



**COMMISSION FOR  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD RENEWAL  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**MEETING SUMMARY**

Thursday, March 3, 2016

**Persons in Attendance:**

**Executive Committee:**

Denise M. McCreery - Trustee  
Charles Ostman – Executive Director  
Ross Klicker – Associate Executive Director  
Steven Vinezeano – Village Manager  
Mike Shields  
Alan Zielinski  
Joe Bialko (who arrived at 6:00 pm)

**I. Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order at approximately 5:05pm.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of the January 27, 2016 Executive Committee Meeting were unanimously approved.

**III. Discussion and approval of the agenda topics for the EDNR Commission Meeting in March**

Mike Shields asked to say a few words in general about the overall goal of these EDNR meetings. He noted that the major goal of the meetings, as noted in the Commission's Purpose statement on the Village website, was to provide informed feedback on important and topical economic development issues to the Mayor and the Village leadership. He felt that a big part of the motivation of Commission members to attend the meetings and contribute feedback is to have agenda topics that are compelling and important and 'stir the passions' enough for people to talk. He believes that future

agenda topics need to be compelling and important to Niles – not trivial – to ensure active participation and robust feedback.

Having stated that, Ross Klicker offered that the number one topic for the upcoming March meeting will be ‘The Niles Public Signage Project’ and related proposals made by the Lakota Group (initially to the Village’s ad hoc Signage Project Committee on February 10th) . Ross mentioned that there has been a lot of interest in the community on this project as evidenced by the dozens of on-line responses he has received following his posting of the proposed signage on the Village website.

Mike Shields then asked Ross to confirm again that ‘the real purpose’ of the feedback at the March EDNR meeting was to ensure that the Village was not missing anything and doesn’t end up like Des Plaines did recently doing a branding project that the community did not like. Ross agreed that this was a prime goal of the upcoming ED & NR feedback on this signage project – to make sure the final recommendation fits Niles and accomplishes its main goal as an effective ‘branding’ tool, among others, for Niles.

Ross opined that he saw the Lakota consultant taking 30 minutes to explain the project and recommendations to be followed by 30-45 minutes of robust Commission feedback and discussion. The Executive Committee agreed that this was the #1 agenda item for the upcoming March (first quarter) meeting.

The discussion then moved on to what the second topic should be.

Mike Shields asked whether a discussion of the Niles Marketing and Promotion Plan would be appropriate given that it is part of an overall branding marketing effort by Niles that was started in 2015 with the new Village icon and imagery and tag line (‘It’s possible here’). The previously mentioned public signage project is part of that on-going marketing and branding effort as will be the new website project. Steve Vinezeano noted that although there was money in the FY 2017 Budget proposal, the Marketing Plan itself was not very far along and therefore there would not be much to discuss.

Chuck Ostman then offered whether a discussion of the new Village website, for which some work has been done, would be a good second topic to discuss. Given that the Village website improvement is part of the overall marketing and branding (and communication) effort for Niles, the Executive Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to have a discussion of the new website as the second topic. Mike Shields asked that the notice of the meeting that gets sent out to the Commission members include a request to attendees to look at other community websites (perhaps a few recommended by Chuck Ostman) to see what they like about them. Mike Shields also suggested that the Commission break out into smaller groups of 4-5 at the March meeting with the task for each of the smaller groups to come up with ‘two things, say in a 15 minute discussion, that the consensus of the group really wants in a new Village (Niles) website’. The smaller groups would allow everyone to weigh in on likes. The ExCom agreed to this proposal.

Denise McCreery made the point that she thought the meeting length of two hours was still too long. The ExCom agreed that it was a valid point but Mike Shields also offered that based on his recent experience as a member of the District 64 (Elementary School District for Park Ridge-Niles) Community Relations Council, if the topics to be discussed are compelling, the membership will talk and talk and talk. Two hours may not be enough. Alan Zielinski wrapped up the discussion by saying that the length of the EDNR meetings would likely find their own natural level – perhaps 1 1/2/ hours or 2 ½ hours or 2 hours. He suggested that we see how it develops. Everyone agreed.

In terms of future agenda topics after March, the thought of inviting the Managing Director of Golf Mill to speak and explain his plans was brought up as was inviting a successful Economic Development Director from another town. Both potential topics were met very positively by the ExCom. Everyone agreed that Economic Development in Niles must remain front and center on everything this Commission discusses in 2016.

One other possible agenda topic for a future meeting brought up by Denise McCreery was an orientation and discussion of TIFs and other possible economic development incentives. Mike Shields cautioned that the topic was inherently wonky and may not excite too many members or allow them to provide informed feedback; at worst it might cause their eyes ‘to glaze over’. However, given the ‘game-changing’ history of TIFs in Niles over the years, the ExCom did acknowledge that a discussion of TIFs, if done in an interesting and creative way, could elicit a good amount of timely feedback from the Commission.

The ExCom congratulated Ross Klicker for the e-newsletter on Economic Development news sent out via e-mail to the EDNR Commission members this week. Very informative and reassuring that Niles is moving forward on several fronts to gain and attract new businesses. Mike Shields suggested that a summary version be included in the Village’s Quarterly Newsletter (nothing on economic development in the most recent newsletter sent out this week) and on the Village’s website as many people in the community would appreciate knowing this information. The more news and information put out to the community the better.

In terms of the next meeting of the EDNR Commission, the scheduled March 16<sup>th</sup> date will not be able to happen as the Village has scheduled a Budget Workshop that night; the ExCom discussed several alternative dates and settled on Wednesday March 30<sup>th</sup> from 5:30-7:30pm in order to have the meeting in the first quarter and as close to the previously scheduled March 16<sup>th</sup> date as possible. A light dinner, pizza (from Riggio’s) and salad, should continue to be provided prior to the meeting. The meeting should start at 5:30 sharp.

#### **IV. Discussion and Approval of the 2016 Façade Improvement Program**

Ross Klicker presented the revised Façade Improvement policy, which now includes landscaping improvements. A question was asked whether planters and fencing in front of the businesses should

be included in the policy. After a discussion about the pros and cons of uniformity on a commercial corridor such as Milwaukee Ave. it was agreed that common enhancements such as planters and fencing can be included in the program but must follow a uniform Village guideline to present a more uniform look to the streetscape as envisioned for example in the various Milwaukee Ave. improvement plans previously done and approved by the Village. Chuck Ostman will develop some basic uniform design and style guidelines and options for these common enhancements and post them to the Village website for quick reference by a business owner contemplating adding them. All requests for façade and landscaping improvement grants will continue to be approved by the Executive Committee of the ED & NR Commission in 2016.

## **V. Other Business**

Mike Shields asked if an interested Niles resident such as Janet Lee will be invited to join the EDNR Commission; Chuck Ostman answered that she will be invited to join. Mike Shields then asked if the people, per his January analysis of meeting attendance, not consistently showing up at EDNR meetings have been thanked for their service by the Mayor and asked to leave the Commission if they are not interested. Chuck Ostman was to check on the status of the Mayor's personal follow up. Mike Shields then said that although the number of Commission members officially was about 32 in 2015, it could probably do with less, say 25-30, and still provide very robust and diverse feedback on economic development topics and issues. He recommended that Ross or Chuck state at the next meeting that the ExCom is recommending a '2-year commitment' to attend eight meetings (four quarterly meetings each year) during this very critical economic development period in Niles history; if after two years, the person wants to opt out, he or she, should do that then.

Alan Zielinski asked what the status of the new lighting (LED) on Milwaukee Ave. is; Steve Vinezeano stated that the Village has received 'a substantial grant' to move forward on this project.

Joe Bialko brought up his concern with the idea he read in the local paper that the Village might contemplate bringing back Ad Benches (he thought 'they are a regression to the past and look tacky') and eliminating Public Services long-standing leaf pickup service in the fall (ask residents to bag the leaves instead?) in order to raise revenue on the former and cut costs on the latter given the tight FY 2017 Budget situation currently. Steve Vinezeano and Denise McCreery, who is co-chair of the ad hoc Committee reviewing possible revenue enhancements and cost reductions, said that there have been lots of ideas put forward by Village staffs and others but no decisions have been made and any idea going forward will be further reviewed by staff and the appropriate Village Committee. Denise encouraged Joe and others to e-mail her with any other concerns or ideas on this revenue/cost review project which is part of the current Budget review process.

## **VI. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 6:25pm.