

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

CALL TO ORDER: President Hofeld called the meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at 7:13 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 Phil Mason, and Trustee Lauren Roman. Trustee Jay Heiferman and Trustee Allisa Opyd were absent.

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

MINUTES: The minutes of February 25, 2025, were presented. There were no questions from the Trustees.

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

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

CLAIMS LIST: The Claims List in the amount of \$1,362,243.49 was presented. There were no questions from the Trustees.

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

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

President Hofeld said three items totals 53% of the Claims List: \$377,505.00 to Alta Construction Equipment of Illinois for a wheeled excavator; \$97,869.87 to Hoerr Construction Co. for sanitary slip lining work; \$249,257.78 for the March insurance premium for employee insurance.

HEAR FROM THE AUDIENCE: Several comments were offered about the condition of the pond at Izaak Walton Preserve. David Sacks from South Suburbs for Green Space, said he believes the Village's recent statements about the pond are false and that evidence shows toxic chemicals are present. He claims polluting runoff is coming from a pipe at Homewood Disposal Co. property adjacent to the preserve property. Liz Varmecky also of South Suburbs for Green Space, complained that no resident was on a call with IEPA and the Village is not being truthful about IEPA findings. She claims carcinogens are much higher and dangerous than the Village is reporting.

Agnes Tropp addressed the Board, arguing that signs in Chicago promoting Homewood are uncalled for, and the signs are not inclusive.

Craig Franks asked if the Village Hall parking lot was sold. President Hofeld said no. Franks asked if there has been notice for alternate bids for the parking lot property. President Hofeld said this had already been done.

Manager Haney addressed the Board and audience on the Izaak Walton pond issue. When he first learned about toxicity, he said contacted the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) Bureau of Water. IEPA sent him a follow-up email on the water quality in the one pond in question. It found that none of the numbers exceeded water quality standards, and Manager Haney said he believes if there had been a hint of any toxicity it would show up in the report. Walton Preserve has been part of a research study the Village conducted in 2024. Every document has been shared with the public. Now the Village is going to hire a firm to continue assessing the problem. He said all reports are on the village website.

Trustee Lauren Roman shared information she received from a friend who works writing legislation to protect ponds and lakes. The woman said the report seemed straight forward and the Village's actions appeared reasonable given the site's history. She said the consultant's report, in conjunction with the IEPA, would be good sources for determining what should be done.

APPOINTMENT: A motion was made by Trustee Mason and seconded by Trustee Roman to approve the appointment of Melissa Gonser to the Appearance Commission for a three-year term ending March 11, 2028.

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

Clerk Thomas administered the Oath of Office to Ms. Gonser.

PRESENTATION: Economic Development Director Angela Mesaros announced that the Village's \$250,000 mortgage for the Maple Tree Inn property is on the agenda to be released. The mortgage was given by Maple Tree in 2019 to secure a \$250,000 incentive payment given to the property owners from the former Southgate TIF. The redevelopment agreement provided that if the developer fulfilled all obligations under the agreement, the mortgage would be released when the TIF ended on December 2024. Today Maple Tree Inn Restaurant is highly regarded and very successful. The board will be releasing the mortgage (Item D on Omnibus). Erich and Katie Wennberg, restaurant owners, lost their business and home in Blue Island due to a fire in 2018. The restaurant relocated in Homewood. The restaurant now marks its 50th anniversary and has been recognized as one of the top Southern restaurants in the U.S. Erich Wennberg addressed the Village Board and thanked Homewood residents and the Village Board for their continued support.

OATH OF OFFICE: The Village Clerk administered the oath of office to Emma Lyons-Weber who is the new Finance Clerk at Village Hall. She had previously worked in Public Works.

Clerk Thomas also administered the Oath of Office to Police Officer Alex Farkas who comes to Homewood from Steger in a lateral move.

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

- A. Reappointments/Planning and Zoning Commission: Approve the reappointments of Seth Bransky and Michael Cap to the Planning and Zoning Commission for a five-year term ending on March 11, 2030.
- B. Budget Amendment/Incentive Payment/Stoney Point Grill LLC: Approve a budget amendment of \$85,000 to the General Fund for the second incentive payment due to Stoney Point Grill II, LLC per the redevelopment agreement.
- C. Budget Amendment/Incentive Agreement/Royal Cultures/1953-55 Ridge Road: Approve a budget amendment in the amount of \$12,000; and, authorize the Village President to enter into an incentive agreement with Olusolape Ogunrinola, Royal Cultures, to provide financial assistance from the non-TIF Business Incentive Program for \$12,000 for building improvements and expansion at 1953-1955 Ridge Road.
- D. R-3213/Release of Mortgage/Maple Tree Inn/18849 Dixie Highway: Pass a resolution authorizing the release of Homewood's \$250,000 mortgage for Maple Tree Inn at 18849 Dixie Highway in Homewood.
- E. R-3214/Motor Fuel Tax Funds/Street Patching/Rock Salt: Pass a resolution appropriating \$750,000 of Motor Fuel Tax funds; \$650,000 for street patching and asphalt testing, and \$100,000 for the purchase of rock salt for the period of May 1, 2025, to April 30, 2026.
- F. M-2346/Solicitation of Alternate Bids/3003-3025 183rd Street: Pass an ordinance directing the Village Manager to solicit alternate bids and development proposals for the property at 3003-3025 183rd Street in the 183rd West Redevelopment Project Area.

President Hofeld asked for comments from the audience. None were offered. Trustee Roman said she was glad that the Village has been able to provide non-TIF District funds to businesses for their improvements as the board did with Royal Cultures. President Hofeld called the owner up to outline her business of wig and extensions and its expansion into two storefronts on Ridge Road.

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

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

NEW BUSINESS: M-2347/Special Use/Epiq Nutrition/18111 Dixie Highway: In consideration of the attached ordinance granting a special use permit for indoor commercial assembly at 18111 Dixie Highway, in the B-2 Downtown Transition zoning district, the Village Board should consider and approve one of the following options: 1) approve the special use with the conditions that the proposed use shall not operate within the hours of operation of the existing carry-out restaurant use, and the total capacity of the use shall not exceed twenty (20) people; 2) refer the matter back to the Planning and Zoning Commission for further consideration; or 3) deny the application.

Economic Development Director Mesaros said that to offer fitness classes, the business needs a special use permit. The business hopes to meet its goal of helping clients meet their health expectations. The issue comes before the board without a recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Commission because it voted 3-2 with two members absent. For a positive recommendation, four votes were needed. Ms. Mesaros said staff re-evaluated the request and did not find a reason to deny the request.

Owner Erby Solis addressed the Board about the business that focuses on holistic nutrition. The business has 10,000 customers for health nutrition and supplements. Being able to offer an exercise/dance program goes hand-in-hand with his business.

Trustee Harris-Jones asked what day he wants to open the exercise classes. He said he thinks it will be Monday at 6 p.m.

A motion was made by Trustee Roman and seconded by Trustee Mason to approve the special use permit.

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

GENERAL BOARD DISCUSSION: Board members thanked the audience for attending the meeting stressing that hearing opinions from village residents is important.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: A motion was made by Trustee Mason and seconded by Trustee Harris-Jones to move into Executive Session to discuss the semi-annual review of closed session minutes under 5 ILCS 120/2(c)21 and collective bargaining under 5 ILCS 120/2(c)2.

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

The Board moved to Executive Session at 8 p.m.

The Board returned from Executive Session at 8:25 p.m.

A motion was made by Trustee Mason and seconded by Trustee Harris-Jones to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees.

The board voted to adjourn the meeting on voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,


Marilyn Thomas
Village Clerk