



VILLAGE OF WILLIAMS BAY

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OFFICIAL MINUTES VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2021 AT 6:30 PM Via Zoom Webinar

I. Call to Order

President Duncan called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

II. Roll Call

Present: President Duncan, Trustees Parker, Vlach (arrived 6:42pm), D'Alessandro, Wright, Umans, and Stanek
Also Present: Administrator Tobin, Interim Administrator Bretl, Zoning Administrator Schaeffer, Village Attorney Schroeder, and Clerk Pankau

III. Public Hearing for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Village Attorney Schroeder gave an update of where the Village stands with the University of Chicago and how the University is asking for their lakefront parcel to be re-zoned from Parks and Institutional to Large Lot Residential for three lots with one house per lot.

A. Open Public Hearing

President Duncan opened the Public Hearing at 6:35pm.

1. APPLICANT: The University of Chicago (Owner)
TAX KEY: WAS 00001A
STREET ADDRESS: Vacant land located south of Constance Blvd. and east of Aurora University, Village of Williams Bay

Applicant is requesting to change the Future Land Use Map designation from Institutional to Large Lot Residential.

Tracy McCabe (Associate Vice President of the University of Chicago) gave an overview of the history of this process and how the University donated the Yerkes Observatory to the Yerkes Future Foundation as their legacy to leave in Williams Bay. He stated that now the University will be selling this lakefront parcel real estate no matter what to either Parks and Institutional buyers or Residential buyers depending on the outcome of this re-zone request. McCabe stated that the University has heard the want of the residents to keep this land low-density, that is why they are requesting three large lots for one house on each lot. He stated that there are benefits to Williams Bay to keep the land zoned as Parks and Institutional and there are benefits to them to re-zone it as Large Lot Residential. He stated that if it remains Parks and Institutional, the buyer could make it a conference hall, a medical building, a dormitory, a church or mosque, or visitor center which would bring many visitors to Williams Bay. He stated that if it is re-zoned to Large Lot Residential, it would remain low-density, the Village would receive tax income on the properties, and the water/sewer mains would be replaced. McCabe stated that the University has offers in hand for both Residential and Institutional buyers.

Trish Gages (198 Vernon) asked how can a re-zoning be done without applying for it with a 10-year plan in place.

President Duncan stated that this is a Public Hearing for listening purposes and that dialogue between the Trustees and

the Public will happen at a later date.

Michael Sierakowski (109 Constance) stated that he supports the re-zoning of the property to residential, private property and that would be a conservation action for the woods as they would then be taken care of. Sierakowski stated that if the Save the Woods group wants the land to be a nature conservancy then they should purchase the land themselves. He stated that he served in the army and still continues to serve to protect and defend the land against enemies. He stated that they have protected private property rights and private property shouldn't be taken for public use without a purchase. He stated that using Local Government to steal a neighbor's land is unconstitutional.

Lilia Delgado (128 N Walworth) stated that she understands that this land was originally given to the University of Chicago for educational use purposes and wants to understand why somehow along the line the idea of changing it to residential came about.

Bill Petullo (49 Garfield) asked that if the land is re-zoned to residential and into three lots, could the new owners eventually come back to ask to split up the lots again.

Sandy Johnson (2327 Theatre Rd) stated that the residents can stop development again like they did with KNC. Sandy gave a presentation of results that she received from a survey she posted on her group's website. She also presented a map of pieces of land that were once not developed in that area, that now are. Sandy asked for the University of Chicago to donate this piece of land to the Village so that they can keep the natural and historic walking paths and retain the zoning of Parks and Institutional.

Jim Killian (91 Potawatomi) stated that he was a Village Trustee from 2014-2019, Chaired the Building, Zoning and Ordinance Committee, and served on the Parks and Lakefront and Finance and Personnel Committees. He stated that he is no longer on the Board, but continues to help in some situations. He stated that he did not seek re-election because he wanted to be able to have more time to dedicate to the KNC. Killian stated that he was also the Chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals, so he is very familiar with the Zoning Ordinances and is speaking today from knowledge, and not opinion. Killian said that he participated in the June 2020 Public Hearing and spoke in opposition to this request. He spoke in opposition again in July 2020 because he wanted potential building plans to be submitted due to the steep grades of the property. He also wanted a tree survey conducted and feels that the University of Chicago and the Village Board did a good job following up with all of the residents' requests. Killian stated to be careful of what you ask for because the University could sell the property right now as Parks and Institutional to another Institution and they could build almost anything they want on that land without coming before the Plan Commission or Village Board as long as their proposal fits within the Code. He stated that would be much worse than what is currently being proposed now. Killian stated that he studied the tree survey and it looks like there is one invasive species - the Norway Maples. He stated that it appears that the Norway Maples happen to be right where the proposed homes would be built, and that those trees need to come down now, no matter what anyways. Killian reminded everyone that currently in the Village for every tree that is taken down, another tree needs to be planted, or a donation to KNC is requested. Killian stated that a lot of the land is garbage and trees that have fallen down so he is not concerned about three homes damaging the forest. Killian stated that he is very happy with this plan and that he changes his position to support the plan.

Marsha Engquist (546 Highland) stated that she is also a Former Trustee. She related this issue to the one that Lake Geneva is currently having with the former Hillmoor Golf Course. She stated that people wanted to make it a park, but that they do not own it. She stated that she's seen discussion about making this land a school forest, but then the school would need to own it and they do not have the funds to purchase it. Engquist stated that the residents did not stop the development of KNC, a proactive Village Board led by Harold Friestad convinced the residents at the time to borrow money to purchase that land to make it a conservancy. Engquist stated that she saw Sandy Johnson's online survey but noticed that it had been taken by only 31 people with 50% of them not being residents of Williams Bay and a significant portion of them said they have never visited the property. Engquist stated that property taxes are high here in the Village but because of that the Village has great Village entities like the Library, School District, and churches. Engquist stated that there is only 8 acres on this property and an average School Forest is over 27,000 acres, so she does not see the benefit of that for this one parcel as it is not appropriate for a School Forest.

David Williams (45 Parkhurst) stated that he owns the closest property to the Observatory's property and that his house has been in his family since 1902. Williams stated that he has lived in his house since 1945 and gave a history of the land. Williams stated that the Village has received many benefits from the University of Chicago over the decades and that it would be selfish to not allow the University to take a little benefit back by selling the lakefront parcel. Williams stated that he grew up on the property and knows the woods that are in question and knows that no one plays in the woods because it is covered in trees and there are no picnic areas. He stated that there is one path from the Observatory to the Lake Shore Path which the University has already said will remain in-tact, and the Lake Shore Path will remain in-tact. Williams stated that the three homes that go up will be beautiful and will not harm anything. Williams stated that the Village should not be holding up the proper use of this land, and that we should be thankful to the University for the contributions they have made to the Village's history and the donation of the Observatory that they made to the Yerkes Future Foundation.

Jack O'Regan (343 Frost) stated that he spent an afternoon going from house to house asking people to sign a petition to stop development of this land and he believes that the majority of the Village does not want to see this happen. He stated that we need to have respect for the Village's property and that the people before us have left it alone all the way until now, so we should not just throw it away.

Tracy McCabe (University of Chicago) stated that he is humbled by the comments made in support and recognition of the University. He stated that there are answers to the questions that were asked tonight in a 54 page document on the Village's website. He stated that the common goal is shared - to maintain the beauty of this property and he believes that keeping it low-density residential would be the best option for that. McCabe stated that he is deeply appreciative to the Village for their work and thanked them for their support of the University of Chicago and the Yerkes Future Foundation.

B. Close Public Hearing

President Duncan closed the Public Hearing at 7:39pm.

IV. Adjournment

The motion to adjourn was initiated by Don Parker and seconded by Lowell Wright at 07:40 PM. Unanimously carried.

These are not official Minutes until approved by the Governing Body.