

**WINNETKA PLAN COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 22, 2025**

Members Present: Layla Danley, Chairperson
Jonathan Alt
Matthew Bradley
Mamie Case
Liz Kunkle
Cyrus Subawalla

Members Absent: Chris Enck

Non-Voting Members Present: Rob Apatoff

Village Staff: David Schoon, Director of Community Development
Ann Klaassen, Assistant Director of Community
Development

Village Attorney: Peter Friedman

Call to Order & Roll Call:

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Danley at 7:02 p.m. Ms. Klaassen took roll call of the Commission Members present.

Approval of December 18, 2024, Meeting Minutes:

Chairperson Danley asked for a motion to approve the December 18, 2024, meeting minutes. A motion to approve the December 18, 2024, meeting minutes was made by Mr. Bradley and seconded by Ms. Case.

A vote was taken and the motion unanimously passed, 6 to 0:

AYES: Alt, Bradley, Case, Danley, Kunkle, Subawalla

NAYS: None

NON-VOTING: Apatoff

Public Comment:

No comments were made at this time.

Community Development Report:

Mr. Schoon stated there is no Community Development Report.

New Applications:

a. **Case No. 24-08-SU: 225 Sheridan Road - Centennial Park & Beach: An application seeking approval of (i) a Special Use Permit to allow construction of improvements to the existing park and beach; and (ii) steep slope exceptions to allow walkways, retaining walls, steps, and seating areas within the steep slope zone. The Village Council has final jurisdiction on this request.**

Mr. Friedman outlined the procedures to be followed for the meeting. Mr. Schoon informed the Commission and audience that a video recording of the meeting would be posted to the Village's website. He then outlined the Commission's purview and summarized the application's background information including: (i) the Winnetka Park District as the applicant; (ii) the Village's role in the special use process; and (iii) the public trust doctrine. Mr. Schoon referred to the Centennial Park approval matrix and outlined

1 the approval process undertaken by the various bodies. He also discussed the recently adopted lakefront
2 construction and steep slope regulations in detail. Mr. Schoon identified proposed permitted
3 development in the steep slope zone, examples of items considered to be steep slope exceptions and
4 development standards for the slope impact area and the administrative review and approval process. He
5 then explained the public trust doctrine in detail.

6
7 Ms. Klaassen identified the property's location and its zoning classification in the lakefront preservation
8 overlay district noting that public parks and recreation facilities are allowed as a special use in the R-2
9 district. She referred to the Comprehensive Plan land use map and several of its goals as well as several
10 of the property's images. Ms. Klaassen then provided a brief overview of the proposed improvements and
11 uses as well as the requested relief. She summarized the ZBA's review of the proposed improvements
12 noting the DRB's review would take place after the Commission's review is complete. Ms. Klaassen also
13 identified recommendations from the Village Director of Engineering and Police Chief for the project,
14 which have not been incorporated into the Applicant's plans. She referred to the special use standards
15 the Commission is to consider and stated following the applicant's presentation and public comment, the
16 Commission can either continue the public hearing to a date certain to allow the applicant and/or Village
17 staff time to address any concerns and comments or consider a motion recommending approval or denial
18 of the special use and exceptions with draft language provided on page nos. 30 and 31 of the agenda
19 packet and provide direction to Village staff and Village Attorney to prepare written findings and
20 determinations to be considered and voted on at a subsequent meeting. Ms. Klaassen then asked if there
21 were any questions. No questions were raised at this time.

22
23 Chairperson Danley swore in those speaking to this matter.

24
25 Christina Codo, Winnetka Park District President, provided background and context for the proposed plan.
26 She then summarized the applicant's plan and introduced the Winnetka Park District team to the
27 Commission.

28
29 Costa Kutulus, Winnetka Park District Director of Parks and Maintenance, stated that he and Scott Freres
30 would discuss the following agenda items in connection with the plan: (i) natural systems; (ii) the history
31 of the Master Plan; (iii) the lakefront implementation plan; (iv) Centennial Beach's evolution; (v) why we
32 are here; and (vi) the proposed design, all of which he outlined in detail. He also referred to illustrations
33 showing the lake level fluctuations and explained the meaning of littoral drift in detail. Mr. Kutulus also
34 described lake-bed down cutting and referred to several illustrations in explanation. He then identified
35 bluff characterizations and littoral barriers as well as images of the Waukegan systems in place.

36
37 Scott Freres of The Lakota Group explained the need to undertake a long term 100-year infrastructure
38 strategy in an effort to stabilize and protect the lakefront. He described the background in terms of what
39 drove the Master Plan study project and their master planning efforts to develop strategies for
40 stabilization and shoreline improvements to benefit the communities. Mr. Freres described the dialog
41 with the community throughout the process as well as the purpose, mission statement and project guiding
42 pillars. He explained the reasoning that the plan included clearing trees from the bluff which would
43 enhance views, and they would reestablish the appropriate plant and vegetative community on the bluff.
44 Mr. Freres then referred to the component of the Comprehensive Plan in which the Village acknowledged
45 the opportunities it has working in partnership with the Park District to improve resident access to its
46 abundant open spaces and natural areas. He summarized his presentation by stating that the proposed
47 plan has strong merits which met the Comprehensive Plan tenets and the tenets of a changing
48 environmental system and the science behind it which he described as done tastefully and with respect

1 to the community and engagement. Mr. Freres concluded they hoped for a collaborative discussion with
2 the Commission.

3
4 Mr. Kutulus then referred to the project timeline for the lakefront parks implementation plan. Mr. Freres
5 went on to discuss the project's long-term investment aspects, shared responsibility, community
6 stewardship and extended lifespan. Mr. Kutulus then referred to the loss of trees and infrastructure due
7 to the change in lake levels and how it was corrected with a headland beach system which has had no
8 negative impact. He also described similar improvements at Maple Beach and provided a comparison
9 illustration for the proposed plan. Mr. Kutulus explained how the plan is considered as a comprehensive
10 systematic approach and explained the planned design's timeline evolution. He outlined the Centennial
11 Beach pillars in terms of the items on which they focused that include long term investment in public open
12 space, increased stewardship and natural resource management, improved operational efficiencies and
13 response to public input. Mr. Kutulus then summarized the process in terms of planning and zoning review
14 in conjunction with engineering concerns noting the biggest issue being the site's development is being
15 considered based on residential zoning standards with the Park District not being a residential based
16 organization.

17
18 Shannon Nazzal, Winnetka Park District Executive Director, asked the Commission Members if they had
19 any questions with regard to the project's history before they address the special use permit and
20 exceptions being requested. Chairperson Danley suggested the applicant continue the presentation with
21 questions to be presented at the end.

22
23 Mr. Kutulus stated with regard to why they are here at this point, he stated they are seeking a favorable
24 recommendation from the Commission for special use permit approval to allow the construction of the
25 proposed improvements to the new and existing uses as outlined in the plans as well as an exception to
26 permit development in the steep slope zone. He referred to the special use standards and their shared
27 purpose and mission of the project to activate the Centennial Beach in two different capacities with regard
28 to active and passive activities including a fenced off dog beach, increased ADA accessibility, view and
29 access from the pier and the re-vegetation of the bluff. Mr. Kutulus referred to an illustration of the
30 proposed plan and explained each plan element in detail. He also explained how the elements were
31 addressed as a result of the comments and concerns previously raised. Mr. Kutulus referred to cross
32 section illustrations of the bluff and its various elements which he explained in detail. He then identified
33 the concrete ADA accessible ramp and retaining walls, the outcropping stone steps and improved mid-
34 bluff paver walkway as items which are part of the exceptions being requested.

35
36 Mr. Kutulus identified an illustration of the coastal design criteria which drove the design and which he
37 explained to the Commission. He also explained the pier's function in terms of safety in that the pier would
38 be an improved public amenity as well as the training and operations functions as well. Mr. Kutulus
39 referred to the swim zone safety concerns raised and explained how the swim zone function would be
40 addressed. He also explained the process undertaken to train lifeguards in detail as well as the Beach SAFE
41 Water Safety campaign.

42
43 Chairperson Danley stated the Commission would take a 5-minute break at this time.

44
45 Chairperson Danley called the meeting back to order and explained how the remainder of the public
46 hearing would proceed.

47
48 Peter Lemmon of Kimley Horn stated they were engaged by the applicant in November 2024 to address

1 traffic and parking concerns and outlined the number of parking spaces at the Centennial and Elder Lane
2 Parks and the limitations on its use as well as their parking review, land banking and offsite parking
3 options. He then referred to general beach characteristics and stated an actual parking usage study was
4 not done due to the time of year but could be generated in the future if necessary. Mr. Lemmon identified
5 the options they considered as factors such as dog pass sales, parking passes, etc. which he identified as
6 generally steady. He then stated there would be an initial uptick in use at the beginning which would then
7 decline. He added the beaches are not parking constrained and described several examples of parking
8 alternatives as well as beach access, traffic patterns and parking availability. Mr. Lemmon also described
9 their consideration of other North Shore beaches and summarized their response to special use standard
10 nos. 4 and 5.

11
12 Mr. Kutulus referred to illustrations of offsite parking options as well as several computer generated
13 elevation views of the proposed pier. He stated in conclusion; they are asking for the Commission to
14 recommend approval of the special use to allow the construction of the proposed improvements and
15 approval of exceptions to permit development in the steep slope zone. Mr. Kutulus thanked the
16 Commission for their consideration and asked if there were any questions.

17
18 Chairperson Danley then asked for public comment and provided instructions to those speaking.

19
20 John Root spoke regarding the Comprehensive Plan's adoption and referred to Goal No. 5. He also referred
21 to illustrations relating to construction at 205 Sheridan Road. Mr. Root stated the special use permit
22 violated ADA requirements and referred to illustrations showing alternative plans. He encouraged the
23 Commission to reject the applicant's ADA path design and uphold the Comprehensive Plan and steep slope
24 ordinances.

25
26 Alexandra Nichols, 900 Mt. Pleasant, read a letter into the record on behalf of Carol Rasmus, 175 Sheridan
27 Road, in opposition to the application.

28
29 Ted Wynnynchenko questioned the Commission's purpose in reviewing the application and referred to the
30 neighboring property's acquisition. He also commented on the dog park and the proposed plan which
31 would encumber and take away public park land for 50 years. He stated it would be inappropriate for the
32 Commission to approve the special use which did not adhere to the Comprehensive Plan or the Park
33 District's lakeshore plan.

34
35 Wendy Dury read a letter from Kris Schriesheim into the record. She informed the Commission that her
36 concerns related to safety.

37
38 Tom Border, Old Green Bay Road, commented on the proposed pier, walkway and the existing park. He
39 also referred to unobstructed views from the tableland and bluff. Mr. Border stated there are safety
40 concerns and the Park District cannot create a known danger with no plans to increase safety. He
41 compared the proposed pier to a mini-Atlantic City setting and commented on the proposed ADA
42 accessible ramp which presented another safety issue.

43
44 Steve Juliusson, 1436 Asbury, referred to a Winston Churchill quote and stated the proposed plan included
45 a lot of factors that they are not aware of and identified various scenarios. He asked for the Commission
46 to deny the special use and for the applicant to come back with a new plan.

47
48 Melissa Mizel, 939 Tower Road, referred to comments raised at the October 2024 ZBA meeting from

1 parents of disabled children. She stated no one wanted to interfere with these children's enjoyment of
2 any Winnetka facility while noting ADA accessibility is one of two stated objectives for the project with
3 the project not being made to be ADA compliant. Ms. Mizel stated the proposal failed the compliance test
4 as well as the intergenerational test in the absence of any bathroom facilities and urged the Commission
5 to reject the proposal.

6
7 Maggie Hayes, Orchard Lane, read Chuck Dowding's statement into the record in opposition to the
8 request. She also commented on her disappointment with regard to the Elder Beach closure.

9
10 Kim Marsh, 360 Forest, asked the Commission to deny the special use permit application and stated the
11 proposed pier would impede sight lines and create serious safety issues. She commented on how the
12 proposed pier would affect views and described two safety incidents including a fatal drowning. Ms.
13 Marsh also commented on the plan's inadequate dependence on lifeguards and signs which would not be
14 effective and asked for the special use permit application to be denied.

15
16 Susie Schreiber, a former Park District and Commission Member, passed out information to the
17 Commission and described the installation at Illinois Beach State Park which addressed littoral drift, sand
18 loss and impounded area blowouts. She commented on how the proposal would significantly affect the
19 bluff and ecologic systems and stated other options are available other than those being presented to the
20 Commission. Ms. Schreiber provided information relating to the successful completion of the NOAA
21 projects and also stated there are other ADA compliant alternatives that can be used for the project which
22 she identified for the Commission.

23
24 Irene Smith, Elm Street, referred to a photo of Centennial Park and the view which she commented should
25 not be given up for the project. She then read a letter from Angie Dahl, former member of the Park District,
26 into the record.

27
28 Anne Wilder read a letter from Mary Garrison into the record in opposition to the request.

29
30 Peggy Marte, Sunset Road, stated she is representing Kris Schriesheim and read correspondence in
31 opposition to the request into the record.

32
33 Martha Gillum, Orchard Lane, described her family's affinity for the lake and its resources as well as the
34 amount of public opposition to the request. She stated the public should be allowed to participate in the
35 vote and referred to several issues regarding the proposal and asked the Commission to recommend
36 denial of the special use permit.

37
38 Phil Enquist, a Village resident, architect and planner, encouraged the Commission to question the design
39 which he described as significantly flawed and he outlined why to the Commission. He also referred to
40 the Park District Board's discussion at its November 16, 2023, meeting questioning the coastal analysis
41 asking for justification of the need for such a huge pier and the response that the pier's purpose is to
42 separate the dog beach from the swimming beach and the walkway is to provide access to the beach. Mr.
43 Enquist asked the Commission to recommend denial of the special use permit. No additional comments
44 were made at this time.

45
46 Chairperson Danley asked the applicant if they would like to respond to the public comments. The
47 applicant chose to defer its response. Chairperson Danley then closed public comment and asked if there
48 were any questions from the Commission.

1 Mr. Friedman stated if there are significant questions from the Commission, it would be helpful for the
2 Commission to provide them to the applicant to allow them time to respond. He also stated specific
3 questions can be provided to Village staff and Park District staff.
4

5 Ms. Kunkle stated she did not have significant questions at this time. Mr. Bradley deferred to ask his
6 questions at the end of the Commission's question-asking session given he has already opined on the
7 application as a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals, which has already considered the application.
8 Mr. Alt asked why the Park District did not wait and present both the Centennial Beach and Elder Beach
9 plans together. Ms. Case asked since Centennial and Elder parks and beaches work together, why was the
10 Commission not presented with both sets of improvements together. She also referred to handicapped
11 parking and asked if it would only be at Elder Beach with there not being at least one handicap parking
12 space at Centennial Beach. It was confirmed there is one handicap parking space at Centennial. Ms. Case
13 then stated she had difficulty with the dog beach placement. Mr. Subawalla stated he had several
14 questions which he would put in writing for the applicant. Trustee Apatoff stated he would defer his
15 questions until the end as well. Chairperson Danley stated she would also submit her questions in writing
16 and asked for additional information relating to the separation of Elder Beach and Centennial Beach and
17 Park. She also asked for additional information relating to the decision process in terms of the dog beach's
18 location selection.
19

20 Mr. Bradley noted he is a nonvoting Commission Member and referred to changes in the Park District's
21 plan over time presented to the Commission which were not presented to the ZBA and asked at what
22 point the headland system was abandoned in favor of the break wall structure which has successfully
23 been done at other beaches. He also referred to other North Shore communities which have not been
24 required to catch littoral drift. Mr. Bradley also referred to the complaints made from neighbors south of
25 205 Sheridan Road. He then asked to what extent the surrounding neighbors may be affected by putting
26 a break wall into effect to catch the sand which would otherwise flow further south. Mr. Bradley also
27 questioned the cost to dredge and remove the sand in terms of cost and potential exposure. He then
28 asked to what extent have private residents had any input into the plan presented. Mr. Bradley questioned
29 the consultant's input mentioned from the 2023 Park District Board meeting compared to the December
30 2024 memo from the same consultant included in the agenda packet.
31

32 Trustee Apatoff noted the request has not formally been presented to the Village Council and referred to
33 several ordinances put in place against which measurements are taken. He then stated he visited Illinois
34 Beach State Park and saw how the technology was put in place which had unobstructed sight lines. Trustee
35 Apatoff questioned whether that type of alternative was considered and referred to an Illinois state
36 governmental agency which considered several new types of technology. He described coastal engineers
37 as beach architects and stated they should adhere to the same standards with regard to the project's
38 consideration. Trustee Apatoff then referred to the bluff issues and ADA concerns raised and the difficulty
39 in navigating the path in terms of its pitch. He also stated in looking at both projects together, he stated
40 there is ADA accessibility and bathrooms at Elder Beach. Trustee Apatoff also referred to the proposed
41 dog beach and questioned whether it is appropriate and whether other accommodations can be made.
42

43 Chairperson Danley also referred to recently received material from the applicant which the Commission
44 is to consider and asked the applicant to provide a summary of the additional materials. She asked if there
45 were any other questions. No additional questions were raised at this time. Chairperson Danley then
46 asked Mr. Schoon for direction in terms of continuing the item. Mr. Schoon provided information to the
47 Commission as to upcoming agenda items for the next meeting.
48

1 Chairperson Danley then asked for a motion to continue the matter to the Commission's February 26,
2 2025, meeting.

3
4 The Commission Members discussed their availability.

5
6 Mr. Schoon asked the Commission Members to provide their questions for the applicant to Village staff
7 by the end of the week in order for the applicant to have time to prepare a response.

8
9 A motion to continue the matter to the February 26, 2025, meeting was made by Mr. Bradley and
10 seconded by Ms. Kunkle. A vote was taken and the motion unanimously passed, 6 to 0:

11 AYES: Alt, Bradley, Case, Danley, Kunkle, Subawalla

12 NAYS: None

13 NON-VOTING: Apatoff

14
15 **New Business.**

16 a. **February 26, 2025, Meeting – Quorum check.**

17 The quorum check was taken during the previous agenda item.

18
19 **Adjournment:**

20 Chairperson Danley asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. A vote
21 was taken and the motion unanimously passed, 6 to 0:

22 AYES: Alt, Bradley, Case, Danley, Kunkle, Subawalla

23 NAYS: None

24 NON-VOTING: Apatoff

25 The meeting was adjourned at 10:52 p.m.

26
27 Respectfully submitted,

28
29 Antionette Johnson

30 Recording Secretary