

SUMMARY OF COUNCIL RETREAT

DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS

FEBRUARY 6, 2012

Mayor Martin Tully welcomed Council members to the retreat at 6:13 p.m. at the Downers Grove Park District Golf Course Clubhouse, 2420 Haddow Avenue.

Present: Mayor Martin Tully; Commissioners Marilyn Schnell, William Waldack, Sean P. Durkin, Geoff Neustadt, Bob Barnett, Becky Rheintgen

Staff: Village Manager Dave Fieldman; Village Attorney Enza Petrarca; Village Clerk April Holden

Council Travel and Training Policy

Mayor Tully said this pertains to potential reimbursement for travel and training. He said Village Manager Dave Fieldman distributed the policy developed by the Finance and Administrative Standing Committee. He noted that this policy was never voted upon by Council. The Mayor said he would like to direct the discussion toward a policy and focus prospectively. Council discussion centered on the need for a separate policy for staff, the continuing need to exercise care with Village money, and out-of-state vs. in-state training opportunities. In terms of budgeting money for training, Council members discussed whether funding should be per person or if the funding should be for the Council as a whole. Commissioner Neustadt expressed a concern about keeping travel expenses down. Commissioner Barnett said he is opposed to travel reimbursement. He said he has no issues with the quality of the training; his concern is the expense. Mayor Tully said he has found conferences to be of value and noted that ideas generated from conferences have been implemented in Downers Grove. Commissioner Waldack said not budgeting for training is probably a mistake. Staying local will only provide a local perspective. He sees value and benefit of training for the community and suggested a yearly budget. Commissioner Rheintgen said there is value in traveling elsewhere for training opportunities as it provides a different perspective; however, due to the economy, she suggested that only local training and travel be permitted at this time. A policy should be developed for the future. Commissioners Barnett, Neustadt and Rheintgen agreed that airfare and overnight stays should not be permitted at this time. Commissioner Durkin said there is value in training events. It is a deterrent not to attend training events and he feels the Council should budget for travel and training. He noted that the National League of Cities is the only out-of-state travel and conference opportunity. Council discussed whether there should be a maximum number of people sent to a training opportunity and the benefits of sending more than one person to a conference. Mayor Tully said it is important to find a balance that is measured and appropriate for the times. Commissioner Waldack suggested that the Finance and Administrative Standing Committee review and revise this policy. The Council could then decide whether to budget for this each year.

Coffee With The Council

Council discussed changing the schedule to allow Coffee With The Council to be held at various different

locations. The pros and cons of an informal vs. formal structure was discussed. Council proposed reviewing the calendar in January and acknowledged the need for representation at this and other community events. Staff will create an interactive events calendar that Council members can view to determine who is attending each event.

Council Responses to E-mails

Village Manager Dave Fieldman said the Village's website allows the public to communicate with Council via "No Reply" e-mails. Some of the e-mails are commenting on policy and asking questions, which require Council response. Due to provisions of the Open Meetings Act, Council members may not know who has responded to an inquiry. Mr. Fieldman said he can notify Council as to whether staff has responded to the e-mail. Following discussion, the Manager said he will work with staff to create an automatic response. He will update the Council regarding this matter in the Manager's memo.

New Business

Council Compensation – Council members discussed compensation such as internet access, computers for Village use, parking passes, etc. and directed the Manager to create a list of "other compensation" that Council will review and discuss at a future meeting.

Channel 6 Broadcast System – Council members discussed the costs and funding to upgrade production equipment as well as a new visitor's podium and microphone in the Council Chambers. Follow-up postcards with residents and other speakers were also discussed.

Council Chambers – Council members considered different formats for the "First Reading" portion of the Council meetings to allow for more dialogue.

Commissioner Waldack said he values Robert's Rules of Order and the Council rules. He does not feel tonight's meeting is appropriate as it is off-site and not broadcast to the public. He said it is Council's job to make information available to the public. He feels that use of the word "retreat" means that Council prefers the public not be at the meeting. It is worthwhile for the public to hear these issues. Mayor Tully commented that at the last retreat, Council members said they liked the format as it is more informal and engaging. Further, Council is discussing matters that affect themselves. Commissioner Rheintgen said it is a way to be more productive; there is no deception and no attempt to hide anything. Commissioner Schnell noted that the meeting was noticed and is in a public place. She feels it allows for a better exchange of information. Commissioner Waldack responded that it can be detrimental. Unless one is constantly watching, you would not know about this meeting. He has a problem with the format, volume and timing of the notice. It was only minimally noticed. It could have been held during a Tuesday meeting. He said the Council meeting schedule is published in the newspaper and does not include this meeting or other special meetings. Commissioner Barnett said this type of meeting builds a concept of communication and team. This is a worthwhile goal. We are not unique or deceptive. The Mayor said Council will work on the noticing issue.

Public Comment

Marge Earl said she feels she is not welcome at a meeting such as this and she feels this meeting could have been better noticed. She noted that the podium in the Council Chambers is horrible and the setup is very intimidating.

Laurel Bowen commented that the microphone in the Council Chambers falls apart. She said no one knew of this meeting. She said public comments are not acknowledged and she does not get responses to her phone calls, e-mails and visits to Village Hall.

Ms. Earl said she sees a great benefit in out-of-state travel as there is a huge difference in the kind of information one gets and new ideas are exchanged.

Jeffrey Crane said he would have appreciated more notice of this meeting as he thinks the Village wants engaged residents. He loves the Village but noted there are problems including major political problems tearing the Village apart. He said he has been attacked. He is trying to be productive and see changes happen. He would like to live in peace and harmony and enjoy our town.

Ms. Bowen said she has lived here since 1988. She commented that Coffee With The Council used to be held at the Library. She said there is not enough space at Fire Station 2.

Adjournment

Mayor Tully thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

April K. Holden
Village Clerk