

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2025
VILLAGE HALL BOARD ROOM

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE PROPOSED NORTH HALSTED TAX INCREMENT FINANCING DISTRICT

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

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 said the meeting is called to inform the public about the Village's plans for a North Halsted Street TIF. The area includes the former Walmart site. He introduced Director of Community and Economic Development Angela Mesaros. Ms. Mesaros said the Village had hired Ryan LLC to investigate the establishment of the TIF, which includes land south of 175th Street to Ashland Avenue, Halsted Street to properties on the south side of Ridge Road, the Village boundary to the southeast. It takes in the Izaak Walton Preserve for the purpose of keeping the TIF contiguous, but no commercial development will take place at Izaak Walton.

The Village conducted a TIF Joint Review Board meeting on Jan. 6 to inform the other taxing bodies – School District 153, School District 233, Homewood-Flossmoor Park District, Homewood Public Library, Prairie State College and Cook County – and received unanimous support for the proposal.

Nina Coppola, senior economic development consultant at Ryan LLC addressed the Board and audience. The Village's 1999 Comprehensive Plan designated Halsted Street as a business thoroughfare. The Village will work to encourage commercial development along this route to sustain the community's economic viability.

The proposed TIF will meet those other goals in the Comprehensive Plan, spur redevelopment, and reduce impediments to private investment.

The area is 236 acres with 39 tax parcels; 16 of those are improved, and 23 are vacant land. Many of the vacant parcels are within the Izaak Walton Preserve.

To be designated a TIF area, the goals of the proposed redevelopment area must be consistent with the Village's comprehensive plan. Several criteria must be met: The property is underutilized, strengthen commercial districts, private/public partnerships for development projects, vacant commercial/industrial areas, and improvements to stormwater systems, sidewalks, etc.

This improved portion of the proposed redevelopment project area qualifies as a conservation area under the TIF Act. Of the 26 structures, 54 percent of those are 35 years or older. At least three of the 13 qualifiers for a conservation area are found within the TIF area. Found four qualifiers: obsolescence, deterioration, excessive vacancies, and decline in EAV (equalized assessed valuation). The unimproved portions of the redevelopment project area qualify as blighted vacant areas.

Key elements of the proposed TIF: Proposed land uses, \$33,055,000 budget for 23 years (life of the TIF), property EAV is currently \$16 million. Over the 23 years of the TIF, the EAV is expected to rise to between \$30 million and \$35 million.

In March, the Village Board can consider adopting the TIF. Once it is created, any proposals for redevelopment will have to come before the Village Board for approval. Annual meetings will be conducted by the Joint Review Board for updates on progress within the TIF.

Director Mesaros reiterated that the Joint Review Board gave unanimous approval.

Public Comment: Amy Crump asked about the Village is/is not including Izaak Walton in the TIF. President Hofeld said Izaak Walton is in the TIF because some expenses, such as if the lake needs dredging the expense can be included as a TIF expense. Izaak Walton will remain as it is; no development.

Liz Varnecky asked is 26 years is a normal amount of time to hold on to a comprehensive plan. Director Mesaros said area plans, such as the downtown area, have been updated, but the residential areas are not really changing. She said a review of the plan probably needs to happen.

Varnecky asked what retail is being sought for the Walmart site. President Hofeld said the Village is working with real estate developers. However, that property is not owned by Walmart. It is part of a trust. There are nine years left on the Walmart lease. Whoever develops the site has to get a buyout from Walmart and an agreement on what will happen to the gas station that's part of that property. Having the TIF in place would give the Village more incentives to lure a potential developer. President Hofeld also clarified that the former Walmart property may have to be divided up or even razed. The building is 30 years old.

Varnecky asked what would prevent a future board from trying to develop the Izaak Walton Preserve. Attorney Cummings said the Village signed a 99-year lease with Izaak Walton. That is why future Village Boards and this Board are legally obligated to honor that lease. Including the Izaak Walton Preserve in the TIF allowed to TIF to be extended to include properties that are contiguous to Izaak Walton and south of Petco. They are vacant. Also, to reach the south side of Ridge Road, where a trailer park is located.

A question on stormwater improvements: Manager Haney said all of Izaak Walton is a detention area. Ms. Varnecky raised concerns about stormwater, which can carry particles other than water.

A question on a conservation area designation: Ms. Coppola said it is a defined term in state law that describes one type of area that can qualify for TIF financing.

A question about why money is set aside for the schools in the TIF budget if there are no residences in the proposed TIF District: Ms. Coppola explained that if a residential development that generates new students was created within the TIF district, TIF funds must be provided to the schools and libraries because of side effects of development. Since the TIF lasts for 23 years, this line item is a placeholder in case there is residential development in the future.

Questions why Kohl's is included: Mr. Cummings said that many retailers are struggling and that including this property in the TIF gives the Village more flexibility to adapt to the changing retail landscape.

Ms. Coppola pointed out that the Kohl's store is in a space originally built for a different retailer. As a result, this store's layout and amenities do not conform to the chain's current standards.

Mr. Cummings pointed out that when Village staff and the consultant prepared the map of the proposed TIF, they excluded several sites that could have been within the TIF, such as Comcast and Accurate Dispersions, to minimize the impact on all the other taxing bodies.

President Hofeld said the Village is very fortunate that downtown has thrived, but Village officials and residents should be aware of the ebb and flow of shopping habits.

Board comments: Trustee Harris-Jones asked if the presentation will be on the Village website. Director Mesaros said yes, on the Village's TIF page. Trustee Roman asked for the names of the school representatives to the Joint Review Board. President Hofeld said it was Eric Trimmerger for District 153 and Dr. Lawrence Cook for District 233. Trustees applauded the work on the TIF district. Trustee Opyd said she appreciated what she learned by attending the JRB.

President Hofeld gave his thanks to Manager Haney and Director Mesaros for their work, and he gave special thanks to Attorney Cummings, who worked to develop the map laying out the TIF District.

A motion was made by Trustee Opyd and seconded by Trustee Roman to adjourn the public hearing for the proposed North Halsted Street TIF.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Thomas
Village Clerk