



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Niles 2040 Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

7:00 PM

FINAL Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Project Steering Committee: Michael DeSantiago, Tom Kanelos, Adam Konopka, Janet Lee, Joe Maccione, Denise McCreery, Dennis McEnerney, Craig Niedermaier, Scott O'Brien, Mike Shields

Village Staff: Kate Lockerby, Staff Liaison/Recording Secretary, Charles Ostman, Nathan Bruemmer, Hadley Skeffington-Vos, Fred Braun, Tom Powers, Rich Wlodarski

Consultants: N/A

Other Attendees: N/A

Absent: Steering Committee Members: Colin Baker, John Murphy

Trustee McCreery called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

A roll call was taken.

Trustee McCreery asked for a motion to approve the February 3, 2021 meeting minutes. Mr. Shields made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. McEnerney seconded. All were in favor. The February 3, 2021 Minutes were approved.

Trustee McCreery noted that there was some frustration at the last meeting, so it was decided keeping the Committee updated was very important. Ms. Lockerby began a presentation to the Committee on Comprehensive Planning in Niles. She explained what a comprehensive plan is and what has been done specifically in Niles since the first comprehensive plan was adopted.

Mr. Shields questioned the percentage of 85% that has been presented as being implemented or is ongoing. He believes that Economic Development and Image were not as well attained, more like 50-60%. He noted that, moving forward, focus should be on what wasn't done in 2030. He believes those two topics would be a great starting point for this new plan.

Trustee Niedermaier agreed with Mr. Shields and asked that Mr. Shields provide the discrepancy points to Mr. Ostman. He noted that when the Village was interviewing consultants, they were all impressed with the actual percentage of execution of the current plan.

Discussion ensued regarding the importance of the plan and the implementation of the plan.

Ms. Lee asked if the Committee could be provided with what wasn't completed and why they weren't completed. Mr. Shields thought it was, in part because the plan wasn't specific enough. Trustee McCreery cautioned that it shouldn't be too specific as everyone has seen that a pandemic can change things drastically.

Discussion ensued about the specificity that should be included in the actual plan.

Trustee Niedermaier mentioned that, regarding Arts & Culture, the Village hasn't used it to transform people's opinion of Niles, yet. He gave an example: the Village could start incentivizing businesses that are around arts and culture. He gave some suggestions on what could be done to accomplish this idea.

Mr. Shields also noted that a virtual tour of architecture of Niles or a science fair around the science behind the Leaning Tower could be created.

Ms. Lee asked about the status of the Touhy Triangle plan and Trustee McCreery explained its status.

Trustee McCreery noted that she liked what Trustee Niedermaier and Mr. Shields suggested, but that level of specificity can't be in the plan, it would need to be more general.

Trustee Niedermaier believes that Niles needs to figure out "who are we? and who do we want to be when we grow up?". He gave ideas about collaborating with Coca-Cola or Affy-Tapple or Milwaukee about user experiences. He suggested that the schools, library, and park district could be involved. He believes, since the plan was adopted, 5-6 strip malls have been built that were not consistent with the plan. He thinks Niles has been a "see a box/fill a box" community. He believes the most important part is, Niles needs to have the courage to execute the plan.

Mr. Shields believes they didn't "think big" for the 2030 plan. He suggested that the Comprehensive Plan may not need 183 goals, but needs to have suggestions to make Niles bigger than what we think it's going to be.

Ms. Lee stated that she gets concerned about a focus being solely on young families, rather it should focus on keeping families in town. Older kids need places to go within town.

Trustee Niedermaier stated that Niles gets people from other communities shopping within town and using the Park District. He also talked about a specific project that was previously proposed.

Trustee McCreery stated that perhaps the Committees of the Village should gather and do quarterly brainstorming sessions regarding topics that affect all Committees to get specific goals.

Ms. Lockerby continued with the presentation and explained why Niles is going through the Comprehensive Plan update at this time. Mr. Ostman talked about the number of additional planning efforts that have been undertaken since the Niles 2030 plan adoption. He stated that the Comprehensive Plan will not go in such detail as the separate plans for the specific subject areas, for example a plan about Economic Development.

Mr. Shields stated that the Committee should bring forward a consensus and just do the plan. He also suggested that Niles should start acting like a business.

Ms. Lee stated that she believes that Niles has a lot of projects that are started, but nothing that is finished. Mr. Ostman clarified that unfortunately, when dealing with private property, projects can't always be done expeditiously.

Mr. DeSantiago stated he liked the "out of the box" ideas he has heard this evening. He mentioned Mather in Evanston. He thought Niles could build on the reputation of being kind to the older population. Trustee McCreery stated that she really loves the senior population, she just doesn't want the Village to continue to negate the other populations in town.

Trustee McCreery also reminded the group that in government, things can't always go as quickly as one would like because the Village still needs to be fiscally responsible with taxpayer's money. Mr. Shields agreed, he just wished that things could operate quicker at the Village Board level.

Mr. Kanelos asked for an example. Mr. Shields gave Golf Mill as an example. Discussion ensued about this property.

Mr. DeSantiago told a story about Cook County Hospital in Chicago. Trustee Niedermaier stated he liked what Mr. DeSantiago said stated that he believes developers are risk-adverse. He talked more about Golf Mill and what other developers are doing with outdated shopping malls. He also reiterated that you can't make people do things that they don't want to do, you should find people that should appreciate Niles for what it is and what it wants to be.

Mr. Konopka asked to zoom out to the big picture. He stated he is unclear if the Committee has a clear vision of Niles in 2040. It is his understanding that is the purpose of this plan and the plan should be a means to that end. He has heard some good ideas. He believes it resonates, but he struggles with how it can be accomplished. Trustee McCreery stated that Mr. Konopka is accurate. She doesn't know about another community in the area that is riper for development at all levels than Niles.

Mr. Shields pointed to the last bullet point on the slide (slide 3) and reiterated that the world is changing so rapidly, maybe the Committee needs to think a little broader to make Niles better.

Mr. McEnerney talked about his experiences growing up in Niles. He also noted that retail revenue has been a priority for Niles for a long time. He also talked about why he believes younger families are not moving to Niles: they are moving where they can get larger lots and bigger houses.

Ms. Lee believes that, if you want families to move to town, experiences need to be the focus of Niles, too.

Trustee McCreery mentioned that, in conversations with people, she has asked why they didn't move to Niles and the responses were consistent – there wasn't anything for them to do in Niles.

Ms. Lockerby continued with the presentation (slide 4), mentioning that she would be providing the Committee a copy of the "Planning 1-2-3" publication, which has good information about writing a comprehensive plan in Illinois. Trustee McCreery asked if it was still pertinent. Ms. Lockerby stated that main content of the document was still pertinent.

Mr. Shields stated he isn't convinced repeating what was done 10 years ago is the right approach. The Committee read the "Planning 1-2-3" document 10 years ago and he's not sure it is the right approach. Ms. Lockerby stated she thinks it is an important document to share as not everyone on the Committee has been through the comprehensive planning process. Mr. Shields believed it should be shared and read, but the Committee should read it and understand that this plan will be taken to the next level.

Ms. Lockerby continued with the presentation (slide 5) emphasizing what the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee's role is in the comprehensive planning process. She also reiterated that all voices need to be heard and that Village staff is recommending a monthly meeting to discuss items more regularly with or without the Lakota Group. The Committee agreed with the recommendation.

Ms. Lockerby also discussed the purpose of the State of the Village Report (slide 6), to create a baseline from which the Comprehensive Plan will be based. She also noted she would send a copy of the final plan once complete and if any of the Committee members would prefer a hard copy of the document, that could be arranged.

Ms. Lockerby mentioned the current 'pause' that has been initiated at this time (slide 7). Once the project is picked up again, the intent is to have more in-person components, depending on the state of Covid. Mr. Kanelos asked about the comparison between the surveys conducted in 2011 and now. Ms. Lockerby stated it is hard to compare, but the Lakota Group seemed to be fairly pleased with the quality and number of responses. She questioned how robust the information obtained was in comparison to in-person sessions. Mr. Shields believes the Lakota Group did a pretty good job with the session in December, unfortunately the pandemic and the digital aspect of the project may have gotten in the way. Mr. Kanelos stated he always believes a small portion of the population participates in projects like this. Ms. Lockerby stressed the importance of Phase 2 being in person.

Ms. Lockerby continued discussing what Staff will be working on during the pause (slide 8). She asked for volunteers for the videos and if there is any interest, please let her know. Mr. Ostman explained the ideas about the videos and he mentioned examples would be shared with the Committee. Ms. Lockerby also asked that the Committee think about ways to get people involved that are not currently involved.

Mr. DeSantiago stated that there is an interest on behalf of Cook County to collaborate with municipalities.

Ms. Lockerby continued with the presentation (slide 9), outlining what the Phase 2 of the project will look like. Additionally, she discussed follow-up for the next meeting (slide 10), asking that the Committee do the following:

1. Please review the Guiding Principles, Vision, Goals, & Objectives from the 2030 Plan and prepare for a discussion at the next meeting (April 7, 2021).

2. What does your ideal Niles look like in 2040? What types of changes does that entail to the current development patterns?
3. Rather than focusing on a collective set of “values”, might the one of the Village’s biggest “values” be that there is this great diversity in town which will bring a variety of personal “values”? Should we focus on the term “priorities”? If yes, these “priorities” should be covered in a more intangible manner, such as in the Guiding Principles and Vision. More tangible items, such as land use and development matters, are better equipped to be covered in the Goals and Objectives of the Vision.

She concluded the presentation by going over the date of the next meeting, a summary of the documents that will be sent to the Committee, and homework for the Committee (slide 11).

Discussion ensued about the state of the project and frustrations with the project. Further, the Committee discussed the details about the homework and preparation needed for the next meeting. Discussion was also had about creating a vision and mission statement.

Trustee Niedermaier talked about the potential of being provided with case-studies of communities that have done dramatic turn-around.

Trustee McCreery stated that she would think about inviting Trustee Alpogianis to the next meeting. She's very excited to get down to the “nitty-gritty” and would like Mr. Ostman to follow-up with her on the idea about having quarterly Committee meetings.

Discussion about the frequency and the next meeting date occurred. It was decided that the next meeting would be in three weeks, at 7 PM on March 24, 2021.

Ms. Lockerby noted that no public comments were received before or during the course of the meeting.

Trustee McCreery asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. DeSantiago made a motion and Trustee Niedermaier seconded. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:52 pm.