

APPROVED MINUTES - SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK
HELD ON MONDAY, JULY 8, 2013 AT 7:00 P.M.
IN ROOM 101 OF OAK PARK VILLAGE HALL

I. CALL TO ORDER

President Abu-Taleb called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Trustees Barber, Brewer, Johnson, Lueck, Salzman and Tucker; President Abu-Taleb
ABSENT: None

Village Manager Cara Pavlicek announced that the Regular Meeting scheduled for July 15 has been rescheduled for July 22. She added that the reading of the Building Codes had been on the agenda for July 15; this has been rescheduled for September 3.

III. AGENDA APPROVAL

It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda for the meeting. A voice vote was taken and the agenda was approved as presented.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Alan Adams, President of the Illinois Beef Association, 2758 N. 4450th Road, Sandwich. Mr. Adams expressed concern regarding the recent "Meatless Monday" proclamation and provided information on the health benefits of eating meat. He also addressed concerns regarding negative effects on the environment as a result of raising livestock and the safety of meat products.

V. PRESENTATIONS

A. It was moved and seconded to receive the **Harlem Underpass Phase I Study Report.**

Village Engineer Jim Budrick stated that in 2008, Oak Park, in collaboration with River Forest and Forest Park, secured \$800,000 in Federal funding to perform a Phase I engineering study for the Harlem underpass to determine the feasibility of replacing the bridge.

Dave Shannon of H.W. Lochner, the firm that completed the study, spoke about the project background and history. He stated that the social, physical and biological environmental impacts were required to be studied because Federal dollars are involved. He described the phases of the project, noting that the preliminary phase is where funding is secured, Phase I is the study to define the improvement, Phase II is design and Phase III is construction. Phase I is the only portion of the project thus far that has been funded.

Mr. Shannon gave an overview of what has been completed to date and spoke about the results of the crash, environmental and structural studies. IDOT has reviewed the traffic study and has directed the use of five 10-foot wide lanes as opposed to four 12-foot lanes. IDOT has also approved the design in the structural study and has indicated that the project may move forward with a public hearing. The current estimated cost for the project is \$19 million; this cost will continue to increase by the actual commencement of the project due to rising construction costs.

Trustee Salzman commented that there is a possibility that this project may never progress beyond this phase, as funding was only available to complete Phase I. He also expressed concern regarding the size of the 20-foot recession of the curb at the southeast corner of Harlem and South Boulevard. Mr. Shannon explained that this would allow very large semi trucks to turn at that corner. He does not know how open IDOT would be to a design exception request, since the crash analysis indicates involvement of trucks at that intersection.

Trustee Barber asked what concerns the previous Board had when this was originally presented in March. Trustee Johnson replied that the biggest concern was the lowering of Harlem and how that change would impact the Shops of Downtown north of North Boulevard. He noted that the bifurcation (two levels) of the sidewalks and addition of stairways to access the upper level sidewalk and stores is a concern and creates accessibility issues. He stated that although the Village has a Complete Streets Policy this proposal seems to place trucks and cars ahead of pedestrians. Trustee Johnson added that he is even more concerned now since IDOT did not address these concerns and made only minor changes to address Board concerns expressed in March. He also commented that many of the limitations and negative impacts to Oak Park are caused by the plans for the abutments holding up the bridge.

Mr. Shannon described the course of action needed to avoid having to completely rebuild the abutments, adding that disruption of train service during construction of the bridge would most likely not be approved by Union Pacific Railroad.

Trustee Johnson stated that another negative impact involving the southeast corner is the taking of Village land to allow for the truck turn radius; this reduces the opportunity for development in that area.

President Abu-Taleb suggested that if South Boulevard became a one-way street going west, it may alleviate the need for the 20-foot recession. He asked Mr. Shannon if there is a way to avoid lowering Harlem Avenue. Mr. Shannon explained why there is not.

Trustee Lueck commented that in addition to the two-tiered walkway along Harlem, the same situation will be present on South Boulevard and North Boulevard. The declining entranceway is an awkward configuration for any store owner to plan around. She also raised the subject of possible flooding at the lowest part of Harlem. Mr. Shannon stated that he, representatives from IDOT and Village staff recently opened a manhole cover in the area and determined there is adequate sewer capacity to handle the underpass.

President Abu-Taleb asked how many more life years the bridge has should the Village not pursue this project. Mr. Shannon confirmed that the bridge is not in imminent danger.

In the event that the project does go forward, President Abu-Taleb asked how much the Village would be responsible for financially. Village Manager Pavlicek stated that it would depend on the amount of Federal funding received. Ideally, this would be no more than a 20% local match. She added that it would be reasonable to assume that Oak Park would be responsible for 50% of the cost, with Forest Park and River Forest at 25% each. President Abu-Taleb remarked that this intersection at Harlem and South Boulevard is dangerous and unsightly. He met with River Forest and noted that they are in favor of moving forward. He asked Mr. Shannon if this is the best possible design, taking into consideration pedestrians and the businesses on Harlem. Mr. Shannon stated that in his opinion, it is.

There was discussion on relocation of the bus stop on South Boulevard, which was recommended by the Steering Committee of the project. Trustee Brewer asked if this could be done prior to the funding of this project. Mr. Shannon explained that this can take place outside of the project but Federal funding cannot be used. He proposed keeping it as part of the project but noted that Pace will decide where the bus stops are located and cannot be forced to move it. However, the Village can make a recommendation.

Trustee Barber asked about potential impacts of this project to the Colt Site Development. Village Manager Pavlicek replied that the biggest conversation with staff has been the desire to consider North Boulevard as a one-way eastbound only starting at Harlem. There have been conversations with property owners and she believes it is something that they would support.

Trustee Barber commented that the Village should use this opportunity to make a bigger impact to this area. He added that what is being discussed does not integrate with other projects in other areas of the Village.

President Abu-Taleb agreed and supported moving forward, adding that River Forest was on board and he would be meeting with Forest Park later in the week.

Trustee Lueck stated that nobody would disagree that this is a bad intersection and everyone is in favor of improvements. However, Oak Park is being asked to give up a valuable piece of real estate in the process; the other communities are not being asked to do that. Their costs are less than Oak Park's as well. To give up that land in the middle of planning a development is a major complication that causes the Village to be unsure of what it has to offer the developer.

Trustee Barber commented that he would like more details before giving up that land but if it allows the Village to create some traffic solutions, he is in favor of that and noted that the development site has been vacant for the 14 years he has lived in Oak Park.

Following further discussion, President Abu-Taleb stated that he is willing to compromise on some small details in order for the project to move forward, adding

that this opportunity to partner with the other two communities will be mutually beneficial. He added that they had discussed reaching out to Congressman Davis regarding funding of the project.

Trustee Johnson pointed out that there wasn't a clear consensus from the Board. President Abu-Taleb noted that no decisions would be made during the meeting with the Congressman, just discussion.

B. Presentation on the South Boulevard TCSP Project

Village Manager Pavlicek stated that this Federal grant was awarded by the Transportation, Community and System Preservation Program (TCSP) and is for improvements for a portion of South Boulevard between Harlem and Marion Street. Staff's intent is to bring back to the Board the contractual authorization for the engineers to proceed with Phase I at the first meeting in September. Budgeted underground utility improvements in the area are included in the overall project as well. She noted that if the Board agrees, she would like to determine if the property could be developed concurrently with this.

Trustees Lueck and Tucker asked Mr. Budrick questions regarding materials being used; granite curbs and brick streets, and what the cost savings would be to use alternate materials. Mr. Budrick replied that the cost of the curbs is \$100,000. The brick street, at \$240,000, could be reduced to \$100,000 if concrete street resurfacing was done instead.

Mr. Budrick noted that a crosswalk enhancement would be added near the train station to provide pedestrian protection. Trustee Barber commented that if the Harlem Underpass Project occurs in its current form, the Village will have to re-do that and asked why this was being considered.

Village Manager Pavlicek stated that it is unlikely that the Harlem Underpass Project will occur anytime soon, if at all. Trustee Barber commented that if that is the case, perhaps it shouldn't have been presented to the Board. Village Manager Pavlicek stated that staff is obligated to allow for comments from the Board as this was an intergovernmental agreement entered into by a previous governing body. She added that activities on the TCSP grant and presentation to the Board has been delayed so that both this and the Harlem conversations could be held together due to the overlaps and conflicts. Staff's recommendation is to proceed with Phase I of the TCSP project.

Trustee Lueck stated that the Village should move ahead with this project, as the IDOT project is uncertain and out of the Village's control, while the funding for TCSP project is confirmed and available.

President Abu-Taleb asked if the water main work would proceed regardless of which project goes forward. Mr. Budrick replied that it will.

Following further discussion regarding costs, President Abu-Taleb stated that going forward with this project exactly as proposed would cost approximately \$771,000. Village Manager Pavlicek reiterated that staff wanted to put award of the contract on

the agenda for the first meeting in September. She clarified that the original engineering costs of \$100,000 are required to be locally funded and do not count towards the 20% match. Once that is completed, the Village becomes eligible for the funding; the local match would come later. She added that the RFP process has been completed and the contractor has been chosen.

ADJOURN

It was moved and seconded to adjourn. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 9:10 P.M. Monday, July 8, 2013.

SUBMITTED AND RECORDED IN THE OFFICE OF:

By: MaryAnn Schoenneman
Interim Deputy Village Clerk

Teresa Powell, Village Clerk