

**MINUTES OF A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
OSWEGO VILLAGE PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OSWEGO VILLAGE HALL
100 PARKERS MILL, OSWEGO, ILLINOIS
October 3, 2017**

CALL TO ORDER

President Gail E. Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Physically Present: President Gail Johnson and Trustees Ryan Kauffman (attended at 6:09 p.m.), Karin McCarthy-Lange, Pam Parr, Luis Perez, Judy Sollinger and Joe West.
Staff Present: Dan Di Santo, Village Administrator; Christina Burns, AVA/HR Director; Tina Touchette, Village Clerk; Jennifer Hughes, Public Works Director; Jeff Burgner, Police Chief; Rod Zenner, Community Development Director; Mark Horton, Finance Director; Corinna Cole, Economic Development Director; Jay Hoover, Building & Zoning Manager; Joe Renzetti, IT/GIS Manager; Jenette Sturges, Community Engagement Coordinator- Marketing; David Silverman, 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.

Autumn Narney, owner of Hudson Design, spoke about the proposed changes to Christmas Walk. Village should have considered the changes in July or August; Kris Kringle Market competes with Main Street; lack of consideration for Downtown businesses; cost to advertise; concerned with pay stations in the stores; adds stress to businesses; theft in her store; Christmas Walk is a tradition in town; marrying Christmas Walk and the tree lighting ceremony is good; moving the tree lighting to the grassy area by Dari Hut; understand the money issue at hand; potential damage in drawing people back to Downtown.

There was no one else who requested to speak; the Public Forum was closed at 6:05 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business.

NEW BUSINESS

F.1. Proposed Changes to the 2017 Christmas Walk Event and Tree Lighting Ceremony

Director Cole proposed changes to the 2017 Christmas Walk event and Tree Lighting Ceremony. The Village hosts or participates on three main events during the Christmas season:

- 1) Tree Lighting Ceremony
 - Separate event at Village Hall for last several years
 - Held the Sunday after Thanksgiving
- 2) Christmas Walk
 - Held in the Downtown the Friday after the Tree Lighting Ceremony
 - Santa will be at Garden Faire
 - Features variety of family focused activities at no cost
 - Inflatable slide

- Faux ice rink
 - Two tiny train rides
 - Horse drawn carriage rides
 - Children's games with prizes
 - Carolers
 - Ice sculptor
- 3) Breakfast with Santa
- Hosted by the YMCA
 - Held the Saturday morning following Christmas Walk

The Cookie Walk is held on the Saturday after Christmas Walk and is hosted by the Downtown businesses.

Annually, the Village spends between \$13,000 and \$19,000 hosting the Christmas Walk, Tree Lighting, and Breakfast with Santa events. Christmas Walk is the most resource-intensive of the three events. Vendors and community groups are invited to apply for a booth space; providing a mix of free services and items for sale. Many community groups use the event as a way to generate awareness and fundraise for their cause. The Village produces and prints between 2,500 and 3,500 programs that lists all of the events during the weekend of Christmas Walk. Limited advertising is included. The program is provided to area businesses in advance of the event and also handed out during the event. The Village recruits and schedules volunteers for the various events. There are limited volunteers from the community. Volunteering by Village staff has gradually been declining; most likely due to the difficulty in standing outside in the cold at night. It appears that the Village last seriously solicited sponsorships for the holiday festivities in 2012. The availability of interested sponsors declined during the financial crises and the years following.

The Village Board expressed interest in off-setting the cost of Village run special events. In order to achieve this for Christmas Walk 2017, a variety of changes will need to be implemented within the next few weeks. The following are proposed changes to the Christmas Walk 2017 festivities:

Objectives:

- To provide a high quality, fun event that promotes a positive association of Oswego with holiday cheer, hominess, and connection with community
- To reduce the realized cost to the Village of hosting the holiday festivities
- To cement our downtown's winter brand as an all-seasons destination as part of our GoOswego initiative

Methods:

- Cultivate and solicit sponsorship opportunities from partnering businesses
- Charge for entertainment
- Charge vendors for participation in the event
- Reduce expenditures where possible

Proposed Changes:

- Consolidate the Tree Lighting and Christmas Walk events
 - Increases the value of the Christmas Walk activities at Village Hall
 - Lowers the burden on Village volunteers and staff
 - Tree Lighting Ceremony would take place at 5:30 pm on the night of Christmas Walk
 - Bring some of the booths and games to Village Hall in the gazebo area
 - Warming station at Village Hall for volunteers
 - Providing trolley service to move people from parking areas at Village Hall and/or Traughber
 - Hudson Park open to teenagers for activities such as laser tag or air hockey

- Vendor Fees: anticipate charging reasonable fees to vendors participating in the event. Looking at similar events in the surrounding communities and charge a comparable amount.
 - Charge fee for booths
 - Charge fee for food trucks
- Rides/entertainment: interactive entertainment currently includes the ice-skating rink, inflatable slide, and rideable trains. Because these offerings have typically been free, it is important to offer additional value when beginning to charge for the experience. One idea is to obtain additional inflatables located in the downtown by re-negotiating the contract with the provider of the activities.
 - Cost: \$3 for a wristband for unlimited rides, or two for \$5 for unlimited wristbands.
 - Vending options: area businesses, Village Hall, or booths on Main Street could easily vend the wristbands through the use of iPay, Square, or similar mechanisms.
- Printed program: program will be designed with the express intention of marketing the downtown as a charming and unique place to complete one's Christmas shopping. The Village will solicit advertising revenue from area businesses. The goal is solicit ads to offset the cost of the printing.
- Breakfast with Santa: Village should continue to participate as sponsors of this event by purchasing the food and paying for the rental fee (~\$1,500)
- Sponsorships: Village will actively solicit sponsorships for the event this year.

Board and staff discussion focused on horse's hooves were damaging Hudson Park; greatest advocates for the Downtown are the seven members of the Village Board; trying to make the Downtown and events better; budget is tight; playing catch-up; needing to find a place to pay for the wristbands; listing is not the same as advertising; what the merchants can do to help make the event unique; GoOswego branding; paying to advertise in the program; where the inflatables will be set-up; bringing more people to the Dari Hut area; holding the tree lighting ceremony at the old Village Hall lot; cost and power issues at Downtown sites for tree lighting; horses cannot be on the streets for safety reasons and parking; liking the combining of the tree lighting ceremony and Christmas Walk; offering electronic payment for wristbands; needing to be more convenient; charging for food trucks; ok with the cost of wristbands; whether we can offer pay stations; logistics involved with pay stations; asking Downtown businesses to also sell wristbands; have someone walking around selling wristbands; can't keep losing \$19,000 for the Christmas Walk event; consider inviting the Chamber to get involved; staff to explore a collaboration with the Chamber; worried about parking if coming late to the event; overflow parking available at Village Hall and Traughber; possibly having a trolley; parade starts at 7:00 p.m.; tree lighting at 5:30 p.m.; Santa at Garden Faire at 5:30 p.m.; 5,000-6,000 people attend Christmas Walk; goal is to move people between sites; school buses were used in the past; wristband is for the ice rink, train rides and inflatables, not for the trolley; non-for-profit (NFP) would pay booth fees; could consider a lower fee for NFP; all NFP pay a booth fee at PrairieFest; some NFP provide a free activity; anyone selling something or fundraising should be charged the booth fee; if no dollars changing hands then it would be considered a part of Christmas Walk; 15-20 booths can fit on the streets for the event; could add some booths at Village Hall; whether to cap NFP booths; careful to not exclude those getting booths; using this year as an experiment; last year's Christmas Walk was over at 7:30 p.m.; used to have people at the event until 11:00 p.m.; Downtown businesses originally hosted the event; objective is to brand and promote the Downtown; creating excitement; selling wristbands ahead of the event; worried about people not knowing they need to purchase a wristband; people not having a way to pay; need to advertise more and send through social media and to HOA's; cut back on the program cost; goal is to generate sponsorships and advertising; re-designing the program and including a map and information on Downtown businesses; branding the Downtown and bringing people into the stores; businesses like handing out the programs; bringing booths, children's games and inflatables to Village Hall and calling it a Kris Kringle Mart. Board thanked Director Cole for pulling all the information together. Director Cole to provide the savings information based on the changes.

There was no further discussion.

CLOSED SESSION

There was no Closed Session

ADJOURNMENT

The Committee of the Whole meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Tina Touchette
Village Clerk