

Village of Peoria Heights
Departmental Meeting
June 26, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m.

Everyone stood for a moment of silence and the Pledge to the Flag.

Upon calling roll, the following Trustees were present: Sarah DeVore, Jeff Goett, Beth Khazzam, David Marfell, Matthew Wigginton, and Brandon Wisenburg. Others present included Mayor Michael Phelan, Village Administrator and Chief of Police Dustin Sutton, and Village Clerk Stephanie Turner. President of the Zoning Board of Appeals, Mr. Rick Picl, Superintendent of Water, Mr. Chris Chandler, Superintendent of Streets, Mr. Michael Casey, Fire Chief Donovan Thompson, and Administrative Assistant Ms. Sarah Witbracht were also in attendance.

Mayor Phelan introduced Peoria County Administrator, Mr. Scott Sorrel, to lead the strategic planning session. Mr. Sorrel ran the Board through some group exercises prior to reviewing the results of the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis.

Mr. Sorrel detailed the top successes of the Village in 2020, in no particular order, as the contribution to the Police Pension Fund, the restructuring of the Peoria Heights Fire Department, completion of the comprehensive plan, the Commercial Expense Reimbursement grant program, state of financial reserves, and the Rt 29 / Galena Road grant. The Board also added the new contract with the Village Administrator as another major success. Mr. Sorrel covered opportunities lost including the sidewalk program, water system infrastructure, multiple commercial developments, Village building infrastructure, and development code modernization. The Board agreed to add multiple denied grants as opportunities that were lost. Mr. Sorrel asked if those were lost opportunities due to internal or external factors. There was discussion which resulted in the consensus that it was both internal and external. The Board spoke about the importance of upcoming economic development. Mr. Sorrel transitioned to the Village's opportunities and strengths which included a safety community, a vibrant business community, an engaged Village Board, a vibrant arts culture, and economic development tools. The Board spoke about efforts to attract minority owned businesses as well as the response to unrest in the previous year. There was discussion of the importance of the local school district which led to discussion of the importance of maintaining local control of utilities and services including water, streets, police, and fire services. Additionally, the Board discussed the importance of being small and focused as opposed to combating urban sprawl. Mr. Sorrel concluded by addressing the Village's weakness and threats. They included housing inventory, K-12 education, lack of capital improvement plan, property maintenance both public and private, lack of cohesive neighborhoods, and a unified identity for the Village. The Board added rental properties and transient populations as well as a lack of handicapped parking and intersections. They also added high property taxes, population loss, and income disparity as concerns.

Mr. Sorrel spoke about identifying the Village's vision for the community. The Board discussed refining and tightening the core message for the Village while also speaking about core values and aspirations for the Village.

The Board of Trustees took a break at 10:08 a.m. The Board reconvened for additional discussions at 10:25 a.m.

Mr. Sorrel presented some updates to the Village's vision message based on comments from the Board. He stated the Village should continue to refine the language and adopt it as a vision statement when comfortable.

Mr. Sorrel asked the Board to think about the mission for the Village in order to define the responsibilities of the Village and refine primary services. He presented a statement formulated from questionnaires and interviews that the Village's mission is focused on customer experience by welcoming visitors and being transparent and accessible to residents. The Board agreed they wanted to reword the sentence in order to reemphasize the Village's commitment to residents. The Board emphasized the desire to prioritize residents. The Board reorganized the mission statement to "Peoria Heights government is focused on its citizens and is welcoming to visitors transparent and accessible."

Mr. Sorrel presented goals for the next 5 years for consideration. He noted that the goals should be revisited in a few years, and there should be no more than 5 goals. Mr. Sorrel shared that common goal themes included value to taxpayers, infrastructure stewardship, vibrant community, partner for success, and customer focus. Mr. Sorrel asked the Board for thoughts highlighting that any additions would need to include removing one goal. The Board discussed refining and defining the goals more specifically. The Board discussed the importance of improving housing stock in order to improve multiple problems the Village faces. There was discussion of ideas for encouraging a new neighborhood for residential development as well as the use and administration of TIF and BDD funds. The Board also discussed fostering a sense of community within the Village. The importance of partnering with the school district for community success was emphasized repeatedly. Mayor Phelan asked Mr. Sorrel's professional opinion. Mr. Sorrel acknowledged the urgency of the timeline to make changes, and the need for the Village to intervene in the housing stock. He spoke about housing rehabilitation programs. The Board discussed options and programs that could improve housing stock. The Board then spoke about partnerships for the school to develop educational resources through ICC, trade schools, and private employers which transitioned into a conversation about marketing the available resources. Mr. Sorrel updated the goals based on discussions to strong neighborhoods, thriving business community, partner for success, customer focused, and vibrant community. He asked the Board to consider the ranking of importance. The Board refined the list and agreed the goals should be strong neighborhoods and vibrant community, thriving economy, citizen focused, and partner for success in order of importance.

Mr. Sorrel wrapped up the strategic planning by discussing the Village's work plan. He asked the Board to identify three actions for each goal for the next 12 months. For each action, identify specific outcomes needed to consider the action complete and develop a schedule for those. Then populate a reporting tool to track progress. Administration will compile the responses for future discussion.

Mayor Phelan adjourned the meeting at 12:25 p.m.

Michael Phelan, Mayor

Stephanie Turner, Village Clerk