

MINUTES OF THE OPEN LANDS PLANNING AD HOC PANEL OF THE VILLAGE OF METTAWA, ILLINOIS, HELD AT THE HOUR OF 6:00 P.M. ON MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2015, IN THE MAPLE BOARDROOM OF THE HILTON GARDEN INN HOTEL, 26225 N. RIVERWOODS BOULEVARD, METTAWA, ILLINOIS.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bohm called the meeting to order at approximately 6:05 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

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

Present: Chairman Bohm and Members Cohn, Johnson, Lys, Stephenson and Sheldon

Absent: Member Weiland

Also present: Jay Womack of WRD Environmental, Inc.; Colleen Liberacki, Deputy Village Clerk. Chairman Bohm declared there was a quorum.

C. Review and approval of minutes from the October 28, 2014 meeting.

Member Stephenson moved to accept the minutes of October 28, 2014 as presented and Member Sheldon seconded the motion. The motion was carried.

D. INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Bohm made sure that Jay Womack of WRD Environmental, Inc. was acquainted with everyone present. Jay Womack was ready to present his vision for the Village of Mettawa Open Lands management as the result of a series numerous village-owned parcel inspections and recent interviews that were conducted with the principals of the village and the Open Land Ad Hoc Panel.

Jay Womack initially eliminated parcels #2 and #9 (East side Oasis service strip, 1.23 acres and Costco berm, 2.19 acres) from any further planning due to their size and lack of potential. He then presented each of the 11 other parcels and right-of-ways, each with two plans. One plan was a site drawing considering: conservation easement resources, recreational trails, topography resources, steep slope resources (8% or more), surface water resources and flood plain resources. The other plan was the aerial photograph/drawing. He gave a description of each parcel, his observations and lastly, his recommendations.

E. REVIEW OF EACH SITE ANALYSIS

Parcel #1: 27570 Oak Hill (2.91 acres)

Jay Womack noted the parcel met the Lake County criteria for wetlands, which was saturated lands, 7 growing days of standing water and soil without much oxygen. He further noted that even as a wetland, the status was not impactful on the disposition of the property, but that there were two homes abutting the property with a driveway/road running thru the property.

His observations were that there were some nice oaks present, however, infested with buckthorn; a bike trail and the driveway present gave it a “private ownership” type of feeling.

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 (suggesting Conserve Lake County to be the holder), long-term stewardship and educational signage. Member Johnson noted that this was a buildable lot. Member Cohn asked if land could be donated to LCFP. Chairman Bohm replied that it was hardly likely to do, since a private driveway/road was running thru it.

Parcel #3: Oasis Park (20.89 acres)

Jay Womack noted that this was a large parcel with steep slopes present, nice hickory tree, wetlands on the edges, drainage swale and a culvert.

His observations were that there was a nice walkway present, vegetation, nice cottonwood trees as well as extra trees present. 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 planting trees along the frontage road, such as an oak grove, and create a boardwalk among the trees with pause points or a kick off for another trail. Chairman Bohm inquired about either a limestone or mown grass pathway, to which Womack replied that the steep slope would discourage the limestone path. Jay Womack also suggested a stone outcropping as a point of interest, a stewardship plan and possible turf area at the bottom of the parcel.

He later stated that he felt that this parcel would be the optimum location for a village hall, due to its close proximity to utilities, large space and central to the village location with trails leading into and through it.

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 to create more biodiversity, a stewardship plan and continue with native wildflowers to contribute to a larger picture, which included parcel #5.

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. Chairman Bohm noted that the Village of Mettawa easement was not set up properly and needed to be corrected by the village attorney, as the grantor and the grantee could not be the same.

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. Member Johnson noted that there was a small pond 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, create a long-term stewardship plan and possibly include a council ring, which was suggested to him in the interviews. Member Cohn inquired if the buckthorn should be cleared before or after the conservation easement and what the cost would be. Jay Womack replied that the easement would take priority and his company would do a cost estimate of all that he was suggesting. Chairman Bohm suggested the need for a permanent steward to follow all the desired management plans, to which Womack replied that a walk thru the parcels once a month would be adequate.

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

Jay Womack noted that this parcel was triangular in shape with a trail and a small conservation easement along the backside, no wetlands, however a watershed movement in two differing directions.

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 that it had a prominent view on the corner. Member Lys thought it would be a nice place for a quaint restaurant or coffee shop, but worried about a McDonald's snagging the spot. Chairman Bohm also noted that the LCFP was planning a bridge over the railroad tracks to the west and was asking the village to continue the trail to the east to connect the bridge with bikers and pedestrians from Lake Forest.

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.

His observations were that this was that looking westward on Route 60 from the intersection, it had a nice "nature" feeling and the grove of trees at the other end of the parcel acted as an entry feature into the village.

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 liked the large scattering of oak trees, which created some nice biodiversity. He recommended along with removing all invasives, herbiciding the entire berm and reseeding due to the overwhelming presence of clover. Member Sheldon recalled that the company that did the original planting is on the hook for the cost of reseeding, as they are aware of the lack of success. Jay Womack's recommendation was using a broad leaf herbicide to do the job.

He also advised removing the evergreens, as they presented a screen and their removal would open up the view. Member Lys inquired if the evergreens could be saved, but Womack replied that they were too big to replant. He also thought it would be a good idea to reset 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 not introduce any new trails, but would recommend the entire parcel be put into a permanent conservation easement. Member Johnson shared that MOLA had plans to create a seed bank on the property, but the funding was an impediment.

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. Member Cohn suggested quickly moving the parcel into open land zoning to protect it and then follow up with the permanent conservation easement, which could take 1 - 2 years to set up, to which both Members Sheldon and Lys agreed.

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)

Jay Womack noted that there was an "L" shaped conservation easement running along Route 60 and connecting St. Mary's Road sides. 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, due to a high amount of soil disturbance. 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 there was a huge drainage swale across the property. The only entrance was an easement off a cul-de-sac.

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 would be overgrown and become a liability.

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. He found spectacular oak trees next to the tollway.

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. Member Cohn cautioned that the buckthorn was screening Costco, to which Member Sheldon added that the buckthorn was squeezing out the oak trees. Womack suggested screening Costco with evergreen trees.

Parcel #4, 5 & 6: Riverwoods Blvd & 26230 Riverwoods Blvd (0.92, 9.04 & 2.41 acres)

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. Other members commented that bike trails were planned and some were present. Jay Womack noted that there was opportunity for other bike trails to connect to other existing bike trails, but members advised that additional bike trails were discouraged.

F. NEXT STEPS

Chairman Bohm and other members were largely in agreement with the plans presented and wondered about next steps. Member Sheldon thought that this panel's work was nearly complete and perhaps one more meeting was necessary to tie up all loose ends and then disband the panel. Jay Womack suggested that the plans be formalized and hold an open house for the entire village.

Member Sheldon suggested that the Parks & Recreation and Village Board could decide on the final details and if necessary, establish another panel to guide the plan along into fruition. Member Cohn read the resolution establishing the Open Lands Ad Hoc Panel, which described its purpose and suggested that they make their recommendation to the Village Board and their duties have been discharged. Member Stephenson suggested the maintenance, prioritization and implementation of this open lands management plan would be another committee's responsibility. Chairman Bohm thought that responsibility could be coordinated with MOLA. It was decided that Jay Womack would present a condensed version of the plan to the Parks & Recreation Committee on February 11, 2015 @ 5:30pm, and also the Village Board meeting the following Tuesday, February 17, 2015.

G. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT MAY APPEAR BEFORE THE AD HOC PANEL FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION TO THE VILLAGE BOARD.

Chairman Bohm suggested that the 1/27/15 Open Lands Ad Hoc Panel meeting could be cancelled, since nothing more could be done until after WRD had its meetings with Parks & Recreation Committee and the Village Board.

H. ADJOURNMENT

With no further items discussed, Chairman Bohm made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30pm, and Member Stephenson seconded the motion. The motion was carried.

Colleen Liberacki, Deputy Clerk

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