

**Village Board Public Safety Committee
~ Special Meeting ~
MINUTES**

~ Tuesday, May 26, 2020 ~

CALL TO ORDER

Trustee Guzzo called the virtual meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

PRESENT

Mayor Gunter, Clerk Szynski, Trustee Barker, Trustee Barry, Trustee Guzzo, Trustee Liddle, Trustee Nero, Village Manager May, Police Chief Gunther, Fire Chief Riley, Finance Director Parker, Community Development Director Sylvester and Chamber of Commerce Director Forrsberg.

ALSO PRESENT

Human Resources Director Brainard, Communications Director McIntyre, Liquor Commissioner Mulhearn, Village Clerk Richards, Admin. Asst. Mielcarski, Planning & Zoning Member Carmichael, Resident Mary Gabryel and Resident Business Uptown.

ABSENT

Trustee Addington

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was waived due to the virtual meeting format.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Village Manager May indicated due to the virtual format of the meetings, public comment is submitted via electronic submission form. Public comment submitted by Dave Scheck, Suburbanite Bowl, was intended for the previous Village Board meeting which was not held. Manager May read the public comment as follows pertaining to construction at Ogden Ave. and Park St.: *"We are concerned on the safety impact of the proposed solution that will force all business traffic at Play It Again Sports to exit directly onto Ogden Ave. via a roadway versus a driveway. The safe mutually developed solution between the Westmont Public Works Departments and our*

businesses, that met the Village requirements and provided a safe solution for our employees and customers was vetoed by the Village Manager. We believe the current / original solution which incorporates none of the consensus solutions creates a significant increase in risk to our customers and employees over what exists today. The goal of any improvement like this should be to further improve our safety, not reduce it. Thank you for addressing our safety concern. I hope the Village will re-consider implementing the collaborative solution that was developed after several onsite meetings between the Westmont Public Works Department and ourselves. The Westmont Public Works Department has a copy of the proposal on file. Kind regards, Dave Scheck."

Village Manager May indicated the public comments were emailed to all board members and has been previously discussed. He indicated he disagreed with the content and indicated that concluded the public comment portion of the meeting.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

COVID 19 LOCAL PERSPECTIVE REPORT

Village Manager May advised Zoom meetings began in March 2020 and as staff transitions to opening Village facilities, the next step would be to conduct hybrid meetings where some are held in Village Hall and others virtually. He said the current Village Board meeting room would not be able to accommodate social distancing requirements. The current meeting is a practice hybrid meeting with Mayor Gunter, Village Manager May and IT Manager Liljeberg attending in the Village Board meeting room and all other members attending virtually.

Mayor Gunter discussed Governor Pritzker's recent announcement setting guidelines to move into COVID Phase 3 which allows for outdoor dining. He said Westmont has worked closely with the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference to develop draft guidelines for outdoor seating to open. The guidelines state no costs associated with opening, they would just need to abide to DuPage County Health Department requirements. He indicated only a couple towns would be closing streets to allow for outdoor dining with several others discouraging the use of tents. Westmont is allowing the use of tents with safety measures reviewed.

Fire Chief Riley said the Fire and Police Departments have worked diligently to take care of the community. He said as of earlier in the afternoon that Westmont, 60559 zip code, had 282 confirmed cases of COVID. He reviewed the cases within the nursing homes in Westmont. To date, there have been a total of 42 deaths of which 39 were out of assisted living, congregate living or nursing homes. As call volumes continue to decrease it appears protective measures taken as a community such as staying at home and wearing face masks appear to be working. Both Fire Chief Riley and Police Chief Gunther have been working to define the new normal for fire and police staff in regard to social distancing. With the support of Mayor Gunter, Village Manager May and Finance Director Parker many measures have been put into place in an effort to protect all employees. Staff continues to work together each week on planning for next phases of COVID response and reopening of the Village.

Mayor Gunter provided an update from yesterday, the American Legion did conduct a brief Memorial Day Ceremony at Veteran's Memorial Park. It was primarily attended by American Legion members and a few fire and police department members. It was a quick ceremony just to recognize those who have passed during wars.

Village Manager May stated the State of Illinois has developed a Restore Illinois Plan which includes several phases. He reviewed moving from Restore Illinois Phase 2 to Phase 3 guidelines and restrictions. All four regions within Illinois are on track to move into Phase 3 on Friday, May 29th. This phase would allow for restaurants to provide outdoor dining. After Governor Pritzker's announcement, staff worked to make a determination on what would be allowed within Westmont. Discussion was held regarding restaurants within Westmont that do not have space to allow for outdoor dining. Guidelines indicated the outdoor seating must be part of the property. He said tents are not required but are desirable, the Village will review at no cost to ensure safety guidelines are met. Outdoor dining will also be regulated by the DuPage County Health Department as well as Americans with Disabilities requirements.

Trustee Barker questioned if businesses were aware of access to sidewalks or back alley ways for outdoor dining. He expressed concern over capacity within those areas. He indicated he was in support of potentially closing a portion of Cass Ave. as well as a portion of Quincy Ave. to provide for adequate outdoor seating capacity. Staff could potentially close the streets on a Thursday and Friday to keep dining out of the alleys. Village Manager May responded to Trustee Barker's comments pertaining to closing off streets to provide for outdoor seating. Staff is not convinced that there is enough interest from downtown restaurants to utilize the closed off space for dining. There would be considerable time putting up and taking down seating as well as insurance liabilities. Trustee Barker said he was glad to see staff working so closely with downtown businesses in an effort to meet their needs. He is in favor of doing all we can do to get them opened quickly.

Trustee Barry expressed his opinion that the COVID phases are merely guidelines and recommendations. There is really not any enforcement especially seen within grocery stores. He expressed concern over tents and potential contamination under them. He feels that Westmont should allow restaurants to open at full capacity using common sense with washing hands and not touching their faces. Village Manager May said Trustee Barry's comments are well taken and observed. There are policies put in place with some following closely and others not. It's up to the individual establishments to enforce. Restaurants within Westmont will be required to follow all County and State guidelines. Staff is working with establishments to successfully open and accommodate any requests. Village Manager May added that this use is only allowed for the 2020 season extending through October. Mayor Gunter advised staff would be checking to ensure safety requirements are met.

STIMULUS AND INCENTIVES

Mayor Gunter said Westmont has appropriated \$150,000 towards a stimulus program that would mirror DuPage County's program requirements. Finance Director Parker prepared a chart outlining several options. It includes three different business categories; restaurants/bars, retail businesses and the service industry, the Village could potentially assist with the stimulus money. Finance Director Parker stated initial budget monies included \$76,000 for restaurants/bars, \$24,000 for the service industries and \$50,000 for retail businesses. Reimbursement for restaurants/bars would cover 75% of costs up to a maximum of \$2,000. Finance Director Parker reviewed several options for distribution of funds. The maximum reimbursement for retail businesses would be \$2,000 and services industries would be \$1,000. Requirements would mirror DuPage County and portions of the Village of Wilmette's requirements. He further discussed exemptions to the grant funding requests.

Trustee Barry suggested offering funding that would benefit all businesses within Westmont with items such as water billing, Norcomm fees, etc. He feels funding should be available to all businesses throughout the community. He further expressed his concern over a lottery type system creating potential controversy amongst business owners.

Trustee Nero expressed his opinion that it's hard to find a one size fits all program. He felt the grant intent was to potentially help businesses that are allowed to open Friday, May 26th. He feels a first come first serve system would be the best process and would remain consistent with prior grants. He is also in favor of cost sharing with the businesses to ensure they are invested in the process.

Trustee Guzzo said she wanted to ensure proper notification and publication was provided to local business owners allowing ample time to apply for funding. Trustee Barker asked if the restaurant/bar grants could be published first with further discussion on retail and service industries. Staff agreed further discussion could be had to determine a need once restaurants/bars are complete. Trustee Barry questioned if gaming establishments are exempt as they receive monthly funding through gaming machines.

Further discussion was held regarding exempt businesses. The initial proposal would exclude businesses exceeding \$1.5 million in revenue from grant funding. After discussion consensus was reached on allowing any business within the Central Business District to apply for grant funding; any business outside of the Central Business District would be capped at \$1.5 million in revenue.

Discussion was held pertaining to renting barriers for outdoor seating. Mayor Gunter indicated renting barriers would be cost prohibitive to Westmont. Staff will research other options such as no cost barriers or purchasing plastic barriers to fill with water. The plastic barriers could then be used at other future Village events such as the Taste of Westmont.

Chamber of Commerce Director Forrsberg provided an update on DuPage County's grant program. The grant program was targeted at companies which did not receive federal funding, generate under \$1.5 million in revenue and employ less than 14 employees. Within a couple days, approximately 800 applications were received. They will be distributing a total of \$10 million in grants throughout DuPage County. Village Manager May indicated information would be made available online pertaining to the grant application and requirements.

Mayor Gunter advised that a Zoom meeting is conducted every morning at 8:30 a.m. to discuss potential grant recipients. Community Development Director Sylvester said to date there have been approximately 12 applications submitted with several others inquiring about the grant process.

In closing Village Manager May indicated staff is working on improving the online meetings as well as transitioning to in person meetings.

Trustee Guzzo advised the next scheduled meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 27th at 4:30 p.m.

There being no other business to discuss, Trustee Liddle motioned to adjourn, to which Trustee Nero seconded. The meeting subsequently adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Hardy
Recording Secretary