

**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 18, 2014 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MEETING OF THE VILLAGE OF METTAWA, ILLINOIS, HELD IN THE
SAVANNAH ROOM OF THE HILTON GARDEN INN HOTEL, 26225 N.
RIVERWOODS BOULEVARD, METTAWA, ILLINOIS**

- A. **CALL TO ORDER @ 9:08am**
B. **Roll Call** - present: Trustees: Armstrong, Clark, Towne, Lane, Maier, and Brennan (left at 10:005am) and Mayor Urlacher.

Also present: Jim Ferolo, village attorney; Bob Irvin, village administrator; Colleen Liberacki, Deputy Village Clerk.

C. **CONSIDERATION AND DISCUSSION OF OPTIONS FOR VILLAGE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PROPERTIES.**

Mayor Urlacher opened the meeting with an announcement that MOLA was having an event on 2/08/2014 from 9:00am – 11:00am. He then urged that everyone attending today's meeting be in a positive and receptive mood. Mayor Urlacher then called upon Denis Bohm to give his Powerpoint presentation about the potential ecological restoration of the open space properties located in the village of Mettawa. Cory Ritterbusch of Prairie Works was also a speaker that was part of the presentation.

Once the presentation was completed, Mayor Urlacher then called any and all residents forth to the microphone to voice their opinion or thoughts about their vision/preferences/concern on the subject:

Larry Falbe, resident, MOLA member and President of Mettawa Open Lands stated that there was a great level of support and interest on behalf of the village in open space preservation. He felt that MOLA was active in part due to the open space preservation and land inventory under village control. He stated that the current MOLA Board is focusing on education as their goal. Larry Falbe further stated that he supports an Open Land Management Plan and would be willing to spend the funds to acquire the expertise.

Nick Patera of Teska and Associates, a land planner and landscape architect shared that the village of Mettawa is in a unique position to preserve and create open space. He noted that this is the direct opposite of many neighboring villages, which are interested in populating their town with businesses and further development. He felt that Mettawa was headed in the right direction.

Resident Mark Meluso thought it was a good idea to have an Advisory Commission, in addition to the abundance of shared expertise in the village. He also thought it was also important to hear the residents' opinions.

Resident Julie Stevenson supported the idea of an Advisory Commission, especially for recreational purposes and would like to see a cohesive plan.

Trustee Lane understood the need for a cohesive plan, but did not understand the need for a separate Advisory Commission. He felt that the village had MOLA, committees and frequent meetings to accomplish such a goal that the Advisory Commission would achieve.

Trustee Maier was in agreement with the creation of an Advisory Commission and a cohesive plan.

Trustee Clark agreed also with the creation of an Advisory Commission and a cohesive plan and stated that other residents as well value the character and nature of the village that brought people here in the first place. He would like to see MOLA more active with input. Trustee Clark further stated that the village has always been committed to open space, and the Board has been more aggressive with that goal this past year, more than ever, with the acquisition of recent properties. He further stated that with the open land, they need to be more aggressive eradicating the invasives and the village and residents could do a better job. He noted that residents have been invited in the past to volunteer with the eradication, and four people showed up to help, two of them Board members.

Trustee Armstrong agreed with the idea of an Advisory Commission creation, as everyone has a different opinion about how to proceed with land maintenance. He advised all present that it takes a lot of work to make something look "untouched" and "natural". He recognized that priorities have to be formalized and a formal commitment to the goal, so an Advisory Commission would be necessary, much like a Zoning and Planning Commission. He would appreciate advice about how to operate, and expertise offered as well as residents' commitment to participate. He felt that the Advisory Commission could make recommendations but the final outcome should be voted on. He also shared that he felt privileged to live in Mettawa.

Trustee Towne advised those present that the village has been focused on acquiring available property for some time, for the purpose of open space and the Village Board has been very busy in this regard, as a lot of work is involved in this process. He noted that the Village Board has quadrupled the open space acreage in the past 2.5 years and wanted to put in one more mile of trail on land across from the HGI. He also reminded the members present that until the berm is complete, they would not be focusing on landscaping plans and input thereof. With regard to the recent "church" property acquisition, the next step there would be to focus on maintenance. Also, with an eye to preserve parcels as open space, there would need to be an overall plan and separate file for each describing the conditions and maintenance plans. He suggested that possibly each neighborhood could take on the responsibility as

stewards of the land under a commission or subcommittee. Trustee Towne noted that there is a lot of talent in the village and MOLA has done a good job of creating open land awareness and eradicating buckthorn. In conclusion, he felt that the Village has done a lot to promote this and still has a lot to do in the future. He loves Mettawa and this motivates him to participate as he does.

Village Administrator Bob Irvin stated that the village has done a great job of acquiring these properties and noted that 74% of the 90 acres acquired is open space. What are left are three residential lots and 2 right-of-ways that will remain as is and a two-acre parcel on the corner of Riverwoods and Route 60 that is zoned commercial.

Resident Roberta Bohm stated that she is a professional consultant and always plays the devil's advocate. She further stated that she had a lot of respect for the Village Board, the numerous hours they have contributed and the good job done to date. She praised the purpose of the creation of an Advisory Commission as an opportunity of engaging the residents and obtaining their input. She saw this as an opportunity for a new program fresh from the start and a win/win result for all, with no regrets.

Mayor Urlacher inquired if there were any others present who wished to share their opinion, but there were none. He then introduced and read a letter from an absent resident, which he prefaced by stating that the letter was negative in character.

Resident Larry Falbe stated that Denis Bohm's proposal deserved serious consideration and urged the Village Board to get behind something and agree on it. He did not want to fight, but wants what is best for the village.

Mayor Urlacher noted that four of the five trustees supported the idea of an Advisory Commission, and he would look to Denis Bohm for setting up a committee chair. He stated that everyone on the Board has worked very hard and residents liked the rural and natural character of the village as it is. He thanked everyone attending for the positive energy displayed.

Resident Jan Pink thanked everyone for a positive meeting and Trustee Towne for the hard work with the acquisitions and Denis and Roberta Bohm for their input.

Resident Greg Widdes questioned Cory Ritterbusch of Prairie Works with regard to his opinion about berms. Ritterbusch stated that he did not enjoy berms, as they are a poor design, but that they can be worked with.

Mayor Urlacher stated that in three years' time, the berms would take on a largely different appearance due to landscaping and growth. He further noted

that the maps on display for this meeting were considered preliminary planning, that nothing was permanent.

Drew Johnson, a resident of Forrest Haven and landscape architect, noted the cost factor up front is a determining factor in the pace of moving forward to native restoration, as it is higher upfront, and lesser as the years proceed. It must be noted that the invasives need to be controlled. The Oasis berm would protect the land from annexation or commercial interest. The proper planting on the descending slope will change the look.

Resident Peter Liphardt, questioned the purpose of the Oasis berm. Trustee Towne replied that in 2009 the prior Village Board was attempting to acquire the Oasis property and had at that time planned a sound wall, much like the one in Lake Forest. The sound wall was functioning to screen out noise and sight of the Oasis trucks and traffic, but this current board thought the berm was a more attractive option. Trustee Towne noted that the north end of the berm is now at its top height and is 70% complete and as time passes, its appearance will improve. They have not planted any trees, only some understory and it is time for some aggressive tree planting.

Mr. Liphardt also questioned about the fear of annexation motivating this acquisition. Mayor Urlacher replied that the Lake Forest side of the tollway experienced annexation by the state of Illinois and the Village of Mettawa saw that as a threat, so they moved on acquiring the property and turning it into a park. Trustee Towne reminded those present that the Oasis Park is a work in process and not all decisions have been made on the final plan.

Mr. Liphardt reported a lack of access to the more desirable recreational parts of Mettawa due to the number of washed out trails used by horses and bike riders and lack of parking spaces at the recreational areas, should he want to drive there as an alternative. He likes hearing about the open lands as a goal, but is concerned that the village will not commit on a plan from start to finish. He would like to see more parks and the trails need to be better maintained.

Trustee Armstrong reported that at the last Public Works Committee meeting, they stated one of the 2014 goals was to complete the trail between Route 60 and Deerpath Road. Additionally, he did agree about the condition of some of the trails and believes they need more maintenance, but the pending status of Bradley Road work has impacted some of their plans. There is a plan to have a drainage tunnel under Bradley Road to avoid frequent washouts. Peter LeParc still was not satisfied, siting numerous washout areas and then complained about the horse poop on the trails. Trustee Armstrong agreed about the nuisance of the washouts and will focus on that, but he could not do anything about the poop on the trails. He further stated that they are trying new materials on the trail to discourage the washout. Trustee Towne added that this

was a work in progress and the village has spent significant funds on maintaining the trails.

Resident Mary Widdes suggested limestone based trails or using sand. Trustee Towne stated that they are using a limestone base and the sand would washout much quicker than the limestone. Trustee Clark suggested that the village might need to grade the trails more than once a year to keep them in shape.

Resident Ron Pink stated he has been a resident since 1978 and loves this place. He cautioned those present not to underestimate the Village Board's efforts. He stated he is willing to support expenditure on consultants to have the plans come to fruition. He thought that 20 years ago the village should have had a plan for Mettawa and he welcomes a new commission, MOLA or whatever strategic open land plan is necessary. Trustee Clark replied that Nick Patera of Teska and Associates has done just that, but perhaps it needs to be done better. Denis Bohm reported that the Lake County Forest Preserve has a plan to build a bridge to link the Lake Forest Academy to Mettawa.

Trustee Maier noted that the Middlefork Savannah took 14 years to move from concept to the mature open land that it is today. Denis Bohm agreed, stating that in 2000, it was just a concept plan and then it took four or five years to create the trails and have the drainage tiles removed. At present, 8 to 9 years after the trails, there is maintenance and invasive removal and it still requires stewardship to maintain.

Resident Larry Falbe spoke about the concept plan Teska & Associates put together after the land acquisition and always under consideration was the ease of access for residents versus the attraction to uninvited outsiders. Trustee Clark noted that the village philosophy has been promoting a passive open space area (accessed by non-motorized vehicles), rather than an active one.

Drew Johnson reminded those present that the Prairie Moon Nursery catalog was available to pick up. Trustee Towne noted that there was a map of property holdings available for those interested. Bob Irvin suggested that a new and updated property holding map would be helpful for financial and accounting reasons as well as for planning purposes

D. ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Armstrong moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:05 am and Trustee Towne seconded the motion. Motion was carried.

The following voted:

Aye: All

Nay: None

Colleen Liberacki, Deputy Clerk

