

MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE VILLAGE OF METTAWA, ILLINOIS, HELD AT THE HOUR OF 9:0 A.M. ON SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2015, IN THE COTTONWOOD BOARDROOM OF THE HILTON GARDEN INN HOTEL, 26225 N. RIVERWOODS BOULEVARD, METTAWA, ILLINOIS.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Urlacher called the meeting to order at approximately 9:33 a.m.

B. ROLL CALL

Upon a call of the roll, the following persons were:

Present: Mayor Urlacher, Trustees Maier, Pink and Towne

Absent: Trustee Brennan, Trustee Clark, Trustee Armstrong

Also present: Colleen Liberacki, Deputy Village Clerk and Jay Womack of WRD Environmental

Mayor Urlacher declared there was a quorum, but added that no decisions would be made today, as the intention of this meeting was for informational purposes only.

C. WRD PRESENTATION OF OPEN LANDS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Denis Bohm, Open Lands Ad Hoc Panel Chairman, thanked the Mayor and trustees for their support and willingness to conserve the village open lands in a responsible manner. He then introduced Jay Womack of WRD Environmental. Jay Womack prefaced his presentation by stating his impression from the numerous interviews with the residents and project stakeholders was that the greatest common denominator was that Mettawa values its open lands and its desire for a long term stewardship partner. He stated that those present would hear the term “permanent conservation easement” frequently.

REVIEW OF EACH SITE ANALYSIS

Parcel #1: 27570 Oak Hill (2.91 acres)

Jay Womack noted the parcel was infested with buckthorn and contained a private driveway. His recommendation was to have MOLA adopt the site and use it as a good opportunity for environmental education, buckthorn removal and create a monitoring program for stewardship. He noted that a MOLA member lived in close proximity to the parcel. Jay Womack highly recommended putting the parcel in a conservation easement, long-term stewardship and educational signage.

Parcel #2: East Side Oasis Service Strip (1.23 acres)

Jay Womack noted the parcel was a 40ft right-of-way strip that must be maintained. He suggested attention to avoid blockage, help improve drainage and remove the buckthorn.

Parcel #3: Oasis Park (20.89 acres)

Jay Womack noted that what he felt really made this spot special was the high points, which created a spectacular view to the west, showing the treetops and village land. He furthermore noted the large and expansive feeling generated from inside the parcel. Jay Womack noted

that there was water moving thru the site, which was the cause of some erosion and felt that vegetation and existing trees would soften the appearance of the berm.

Jay Womack's recommendation was to use native plants (prairie short grass) to create a large prairie and omit the planned trees on the berm. He noted that the compacted soil had 98% density due to the spoils dumping and only a top layer of black soil, which would discourage tree growth, yielding stunted and sickly trees. He suggested creating a boardwalk parallel to the road and possibly 2 or 3 parking stalls on top for access to the vantage points.

Parcel #4: Riverwoods Blvd (0.92 acres)

Jay Womack noted that there was a small piece of the parcel in an existing conservation easement, close to a right-of-way, and it is largely a flat parcel, with a little spot qualifying as a wetland. He further noted that parcels #4, 5 & 6 were continuous properties.

His observations were that part of this property had a "T" intersection at Riverwoods and Bradley Road, intimating a dividing line between the corporate and residential areas. He thought that it gave a nice feel of residential with the oaks at the "entrance" to residential area at the "T" and thought native wildflowers would be suitable to the area. Chairman Bohm noted that TallGrass was supposed to be maintaining the area.

Jay Womack's recommendation was that the sun exposure (or lack thereof) would dictate a savannah style plantings.

Parcel #5: Riverwoods Blvd (9.04 acres)

Jay Womack noted that this parcel stretched from Bradley & Riverwoods Road to a conservation easement owned by the DNR and Village of Mettawa.

His observations were that there were incredible oak trees, however it was being choked out by a heavy infestation of buckthorn; winding trails connecting to the corporate area, yet the property served as a separation between the residential and corporate area. He noted that there was a small vernal pool (which was rare) on the parcel that was a breeding ground for salamanders; however, the presence of buckthorn had absorbed most of it.

Jay Womack's recommendation was to clear the buckthorn, remove the existing meadow fencing, place the parcel in a conservation easement, and create a long-term stewardship plan.

Parcel #6: 26230 Riverwood Blvd. (2.41 acres)

His observations were that this was a very open piece of property with no vegetation in it to restore, except some teasel was cleared. He felt that this parcel lent itself to development vs. restoration. Jay Womack's recommendation was that the village should let it be as is and just keep it mown.

Parcel #7: Whippoorwill Preserve/Farm (11.18 acres)

Jay Womack noted that this parcel had no conservation easement and a trail from Bradley Road was located across the back end. He also noted that there was a corner berm with some steep slope, but the rest was flat with one small wetland area.

Jay Womack's recommendation was that the village should keep the berm intact and move forward with other changes. He noted that there was a significant buckthorn infestation that should be removed as well as clover and elm that should receive the same treatment, as it was eliminating what native plants there were. He noted a lack of biodiversity and signs of erosion. He recommended along with removing all invasives, herbiciding the entire berm and reseeding due to the overwhelming presence of clover.

He also thought it would be a good idea to retain the bluestone patio, as it was part of the Korhumel history. Womack suggested incorporating native landscaping, along with plugs for a splash of color and keeping some spots of the parcel "cultural", as it once was when the Korhumels lived on the property, along with interpretive signage. He would recommend the entire parcel be put into a permanent conservation easement.

Parcel #8: Costco North (2.80 acres)

Jay Womack noted that there was no conservation easement present and no village trails leading to the property. He advised that it was originally a wetland where Costco was now located, which displaced the water and pushed it into other areas.

His observations were that this property was not as big as it initially looked, and it gives you the feeling of being down in a hole. Jay Womack's recommendation was to work with Costco to put the parcel into a permanent conservation easement. He also suggested working with the cattails, which were a symptom of poor water quality (probably runoff from the parking lot) and eradicate the buckthorn.

Parcel #9: Costco Berm (2.19 acres)

Jay Womack's recommendation was to leave as is.

Parcel #10: 701 Riverwoods Road/Everett Pond North (24.01 acres) and

Parcel #11: Everett Pond South (5.23 acres)

Jay Womack noted that nothing much was going on but a little bit of passive wetlands for Parcel #10 and for Parcel #11, nearly 2/3 of the property was a pond. The property was located next to Grainger on one side and LCFP with a trail on the other side.

His observations were that this was the front door to Mettawa coming from Chicago, and the view was spectacular looking west, including the berm and a rural feeling from the hayfields given the village's history of horses. He also noted a grove of oak trees (infested with buckthorn) and a giant burr oak tree, suggesting native plantings should go under it. He felt that this property was a critical piece of the future and how it should be handled, firstly by placing it into a permanent conservation easement and involve Grainger in doing so. He thought that the village should continue to be guarded against future development here, due to the presence of Costco.

Jay Womack's recommendation was that the village should maintain the land as a hay field for the next 10 – 20 years and then convert it later to a prairie and open up the view by eradicating the buckthorn infestation. He again urged cooperation with Grainger to put the parcel into a permanent conservation easement.

Parcel #12: 25960 St. Mary's Road (3.95 acres)

He stated that the land slopes toward the Des Plaines River and the highest point was where the house was previously located prior to demolition, and there was a wetland on the back side and corner of the property, maybe ½ acre in size.

His observations were that there was an extra thick infestation of buckthorn, more than he had ever seen. He felt that there was no tree worth saving on this property and no redeeming qualities, due to the amount of traffic and noise produced on such a busy corner; he felt it was nearly unbearable to spend much time there.

Jay Womack's recommendation was to remove the buckthorn and plants should stabilize the north half of the property against erosion. He further noted that the slope and moisture content of the parcel would be a deterrent against development, and this would be an unlikely spot for a village hall, in addition to the traffic and noise produced on such a busy corner. He did recommend putting the parcel into a permanent conservation easement.

Parcel #13: 16 Alexandra Drive (3.91 acres)

Jay Womack noted that this was a landlocked parcel, partly in a floodplain and the adjoining property was underwater. The presence of the sound barrier wall was ineffective, as the sound would bounce over it and funnel into the low point. Jay Womack's only recommendation was to sell the property and use the proceeds to fund the restoration work on the other village parcels. He felt that this property had no ecological value.

Right-of-Ways

Jay Womack noted that there was much buckthorn and (recently removed) dead ash trees. He noted that this parcel contained right-of-ways, but residents had no understanding about the boundary lines on both sides of the road. He noted much encroachment with fencing and landscaping into the right-of-ways.

Jay Womack's recommendation was to work with the residents about education and communication regarding the right-of-ways and whose responsibility it was to maintain. He suggested establishing right-of-way signs for everyone's benefit. He also thought there should be discussion with the homeowners about removal of invasives and natives for screening and wildlife habitat. He also advised a program for tree pruning, erosion control and water management; and lastly, recommended putting the parcels into a permanent scenic easement.

He further advised that the trails were pretty complete and no need to develop more. He then opened up the presentation for questions.

Terri Mazel inquired if it was the village's intention to make the pond on site 11 accessible to everyone. Jay Womack answered that there were also a lot of trees on this property and although the pond was visually accessible, it was not necessarily physically accessible to everyone. He felt that the village might not be comfortable with making the pond accessible to everyone, which would include outsiders or non-residents.

Terri Mazel inquired about herbicide use on the properties and if it would be organic or Round-up. Jay Womack replied that part of the process of ecological restoration would need this type of intervention, and each herbicide use would be appropriately customized

according to each situation and the person applying it. He cited for example, that an oil based herbicide was required for the buckthorn eradication, painted directly on the stump. He further stated that it was not soluble and would be absorbed by the plant all the way into the roots, hence, this would not seep down into the soil or water tables.

Terri Mazel was pleased to hear about the Oasis Park views and would like to see them, however, the residents were also told that the berm and accompanying trees would hide the light pollution from the gas station on the tollway. She wanted to know how this would be addressed. Jay Womack replied that they would try to hide it, however, it would not be as obtrusive as she anticipates, because the landscaping would help. He further stated that the trees she was thinking of as a screen would be deciduous, and it would take a long time to impact as a screen. He also explained that a berm had typically compacted soil, and trees would not do well. Terri Mazel questioned if the berm could be higher, and Jay Womack replied that the berm could not be any higher due to the steep incline that it would require and it would soon become a safety issue for people and equipment working on or maintaining the berm.

Charlie Mitchell wanted to benefit from the WRD education regarding natural plant screening suggestions, and supports the buckthorn eradication. He also wanted to know what was the difference between prairie and savannah, what cattails had to do with water quality and likes the idea of WRD partnering with the homeowners. Jay Womack advised that a desirable plant list would be added to the planning book, and felt that privacy landscape screening was important to people. He stated the plan was to replace the eradicated buckthorn with native plants. He advised Mitchell the difference between a prairie, which required 8 hours of sunlight and hot conditions for thriving and a savannah, which required filtered sunlight that would be provided by a treetop canopy.

Keith Gray complimented Jay Womack on the presentation and the plan. He shared information with those present about the Conservation Home Program, part of Conserve Lake County (CLC). He cited as an example that the Village of Grayslake included in their budget an inclusion for the homeowner to implement landscaping environmental practices. Jay Womack replied that ecology is the basis for so many landscaping decisions.

Larry Falbe was happy that each site was labeled with a descriptive name in addition to a number, so that he is able to make the association when listening to the comments. He also did not want to readily give up on the trees at Oasis Park, but suggested asking the tollway to lower their lights. He and MOLA were also very excited about the prospect of WRD being involved, and that their organization was looking for four projects to do. He was happy about the discovery of the vernal pool and would like MOLA referenced more often to be involved with projects. Jay Womack applauded MOLA for their accomplishments and thought that site 5 would be a good opportunity for involvement.

Denis Bohm reiterated the importance of the suggested conservation easements to protect the land from a future board that might not be so sympathetic to open lands management, as opposed to commercial development.

Tom Heinz noted that 6 of the 13 properties and right-of-ways had a terrible buckthorn problem and suggested that MOLA might be tapped to do the eradication. Also, there were 8

to 10 telephone poles at the entrance of Mettawa that were an eyesore and perhaps they could be removed. Jay Womack explained that the buckthorn was merely a symptom of a problem that the land was not being taken care of.

Jan Pink questioned how legally permanent was a permanent conservation easement. Jay Womack explained that it was very permanent, due to how the deed was written, and that the deed was held by a third party with a secure status. He advised that there were costs associated with that arrangement, legal, maintenance and otherwise. Roberta Bohm questioned if the easement holder could be an independent party, but still controlled by the village. Jay Womack replied that the very nature and purpose of a conservation easement was so that it remained outside the control of the granting party. Rick Phillips stated that he supports the concept of a conservation easement with Conserve Lake County and referenced the 240 acres in Deerpath Farms, where he lives, and that this was better than zoning. He further cautioned that without a permanent conservation easement, the village owned open land properties are only 4 votes away from being changed. He stated that a permanent conservation easement is one of a kind legal document specifically written to each property to limit the marketability and developmental use.

Andy Cohn inquired who held the conservation easement located on St. Mary's Road and Route 60. Trustee Towne stated he was not sure, but that the village owned a scenic easement. Jay Womack thought it was possible that the Lake County Forest Preserve might own the easement. Andy Cohn further suggested that he would like to see a list of herbicide poisons and helpful advice in the book that will be produced for the village as part of the deliverable from WRD. He also cautioned against any further building in the village. Jay Womack replied that although people needed buildings to live in, that any building should work with the environment or not at all.

Drew Johnson suggested regarding the pool on parcel #11 might benefit if Jay Womack reached out to Grainger (which abuts the property) on behalf of the village and talked to them about cooperative land management. Jay Womack was very enthusiastic about this prospective partnership and would be agreeable to initiate it.

Mayor Urlacher solicited any additional input or questions from the attendees or trustees and there was nothing further to be shared.

D. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Urlacher thanked Jay Womack for his presentation and everyone else for coming. With no further items discussed, Trustee Towne declared the meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m., seconded by Trustee Maier.

Colleen Liberacki, Deputy Clerk

This document is subject to correction as noted on next meeting's minutes.