

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
Council Community Affairs Committee Meeting
March 4, 2026

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Havens.

2. Roll Call

Roll was taken by staff. Members Havens, Greenwood, and Wright were present.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the prior meeting were presented. There being no corrections, the minutes were accepted as presented by unanimous consent.

4. Old Business – Old Village Review Board (VRB) Restructuring to Old Village District Advisory Commission (OVDAC)

The Committee continued its prior discussion regarding challenges with the existing Village Review Board and the concept of creating a successor advisory commission focused on advocacy, coordination, and guidance for the Old Village District.

4.1 Composition & Appointments

a) Rename body as the Old Village District Advisory Commission ("OVDAC").

b) Membership: five (5) members appointed by and serving at the pleasure of City Council:

- One (1) resident of the Old Village District.
- One (1) individual who either owns real property within the District ****or**** operates a business at a location within the District (business member need not be a city resident). If no qualified person is available, Council may appoint a city resident with relevant interest/skill.
- Three (3) at-large city residents (need not live in the District).

c) Advisory Support: The City Manager may, as needed, retain the services of a registered architect to advise the Commission.

d) Terms/Staggering: Regular terms of three (3) years, initially staggered as follows to avoid simultaneous expirations: two members for one year; two members for two years; one member for three years. Vacancies are filled for the unexpired term in the same manner as original appointments.

e) Qualifications: If a member ceases to meet the designated qualification for his/her seat, the membership is automatically terminated and Council appoints a qualified successor. Members serve at the pleasure of Council.

4.2 Purpose & Scope

The Old Village District was created to provide special procedures and considerations to assist property owners and future development in meeting the District's master design goals and the City's comprehensive planning objectives. The District's procedures supplement, and do not replace, underlying zoning. The OVDAC's purpose is to: (i) maintain and enhance community heritage and character; (ii) advocate for appropriate economic growth, redevelopment, and reinvestment; and (iii) advise on planning and zoning processes within the District. The OVDAC is not a quasi-judicial body; it serves in an advocacy and advisory capacity.

4.3 Roles & Responsibilities (Advisory/Advocacy)

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- a) Make recommendations to the Board of Zoning Appeals on variances related to District guidelines and purposes.
- b) Make recommendations to the Planning Board on rezonings, developments, and special districts affecting the Old Village, consistent with District guidelines and the Comprehensive Plan.
- c) Coordinate and cooperate with City Council, Planning Board, and the Bellbrook Community Improvement Corporation on initiatives that enhance redevelopment and reinvestment in the Old Village District.
- d) Coordinate and cooperate with other city and community organizations for civic and community-related events and activities to support the District.

4.4 Expectations & Guidelines (Guiding Principles)

Primary elements to guide member mindset and deliberations:

- Beautification and maintenance of character/identity of the Old Village.
- Walkability and age-friendly access.
- Support for civic and community events/activities.
- Small-town-friendly focus and alignment with the Bellbrook Comprehensive Plan.
- Advocacy for reinvestment and redevelopment consistent with community expectations.

Guidance when offering recommendations:

- Discourage uses that do not enhance downtown (e.g., storage buildings, pole-barn style construction, industrial uses, large multi-family, or non-service-related retail).
- Encourage professional and service-oriented businesses that support other downtown businesses and community needs.

Discussion noted that the City does not currently maintain binding historic design standards or a formally designated historic district; any enforceable design or architectural standards would require subsequent legislative action within the planning and zoning code. The OVDAC's role is to provide early, business-friendly guidance and advocacy rather than regulation.

5. Public Comment

Jen LeClaire, 3408 Pavilion Lane, offered two suggestions: (1) modify the business-member qualification to "owns property **or** operates a business" (replacing the conjunction "and"); and (2) emphasize "beautification and maintenance of character" (identity/ambiance/vibe) when describing expectations for the Old Village. Committee discussion was supportive of the suggestions.

6. New Business

6.1 Planning Board Vacancy – Interviews

The Committee discussed pending board/commission appointments. A vacancy exists on the Planning Board; three applications have been received. The Committee will conduct interviews **Monday, prior to the next City Council meeting**, subject to applicant availability. The City Manager will contact applicants to coordinate scheduling.

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6.2 Annual Sugar Maple Festival Agreement

Staff noted that the routine agreement with the Sugar Maple Festival Committee for operation of the annual festival will return for renewal with no substantive changes anticipated. Related legislation will be brought forward in due course.

7. Next Steps & Action Items

- City Manager to revise the working draft to incorporate Committee suggestions and prepare legislative format for Council consideration (e.g., disbanding the VRB and creating the OVDAC).
- Committee members to consider additional feedback and invite public comment prior to the next session.
- Committee tentatively to reconvene in early April to review the revised draft and consider a recommendation to Council.
- City Manager to coordinate Planning Board applicant interviews and place any recommended appointments on an upcoming Council agenda as timing allows.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting adjourned.