



VILLAGE OF WILMETTE

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**MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING OF THE
VILLAGE PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE OF
WILMETTE, ILLINOIS, HELD IN THE SECOND FLOOR TRAINING ROOM
OF SAID VILLAGE HALL, 1200 WILMETTE AVENUE, WILMETTE,
ILLINOIS ON TUESDAY, JULY 22, 2008.**

I. Call to Order

President Canning called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Members Present:

President Christopher S. Canning
Trustees Alan Swanson
John Levin
Mari Terman
Mike Basil
Lali Watt
Karen Spillers

Staff Present:

Michael J. Earl, Village Manager
Brigitte Mayerhofer, Director of Engineering
John Adler, Director of Community Development
Peter Skiles, Director of Information Services
Jorge Cruz, Assistant Director of Engineering
Lisa Roberts, Assistant Director of Community
Development
Michael Braiman, Assistant to the Village Manager

I. Discussion of Report Regarding the Building Permit Review Process

President Canning introduced the matter before the Village Board.

Mr. Adler stated that staff met with Trustee Swanson last week and discussed options regarding concurrent review, specifically the possibility of splitting up and distributing the plans to various disciplines and then consolidating the plan comments following the various reviews. Mr. Adler said the concerns from Inspectors were that they refer to other plans in the set during their review and thus they need access to the other disciplines. Another option was for each Inspector to get a full set of plans which would require someone consolidating the plans into two master sets.

Trustee Watt stated that if we have electronic submission and inspectors can view each other's notes, then the issues Mr. Adler described with concurrent review are eliminated.

Trustee Swanson stated that concurrent review would speed up the process and the issues raised by Mr. Adler can be worked around. That being said, concurrent review can only work if you have control of the drawings through an organized process. A good architect could handle the majority of the electrical and plumbing reviews and could ask the Inspectors questions as needed. In regards to electronic review, a set of plans is needed in the field to ensure that the project is built right.

Mr. Adler stated that a new home recently went through the permit process in 35 days, mainly because the Building Inspector reviewed all of the plans and served as the contact with the applicant. Since the Village has been utilizing one person for plan review, the number of complaints regarding how long it takes to process a permit has reduced significantly.

Trustee Basil stated that we should not be afraid of concurrent review just because it will not be a perfect routine. If we are going to be cross-training people to inspect the work on all disciplines, they should also be cross-trained to review all disciplines.

Trustee Basil added that electronic blueprints would allow multiple people the ability to annotate plans at the same time and that the applicant could be required to print a set for the Village and for the construction site.

Mr. Adler stated that he does not see going paperless to be a negative. However, we need to be sure that customers who cannot submit plans electronically have an alternate option.

Trustee Terman stated she likes the idea of experimenting with electronic submittals by starting with the Fire Department plan reviews.

Trustee Watt stated that she is uncomfortable when we say our people are not comfortable with new technologies—it should be a job requirement to use technology and to be cross-trained, with the understanding that such training cannot be accomplished overnight.

President Canning stated that this seems to be a wide open issue and would like to move toward the recommendations.

Village Manager Earl described the options staff had considered to solve the problems of untimely review of permits and poor coordination.

Trustee Swanson stated that expediting reviews through contracting out also frees up time for staff to conduct reviews in house.

Trustee Watt stated that is she concerned how someone else could conduct the review faster. What is to preclude us from setting up the same structure as a private firm to review plans.

Trustee Swanson said the difference is the ability to organize how work is distributed whereas there is a que in the Village to review plans based upon date of submittal.

Mr. Adler stated that the key is having someone who is not pulled out of the office to conduct inspections, answer phone calls and work with applicants at the front counter.

President Canning stated that contractors will select the expedited review if they determine they can save money by spending more up front to ensure a faster review.

Trustee Terman stated that the variable that seems to matter to speed up review is to have one person in the office at all times to conduct reviews.

Mr. Adler stated that it is important to note that the recommendations are proposed to be funded through user fees.

Village Manager Earl described the revised recommendation forwarded to the Village Board which is to move forward with a Permit Technician and a Part-time Inspector, re-evaluate a year from now with hard data from MUNIS and feedback from permit applicants at a cost of \$55,210 which would be funded through increased permit fees.

Trustee Levin stated he is hearing two things: how to shorten the review timelines and what is the best of all possible worlds. All of the recommendations address how to solve the current problem, however, there are a lot of problems that would still need to be addressed to obtain the ideal situation. It is very difficult to cross-train and to implement new technology.

Trustee Watt asked to see a flow chart of what happens when someone submits plans. This will identify the weaknesses in the process. Trustee Watt added that she is not comfortable adding people not knowing where the blockage is in the process.

President Canning stated that the fact that Inspectors have to be out of the office conducting inspections slows the process. The system needs a manager and needs to have built in checks and balances to make sure problems are addressed immediately.

Trustee Spillers agreed with Trustee Watt in terms of the process. During her own project, the Electrical Inspector had an inspection at her house and the Building Inspector

came with the Electrical Inspector and was not doing anything. Mr. Adler responded that this is one way that the Inspectors are able to be cross-trained in the various building disciplines.

President Canning asked, shouldn't the manager be the one to improve coordination within the department and how would Mr. Adler improve coordination.

Mr. Adler responded that the Permit Technician will be able to work with the applicants on a daily basis and review plans as they are submitted to ensure they are complete.

Trustee Basil stated that he hesitates to throw another body or two at the problem when we talk about new ways of doing things and have people back in their proper roles as compared to 2007. The option of outsourcing for expedited review seems like a good short term experiment. We are asking all of the other departments in the Village to cut back while we are talking about adding more people to fix this process.

Trustee Basil suggested that the Village review the administrative approval of variances as is done in Evanston.

President Canning asked if the Board is willing to take action now or continue working on this and add it to the Mid-Year Financial Review.

Trustee Watt asked for current numbers of how long it is taking for permits to be approved.

President Canning stated that this item will be added to the Mid-Year Financial Review.

III. Adjournment

Trustee Watt moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 p.m., seconded by Trustee Terman. All voted aye, the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Braiman
Assistant to the Village Manager