

**MINUTES OF A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING  
OSWEGO VILLAGE PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
OSWEGO VILLAGE HALL  
100 PARKERS MILL, OSWEGO, ILLINOIS  
August 21, 2018**

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Gail E. Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Physically Present: President Gail Johnson and Trustees Ryan Kauffman, Karin McCarthy-Lange, Pam Parr, Judy Sollinger and Joe West.

Absent: Trustee Luis Perez.

Staff Present: Dan Di Santo, Village Administrator; Tina Touchette, Village Clerk; Jeff Burgner, Police Chief; Jennifer Hughes, Public Works Director; Mark Horton, Finance Director; Rod Zenner, Community Development Director; Christina Burns, AVA/HR Director; Jay Hoover, B&Z Manager; Corinna Cole, Economic Development Director; Jenette Sturges, Community Engagement Coordinator- Marketing; Carri Parker, Purchasing Manager; David Silverman, Village Attorney; and Marron Mahoney, Village Attorney.

**CONSIDERATION OF AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS ON-ANY REQUESTS FOR ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION IN MEETING**

There was no one who participated electronically.

**PUBLIC FORUM**

Public Forum was opened at 6:01 p.m.

Gerald Sternberg addressed the Board regarding problems with the HOA in his subdivision; not allowing homeowners to repair their duplexes unless neighbors also repair the same; up to the homeowner to repair the homes structurally; insurance companies make the rules; if allowing multi-family homes, then specific rules need to be made; HOA should do the exterior repairs; there isn't a good solution.

There was no one else who requested to speak; the Public Forum was closed at 6:03 p.m.

**OLD BUSINESS**

There was no Old Business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

F.1. Discussion of Winter and Holiday Decorations

Director Cole addressed the Board regarding holiday decorations. In October 2016 the Village of Oswego considered a procurement conducted by Director Hughes for the purchase of holiday lights. At the time, the Village Board declined to approve the item, in favor of waiting for downtown redevelopment. The Village's current holiday decorations and their relative condition are as follows:

- Large incandescent wreathes along Washington- the wreathes are badly aging; the incandescent bulbs easily short out with exposure to water; require annual maintenance; will soon age out of commission and need to be replaced annually.
- Small non-lighted wreathes in the downtown are not lit and not a lot of presence; have little decorative "pizzazz".

- Live Christmas tree in the fountain-bought out of state for several years and installed in the fountain at Village Hall; tree is lit with incandescent lights that are thrown away with the tree annually.
- Village plaza and tree lights- icicle and string lights purchased from local stores that are reused; strung on gazebo and pergola.
- Main Street tree lights- incandescent string lights purchased from local stores; lights do not weather well in the branches of the trees; hard to remove; cut down each year; Village hasn't upgraded to LEDs because of the increased cost and the need to dispose of the lights each season.

### Goals

During Christmas Walk 2017 preparations, Director Cole began conversations with various stakeholders, including several trustees and Public Works, regarding updating the Village's decorations. It became apparent that the following key goals should determine any future upgrades to holiday decorations:

- Complement regional positioning branding with a focus on the downtown
  - The goal of a Main Street-first plan is to help draw attention to downtown businesses ahead of upcoming construction, which can have a dampening effect on business
  - Ensure the downtown feels like a welcoming winter destination
  - Extend past Christmas season and into Winter season
- Be mindful of the financial impact of decorations
  - Complete cost to the Village, including initial purchase, labor for installation and removal, maintenance, and electricity
  - Potential positive economic benefits to business from an improved holiday/winter shopping atmosphere
- Accommodate the constraints on the downtown infrastructure
  - Little available power; includes power load capacity and placement of outlets
  - Inconsistent tree placement; types of trees in the downtown will or have already grown bigger than the planters allow; some have been removed already and some will need to be removed in the future; species will get too big and need to be replaced; look uneven
  - Accommodate the "short" 20-foot light poles
- Meet environmental objectives
  - Avoid single-use purchases or disposable items
  - Lower energy consumption
  - Transition to decorations that have a longer expected useful life

### Village Christmas Tree

Staff investigated alternatives to shipping in a tree from out of state for placement in the fountain; researched placing a tree, live or artificial, in the downtown, but no site has the infrastructure and power required and the vacant property where a tree could be placed is either privately owned or intended for development in the near future. Ultimately, staff decided the cheapest, most environmentally friendly idea was to use a live tree. The Christmas tree, for the next few years, is growing adjacent and slightly recessed from the flag poles in front of Village Hall. Staff will string LEDs and stage the Tree Lighting Ceremony from that location. The Garden Faire has generously donated a six-foot evergreen tree which was planted on the Northeast corner of the Village Plaza lawn. When it is mature, its location will be perfect for the Tree-Lighting Ceremonies.

### Additional Village Hall Improvements

Staff investigated other improvements for decorating Village Hall. It was determined that the improvements did not meet the first objective to improve the winter appearance of the downtown. Biggest issue is power and funds. The options researched included:

- Village Hall Plaza-investigated whether to install improved string lighting on the pergola and gazebo and purchase stand-alone light holiday features (i.e. giant walk-through snowflakes, etc.); extending power to this area would cost approximately \$13,000 to \$15,000; Village will need to provide the future Christmas Tree with power to be lit for the holidays
- Fountain- researched commissioning a standalone lit piece for the Village Fountain; there are several excellent options; each would cost approximately \$9,000 to \$11,000

#### Architectural Up-Lighting

Staff spoke with several sources regarding the idea of architectural up-lighting for Village Hall and the downtown. The lighting concept uses colorful lights placed at key architectural features to dramatically highlight the building. The potential benefit is that lights have high coverage at a low relative cost. Unfortunately, it is very costly to hire a niche designer to put together an effective up-lighting design. Moreover, such lighting would be washed out by the ambient light provided by streetlights. Finally, both the downtown and the Village Hall have constraints on the available power. This was determined to be an ineffective lighting option for both Village Hall and downtown.

#### Refurbishment of Washington Street Wreaths

Staff requested quotes for the refurbishment of the wreaths placed on the Washington Street light poles. It would cost about \$10,000 to strip the wreaths and add LEDs and new bows. This plan would require Public Works to perform most of the refurbishment by hand. The benefits and problems with this plan are as follows:

- Refurbishment is cost effective
- Refurbishment is more environmentally effective than buying new
- Wreaths are currently decrepit and in need of replacement/repair
- Would potentially clash with a cohesive downtown design
- Wreaths are specific to the Christmas season, which mandates that Public Works install and remove the decorations within a short window; beyond Christmas, the wreaths do not enliven the downtown during a slow season
- Replace wreaths that would match the downtown

While staff originally intended to bring this option for the Village Board's consideration, timing constraints for both Public Works and Temple Design eliminated the refurbishment as a possibility for the 2018 holiday season. The Village will continue to use the wreaths as long as possible; including for this upcoming Winter.

#### Commission Downtown Decorations

In December of 2017, Director Cole and Community Relations Coordinator Sturges decided it was important to create an Oswego aesthetic as part of a larger "place making" initiative. The place specific aesthetic is a cohesive look that makes it instantly identifiable and gives visitors a sense of connection to the location. The Oswego Aesthetic will accomplish the goals through repeating colors, shapes, patterns, themes and other design elements; specifically, curving lines which mimic the Fox River, botanical themes, star bursts, and a warm-gold color which includes logos and are produced locally. Staff always intended that any Winter decoration would coordinate with the look. Staff took the following steps to develop the aesthetic and a conforming winter décor:

- February 2018: Met with Trustee McCarthy Lange, Public Works, and Community Development to begin the creation of an Oswego Aesthetic
- March-July 2018: Staff met with various community stakeholders to discuss the Oswego Aesthetic
- June 2018: Staff presented the aesthetic to the Cultural Arts Commission, received their endorsement and solicited feedback

- July 2018: Based on feedback from the Cultural Arts Commission, staff made corresponding changes to the aesthetic
- June – July 2018: Using the 2016 Holiday Lights Procurement undertaken by Director Hughes, staff contacted the winning designer- Artistic Holiday Design. Staff provided Artistic Holiday Design with the regional position branding criteria and the new Oswego aesthetic. Community Relations and Public Works met with Artistic Holiday Design and shared objectives and requested up to five new designs.
- August 6, 2018: Artistic Holiday Design presented their designs. Public Works and Community Relations worked with Artistic Holiday Design to make a few modifications.
- August 7, 2018: Director Cole presented the designs to a representative of the Downtown Association Board and received feedback.
- August 7, 2018: Jenette Sturges presented designs to the Cultural Arts Commission and received their feedback.
- August 14, 2018: Director Cole met with the Oswego Chamber of Commerce President to confirm downtown support for the design.
- August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018: Artistic Holiday Design's deadline for orders for the 2018 holiday season.

Proposed designs were presented to the Board which included chasing lights, twinkle ball lights, pinwheels and planter spheres.

Board and staff discussion focused on lights lighten the environment and welcome people in; two samples of lighting are currently installed in the downtown on poles to see which is better; staff recommends pure white with warm white; downtown business like the same; marketing and placemaking lends to a cohesive place to gather; encouraging developers to be on board with the same feel; feeling more celebratory; can add ribbons to the spheres for the holidays; don't like LEDs because they are super bright; LEDs look different in a house versus on the street; preference is warm lighting; display company suggested both; more flexibility; timing issue; need decision by Friday; power issue in downtown; tree wells are an issue; stringing of lights time consuming for Public Works personnel; not using as many lights and incorporating spheres; tree trunks will be wrapped with lights; staggered light balls in trees will appear that there is more lighting in the tree; LEDs will last ten times longer; Public Works has a two week window to install lights; lights are taken down in between snow storms; breakeven of expense versus life expectancy; will see cost savings next year; purchase of décor is not apples to apples; will not refurbish the wreaths this year; a lot of work for Public Works to rewire; considering wreath replacement on Washington Street; wreaths were originally bought in 1998 by the Chamber of Commerce; cost to refurbish 33 wreaths is \$10,000, but doesn't include labor costs for Public Works employees; Public Works employees should have downtime to do the work; Public Works does not have downtime; material can't be that much; considering the visual look on Washington Street; extending the décor into January and February; liking the soft white lights; better than in past years; purchase would be an investment; like the pinwheels; expensive to refurbish; extending power to the pergola; lights and décor at Village Hall; focusing on the downtown now; costs \$15,000 to get power out to the future Christmas tree at Village Hall; have sound and light solution for Christmas Walk festivities at Village Hall this year; will be some time before the Christmas tree at Village Hall will serve as the official tree; concerns with the cost; \$3,000 spent each year for the tree in the fountain; \$5,000 spent each year on lights, but doesn't include labor costs; two options to choose from for future lighting; buy up front, or rent to own over three years; budgeted \$12,000 for temporary poles to be installed on Main Street; poles do not conflict with underground utilities; banners could be installed on the poles; \$9,000 budgeted in Public Works' budget; rent to own is common for municipalities to do; year one will come out of the special events fund; \$175,000 currently in special events fund; staff drafting a special event policy to adopt in the Fall; Board made a deal to have Village events pay for themselves; construction has a negative perceived affect; helping to bring extra attention to the downtown; on deadline to purchase; would like a fun and inviting environment; current wreaths are on borrowed time; useful life is 10 years; what other communities do; thinking about future plans for wreaths; using what the Village has now

and decide what aesthetic to move to; unrealistic for Public Works staff to refurbish the wreaths; Board can donate time to re-string; if choosing the purchase option, Board to revisit in January for plans for Washington Street; doing a portion of the street at a time; IDOT will not allow lights across the road, but will allow on the street poles. Item is on the Regular Village Board meeting agenda tonight for vote. There was no further discussion.

**CLOSED SESSION**

There was no Closed Session held.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The Committee of the Whole meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Tina Touchette  
Village Clerk