

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2024  
VILLAGE HALL BOARD ROOM

CALL TO ORDER: President Hofeld called the regular 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 Jay Heiferman, Trustee Vivian Harris-Jones, Trustee Lauren Roman and Trustee Alissa Opyd. Trustee Anne Colton was absent.

President Hofeld introduced staff present: Village Manager Napoleon Haney, Village Attorney Chris Cummings, Finance Director Amy Zukowski, Fire Chief Bob Grabowski, and Assistant Director of Public Works Joshua Burman.

MINUTES: The minutes of the meeting of March 12, 2024, were presented. There were no comments or corrections.

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

CLAIMS LIST: The Claims List in the amount of \$757,098.33 was presented. There were no questions from the Trustees.

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

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

HEAR FROM THE AUDIENCE: President Hofeld invited anyone in the audience to address the board on any subject not on the agenda. Louis Dutka Jr. of East Hazel Crest asked if the Board was aware that panhandling is going on in the Halsted Street shopping district. He is concerned that it could be a bigger problem when the casino opens and asked if the Village could do anything about it. President Hofeld assured Mr. Dutka that the Village was aware of the problem. Some people begging for money may have legitimate issues, but he said others may be creating a nuisance.

MEET THE MERCHANTS: Kevin Welsh, owner of Dairy Queen on Ridge Road, gave the history of the small business. The store was built in 1954 and operated by the Kaiser family under his father, Art, purchased the business in 1967. Today Kevin Welsh's daughter, Kelli, is the store manager and four generations of the Welsh family are working in the store. He said the business takes teens as young as 15, with a work permit, and hiring gives these young people their first work experience. The store suffered serious damage after a car crash in 2018, but the family agreed to rebuild. The store sells only ice cream specialties, unlike other Dairy Queens. It is open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. March into November.

PRESENTATIONS: Clerk Thomas read the “Celebrating World Migratory Bird Day” (formerly International Migratory Bird Day).

Chief Grabowski gave a presentation on computer updates in the Building Department that have reduced by 90 percent the need for paperwork for building permits, etc. No longer does an applicant need to come to Village Hall to apply for a permit. Forms are available online. Also, blueprints can be sent as file attachments. Chief Grabowski said this transformation was first considered in 2020. It took three years to get the system up and running and then an extra effort on the part of staff to migrate information from the Building Department, the Finance Department, and the Fire Department. When plans require a review by a consultant, they now can be sent as an electronic file.

OMNIBUS VOTE: The board is asked to pass, approve, authorize, accept, or award the following items:

- A. Reappointment/Beautification Committee/Charles Turman: Approve the reappointment of Charles Turman to the Beautification Committee for a five-year term ending on March 26, 2029.
- B. R-3178/Audubon Illinois Bird City: Pass a resolution in support of the Village of Homewood becoming a certified Audubon Illinois Bird City.
- C. MC-1079/Class 12A Liquor Licenses: Pass an ordinance amending Class 12A liquor licenses to allow the sale of alcohol during a public function conducted on the premises of a public library or other unit of government.
- D. M-2284/Class 1 Liquor License/The Ridgewood/2059 Ridge Road: Pass an ordinance amending the Table of the Number of Liquor License Limitations by Class to restore the allowed number of Class 1 liquor licenses for The Ridgewood location at 2059 Ridge Road.
- E. Purchase approval/Chipper Truck Chassis/Lindsay Ford: Waive competitive bidding due to high demand and limited availability of vehicles; and authorize the purchase and delivery of a 2023 Ford F-550 Super Duty Crew Chassis from Lindsay Ford of Wheaton, Maryland, in an amount not to exceed \$63,215.
- F. Bid Award/Pavement Patching/D Construction, Inc.: Award the 2024 Motor Fuel Tax General Maintenance Pavement Patching Program bid to D Construction, Inc. of Coal City, IL, the lowest responsible bidder, for a contract amount not to exceed \$642,000.
- G. Budget Amendment/Incentive Payment/Stoney Point Grill II, LLC/HCF Homewood, LLC: Approve a budget amendment of \$425,000 to the General Fund for an incentive payment to Stoney Point Grill II, LLC and HCF Homewood, Inc.

At board comments, President Hofeld invited Scott Donkel to come up and give an update on The Ridgewood. Donkel said work is continuing and it is anticipated the establishment will open on or about May 15. He plans to have a large selection of wines. He said he anticipates a good business because of all the activity in downtown Homewood.

Trustee Opyd asked for clarification on the street patching program. Assistant Director Burman said the Village going with the lowest responsible bidder did not mean it sacrificed quality. He anticipates the Village will be able to cover a large area this year.

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

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

**NEW BUSINESS – BUDGET DISCUSSION:** Finance Director Zukowski offered information on the proposed expenses and budget for the May 1, 2024 to April 30, 2025 Village budget. She said today her report focuses on the General Fund, the Water and Sewer Fund and the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Funds. Other funds will be outlined at the next Village Board meeting.

The General Fund supports the work of the Police, Fire and Public Works Departments and general village operations. This fund remains in the black. Director Zukowski anticipates a budget of \$27.2 million for the general fund, with expenses of \$26.8 million.

She said the budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year projects a surplus of \$408,906. She anticipates an increase in the sales tax, income tax and estimated gaming revenue for the new casino opening in December.

The upcoming budget will follow the Village Board's newly adopted policy of having five months in the fund balance. The board also moved \$2 million from the unassigned fund balance to capital projects. Director Zukowski said despite these changes, the Village had \$3.7 million in "unassigned" funding, but when the Village got a state request for reimbursements for ground medical transport, it dropped the unassigned balance to \$1 million.

Sales taxes are the largest revenue source for the General Fund at 30 percent or \$5.9 million. Property taxes support 17 percent, or \$2.25 million, of the General Fund.

Director Zukowski presented the board with three major budget items. The Police Department needs funding to continue its recruitment effort as more officers retire. The Fire Department wants to hire three new firefighter/paramedics to bring its ranks up to seven per shift. And Public Works has equipment that is dated and needs to be replaced at an estimated cost of \$140,000.

The latest news from Springfield is that Gov. J.B. Pritzker has suggested eliminating the sales tax on groceries. This would result in an estimated revenue loss of \$650,000 annually. Director Zukowski said because there is no definite action from the Illinois legislature, she would recommend the Village Board approve the proposed \$27.2 million budget that includes anticipated grocery sales tax revenue but hold off on the Fire Department and Public Works hiring and equipment requests pending action in the Illinois Legislature. If the sales tax on groceries remains, the Village budget will be in good shape. If the sales tax on groceries is eliminated, the board will be asked to make decisions on what it can and cannot afford.

She also recommended that the Village consider a water rate study to ensure that the Water and Sewer Fund will generate sufficient revenue to cover upcoming critical capital needs, including a new water tower and replacement of lead service lines. The Water and Sewer Fund should operate with the ability to cover all its costs.

The village has six active TIF districts. Information on the Village website lists all six and the incomes/expenses for each.

President Hofeld said while he understood the desirability of eliminating the sales tax on groceries, the legislature should provide additional revenue to make up for this action. It will be a big hit to the Village's budget, and budgets of all Illinois communities – large and small.

Trustee Roman asked about the Public Works equipment to be replaced. Assistant Director Burman said the aerial truck is 23 years old and the lift mounted on the truck is 29 years old. A plow is 15 years old.

Trustee Heiferman asked about the sidewalk replacement program, and asked specifically if work will be done on Ridge Road at Irwin Park. Assistant Director Burman said it was on the list.

GENERAL BOARD DISCUSSION: Trustee Opyd reminded residents that the Homewood Business Association was sponsoring its Staycation Shopping program.

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

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Thomas  
Village Clerk