, but due to the pandemic, the trend was now returning to traditional office space, found in the suburbs. Examples followed. He anticipated more subleasing in the future.

#### **4. Minutes of Council Meeting**

**MIN 2020-8669** - A. Minutes: Council Minutes – September 8, 2020

**Motion:** Commissioner José moved that the Council adopt the minutes of the September 8, 2020 meeting, as presented. Commissioner Earl seconded the motion.

Mayor Barnett declared the motion carried by voice vote.

#### **5. Public Comments**

Ms. Rose Kraft, 1120 Forest, relayed that she was crossing Warren Avenue and walking towards the bank when she almost got struck by a vehicle heading north. She has been asking for a traffic signal to be installed at Warren and Forest due to speeding vehicles. Mayor Barnett indicated the matter would be looked into.

#### **6. Consent Agenda**

**COR 2020-8667** A. Claims Ordinance: No. 6377 – Payroll, August 28, 2020

**BIL 2020-8668** B. Bills Payable: No. 6550 – September 15, 2020

**RES 2020-8645** C. Resolution: Authorize an agreement with BNSF Railway Company

**Summary:** This authorizes an agreement with BNSF Railway Company

#### **A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN AGREEMENT WITH BNSF RAILWAY COMPANY**

#### **RESOLUTION 2020-44**

**Motion:** Commissioner José moved that the Council adopt the Consent Agenda as presented. Commissioner Earl seconded the motion.

Mayor Barnett declared the motion carried by voice vote.

#### **7. Active Agenda**

#### **8. First Reading**

**INF 2020-8655** — A. Information: Consider Regulations and Taxes on Recreational Cannabis Businesses

Community Development Director Stan Popovich walked through a slide presentation on the zoning of cannabis-based businesses and discussed a number of matters associated with such businesses, such as 1) those municipalities that have “opted in”; 2) those communities surveyed for public safety incidents after opening up such businesses; 3) the liquor store use versus the dispensary use as it relates to criminal activity; 4) revenue that comes from Local Government Distributive Fund; 5) the potential revenue from such dispensaries; 6) the number of licenses to be distributed; and 7) policy questions for the Council to consider, etc. Mr. Popovich discussed the parking requirements that would have to be considered for such use, the potential locations for such dispensaries, the 1,300 square foot separation distance, and the next steps for council’s direction.

No questions or comments were received from the Council nor the public on the above matter.

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**MOT 2020-8654 - B.** Motion: Direct Staff to construct Sidewalk on the South Side of Norfolk Street between Carpenter Street and Saratoga Avenue

Mr. Fieldman indicated that he would like Council's direction on this matter as to whether sidewalk systems should be completed on both sides of streets that surround schools and, if so, should it be done on a petition basis or a programmatic approach that includes a multi-year plan? He would be seeking direction on this matter specifically.

Public Works Director Andy Sikich explained the background of this petition, signed by five residents, which were seeking a new sidewalk on the north side of Norfolk between Carpenter Street and Saratoga Avenue, to improve the safety for children walking to Kingsley School. He discussed in detail the Village's policy as it relates to the installation of sidewalks, with examples following in his presentation. Mr. Sikich pointed out the specific location of where the 665-foot sidewalk would be installed, for a cost between \$80,000 to \$100,000. Staff recommended that if Council desired to construct sidewalks on both sides of the streets near elementary schools, a comprehensive analysis should take place so that decisions could be made on a system basis. Per staff, the Transportation and Parking Commission did review this request and recommended prioritizing the construction of a new sidewalk at the location as well as completing a comprehensive study of sidewalks near elementary schools and creating a plan for constructing sidewalks on both sides of the street in such areas.

Mr. Fieldman asked if Council wanted staff to include the construction of the specific sidewalk being requested in its FY2021 budget preparation, or to provide a system-wide analysis of those sidewalks around elementary schools, or to not consider the matter at this time. Council members discussed 1) the matter at length; 2) described the challenges of such installation and the matters that needed consideration before an installation took place; 3) the public safety studies that were done at the two high schools; and 4) the former sidewalk matrix.

The Mayor and Council members were in agreement that staff should perform a system-wide sidewalk analysis and bring back a timeframe for its completion with a priority list. Mr. Fieldman summarized that his study should answer where sidewalks will be constructed around the schools, in what priority order, why, the cost, when, and the tradeoffs the sidewalks would pose with other community challenges such as trees, drainage, etc. He believed this could be reflected in the upcoming budget.

Mayor Barnett invited the public to speak.

Ms. Noel Shores, who resides in the Kingsley neighborhood, discussed her neighbor's involvement with this matter prior to 2019, understanding that a prior (sidewalk) survey was done and was paid for but did not include elementary schools. She asked whether the residents would have to pay for another sidewalk analysis. She stated she has heard from others that Norfolk Street is dangerous and was a raceway for the high school students. She was disappointed by the Village that the numbers for the installation of the stop sign were not enough. Ms. Shores asked that bus turn-about also be considered under the analysis.

Mayor Barnett explained what the prior scope of work entailed and who paid for it (District 99), noting the elementary schools were not included in that scope. The Mayor further explained what the sidewalk analysis being discussed tonight could entail.

Ms. Janice Fellows, 1127 Norfolk, discussed that she did voice her concerns to the Transportation and Parking Commission and the fact that she and her neighbors were not only addressing the concerns for today but also for the future, since the area in which she lived was growing with families. She appreciated the Council wanting to look into this matter and reminded them that the residents of the block and Kingsley School have come to the Council to review the block and to consider the installation of sidewalks. Furthermore, she indicated this matter has been ongoing for years. Lastly, she asked that while the comprehensive plan is being studied and other schools are reviewed, to include her area as a priority in a timely matter.

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Ms. Noel Shores returned and briefly mentioned that a study was done on Norfolk Street but Will Lorton had told the residents that there was not enough traffic to warrant a stop sign as it would slow down traffic and that traffic could not be slowed down on Norfolk. She stated that this matter had been going on since 2014.

Ms. Mel Hackett, principal of Kingsley School, acknowledged all of the residents in the council chambers who were present advocating on this topic, appreciated the time taken by the Mayor and Village Manager and others to meet on this topic, and wanted the Council to know that the school was ready to partner with the Village on this matter.

Commissioner Kulovany had some questions for Mr. Sikich about the installation of sidewalks near large trees which could be damaging, wherein Mr. Sikich said he would have to look into the matter. Asked if right-of-ways were expanded in the past in order to install a sidewalk, Mr. Fieldman did not recall right-of-ways be expanded, but mentioned the occasional acquisition of easements have taken place.

Mr. José acknowledged the issues at play and discussed that what the Village did not want to do was take a problem on one street and move it over to the next street. Mr. Fieldman stated that a number of neighborhood vehicular and pedestrian safety studies were done, but this particular study of having sidewalks on both sides of a street near elementary schools, was not done and could be done in-house.

## 9. Manager's Report

### REP 2020-8545 — A. Report: Financial Response Plan to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Fieldman explained that he did have an update to the financial response plan to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was affecting the Village's revenue and expenses. He reviewed the Village's goals and objectives, noting the Village had to be prepared to respond to future disasters. As a result, staff created a plan that included a worse case scenario of up to \$20M dollars of revenue loss, recalling he used a four-tiered approach that included 1) to seek assistance from state and federal governments as expenses are cut in the general fund; 2) using reserves from multiple funds; 3) delaying capital projects; and 4) taking money from capital funds for use in operating funds. Currently the Village was using Tiers 1, 2, and 3. Further discussion followed. Monthly sales tax figures and home rule sales taxes figures were explained by Mr. Fieldman. He reported the Village was down in revenue 18.5% from last year. A number of slides were reflected. Revenue projections were also depicted as well as revenue and expenses. In summary, Mr. Fieldman estimated the deficit in 2020 would range from \$1.3M dollars to \$7.3M dollars.

Considering the fourth quarter, Mr. Fieldman expected it to be challenging and, as a result, identified a few key questions to consider: 1) how will food and beverage revenues perform when the weather turns colder; 2) how will the Village fare in sales tax and home rule sales tax as the Village moves into the holiday season; 3) how strong will the holiday purchasing be; 4) when will hotel tax revenue performance improve; and 5) when will business travel return, etc. In addition, he queried how the county will respond to the Village's grant application. Overall, Mr. Fieldman believed his plan was working.

Mayor Barnett invited questions from the council members; none were voiced. However, he did proceed to comment that the fourth quarter will be a large question and many questions will be unanswered. On the positive side, he felt the Village has acted responsibly in providing its services to the community, held off on other items, and stated the plan was not permanent. Overall, he felt there should be some pride in the community because it has tried to help itself and can continue to help itself by buying locally. He extended his appreciation to the staff and council members. Mr. Fieldman also expressed his appreciation to the finance department for gathering the figures for the financial response plan.

Commissioner Kulovany inquired of staff whether there would be any issue with the temporary outdoor dining if tents with sides could extend the season, wherein Mr. Fieldman recalled there were emergency orders confirmed by the Council extending the outdoor dining in the public areas to November 1<sup>st</sup> and then allowing the manager to extend them to November 15<sup>th</sup>. After that, he explained the issue then becomes snow and ice control in the public

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sidewalk areas in the downtown area. Mr. Fieldman explained there was a team that was interested in extending the timeframe for outdoor dining in private properties. More information on that topic should be available closer to October.

## 10. Mayor and Council Member Reports

Commissioner Gray mentioned that within the Arts & Entertainment section of a *Chicago Tribune* article he read, the Tivoli was highlighted. He shared some of the article.

Given the report on sales tax, Commissioner Kulovany encouraged the residents of Downers Grove to shop locally to help the businesses.

## 11. Adjournment

Mayor Barnett asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**Motion:** Commissioner Hosé made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Earl seconded the motion.

Mayor Barnett declared the motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Megan Miles

Village Clerk