

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2024
VILLAGE HALL BOARD ROOM

CALL TO ORDER: President Hofeld called the meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at 7 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: President Hofeld led trustees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Clerk Marilyn Thomas called the roll. Those present were Village President Richard Hofeld, Trustee Julie Willis, Trustee Vivian Harris-Jones, Trustee Jay Heiferman, Trustee Phillip Mason, Trustee Lauren Roman and Trustee Allisa Opyd.

President Hofeld introduced staff present: Village Manager Napoleon Haney, Village Attorney Chris Cummings, Fire Chief Bob Grabowski, Police Chief Denise McGrath, Director of Public Works Josh Burman, and Assistant Village Manager Terence Acquah.

MINUTES: The minutes of January 14, 2025, were presented. There were no comments or corrections.

A motion was made by Trustee Mason and seconded by Trustee Roman to approve the minutes as presented.

Roll Call: AYES --Trustees Willis, Harris-Jones, Heiferman, Mason, Roman and Opyd. NAYS - None.

CLAIMS LIST: The Claims List in the amount of \$1,175,309.95 was presented. There were no questions from the Trustees.

A motion was made by Trustee Willis and seconded by Trustee Harris-Jones to approve the Claims List as presented.

Roll Call: AYES --Trustees Willis, Harris-Jones, Heiferman, Mason, Roman and Opyd. NAYS - None. Motion carried.

President Hofeld said one item totaled nearly 80 percent of the Claims List: 2025 contribution to the Illinois Risk Management Agency -- \$931,189.00.

OATHS OF OFFICE: Clerk Thomas administered the oath of office to Kevin Coyle who accepted the position of Landscape and Maintenance Worker; Patrick DiDiana who accepted the position of Assistant Director of Public Works; and newly promoted Police Sergeant Michael Kozlowski.

HEAR FROM THE AUDIENCE: Resident Amy Crump addressed the board on what she said was disinformation spreading at all levels of society. She said denialism benefits those who create the lies. We all need to be aware of how propaganda can influence one's thinking. She pointed to a 1969 memo from the tobacco industry showing that manufacturers knew the harm cigarettes was causing, but the businesses used propaganda to create an alternate story. It was not until a 1991 civil suit that the propaganda was brought to light and the tobacco industry made cash settlements with people and government bodies.

Liz Varnecky of South Suburbs for Green Space said contaminants continue to flow into the pond at the Izaak Walton Preserve. She acknowledged the Village is trying to hire a consultant to determine how to remedy the problem, but it is taking a long time. She also asked how the Village would be impacted by President Trump's action freezing all federal grants. Manager Haney said the Village does not get much federal funding. It may impact the fire department's reimbursements from Medicaid for ambulance transportation.

PRESENTATIONS: Events Manager Marla Youngblood and Communications and Engagement Manager Antonia Steinmiller each gave a report on 2024 activities.

Manager Youngblood said the reception to the Village's 20 events has been outstanding. She was especially pleased to work with the Village of Flossmoor on the newest activity – a holiday trolley that drove people around to see holiday decorations in both communities. Events are drawing visitors to Homewood from the H-F area, as well as surrounding suburbs, Indiana and in some cases Michigan. This was the first year the Village ran the Art & Garden Show. It drew more than 100 vendors. In 2025, she is looking at joining with others to co-sponsor events, such as senior events hosted by the Homewood Library or the Homewood-Flossmoor Park District. (See report in board agenda.)

Manager Steinmiller told the Village Board that she and Assistant Village Manager Terence Acquah are working on developing an online application that will put information into the hands of anyone with a cell phone. It is just the latest effort she is working on to raise the profile of the Village and make Homewood news accessible to those in and outside the Homewood community. She outlined her efforts to increase online traffic to Homewood pages on Facebook, Instagram and other outlets. In 2024, the most popular Homewood story online was the Village's celebration of cicadas. A weekly Homewood Happenings email now has 5,100 views, and she helped with the roll-out of the new 911 app that is giving users immediate updates on emergencies. (See report in board agenda.)

President Hofeld asked for comments. Resident Chris Condon asked how to draw teens to Homewood events. Manager Steinmiller said that group is not following village news. She is going to try different approaches to draw them to the various social media sites. Liz Varnecky asked about public documents being available. Steinmiller told her on the Village's FOIA portal residents can search documents that have already been requested.

Trustees congratulated Steinmiller for her work, and said they are excited about the app. President Hofeld added that much credit goes to Manager Haney who spearheaded the new approach to sharing village information. Ms. Steinmiller received a round of applause from the audience.

OMNIBUS VOTE: The board was asked to pass, approve, authorize, accept, or award the following item(s):

- A. Reappointment/Firefighters' Pension Board/Christopher Cummings: Approve the reappointment of Christopher Cummings to the Firefighters' Pension Board for a three-year term ending on January 28, 2028.
- B. Reappointments/Veterans Committee/Charlene Dyer/Larry Garth: Approve the reappointments of Charlene Dyer and Larry Garth to the Veterans Committee for a three-year term ending on January 28, 2028.

- C. Annual Reports/Police Pension Fund Board/Firefighters Pension Fund Board: Accept the 2024 annual reports of the Police Pension Fund Board and the Firefighters Pension Fund Board.
- D. Agreement Amendment/Municipal Enforcement System/DACRA Tech LLC: Authorize the Village President to enter into an amendment to the master software licensing agreement with DACRA Tech LLC of Itasca, IL to incorporate DACRA Web-Pay Services.
- E. Agreement/Stray Animals/South Suburban Humane Society: Authorize the Village Manager to enter into a service agreement with South Suburban Humane Society of Matteson, IL for the temporary shelter of stray animals found within the Village.
- F. Agreements/Design Engineering and Construction Engineering Services/HR Green LLC: Authorize the Village President to enter into an agreement with HR Green of New Lenox, IL for design engineering services in an amount not to exceed \$38,445; and an agreement for construction engineering services in an amount not to exceed \$28,420; for a total cost not to exceed \$66,865 for repairs related to the 183rd Street railroad bridge.
- G. M-2336/Amendment to Fee Schedule/Fire Department: Pass an ordinance amending the "Fire" section of the fee schedule to allow the current fee to remain in place for the following calendar year in the event the annual calculated fee for the upcoming year is less than the current fee; and, remove certain fees for additional services.

Before the vote, Trustee Heiferman asked what the current expense was for South Suburban Humane Society. (Item E) Police Chief McGrath said it is about \$5,300 a year. Attorney Cummings, who is on the SSHA board, said fees cover only about 25% of the cost. He said SSHS has not raised fees in years. This three-year plan will help slowly increase SSHS funding without asking villages for an exorbitant amount at one time. Trustee Heiferman said he supports this contract extension.

Trustee Heiferman also asked about the damages by the truck crash at the 183rd Street viaduct. (Item F) Manager Haney said the trucking company was insured. The claim will go to IRMA for processing and collection.

A motion was made by Trustee Roman and seconded by Trustee Opyd to approve the Omnibus Agenda as presented.

Roll Call: AYES --Trustees Willis, Harris-Jones, Heiferman, Mason, Roman and Opyd. NAYS – None. Motion carried.

GENERAL BOARD DISCUSSION: Trustee Heiferman recognized Amy Crump as a charter member of the Homewood Science Center.

Trustee Opyd congratulated Managers Youngblood and Steinmiller for all their efforts in 2024.

She told a story of a new neighbor who found a dog in the yard as they were moving into the house. She was grateful for the relationship with South Suburban Human Society that took the dog in.

President Hofeld reminded residents that Dave's Hot Chicken is opening this week on Halsted Street. He encourages all to visit the new restaurant.

ADJOURN: A motion was made by Trustee Opyd and seconded by Trustee Mason to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Roll Call: AYES --Trustees Willis, Harris-Jones, Heiferman, Mason, Roman and Opyd. NAYS – None. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Thomas

Village Clerk