

Village of Oak Park Board of Trustees
June 5, 2017

Suzanne Davis, Observer
7:30 Open Session

Trustees Boutet, Taglia, Moroney, Button, Andrews, and Tucker, as well as Mayor Abu-Taleb, were present.

A resolution was adopted in appreciation of Hephzibah Executive Director Mary Anne Brown, who has led Hephzibah since 1976 and has been the recipient of many awards and honors for her service to the community.

This meeting marked a continuation of the theme of newly-elected trustees removing items from the Consent Agenda (consisting of items listed in the written Meeting Agenda, but approved en masse without any public comment or discussion at the public meeting) and transferring them to the Regular Agenda in the interest of transparency.

For example, Trustee Andrews removed from the Consent Agenda the matter of approval of a professional services agreement with Teska Associates, Inc. to prepare an update to the Harrison Street Arts District Plan in an amount not to exceed \$57,100.00. This would essentially be a study to see how the district could better fulfill its “arts district” designation. The item was removed from the Consent Agenda due to a concern about additional expenditures to study Harrison Street, which has already been studied “ad nauseum.” Andrews noted that cost is a barrier to artists and would prefer finding a way to spend money on the arts directly. A public comment by a representative of a Harrison Street business group spoke to the same effect, noting that a study had been done some years ago, nothing had changed, and the money could be put to better use. Instead of being summarily approved on the Consent Agenda, the item was unanimously tabled, with trustees voicing concerns about the project being wasteful spending.

Trustee Boutet pulled from the Consent Agenda the matter of approval of a contract with Schroeder Asphalt Services for a pavement-patching project in an amount not to exceed \$125,000. Boutet had noted that Schroeder had submitted a low responsible bid for \$58,570.75 and questioned why approval was sought for \$125,000. The Public Works Director stated that since the bid pricing was very good, it was advisable to allow room to take advantage and get as much maintenance work done as was needed and feasible. This item was unanimously approved.

Regarding a brew pub that is being developed on the corner of Lake and Austin, a representative of the project stated that they were aiming to open on November 1, but was seeking an extension until March 31, 2018 as a “buffer,” given the scope of renovation. The rooftop deck requires additional structural work. As an incentive, there is a sales tax rebate sharing agreement whereby there is 100% rebated for the first four years up to \$50,000 a year, and 50% rebated for years 5 through 7, up to \$50,000 a year. The agreement had called for completion of the brew pub by June 30, 2017. The extension of the delivery date was unanimously approved.

There was a presentation of the 2016 Request for Proposal Responses for 940-970 Madison, the old Robinson Ribs and District 97 property; the Village has purchased the entire block. The Oak Park Economic Development Corporation recommended Lexington Homes to be the preferred developer, and there was a motion to accept this recommendation. Lexington Homes has been in business for 40 years as a builder/developer in the region. It proposed a 21-unit townhouse development, with Pappageorge Haymes as the architect. The units would be priced at \$455,000-500,000. It had been determined that there was a need for homes in that price range in Oak Park. Six other proposals had been received, including senior housing and retail space. There was a concern about not being able to fill the retail space. Boutet thought that Oak Park needs more senior housing and that Paragon's proposal would benefit the entire community. There was an indication that Paragon might be open to building elsewhere in the community. Moroney thought that the townhouse development should not be approved unless the developer submitted something more "unique." The representative indicated a willingness to work with Oak Park architects and the Plan Commission to that end. The motion passed, with Boutet and Maroney voting no.

Also generating considerable discussion was an ordinance to remove certain properties from the Greater Downtown Tax Incremental Redevelopment Project Area. The ordinance would amend the TIF map by removing property owned or leased by elected officials to show that neither the Red Mango (owned by Taglia) or Maya del Sol (owned by Abu-Taleb) remains in the TIF to show that those properties will not benefit from the TIF. A Mr. Davidson provided a legal opinion and stated that this passes ethical standards and is done in other municipalities. However, residents stated in Public Comment that there is still a conflict of interest because even if technically outside the TIF, by virtue of their geographic inclusion, they still benefit from rulings favoring the TIF; hence, the better approach would be to remove the property-owning officials from any discussion or votes about the TIF. The result was the removal of the properties from the TIF, such that the elected officials can now vote on pertinent matters.

When the observer left at 10:00 p.m., the meeting was still going strong, with a number of agenda items still to be discussed and voted upon.