

Village of North Riverside
Administrative Committee Meeting Minutes
January 11, 2021

Committee Members Present:

Trustee Sarro, Chairwoman
Trustee Flores
Trustee Mengoni
Trustee Czajka

Committee Members Absent:

Trustee Demopoulos

Others in attendance were Mayor Hermanek, Trustee Mandel, Administrator Scarpiniti, Village Planner Kallien and Attorney Mike Hayes.

The meeting was held remotely via zoom and was called to order at 6:04 pm. The following is a summary of the meeting:

Item #1: Open Meetings Act Procedures

Chairwoman Sarro yielded the floor to Attorney Hayes. Mr. Hayes explained that the Village doesn't have any restrictions in the code regarding public comments at Board Meetings. He recommended the Village institute procedures that are codified in the municipal code. He referred his memorandum to the Board dated January 4, 2021 referencing the Open Meetings Act which requires the Board to "set aside time for public comment during open meetings and that public bodies must publish their public comments rules". He explained that while the Act does not provide specific details regarding potential regulations on public comment, the Illinois Public Access Counselor (PAC) has provided some guidance to public bodies within the framework of their decisions. The general rule being that public bodies may only adopt "content-neutral" rules and may not limit speech based on its content. Attorney Hayes went on to say that PAC has upheld rulings asking a commenter to state their name, but asking for their address was not allowed. He then asked the Board what type of restrictions they would like to put into place.

Chairwoman Sarro opened the floor to questions.

Trustee Czajka asked if it was possible to only allow questions on agenda items. Attorney Hayes replied that you can have multiple places throughout the meeting for public comments, but you have to provide a time in the meeting for any comment regarding any aspect of the local government.

Trustee Mengoni asked if you can limit comments to only those in attendance. Since the pandemic has created a need for meetings to be held remotely, Attorney Hayes

stressed how in person appearances are not possible and most villages are allowing public content to be read into the minutes to comply with the Act. The Village modified its procedures during the pandemic to accept written public comments received prior to 3pm the day of the meeting. Those procedures are clearly published at the end of the meeting agendas. Trustee Mengoni also questioned whether the public comments that were referenced but not read at the last two Board Meetings should have been read. Attorney Hayes stated that technically they should have been read.

Trustee Mandel read a prepared written statement questioning why the VIP controlled administration and attorney did not have guidelines already in place to manage the public comment portion of the meetings and accused the VIP Party for not instituting fair procedures on public comments while only allowing their supporters the opportunity to participate in public meetings. She asked that new procedures require the identification of any person submitting public comments to be verified. Trustee Sarro objected to this characterization and responded that she and other Trustees were trying to keep politics out of village meetings and found Trustee Mandel's reference to some Trustees as "VIP Minions" to be offensive and inappropriate. Attorney Hayes responded that formal procedures were not deemed necessary in the past as this situation has never occurred before. Trustee Mengoni asked Trustee Mandel who wrote the statement she was reading.

In response, Mayor Hermanek urged Trustees to leave politics out of public meetings and emphasized his belief that public meetings should be conducted with a high degree of professionalism and transparency. He asked Trustees to adhere to these standards and suggested everyone voluntarily honor and agree to his request moving forward.

After more discussion, it was determined that many Trustees were primarily concerned with public comments submitted using aliases and fake names. Attorney Hayes reiterated that the Village cannot restrict the public from making public statements or the content of the comments submitted, but would look into the feasibility of validating the authenticity of the comment's author, although this might be difficult to accomplish.

Chairwoman Sarro recapped the consensus of those in attendance by summarizing that all letters are to be read if they are submitted according to the established guidelines if they pertain to the Village of North Riverside or to any elected official and employee and pertain to any village business, although this is a very broad scope.

All committee members present, including Trustee Mandel, agreed.

Chairwoman Sarro yielded the floor to Administrator Scarpiniti who noted that FOIA requests can be anonymous and that the Open Meeting Act states that we can ask people to share their name, but we can't require them to give it. She then asked Mr. Hayes what type of verification could be required. Attorney Hayes responded by stating that asking for a name is common, but according to PAC you cannot require an address to be given. Ms. Scarpiniti suggested that going forward, the Board consider providing

a signup sheet for those wanting to address the Board during the public comment section of a meeting.

Attorney Hayes stated he provided a list of best practices in his memo, and was willing to draft a policy based on these for review by the Board. All Trustees agreed with Attorney Hayes's recommendation and thought that was a good idea.

Item #2: Website Update and Enhancements

Administrator Scarpiniti updated the Committee on the progress of the Village's new website. Staff has been working with CivicPlus to create the framework of the website and design a new logo. The logo options are being narrowed down and should be ready for the Committee's review in the near future.

The anticipated go-live date is the first week in April. Ms. Scarpiniti put forward some additional CivicPlus modules that weren't included in the original Website RFP but would enhance the functionality of the website:

- **CivicClerk:** This module is designed to provide easy access for website visitors to view agenda packets and minutes of all public meetings. This module would allow the Village to manage and archive the Village meetings in all applicable applications (audio, visual, and written). Module cost: \$10,000
- **CivicReady:** This module would replace our current emergency notification system, Everbridge. In addition to the emergency notification via email and telephone, CivicReady also utilizes social media as a venue for notification. Residents will be able access their account to keep it their information current, increasing the effectiveness of the emergency alerts. Module cost: \$3,100
- **SeeClickFix:** This interactive module allows residents contact Village staff to report problems and create on-line work order tickets within village departments. Administrator Scarpiniti gave the example of a resident reporting a pothole to Public Works. SeeClickFix is a streamlined way for residents and employees to interact. Module cost: \$5,000

Chairwoman Sarro opened the floor for questions.

Trustee Czajka asked for clarification on pricing and Ms. Scarpiniti explained that in the first year there is a higher cost to purchase the software and the following years would incur a maintenance fee. CivicPlus products are subscription based services, so all updates would be included in the maintenance plan and the Village would never need to "purchase" new software. She explained there is approximately a 7 month lead time to implement these additional modules, but that she was looking for feedback, to see if she should provide additional information for next year's budget. She felt the CivicClerk product specifically should be considered for immediate implementation to allow for greater transparency and accessibility on our new website.

Trustee Mandel questioned these added costs and why they were not included in the original proposal approved by the Village Board. She further questioned whether the other vendors who provided proposals included these features in their original cost proposals. The Administrator reminded the Committee that these additional enhancements were not part of the Village's base proposal and were submitted as extra costs for consideration. CivicPlus was the lowest cost received and their base package provided all the same functionality as the other vendor proposals. Since the other vendors did not provide similar features of these add ons, the consensus of the full Board was to only authorize the base package submitted by all vendors so there was an apples to apples comparison. The Board elected not to authorize the additional cost due to budgetary constraints. Staff elected to readdress these enhancements with the Committee due to the value added to the basic website redesign.

After some discussion, Chairwoman Sarro polled the Committee. All Committee Members and Trustee Mandel agreed to table these additional requests until after the launch of the new website.

Chairwoman Sarro asked if there were any other concerns and Trustee Mengoni asked about the recent sale of the Roy Strom Company and whether or not the Village had to honor the contract?

Mayor Hermanek stated that he thought the Village could pull out of the contract within a certain time limit and recommends that the Village waits to see what changes under the new ownership.

Trustee Mengoni asked Administrator Scarpiniti to stay aware of the situation and she responded affirmatively.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri Sarro

Trustee Sarro, Chairwoman