

MINUTES
WINNETKA VILLAGE COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

December 8, 2015

(Approved: January 5, 2016)

A record of a legally convened meeting of the Council of the Village of Winnetka, which was held in the Village Hall Council Chambers on Tuesday, December 8, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

- 1) Call to Order. President Greable called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present: Trustees Andrew Cripe, Carol Fessler, William Krucks, Stuart McCrary, Scott Myers and Marilyn Prodromos. Absent: None. Also in attendance: Village Manager Robert Bahan, Assistant to the Village Manager Megan Pierce, Director of Community Development Mike D’Onofrio, Assistant Director of Community Development Brian Norkus, and 3 persons in the audience.
- 2) Downtown Master Plan: Teska Associates Status Report. Ms. Pierce reviewed the process that led to the engagement of Teska Associates to craft Winnetka’s Downtown Master Plan, and she introduced Teska’s Project Planner, Erin Cigliano, and Project Principal, Michael Blue.

Ms. Cigliano explained that project formally began in October, with a walking tour prior to a public joint kick-off meeting of the Steering Committing and Working Groups. The appearance and character of the downtowns was the focus of the walking tour, and Teska gleaned information from the participants’ comments that will help drive future discussions about downtown revitalization.

Ms. Cigliano said since that initial meeting, the Steering Committee and individual Working Groups have met on October 26 to discuss existing downtown conditions, and on November 30 to discuss results of a market analysis. Other completed outreach projects include:

- Creation of an interactive Downtown Master Plan website, to assist the public with following progress and offering comments.
- On October 24, Teska set up a display to gather input at the Halloween on Ice event at the skating arena.
- On November 16, the Village and Teska hosted a public visioning workshop at North Shore Country Day School.
- Interviews with a wide-ranging selection of Winnetka stakeholders were conducted on October 30 and November 6.
- During the month of November, ideas were gathered from the community via two chalk idea boards set out in the Elm and Hubbard Woods business districts.
- An informational brochure was designed and inserted into the 4th quarter *Winnetka Report*, which was mailed to each Winnetka postal customer.

Mr. Blue explained that Teska is gaining an understanding of the challenges faced by each district, as well as community desires and market-supported opportunities. Next, he distributed worksheets related to an exercise aimed at procuring the Council’s input to help develop a vision statement for each of Winnetka’s commercial districts.

The following points surfaced during the discussion:

Elm Street District:

- Strong effort must be made to engage the community and gather public input.
- Some buildings in the district are dilapidated and uninviting, due to age and lack of investment in commercial properties. In light of this, the historic architectural roots may need re-evaluation.
- Busy families can't get all their shopping needs met in the Village; therefore, they may have little reason to visit the commercial districts.
- The stores are typically small with limited selections, and modern shoppers are used to more physical space and varieties of goods.
- Winnetkans spend a lot of money eating out and need more local restaurants.
- What is Winnetka's brand to attract people?
- How important is the Tudor style and two-to-three story scale of the buildings?
- What areas and regulations are sacrosanct and can't be touched? Where is there room to bring in something new?
- Are there regulations preventing retailers from moving into Winnetka?
- Should the downtowns be changed to appeal to the wider community, and not just residents?

Hubbard Woods District:

- Village cannot regulate who landlords rent their space to – important to set expectations.
- Some savvy retailers not only sell via brick and mortar stores, but are also using the internet.
- Hubbard Woods has a boutique, upscale character.
- The speed of traffic along Green Bay Road may encourage motorists to just pass through.
- Wayfinding signs are needed for the parking structure on Scott Avenue.
- Small retailers may lack sophistication of national chains (merchandizing, supply chains) – what can the Village do to provide resources to help them succeed? Success attracts success.
- What is the significance of the Hubbard Woods Park renovation?

Indian Hill District:

- Should the area be left for New Trier High School students, or revitalized to appeal to nearby condominium owners?
- It is a main gateway to Winnetka, and as such, needs attention. A gateway claims the town's boundaries.
- How important is it to create a gateway in this area?
- Examine ways to add more parking, as it is in high demand; this would help the neighborhood around New Trier.
- Signs and wayfinding are important.

In conclusion, Mr. Blue explained that people tend to be resistant to change, and the Downtown Master Plan process will assess the tolerances of the community. Boundaries will be tested to uncover the core of what cannot be changed, and identify what can be transformed to bring vitality to the business districts.

- 3) Public Comment. Kristin Ziv, Arbor Vitae. Ms. Ziv said the strip mall located just north of Scott Avenue on Green Bay Road is unsightly, and she suggested working with Glencoe to transform this northern gateway to Winnetka, to make it more attractive and appealing.
- 4) Executive Session. None.
- 5) Adjournment. Trustee McCrary, seconded by Trustee Prodromos, moved to adjourn the meeting. By voice vote, the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Deputy Clerk