



rRemarks Data for January 14, 2025 Village Council Meeting

Agenda Section & Item: Comments of a General Nature

Commenter: David Rose

Comment: Comment on the MLK Jr Day proclamation

Anticipating CC (council chair) will reprise again his usual proclamation for MLK Day.

I reprise mine, with notable alterations.

In 2025, Jan 20 is Martin Luther King Jr Day in the US.

I presume CC will as usual use his MLK Jr Day proclamation to call for a day of service. In response I again note that such a call is a classic version of the sterilized, milquetoast way in which white America — especially the well-to-do part of it — wishes to remember and memorialize the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

To repeat, I don't believe King and his supporters were marching and subjecting themselves to physical attack and risk of death so that more people in the US would be motivated simply to work in a food pantry or soup kitchen, paint the walls of a senior center, or render some other such service to each other, laudable as those acts are.

As I have noted previously, our country still does not have a national community service entity because the Republican Party portion of it believes such an entity would likely pursue objectives and engage in activities it opposes. Better to have the principal —indeed sole — focus of promoting unity in the country be the military, and the fomenting of paranoia about and the waging of war against all those foreign nations who fail to appreciate ours is the exceptional nation, God's gift to the world.

Indeed, now that the Republican Party has become the Trump Party and taken control of the federal government, advocating for serving others seems quaintly outdated.

So here we are approaching 60 years since MLK's untimely death, assassinated at age 39; and not only is much of what he struggled for still to be done, much of what he accomplished and inspired others to achieve is at risk of being undone.

King pondered the obstacles he faced, and was coming to believe 'white well-meaning moderates' were among them. In what has become known as his Letter from Birmingham Jail, in 1963 he wrote the following:

"I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride for freedom is not the White citizens' 'Councilor' or the Ku Klux Klan, but the white moderate who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension than to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action(;)' who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a 'more convenient season.' Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is more bewildering than outright rejection."

One can't help but wonder how King would assess the social and societal dynamics of today's America, influenced as they are by the forces of white Christian nationalism and their relentless effort to limit the freedom of those not of their kin and kind.

Would he agree with Jim Wallis that white Christian nationalists proclaim a "False White Gospel"? Wallis observes for one example they preach an edited version of the Bible, one that 'conveniently' omits passages such as Galatians 3:28: "There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Yet Wallis' book implicitly reiterates King's concern: What "more convenient season" are well-meaning humans waiting for to be guided by a vision of oneness ... with not only each other but all of Life in its material complexity?

Those Americans willing to honor King prefer to see him solely as a civil rights leader, but as I have noted previously, that characterization fails to acknowledge the fullness of his life's work and the implications of carrying on its legacy.

So I again hope the CC's proclamation includes a call for

a day of self-examination, both personal and institutional, to assess one's relationship to racism and other forms of exploitation.

a day of reconciliation that explores how to heal the deep wounds of our nation's history and shrink the gender, racial, ethnic, and class divides.

a day of empowerment, in which people are encouraged to examine the impact past suppression of African American voting has had and discuss what needs to change if voting in our democracy is to be not something we fight over but something we practice as a key part of the joint responsibility we call self-governing.

a day of peace and restraint, in acknowledgement of King's opposition to the Vietnam War and American militarism more generally; for us, an opportunity to assess among other things how it is our nation's self-image contrasts so dramatically with its interminably acquisitive and belligerent behavior in the world. to assess how all too many of us have a facile capacity to dehumanize in the name of any of a range of motives, from self-aggrandizement to pursuit of higher good.

a day of justice and opportunity, in acknowledgement of King's recognition that fighting to overcome poverty was a way to unify and uplift poor people of every color. A day, in other words, in which we examine why our democracy has failed to ensure equal educational and economic opportunity, medical care, and safety in one's person. In which we investigate what must happen for our society to stop using poor people, especially poor people of color, as the safety-valve whenever the capitalist economy needs a downturn in order to undo its excesses.

a day of dignity and equality, in which we assess why our capitalist economy has failed to deliver higher standards of living for so many and not only failed to reduce inequality but worsened it, and explore how to change these failings in order to allow each of us to provide for and contribute to our individual and collective well-being.

finally, a day of ecological sustainability, in acknowledgement of King's opposition to materialism, in which we examine to their very core the workings of the capitalist system in order to figure out what needs to change in both the public and private sectors if we are to prevent the ravages of our present ecologically unsustainable way of living from devastating not only the poor, regardless of race or ethnicity, but every single one of us.

As I have observed previously, MLK Jr Day as a day of service? That's about the least white America can do to honor Dr King.

Is it not then ironically fitting that MLK Jr Day in 2025 is also the day the US inaugurates — for the second time, no less — the tale-weaving, verbal grenade-throwing, air-brushed great grey-haired and balding, pasty-white-skinned hope Donald J Trump as its President?

The meaning of one of the civil rights movement's anthems of the 1960s — “a change is gonna come” — seems about to be turned on its head.

Will we recognize the America of Inauguration Day, 2029?

Will the nation have blossomed, withered, or self-destructed between now and then?

Will MLK Jr Day still be a national holiday in 2029? To what end?

Agenda Section & Item: Active - ORD 2024-10611 A. Ordinance: Amending the Zoning Ordinance of the Village of Downers Grove, Illinois, to Designate the Property at 4913, 4917 & 4921 Forest Avenue as Planned Unit Development #70 (4919 Forest Avenue Planned Unit Development)

Commenter: John Schofield

Comment: Why is this a PUD, rather than just using the existing zoning? What are they proposing that would not be consistent with existing zoning? Please make this clear, and explain why it's desirable for the Village and neighborhood. Thank you!

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Commenter: Tom Schroder

Comment: Happy New Year to all.

My comments apply to the three active agenda items regarding development #70 on the 4900 block of Forest Avenue.

I purchased my home nearly 20 years ago, knowing that the 4900 block was zoned for commercial mid rises so my concern is not that building should not be there, rather looking at density and height constraints.

I will be out of town next Tuesday doing college visits with my son so I'm writing this note just to raise my concern.

When a resident wants to put a front porch on their house, there are certain setback requirements and also it can't be further out than any other neighbors on the same side of the block. My comment is similar to that - when looking at the seven story height of this proposed building. I'm asking that you look into height constraints to make sure our current zoning is being met. Right now there is a 5 story building directly south. If we allow a 7 story, what's to prevent a leapfrogging when the next two buildings go up that might want to be 8 or 9 stories. Every developer wants to keep pressing the threshold going higher and denser.

Recall, the plans for the building going up on the east side of the 4900 block of Main Street currently is 5 stories. To get their 5 stories that they wanted they spent extra money and put parking underground. This definitely cost more money, but it kept them within the zoning constraints and was better for the neighborhood. It was a perfect example of how a developer petitioner listened to the village and neighbors and everyone ultimately got what they wanted. Just was a little more expensive to dig underground more for the parking.

It appears this development 7 story structure has parking on the first two floors. If they are not allowed to "buy right" to have 7 stories it would be nice to put that parking underground, and the building would only have to be 5 stories, similar to building directly south of it.

If you approve this, it would also be nice to write into the construction management plan once they are digging and hauling foundation dirt that they truck north up forest east onto Franklin and the north on Main Street and not let them track huge chunks of dirt onto the 4800 block of Forest. As you know, there are lots of people that jog and bike on that street and it could be a trip and slippery hazard.

Again a lot of the development they can do by right, but please think hard on density and height constraints and whether we want to get into a slippery slope of every time we approve one of these we keep inching higher and more dense.

Thank you.

Tom Schroder

Agenda Section & Item: Comments of a General Nature

Commenter: Jessica Nastal, PhD

Comment: Thank you for deciding not to pursue RES2024-10593 on the April ballot. Regular meetings between the Village Council and Library Board of Trustees are sure to provide both bodies with more information and are a good model for the village. I am hopeful regular communications will prevent similar situations in the future.

I commend the Council for pursuing deliberative, evidence-based decision-making processes for the good of Downers Grove, and for standing up to messages founded in hatred and misinformation.

Agenda Section & Item: Comments of a General Nature

Commenter: DG Citizens in favor of Elected LBOT

Comment: Downers Grove Public Library (DGPL) Grievance Points:

NOTE: 9) & 10) are additions to the list posted in the 1/7/2025 rEmarks.

1) Library Board not holding the Director accountable for violating state law by reporting the names of all of the library card holders.

2) Removing Library Board Trustee illegally, without cause, without due process.

3) The Library Board currently does not answer to anyone (Village Council claims no responsibility for oversight)

4) Lack of Transparency:

*In Village Council appointments to the Library Board (behind closed doors)

*On website for budget and financial information (missing direct link to 2024/2025 financial information)

*Cover ups dealing with employee situations

*Lack of safety or alarming incidents at the library, ie: drug use, computers used for porn, intoxicated patron in children's section, (per Police FOIA responses and Patron Incident Tracking System -PITS reports)

5) Lack of Oversight on Spending/Finances

*Wasteful, biased spending on D.E.I. consultant over \$150,000

*Hiring a social worker when we have a Village social worker (at cost up to 100k/year dependent on benefits)

*Excessive spending on unnecessary Library remodeling

*Little to no questioning of budget proposals submitted by the Director.

- *Subjecting taxpayers to potential liability and legal costs for all such violations
- *Threatening to use tax dollars to fund a battle against the citizens of Downers Grove

6) Failure to follow Bylaws, Code of Conduct & State Laws

- *Breaking Library code of conduct by screaming “SHUT UP” at citizens during a Library Board meeting
- *Electioneering in the Library during a presidential election (misinformation connecting Trump with Project 2025).
- *Violating Bylaws with politically biased emails to the public
- *Violating Open Meetings Act
- *Violating Library Records Confidentiality Act

7) Failure to remain neutral:

- *Lack acknowledgment statement with wrong information and demeaning to the character of indigenous people
- *Promotion of cultural ideas without balance rejecting traditional American culture(s) and values
- *Tone deaf to conservative viewpoints while promoting liberal ideology
- *Excessive partnership with EQDG on programming: Example: Pride month! No heterosexual month, Christian family month, Pro Life month etc.
- *Sexualization and indoctrination of children and babies
- *Drag Queen Bingo for children does not belong in the public library (allowing minors to register without parent’s knowledge or consent)
- *LGBTQ+ indoctrination to 2-3-4 year old babies, plus K thru 12
- *Pornographic books displayed in young adult sections, gender fluid books in children’s section
- *Not inclusive and racist towards certain cultures of community eg: Italian American community etc.
- *Not one conservative trustee on the Library board, so no diversity of thinking
- *Requested conservative books not stocked (example: Abigail Shrier’s Irreversible Damage)
- *Issuing selective anti-hate statements supporting a biased narrative
- *Use of the library to create community divisiveness.
- *Falsely labels the community as hateful and anti-LGBTQ

8) Dishonest conduct:

- *Lying to patrons about window painting policies.
- *Propaganda, allegations re: threats to the library that have been proven to be false
- *Library Board President open letter to the public about the referendum filled with false information

9) ++Forcing Village Council to spend an inordinate amount of time on Library issues and taking away from their time spent on Village issues.

*Drag Queen Bingo

*Bill Nienburg

*Elected Board Member issues

*Safety issues

10) ++Library website term ending date for trustee Khuntia is inconsistent with village records. Per the 9/13/2019 Village Council minutes; confirmed by village manager and documented in the 9/25/2019 LBOT minutes she was appointed for a 6 year term ending 8/31/2025.

++The library board's answer to any argument for change is weaponizing the "5-star Library" award. In reality, the award is from a Trade Journal and based off of data from 2020. It's an outdated award, no longer given. A library board that does not value the community it serves, is not 5-star.