

CITY OF OAK FOREST
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Tuesday, February 28, 2023

Mayor Kuspa called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and the Roll Call as follows:

Present: Alderman Gray
 Alderman McCarthy
 Alderman Wolf
 Alderman Selman
 Alderman Emmett
 Alderman Hortsman
 Alderman Danihel

Also Present: City Clerk Jack Janozik
 City Administrator Tim Kristin
 Communications Director Chrissy Maher
 Public Works Director Mike Salamowicz
 Economic Director Ed Cage
 Treasurer Ericka Vetter

4. DISCUSSION OF CITY ENTRANCE SIGNS

Communications Director Chrissy Maher and Economic Director Ed Cage proposed new entryway signs for the City of Oak Forest. Current signs appear to be dated and do not comply with the branding standards. They are proposing new signage that will conform with the branding standards and achieve a key element of our strategic plan which is Community Pride and Image. The new signs will create a welcoming look and feel. This was something that was identified in the strategic plan as important to residents, visitors and prospective developers. The signs are in line with our other improvements we have made to integrate the City's logo and identity standards across City communications including our refreshed website, social media strategy and improved digital news letter. The proposed signs are moderate and sleek to maximize the City's logos, colors and type face. They are raised higher than the current signs as not to be blocked by landscaping.

Economic Director Ed Cage stated this is one of our existing eight current entrance signs with the older logos on each of the columns. He believes the key from a branding and marketing perspective is that it is clear, simple and has a current and modern look. An important key element here is the leaf in the center. This design was done by a sign company that we worked with before. Depending on direction, we can take this out for bid because if this is something City Council is interested in, it would exceed the \$10,000.00 amount for that. We looked at some examples of

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other signs in other communities. We wanted something that would fit Oak Forest. So we used the font and colors used in correspondence and on the website, etc. A gentlemen from One Up Signs helped design this. Following up on a few key elements Chrissy mentioned, we wanted to raise the sign up a little bit to have landscaping so we do not lose the face of the sign. Some communities have elaborate signs that I think overpower you with more design elements. There are eight entrance signs that would be made out of aluminum using the color black. The 3M Engineered Grade Prismatic is reflective and non-illuminated. I have not proposed illuminated signs because that would increase the cost significantly. Also proposed is aluminum square tapered posts. The cost is not to exceed \$39,840.00 for the eight new proposed entrance signs which includes the removal of the old signs. We do have a marketing community advertising budget. The City has not taken much out of the budget. My focus is more on the City's properties, bringing them back on the tax records, selling those and getting new developments. The marketing community advertising budget as it stands today is \$120,704.00. Ed Cage asked for questions or comments.

Alderman Emmett commented it is a nice idea but about the Christmas decorations. That has a different fund but I would concentrate more on making our decorations. Spend a lot more money in the decorations. Maybe that can be tabled for one year and that money can be saved.

Tim Kristin noted these are totally two different line items. So money has been allocated, Social Services, and Ericka can speak to that. This is just for community development purposes.

Alderman Emmett asked if that money would be from that fund only.

Tim Kristin noted this is budgeted separately. There is money for this and money for that.

Mayor Kuspa stated that if the Aldermen do not want to spend the money, then it is different. He understands Alderman Emmett's concern.

Alderman Wolf commented that she likes the sign and understands what they are proposing, but I think there are other things we could be doing such as the viaducts. She has been talking about the viaducts for a couple of years. You got to check with Metra, State, County, you have to check with all these different facilities but it has been a long time. Is there any updates on that? That is what people are going to see when they are driving through. The cement is crumbling, rusted, no landscaping around it. Other towns are able to do it. I do not know why we cannot. I rather see something that is going to be an eye-popper. It is going to be noticed that we changed something. Are people going to notice that we are changing our entryway signs, to put \$40,000.00 into it?

Mayor Kuspa noted that is an excellent point. He stated they looked into the prices of the viaduct and they were a million dollars. This is a smaller investment.

Alderman Wolf stated that she has not seen anything that it was going to cost a million dollars for the viaducts. Just cleaning them up, painting them, something. Did we ever decide who owns the one on Cicero?

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Tim Kristin replied that IDOT owns that. There are three different entities that have control over those. When you are talking about doing any type of work on a railway overpass it requires permitting and expenditures. Just to repaint them would be cost prohibited. We do not have control over those viaducts so we could not just say send the public works crew out there to repaint them.

Alderman Wolf stated she understands that but how is it possible for other towns to do it? South Holland does it. You can put the sign up on the viaduct for Oak Forest. We went through that. I have gone through this.

Tim Kristin replied he remembered sitting in a meeting with Alderman Wolf and Metra. He stated he worked with representative from Bob Rita's office on this. We did discuss this, we specifically discussed the overpasses and we thought it was best to bring this to you first.

Alderman Wolf asked if there is any answer for the overpasses. Will they give Oak Forest permission to do something?

Tim Kristin stated they have not pitched a design yet to them.

Alderman Wolf asked to work on a design. Her suggestion was to clean up our streets on Cicero Avenue. They have talked about the garbage for years. The Metra train lot was brought up a few times with overgrown weeds. She understands the concept of having the welcoming feel.

Alderman Gray asked to see the current signs. The two poles on the right and left of what is holding up the sign in the middle, those are like breakaways correct? Styrofoam?

Ed Cage stated yes.

Alderman Gray asked to see the design. If you wanted to change the logo, can they be retrofitted or refitted with the new logo? Make it a little more cost efficient. Raising it up a little bit would be easy. The budget where the money is coming from is a marketing and public relations budget. Can we consider using those funds for things like when we have the residents blast us on social media for not having fireworks, Oak Fest, door art. I think to bring the community together those kind of funds would be better used for those kind of marketing. If it can be retrofitted a little bit to make it work, a combination of the new design and old design, why not look into it?

Alderman Danihel remarked that she thinks we need to do something with the signs. They are dated, old, falling apart, you can barely see them from the road. This is our community and this is welcoming people into and through our community. I like the new sign.

Alderman Hortsman commented that we have done marketing campaigns such as "all good things close to home" that is not on the sign. There is nothing like a website or anything like that on the sign. Would that be something we would be interested in doing?

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Ed Cage answered that the intent was the name of the community. We can do whatever we want with the sign. It is a question of whether it is something that we are interest in doing. If you want to add to it, we can do that. It is a first design. We have made simple deliberately.

Mayor Kuspa opined that less is more. You start cluttering it with websites and phone numbers and it is not necessarily a good thing.

Alderman Emmett stated he liked the design and the height due to the fact that the ones on 159th get buried from the snow. Since the money is coming out of a different fund, I agree with Denise on the appearance of the town coming in. They are pretty structurally sound.

Mayor Kuspa remarked regarding Alderman Gray's suggestion of a compromise, a less expensive sign, continue to use the upright structure and replace the sign in the middle itself.

Chrissy Maher stated the only problem is it will not comply with our branding standards. The type face is incorrect, the green color is not the color that we currently use. That would be something to consider. The idea is to create a cohesive identity for the City and that would not be creating a cohesive identity.

Alderman Selman commented he thinks he would go along with Alderman Gray's assessment. If we could keep the verticals and replace the horizontal. I understand the significance of uniform approach and having consistent branding throughout the City, but when I look at the color and texture of the sides there, I think of a forest. You see browns, tans, colors you would see in a thriving developing Oak Forest. The proposed change leads me to think of charcoal, when a forest burns down. If we could keep the sides and maybe even change the landscaping in front of them so it does not grow up and cover the signs. Change the centers and leave the sides a warm color. The proposed black, reflective, you can see at night but I do not think that is very attractive during the day.

Chrissy Maher stated the black might help the landscaping pop. The green pops from the black, maybe the landscaping would pop more with the black background.

Alderman Hortsman asked about the new signs, whether they are aluminum based signs, are the metallic painted? Is that what gives it the shine?

Ed Cage stated it is 3M EPG reflective with laminate. Similar to what is used on the road signs.

Alderman Hortsman inquired about the usefulness in the standing structures to make it a little less costly? Be more cost effective?

Mayor Kuspa replied absolutely.

Alderman Hortsman asked staff for a second proposal.

Mayor Kuspa thanked Chrissy Maher for a great job, keeping them on track with the rules and the presentation. He was impressed. Alderman Hortsman had an idea of continuing to use the current

uprights. Can I have a motion to use the existing uprights and direct staff to possibly get a new sign to put in between?

The motion was made by Alderman Hortsman.

Motion seconded by Alderman Emmett.

Roll Call vote was taken as follows:

<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Alderman Hortsman			
	Alderman Danihel		
Alderman Gray			
Alderman McCarthy			
Alderman Wolf			
Alderman Selman			
Alderman Emmett			

The motion was carried 6/1.

Mayor Kuspa stated the direction is to take another look at the plan. Personally, I love this sign. I think it is great. I do not think it needs much more. It follows the rules. But see if we can reuse the structure and keep the cost down.

5. DISCUSSION OF HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

Public Works Assistant Director John Robinson reported he put together some information about the lights we put along Cicero and 159th Street. We did some investigation on costs but they are not rock solid prices. We would have to go out to bid and get different pricing. This just an idea of how much this would cost. We have two different kinds of lights out there. The list in front of you is the lights on 167th Cicero, Fieldcrest, Cicero and out 159th. Those lights are all 240 volt fixtures because of the way the lights are wired. There are a total of 76 fixtures. To replace those as they are right now, they are about \$750.00 a piece with the ones we were looking at. That comes out to \$57,000.00. 151st to 157th there are 46 of the "seahorses". Those poles are wired for 120 volts. Those 46 would be replaced at \$750.00 a piece adding an additional \$34,500.00. We are going to show some different ideas and different things just so you can see. There are catalogues full of these. These are some we thought would look very nice. We also have some recommendations for little bit of cost savings/work savings. He showed depictions of two different snowflakes. They are about 5' tall because when it is up on the pole it will be visible. These two are generally about \$750.00 a piece. The one to the left is just poinsettias, those are about \$1,300.00 a piece. When you get to the more fancy and decorative stuff, like the one to the right, those start at \$2,000.00 a piece and go up. One of the recommendations we wanted to talk about was between 151st and 157th where the stretch has lights on every pole. Our recommendation is to put the lights at the intersections of 151st and 155th with banners. We have the hometown hero banners which go all the way down Cicero, there are approximately 80 of these banners. We

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recommend when we take the hometown hero banner down, we put up a holiday banner. When we take the holiday banner down, we put up a spring time banner. When we take the spring time banner down, then the hometown hero banner goes back up again. The hometown hero banners cost about \$6,000.00 for the whole stretch of Cicero (80 banners). A holiday and spring time banner would be about the same price. That would come out to \$18,000.00. If we do not use 46 fixtures on Cicero and just do the intersections, the cost would go from \$34,500.00 down to \$6,000.00. There would be more than enough left over to do the banners. We can expand on that. We do not know exactly how much the lights would cost until we get a solid number. We would like to keep it simple. We get more out of it by using banners because we would be going down all of Cicero where the existing banners are. You are getting more display with the banners and spend less money on the lights.

Mayor Kuspa remarked that Ericka Vetter and the Mayor are members of the Social Service Committee. They have pledged money to fund the holiday decoration portion of this. Social Service Committee Corporation oversees the money that is in a totally separate account invested and they will help finance a particular project that supports the City as a whole and makes the City work better or look better. Holiday decorations falls under their category and they want some nice Christmas decorations. The financing for this has been pledged, not from tax dollars, but from a separate committee. Whatever the Council decides to do moving forward, Ericka and I will take back to the Social Service Committee. Once we get solid dollar estimate from our Public Works Department. That being said, who would like to start the discussion?

Alderman Emmett liked the idea with the banners but believes the intersections should be well lit up. We have got blasted for the last eight years. This City Council picked out almost like a snowflake. For some unknown reason, individuals picked out something else. It did not look good. That is water under the bridge. 159th Street is heavily traveled to go west toward Tinley and Orland. I think it should be well lit like Cicero.

Assistant Director Robinson stated he was not planning on changing anything on 159th. The 76 fixtures are still there. We were going to leave them the way they are down 159th, Fieldcrest and 167th.

Alderman Emmett likes the idea of the crew being on the pole one time putting up and taking down banners. The banners look nice if they are new if they are not frayed. I think our town, the first town going west, should be well decorated on 159th just as much. The forest preserves, when it is snowing out, a nice bright LED snowflake is nice. The second one, yellowish tint, I do not know.

Assistant Director Robinson stated those are just examples. There is a different between cool white and soft white.

Alderman Emmett stated we could have one phase and see what Social Services is going to do for us. If we can show off our community, I think you guys working hard, we are getting a lot of businesses, I think this will show off Oak Forest in the next couple years. I think this would be a positive image.

Mayor Kuspa questioned if he wanted to see more lights or the same amount?

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Alderman Emmett stated the same amount but more maybe the next year after that. Budget restraints. I think 159th should be lit up.

Mayor Kuspa would like to get direction from Council so he can go back to Social Service Committee. What is it you are asking? What is your dream/goal?

Alderman Emmett stated they do not have enough money for my goal. In my mind it is going to be \$100,000.00 to \$150,000.00 to light it up. If we get anything from them, maybe the next year budget we can put \$20,000.00 to \$30,000.00 in the same type of snowflakes.

Mayor Kuspa stated the idea of replacing the banners, you are okay with that? So not adding lights to where the banners are?

Alderman Emmett answered correct.

Mayor Kuspa stated the idea is a sound idea. Basically, try to replace the seahorses with snowflakes, correct?

Alderman Emmett answered correct.

Alderman Wolf stated from what she remembered from the original light décor, they looked like the picture when they first went up. The snowflakes were white and the swirls were blue. But what happened because of the difference of the volts, the bulbs were popping. They replaced it with all green. The snowflake is not green and the swirl is not green. That is how it turned into a seahorse. Is it even possible to change the green to the white in these snowflakes? They did change them.

Off microphone comment.

Public Works Director Mike Salamowicz asked if she is referring to changing the bulbs in the existing fixtures? I think the reason that they changed the bulbs was trying to get away from looking like a seahorse. They were trying to change the bulbs in different ways, different colors to try to get maybe the snowflakes to stand out more. I think that was the reason why they went with the different bulb colors.

Alderman Wolf stated she was told that was the only color they had.

Assistant Director Robinson stated you can change the bulbs. I think they had to change the bulbs because of the difference of voltage on 159th and Cicero.

Alderman Wolf stated it does not look like a seahorse in the picture. What happens if we buy all these snowflakes and they look like a pineapple? What if we do not like the color?

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Assistant Director Robinson stated that would be the decision you would have to make. Do you want the cool white or the warm white? It will be one color or the other. That is a snowflake. There is no doubt that is a snowflake.

Mayor Kuspa noted some aldermen are relatively new and did not go through what they went through. The problem with the bulbs is on 159th Street some did not last overnight because they were wired for 110 and it was 240 volts. They were popping. That is why we started changing bulbs for necessity. I was told they could not get all white bulbs so they put in whatever they could get.

Director Salamowicz stated whatever the City Council wants that is what we will get. I believe the fixtures we are looking at will be LED.

Assistant Director Robinson noted that some of the LEDs are not interchangeable bulbs. They put a transformer on it and it is ran at whatever voltage put in.

Mayor Kuspa asked for their opinion on the current Christmas decorations. They are several years old and the exterior lights do not last forever, are they salvageable enough to change the bulbs or are they far gone?

Assistant Director Robinson stated they have not investigated that. We can look into the cost of the bulbs and the cost of changing them. If you tell us to put a neon pink snowflake, you will get a neon pink snowflake.

Tim Kristin, City Administrator, stated he thinks they should start fresh and start over. Put the old ones up for sale.

Alderman Gray stated the best decorations she has seen so far has been in Palos and on 143rd and LaGrange Road. They alternate, what does everyone think about not just having all white snowflakes? Alternate snowflake, Christmas tree.

Assistant Director Robinson stated that a tree is very Christmas. You can put up flowers, you can do that, we would have to find something else.

Alderman Danihel questioned alternating with the banners. You do not have to put snowflake on every light. Maybe every two, then a couple banners in between.

Assistant Director Robinson stated the point of the banners is to replace the banners that are up there now so we do not have to move brackets around. The point is to take one down and put one up. Some intersections have 4 lights and some have 8. It may be difficult to do something like that with the banners.

Alderman Emmett stated on 147th and Central there are 24 metal poles. They have eight receptacles. We can start with snowflakes and see if something else is on sale, add some more stuff.

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Assistant Director Robinson replied that not all the poles have outlet on them. So we would have to go back and add outlets which would be additional costs.

Alderman Selman wanted to caution about trying to pick from pictures. Seeing first hand it is a different image. I would be in favor with going with the whitest white snowflake we can get.

Assistant Director Robinson remarked it is easier to see in the picture that there is a soft white versus a bright white. If you want a bright white that is fine and that is what we will do.

Mayor Kuspa stated before the Council makes a final decision, buy one, stand it up in the back of the room so we can see how big it is, and plug it in. I am serious.

Director Salamowicz stated they can do that.

Tim Kristin said he was confused and asked if the one on the left is the sample to bring in.

Mayor Kuspa asked Council which snowflake.

Assistant Director Robinson said the one on the left is the common snowflake. There are books full of just snowflakes.

Mayor Kuspa stated they are going to try to sell the seahorses we have and come back with a plan with some solid numbers. Aldermen are okay with the snowflake on the left? Everyone but one likes it.

Alderman Emmett asked if they could bring in samples of banners as well. What type of banners there are out there.

Assistant Director Robinson stated when it comes to banners we will work with our branding experts to make sure everything is the way it should.

Alderman Selman was glad to hear you say that the hometown hero banners are going to be up longer. Veterans Day to Memorial Day was the plan. So around Veterans Day you would put up the holiday banner and lights. After the holidays, you would take down the holiday banners, the lights, and put up the Spring banners.

Assistant Director Robinson stated whatever you decide you want the other banner to be. It could be a welcome to Oak Forest banner. It could be anything. It is just a fill-in after the holidays and before Memorial Day.

Alderman Selman asked if Public Works would have to put up and take down stuff more, would it increase the cost of labor drastically?

Assistant Director Robinson replied one comes down and one goes up at the same time. Right now we have to do two trips, so we are adding one more trip. The question is do you want to keep the same amount of lights on Cicero on every pole or do you want to go to the intersection like

159th? This is a question for when we order but that is something to consider. Do you want to stick with the intersections? Do you want to keep that whole stretch on Cicero?

Mayor Kuspa commented he likes the whole stretch. He noted he saw a lot of nodding heads.

Tim Kristin asked the Mayor if he would like Public Works to get a sample, bring it here, and then discuss under old business at a Council meeting rather than have another COW.

Mayor Kuspa remarked he thinks it should be an agenda item. We can get clear direction from Council on what they want and Ericka and I have to go back to Social Services Committee.

5 (sic). EXECUTIVE SESSION

No executive session.

6. CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

Kathleen Brya approached the podium and stated she was at a meeting on November 8th. I am one of the owners of Nite Games and there has been a lot of them using your police department to keep me out of my establishment. So I was told to do the FOIA, which I did. I asked for a meeting and nothing has changed because they are still trying to keep me out under false pretenses. I am here to see if I could get a sit down meeting because what they are telling Tim is not true. I have proof that it is not the truth. I cannot get into my own bar because every time I do, they file a report. Two of the times the police said it was civil, which it is. I am trying to find out how the liquor license might have gotten changed. I know my name was on it originally. I am talking to a lawyer but I keep having to get lawyers when I know the truth. Can I get a sit down meeting with you or someone to show them.

Mayor Kuspa stated this is a civil matter. You are trying to use our police department and you criticized the police department because you felt that they were rough on you. The custodian of the bar obviously felt somehow you were intruding in their business. They had to legally control the business. They asked you to leave and you would not leave. You need to hire an attorney. This is not a city issue. This is a matter between you and your partners, get an attorney, file on them. But there is nothing else we can do.

Tim Kristin, City Administrator, stated he has researched this issue in depth. I have had several conversations in person and on the phone with Mrs. Scott. I have given her the same advice I gave you. I read the court case which she filed against them originally which was dismissed. Her next course of action is a civil attorney. The City is not going to interject with a civil dispute you have with your business partners.

Ms. Brya would like to go on the record that she is the owner. There isn't any proof that Ms. Scott is an owner. I did not have a problem with your police department. I know what you have, I gave you those papers.

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Alderman Danihel
Alderman Gray
Alderman McCarthy
Alderman Wolf
Alderman Selman
Alderman Emmett
Alderman Hortsman

The motion to adjourn was carried 7/7. The Committee of the Whole meeting ended at 7:35 p.m.



MAYOR HENRY L. KUSPA