



## MINUTES

President and Board of Trustees  
Village of Arlington Heights  
Committee-of-the-Whole  
Community Room  
Arlington Heights Village Hall  
33 S. Arlington Heights Road  
Arlington Heights, IL 60005  
January 8, 2018  
7:30 PM

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

President Hayes called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

### **II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

### **III. ROLL CALL**

President Hayes and the following Trustees were present: Baldino, Tinaglia, Blackwood, Rosenberg, LaBedz, Sidor, Scaletta and Glasgow.

Also present were Randy Recklaus, Steve Touloumis and Becky Hume.

### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. Building & Life Safety Presentation**

Mr. Recklaus said the Board indicated in its summer Goal Setting session that improvements to the Building and Life Safety Department are their second highest priority. He said Mr. Touloumis has had time to observe and develop a plan to make the improvements the Board has called for. Until now, there has not been the opportunity or resources to reinvest in processes to make the desired improvements. Just recently, a part time position was added to free up staff time to this end.

Mr. Recklaus recounted a memo from 1999, where Bill Dixon asked for 20-year staffing projections. Roger Fox, Building Director at the time, took into account all the factors and said he thought the Department would need 25 employees by 2019. It had 18 full time employees in 1999. Currently the Department has 16.5 employees. In 2009 there were 5,300 permits processed, in 2016, there were more than 7,300. Mr. Touloumis demonstrated the number of various codes staff has to work with. The Department deals with many variables and there is no way to make these

processes simple but they can make them more efficient and user friendly.

Mr. Touloumis said that the Department had a Contractors/Design Professionals meeting in September, and some of the ideas suggested there are included in this presentation.

## **A. Consistency in Standards Applications**

Mr. Touloumis showed examples of Code sections with conflicting language. It is not only the codes that need to be addressed, but the actual ordinance language needs to be addressed too. There is no guidance in the language on how to apply, when to apply, when penalty fees are administered and what the circumstances should be. Staff is left to make their own decisions, and different staff sometimes make different decisions.

Trustee Scaletta asked when fees would be addressed. Mr. Touloumis said in the Building Code Review Board review as part of the overall Code review.

Mr. Touloumis said each codebook has its own administration sections and there are inconsistencies between them. He plans to create one administration section for all codes, remove process language, put all fees in Chapter 7, restructure the fee schedule, eliminate value-based fees, improve existing construction code language, and reduce the number of technical amendments.

Trustee Rosenberg said a project that has electrical, plumbing and carpentry; all have different governance. He asked how these would be correlated under one administrative code. Mr. Touloumis said one set of rules needs to be established and the best of each used. It is important that there are no inconsistencies. He gave examples of the discrepancies in the codes and discussed the importance of developing one set of guidelines. Trustee Rosenberg asked if other communities have done this. Mr. Touloumis said yes, but each town has its own challenges. The Village has good staff and BCRB members who know their industry and will make good recommendations.

Trustee LaBedz asked if the municipality has the authority to make these kinds of changes and if the Codes were arbitrary. Mr. Touloumis said yes, the village is allowed decide what it wants. There are no state or federal laws that says you have to follow the international codes, with some exceptions like the energy code and the plumbing code. Most of the trades are not regulated by the State. The Village can increase or decrease the standards as it sees fit.

As an example of Code language inhibiting the process, Mr. Touloumis said the Code requires six sets of plans. This kind of language does not belong in the Code. It does not give staff leeway to change procedure as technology changes or processes improve. Fees should not be scattered in multiple chapters. The fees need to be restructured to reduce negotiable and difficult

to determine fee schedules. This will save time and eliminate interpretation. The scope of work can change during a job, so if the fees are based on the first calculation, it often means the job is re-reviewed and the fees changed. He would like to eliminate all this and collect fees at the end of the process. He also would like to build in the re-inspection fees into the fee structure as a whole in a more communal way.

Mr. Touloumis cited the construction code language and the electrical chapter, which need to be fairer and more reasonable. Many parts are outdated and arbitrary. He suggested that the BCRB absorb the Electrical Commission so the same group of people chime in on trades that overlap. However, an electrical expert would be on the BCRB. He is considering having BCRB have decision-making power, meaning the Village Board would not need to review its decisions, in an attempt to reduce red tape. Trustee Rosenberg asked how often people are waiting for Village Board review. Mr. Touloumis said there were 7-8 times this past year where projects were waiting for Board approval. Contractors assume the risk, and it becomes problematic. Everything that went to the Board was approved, but it takes weeks. By the time they receive approval, residents have already been through plan review and BCRB at a minimum.

## **B. Proactive Code Enforcement**

Mr. Touloumis said he will implement Saturday sweeps where they will look for illegal signage. Also beginning is multi-department coordination/cross training effort. As an example, an inspector who is evaluating grass, might be able to handle some other site issues. The Village is improving coordination. The adjudication process is proving to be a very effective tool. It is not the first choice for inspectors to write tickets, but when needed, it makes enforcement easier. Adjudicators are typically more sympathetic to Village's plight. The Department is using a third party service to track the testing of fire systems. Seven hundred fire systems need to be tested. The confirmation of testing is reported to the Village so noncompliance can be ascertained. The property administrator does the testing and is charged the fee.

Mr. Touloumis said technology improvements are already impacting inspectors' workflow. Trustee Rosenberg asked about community risk assessment. Mr. Touloumis said low risk/high risk buildings are identified with the idea that low risk buildings are visited less frequently than once a year and high risk are inspected more than once a year. This way the Village can see the ones that need to be seen more often. Mr. Recklaus said that right now it is one size fits all with every building getting a once a year inspection; but some buildings are dangerous while others are not, so different schedules may be appropriate.

## **C. Better Coordination**

Mr. Touloumis discussed the importance of having a good rapport with staff

and being a good team leader. Starting tomorrow, the Department will have monthly meetings so that staff can all get the same message and hear the same questions.

Trustee Tinaglia asked if the staff understands the importance of the changes and if they agree with them. He asked if this message will be shared with the entire department, or will it be a series of surprises. Mr. Touloumis said it is not a surprise, they will be doing this together, but there is a fear factor. He is communicating to staff that they will get the right training and be walked through so they will understand what he is trying to do. Trustee Tinaglia asked if the importance of the changes will be understood and embraced. He asked how the team feels about it. Mr. Touloumis said going from manual to automated does intimidate some people. Staff is fearful about how some of it is working.

Mr. Recklaus said that there was a whole Department retreat in August. Staff was apprehensive and they discussed the issues the Board raised and what the expectations were. It was explained to them that the Village was committing to giving staff the training and support they need. Staff has milestones and deadlines but this is a work in progress. Mr. Recklaus said he was confident that Mr. Touloumis will lead this team to substantial progress in the next 12 months. One third of the staff has turned over in eight months. Cognos training started last week. IT is working with them and its importance is clear.

Mr. Touloumis said the Cognos training is for Engineering and Planning too. Building may be the face of projects, but other departments are part of the process and perform reviews as well. Trustee Tinaglia noted that the Building Department handles all of the permitting even when other departments handle the process. The Building Department is the face of permitting.

Trustee Blackwood said the technology empowers employees to be more confident in answering the public's questions. She asked if they are they afraid of losing their roles. Mr. Touloumis said maybe, as they see the work they used to do being done on the computer. However, there is so much more that staff can be doing than shuffling paper. The vision is to use people for more valuable things, but this is sometimes hard for them to understand. Trustee Blackwood said they would have expanded roles. Mr. Recklaus said he wants to stress the empowerment of the employees. During the recession, Building was in hold-down-the-fort-mold and they are trapped in this system. These are smart qualified people, so we are asking them how it ought to be. They would rather have better interface with the customer too. As Mr. Touloumis said in his interview, the person who issues the permit is the permit tech at the counter. They are the ones who are responsible to make sure everything has been done. That is a change in mindset.

Mr. Touloumis said his goal is for better coordination, work flows, technology and process change. He wants to reduce lag time. There is a lot of time wasted tracking down project folders and duplicating inputs.

#### **D. Better Overall Communication**

Mr. Touloumis said all improvements are contingent on having a strong base of ordinance language. Then the structure definition can improve. Staff needs to be able to answer questions as to what are the necessary inspections, permits, and fees. Then, good information will be dispensed and all levels of communication can improve. A good cycle can be repeated and the best value of the Department will be achieved. This will establish a good long lasting foundation.

Trustee Tinaglia restated the staff projections from 1999 when the Department had 18 full time and 3 part time employees to process 5,300 permits. The projection for 2019 was 25 employees. Now, there are 16.5 employees processing 7,300 permits. Technology is a huge part of dealing with future. The most important thing for the Board to do is to help him fix this Department. He told Mr. Touloumis that if there is anything the Board can do, he would like to do it. It is so important to help the community grow in a smart and safe way. If it means adding an employee or two, he would be in favor of it. He said Mr. Touloumis knows what he needs. He said to start building.

Trustee Sidor asked when the information would be on the website. He asked how the information would be better navigated. Mr. Touloumis said the new website is a great framework, but the content from the Building Department needs work. That stems from the core form itself. There is no reason to put a piece of junk up on the website. He is rebuilding everything from the ground up. The website is high on the priority list with updating the Code and automating technology. Mr. Recklaus said the website is a framework to convey information we have. The issue is we want to change the process. It is not a good use of Mr. Touloumis' time to pretty-up a bad process. The decision was to develop a new process with a lighter website presence.

Trustee Scaletta asked if the BCRB decisions will be final, or if a project is denied, would it come to the Board. He said he liked the direction of the Department. He said moving forward, that a firm direction of what Mr. Touloumis is going to need be presented so money is not spent piecemeal. Trustee Scaletta said wants the overall impact to be felt. The scope is complex, and he appreciates that there is a lot of work and thought happening. He would like more detail of a long term plan sketched out, even if it is not firm.

Trustee Baldino said he was excited about the changes and technology. When you have this many changes, there can be inconsistent information passed to the public. One priority needs to be consistent information going out to the public.

Trustee Blackwood said that as the consistencies are established, they should be conveyed to the website. Clear expectations can be shared quickly.

**Public Comment:**

Melissa Cayer suggested that the Building Department use Facebook to communicate. It could be a community resource for information.

**V. OTHER BUSINESS****VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Trustee Tinaglia moved to adjourn at 8:59 p.m. Trustee Scaletta seconded the motion. The motion carried.