

Village of Peoria Heights
Board of Trustees
March 5, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

Everyone stood for a moment of silence and the Pledge to the Flag.

Upon calling roll, the following Trustees were present: Sarah DeVore, Jeff Goett, Elizabeth Khazzam, Jennifer Reichert, Matthew Wigginton, and Brandon Wisenburg. Others present included Mayor Michael Phelan, Village Administrator and Chief of Police Dustin Sutton, Village Clerk Stephanie Turner, Fire Chief Dan Decker, and Village Counsel Attorney Mark Walton.

Trustee Khazzam made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 5, 2024 meeting. Trustee Wisenburg seconded the motion. The minutes were approved 6-0.

Mayor Phelan opened the meeting to public comment on agenda items. Hearing no public comment, the Board moved on to old business.

Trustee Wigginton noted Chief Decker was available to answer questions as many on the Board had questions regarding salaries. Trustee Wisenburg stated he had questions, and he would prefer others meet with Chief Decker prior to conversation. Trustee DeVore asked Chief Decker for more information regarding salaries which Chief Decker provided. Trustee Khazzam asked Chief Decker to provide an overview of his plan. Chief Decker spoke about NFPA standards and standard responses. He explained he planned to provide a stipend position for volunteers that would be a 24 hour shift. He noted he expected the model would help with integrating full-time and volunteers. Trustee DeVore asked for more details on the stipend positions with Chief Decker explaining his vision of creating three companies. Trustee DeVore complimented Chief Decker on his efforts. Trustee Khazzam asked how many paid positions were required and what the timeline was for staffing those. Chief Decker stated he'd like at least 2 full-time positions each day and noted that the department would still have to call for help even if 4 staff were able to respond to a structure fire. He expressed he'd like to be able to hire 3 additional staff in fiscal year 2025-2026. Trustee Khazzam noted her understanding was that the Board wanted funds to go to developing the Village's fire department, but now the Village had exceeded the amount proposed by the City. She noted the Board would need austerity measures or increased sales tax in order to afford the PHFD. Trustee Reichert expressed reservations noting that the Village had already had financial issues and had to disband the ambulance service due to financial issues. She stressed she didn't want to see that happen to the PHFD. Trustee Reichert asked if Chief Decker was responding to calls. Chief Decker stated he had been at the two fires since he was hired. Trustee Reichert asked about the policies regarding hiring for firefighters with Chief Decker explaining the testing process and procedures. Trustee Wigginton asked Chief Decker to speak about the volunteer stipends as part of the plan. Chief Decker noted the Village would likely always need assistance from other communities, but the Village needs engaged volunteers. He stated the stipend was his way to integrate the volunteers with the full-time staff. Trustee Wigginton expressed concern about the age of the equipment noting it was not included in the budget. Chief Decker stated he's applying for grants to help offset costs but the vehicles are in good shape for the age that they are. Trustee Wigginton noted the NFPA standards were two in two out. He questioned firefighters being concerned about their safety. Chief Decker agreed with the importance of staff and volunteer safety speaking about protocols and mutual aid. Trustee Wisenburg noted the comparables provided by Chief Decker were for

significantly larger communities asking if he had comparables for smaller communities. Chief Decker noted the Village has a high call volume and rivaled some of the districts in the City of Peoria. Trustee DeVore asked Chief Sutton about specifics of structure and salaries at the police department.

Trustee DeVore noted the Village was on a deadline to adjust sales tax. She expressed the Village was behind the City of Peoria and increasing the sales tax rate 0.25% would increase revenues \$156,000. Trustee Wigginton clarified that the increased sales tax would be in addition to increasing garbage fees, and Trustee DeVore agreed. Trustee Khazzam noted that increased revenues were important, but it was in response to the deficit. The Board discussed the Village's sales tax rates in relation to other communities. Trustee Khazzam expressed concerns for the impact on local businesses noting she wouldn't support anything above 0.25%. Trustee Goett disagreed. Trustee DeVore noted the State of Illinois was discussing eliminating the grocery tax which would further increase the deficit. The Board briefly discussed deadlines. Mayor Phelan noted the Board could propose an agenda item. Trustee DeVore requested an agenda item regarding sales tax rates on the next agenda.

Trustee Wigginton asked for a status update on the pumphouse. Mayor Phelan noted it was being drafted by counsel and would be presented at the next meeting.

Hearing no additional old business, the Board moved on to new business.

Trustee Wisenburg made a motion to approve a donation in the amount of \$500 for Peoria Heights Grade School PTO Easter Egg hunt. Trustee Wigginton seconded the motion. Trustee Wisenburg explained the event. Representatives of the event came forward to explain the event noting that they had difficulty raising funds. Trustee Wisenburg noted the event was entirely funded by donations and fundraisers. Trustee Wigginton asked if the event was restricted to students at District 325, and the organizers noted it's open to all residents. Trustee Reichert shared there are options available for children in wheelchairs as well. The Board approved the donation 6-0.

Trustee Khazzam began discussion of consultant selection for Active Transportation Plan (ATP). Trustee Khazzam shared the plan will be to improve walkability. Tri-County Regional Planning has funding which has a \$10,000 match from the Village. The plan selected was included in the Board packets and the project is anticipated to be completed by December. Trustee Khazzam recommended moving forward with the project. Mr. Michael Bruner, representative of Tri-County Regional Planning, came forward to note they've worked with the consultants before, and they provide a quality project. Trustee Wisenburg asked for more specifics. Trustee Khazzam explained it's an initial phase to review pedestrians and biking and feeds into the Prospect Road redesign. Director of Community Development, Mr. Wayne Aldrich, explained how the project fits into other projects in the area as well as the State. He noted that these kinds of documents are necessary to receive federal funding. Mayor Phelan will add the item to the agenda when the agreement has been completed.

Director Aldrich stated he received two proposals for the code rewrite, and he's reviewing them.

Trustee Reichert began discussion of consultant selection for Prospect Road Phase 1 engineering. She explained the chosen consultants had the strongest experience with the type of project. Director Aldrich spoke of the engineering phase noting its importance in securing later funding for construction. Trustee Reichert spoke about the importance of addressing aging infrastructure with Trustee Khazzam concurring. Director Aldrich noted he'd worked with the consultants in the past. Next the Village will need to negotiate a contract and return to the Board for approval. Trustee Wisenburg asked about the

finance with Chief Sutton providing both the source and anticipated timeline. Trustee Wisenburg asked if the Village had control of the design with public input. Trustee Khazzam explained the process which includes public meetings as well as interviews with stakeholders. She noted the funding included construction of a bike lane. Director Aldrich agreed noting the importance of bike lanes. Trustee Wigginton asked about local presence, and Mr. Bruner explained they consider the tri-county region as local.

Mayor Phelan asked for miscellaneous business. Hearing none, Mayor Phelan opened the meeting to public comment on general items.

Mr. Knute Laundry approached to speak about the expenses of a business. He stated increasing the sales tax would be a bad idea. Mr. Beau Laundry questioned Trustees Goett and DeVore about use of the sales tax. Trustee DeVore spoke to the expenses currently facing the Village. She noted she is a business owner and understands that concern. She noted that amenities come at a cost. Trustee Wisenburg noted streets, police, and fire cost, and clients expect those services. Mr. B Laundry asked about cost savings measures with Trustee DeVore explaining the budget meetings that already happened. Chief Sutton spoke to Mr. B Laundry about the process of refining the budget.

Ms. Barb Milaccio came representing the Peoria Heights Chamber of Commerce as well as owner of the Exhibit A Gallery. She noted the proposed tax increase makes her cringe explaining she already has customers questioning the tax rate. She noted people compare the tax rate to Chicago. She expressed the businesses are going to have to pay a type of tax for the redesign as well as property tax rates. She noted the Village is attracting professional services when it needed to attract retail business. A sales tax increase would deter new businesses from moving into the Village. Ms. Milaccio expressed concern about the proposed salaries discussed for the fire department. She also expressed as a business owner her appreciation for the PHPD for all that they do for the businesses explaining specifics of the services they provide for events and patrol. She questioned the Village's holiday plans noting its impact on business sales. Trustee Wigginton explained the miscommunication on holiday plans. Trustee Wigginton spoke about public safety and the budget. The Board thanked Ms. Milaccio.

Hearing no additional comments, Mayor Phelan closed the meeting to public comment.

Mayor Phelan noted there was no need for an executive session.

Trustee Goett made a motion to adjourn, and Trustee Reichert seconded the motion. The Board of Trustees voted 6-0 to adjourn at 7:01 pm.

Michael Phelan, Mayor

Stephanie Turner, Village Clerk