

**Minutes of the Community Design Commission Forestry Sub-Committee Meeting  
Held on February 25, 2015  
At Village Hall in Room 101**

Forestry Sub-Committee Meeting called to order at 6:45 p.m.

**Attendees:** Acting Chair John Schiess; Commissioners James Rolfes and Michele Wheeler

**Absent:** Chairperson Douglas Chien

**Also present:** Craig Failor, Village Planner; Mike Bruce, Zoning Administrator

**Discussion regarding forestry issues:**

Mr. Failor reviewed a report provided by the Village Forester. The forestry division continues to do removals and cycle pruning as well as working on snow removal as needed. They plan to plant approximately 325 trees in the spring. A resolution will be presented to the Village Board next week to support the application for Arboretum status for accreditation. The village has agreed to a joint Arbor Day celebration with the Park District on April 24, 2015 in Scoville Park.

Commissioner Wheeler suggested bringing back tree walks. Mr. Failor said he would add it to the next meeting's agenda for discussion. A short discussion ensued about tree tagging for the Arbor Day celebration at Scoville Park. Commissioner Rolfes spoke with the Morton Arboretum and said a speaker was available to talk about forestry issues for educational outreach.

**Other Business:**

Mr. Failor said he would consult with the Law Department regarding the sub-committee offering tree consultation to residents. Commissioner Carpenter suggested marketing any tree outreach to the One Love Earth Film Festival through the Green Community Connections.

**Community Design Commission Meeting called to order at 7:15 p.m. and roll was called.**

**Attendees:** Acting Chairperson John Schiess; Commissioners Julie Carpenter, Susan Ebner, Teresa Heit-Murray, Adam Kallish, Richard Katz, Christina Loran, Lloyd Natof, James Rolfes, Aaron Stigger and Michele Wheeler

**Absent:** Chairperson Douglas Chien and Commissioner Greg Sorg

**Also present:** Craig Failor, Village Planner; Mike Bruce, Zoning Administrator

**Public Attendees:** None.

**Non-Agenda Public Comment:** Ms. Kathryn Jonas, 124 S. East Ave Oak Park, suggested contacting Sally Stovall with Green Community Connections to help with marketing tree education outreach as well as Pam Todd with West Cook Wild Ones. She said she would also forward information to her organization, Tree Keepers Open Lands. She said Tree Keepers started the Historic Oak Project in collaboration with the Morton Arboretum. The project propagated acorns from oak trees that date back to pre-European settler days. Those saplings were then sold to people in Oak Park and were also planted in parkways by the Village. On Arbor Day the Park District will be planting more in the parks, sometime in the late afternoon. She said there would also be a presentation for children on photosynthesis. Ms. Jonas said they have a short slide-show presentation about the historic oak project that they'd like to present to the CDC and asked to be put on a future CDC agenda. She asked about a tree preservation ordinance, as the historic heritage trees are all on private

properties. She said most municipalities have some sort of protection through the permit process. Acting Chair Schiess said an ordinance was explored but it has been tabled for now. Mr. Failor clarified it was not on the work plan for this year.

**Forestry Superintendent Report:** Mr. Failor reviewed the sub-committee meeting and the report from the Village Forester.

**Minutes:** Commissioner Ebner moved to approve the minutes from January 28, 2015 as submitted. Commissioner Wheeler seconded. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Public Hearing(s); Sitting as the Design Review Commission:** None.

**Sub-Committee Report:** Commissioner Wheeler went over the description of the Forestry sub-committee consultation that will be distributed through village communications. Acting Chair Schiess asked if a report would be generated with the consultations. A short discussion ensued and it was agreed it would be a verbal discussion. Commissioner Rolfes briefed the commission on the educational outreach efforts, including the Arbor Day celebration complete with tree tagging. Volunteers interested in helping should email staff.

Mr. Failor said Commissioner Katz has agreed to take over the Stewardship Awards coordination. Other members of the Cavalcade of Pride sub-committee are Commissioners Carpenter and Heit-Murray. They will discuss the upcoming event and report back at the next meeting.

**Staff Report:** Mr. Failor said the Lake Street Streetscape Committee will meet again on March 3, 2015. He said at the prior meeting the committee preferred brick streets, but staff has some snow removal concerns so there was still discussion ongoing. He said the committee preferred blue stone sidewalks and the amenities that are on Marion Street. He said the Public Works Department was looking into getting a grant to fund the repaving and it may be limited to fund asphalt and concrete.

Mr. Failor said the Village Board will meet in April to discuss the Madison Street TIF and the distribution of that money. The board will be discussing in addition to economic development, various options including a road diet, streetscape improvements and amenities.

He said they were waiting for the state to release funding for a study of North Avenue that would look at infrastructure and geometric improvements. The hope was for the Village to coordinate with the City of Chicago to do a plan for that street. Also, the Village was planning to do a revamp of the Zoning Ordinance, beginning in the summer.

**Other Business:**

Sign Ordinance Discussion

Mr. Failor explained that at the last CDC meeting, commissioners were asked to review the Sign Code and note anything that needed review or further discussion that could be brought to the Village Board for modification. He said after tonight's discussion, staff would consider the changes and come back with a report to send to the Board.

Commissioner Kallish reviewed his recommendations and said the visual exemplars were not very clear and he had suggestions on how to re-order the document so that it was easier to read. He said some of the design guidelines were clearly subjective. He also suggested removing some of the wordage regarding signs that are not permitted. Commissioner Natof agreed that the document could use some reformatting and it could be clearer but said the design issues were difficult to contextualize. Commissioner Kallish disagreed and said the language could be honed to make it easier to understand.

Commissioner Ebner agreed with the changes to the outline but questioned making the language too confining in terms of design and examples. She said broader language was better. Commissioner Kallish suggested showing more than one exemplar. Commissioner Stigger suggested a line drawing for examples to keep it even broader. Commissioner Kallish agreed. Commissioner Rolfes suggested more information was needed as to why the regulations were in place and what makes them relevant. Also, if an applicant comes in for a variance they could then provide more information as to why the variance was necessary. Commissioner Heit-Murray said many variances have come in due to the size of the building versus the sign- as the code has signs based on the linear feet versus the square footage of the building. She suggested changing the language to accommodate the entire fascia of a building when calculating sign size. Commissioner Natof said a lot of time could be spent discussing aesthetic parameters, but the majority of variances were about getting as much sign as possible for the space.

Acting Chair Schiess said he believed the code was more subjective and should stay subjective in nature. He cautioned against trying to take the code to a more prescriptive level as it would require feedback, public hearings, etc. He said the code could use some tweaking but the variance process works. Commissioner Katz suggested getting rid of legal language to help clarify the document. Mr. Bruce reviewed a section that allows for a variance preliminary conference. He questioned the necessity of requiring notices to neighbors for the preliminary conference as the noticing guidelines were stricter than the requirements for the variance hearing. A short discussion ensued about noticing requirements. Commissioners agreed that no noticing requirements should be necessary for a preliminary conference and only newspaper and placard noticing was necessary for a variance hearing.

Commissioners discussed the findings of fact portion. Commissioner Kallish suggested adding the corresponding section of the code to each guideline so that it would be easier for applicants to find the supporting information. Commissioner Katz said the language of the document bothers him and using “findings of fact” for design elements was not appropriate. He suggested using “standards and guidelines” instead.

Mr. Bruce explained that if an applicant does not agree with the decisions of the CDC they could go to the Village Board to ask for an appeal to the CDC’s decision. Acting Chair Schiess said for that reason he actually preferred the term “findings of fact” as it showed the board there was a procedure that was followed and this was the official record of it. Mr. Failor said they could consult with the Village Attorney regarding that matter and get back to the commission.

Commissioner Natof said the code does not address businesses that put a sign on a side of a building that does not have street frontage, but was still visible from the street. Mr. Bruce said the language could be clearer on the interpretation but the code does not allow signs where there was no street frontage.

Commissioners agreed that the descriptions for the forestry consultation sub-committee and the sign advice sub-committee were appropriate for the Village FYI and were ok for publication.

**Adjournment:** Commissioner Heit-Murray moved to adjourn. Commissioner Lorz seconded. The meeting ended at 9:05 p.m.

Angela Schell,

Recording Secretary