

**WINNETKA PLAN COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
MAY 28, 2025**

Members Present: Layla Danley, Chairperson
Jonathan Alt
Mamie Case
Chris Enck
Liz Kunkle
Cyrus Subawalla

Members Absent: None

Non-Voting Members Present: Rob Apatoff
Matthew Bradley

Village Attorney: Peter Friedman

Village Staff: Scott Mangum, Community Development Director
Ann Klaassen, Assistant Director of Community
Development

Call to Order & Roll Call:

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Danley at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Klaassen took roll call of the Commission Members present. Chairperson Danley explained the procedural change the meeting would take and that the meeting would begin with the Village staff presentation followed by public comment, with those who were not able to provide public comment at the January 2025 meeting going first, and then the applicant's presentation.

Public Comment:

No comments were made at this time.

Community Development Report:

Mr. Mangum stated is no new information to report.

Continued 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. This item was continued from the January 22, 2025, Plan Commission meeting.

Ms. Klaassen informed everyone the meetings relating to this application would be video recorded and made available on the Village's website. She summarized the application's prior presentation noting the proposed plans have not changed since the January 2025 meeting and referred to a PowerPoint presentation. She also summarized the relief being requested and the steep slope regulations. Ms. Klaassen then summarized the ZBA's consideration of the application with the DRB's review to follow the completion of the Plan Commission's review. She identified the recommendations made by the Village Police and Engineering Departments.

1 Ms. Klaassen identified the Commission's role in considering the application and stated following public
2 comment and the applicant's presentation, the Commission may decide to either continue the matter to
3 a date certain to allow the applicant and/or staff time to address any questions/concerns raised or
4 consider a motion recommending approval or denial of the special use and exceptions with draft language
5 included on page nos. 9 and 11 as well as written findings and recommendations for the Commission's
6 consideration. She then asked if there were any questions. No questions were raised at this time.
7

8 Chairperson Danley swore in those speaking to this matter.
9

10 Rahila Anwar, 1195 Tower Road, read her statement into the record which she summarized as a
11 suboptimal plan and an expensive and cautionary tale of missed opportunity, fractured design and
12 escalating taxpayer expense. She asked for the Commission to recommend that the application be
13 rejected.
14

15 Willie Franzen, 232 Sheridan Road, stated as a daily user of Centennial and Elder Beaches, his concerns
16 related to parking, traffic, congestion and safety and read his statement in opposition into the record. He
17 asked that the special use permit request be denied.
18

19 Maggie Hayes stated she and her family have been frequent users of Elder Beach and Centennial Park and
20 asked for clarification with regard to how Elder Beach is only being proposed for use in the sand but not
21 the water. She read her statement into the record which referred to the petitions circulated opposing
22 beach walls and fences as well as the zoning concerns, parking and sign issues, among other issues, with
23 nothing having been changed. Ms. Hayes urged the Commission to recommend denial of the application.
24

25 Robert Mucci, Tower Road, read his statement into the record which he described as an extraordinary
26 remedy which sought to satisfy the Park Board's interests that overrode rules, regulations and zoning laws
27 which were put in place to protect the general public's interests as well as overriding government
28 safeguards and not adhering to caucus survey results and public comment. He asked the Commission to
29 recommend the special use permit request be denied in its entirety.
30

31 Alan Welch, 40 year Winnetka resident, described his affiliation with the Winnetka Park District Dog Beach
32 Advisory Committee and identified his concerns that the Park District claimed the only other viable option
33 is the south end of Tower Road Beach. He summarized the other options considered, which are Elder
34 Beach, Maple Beach, Lloyd Beach and the beach immediately south of the power plant. No additional
35 comments were made at this time from those who did not have an opportunity to speak prior.
36

37 John Root described his educational background in geology and engineering and urged the Commission
38 to recommend denial of the special use request. He described the Park District's claim as false with regard
39 to their abandonment of its original headland beach system due to newly adopted Village ordinances
40 which prioritized unencumbered lake views. He also referred to the 205 Sheridan Road headland system
41 and read the remainder of his statement into the record. Mr. Root asked for the Commission to
42 recommend denial of the special use permit.
43

44 Katie Stevens stated she has fought for public land for over 40 years and that the community has been
45 lied to for years with regard to the proposed plan. She then described her request for FOIA information
46 relating to the project. Ms. Stevens stated the pier serves no purpose and the application should be
47 denied. She suggested just a simple pier be proposed.
48

1 Alexandra Nichols, 45-year Winnetka resident, read her statement into the record relating to the elevator
2 at Elder Beach. She asked the Commission to recommend denial of the special use permit.

3
4 Kris Schriessheim, Pine and Maple Street, provided an illustration to the Commission for their review of
5 the breakwater which did not require a variance as well as the proposed breakwater. She stated her
6 concerns related to safety which she explained to the Commission and asked the Commission to not
7 recommend approval of the special use permit.

8
9 Carol Rasmus, 175 Sheridan Road, asked the Commission to recommend denial of the request which
10 violated the Village's goals stated in the Comprehensive Plan, which she identified. She read her statement
11 into the record relating to the size and length of the proposed pier.

12
13 Anne Wilder, a Garden Guild member and Winnetka resident, read her statement into the record with
14 regard to her investment in parks, lakes and beaches with it being vital that the Park District follow best
15 practices to meet Winnetka residents' and taxpayers' high standards. She commented on the Park
16 District's statement on page 20 of the 890-page agenda packet and asked for the Commission to
17 recommend denial of the application which was not designed or vetted by qualified coastal engineers.

18
19 Jude Overly, a Fuller Lane resident, read Mary Garrison's statement into the record.

20
21 Steve Juliusson, 1436 Asbury, stated the Park District has repeatedly ignored the community's concerns
22 with regard to several governing bodies and referred to the ZBA's comments. He asked that the
23 Commission recommend denial of the ill-conceived and dangerous plan.

24
25 Susie Schreiber distributed material to the Commission and identified her past affiliations on several
26 Winnetka boards and read her comments into the record commenting on the Illinois Beach State Park
27 offshore island design which was implemented over the last two years. She also summarized the Great
28 Lakes watershed design which needed to be addressed as a complete unit and not in piecemeal fashion.
29 Ms. Schreiber urged the Commission to reconsider offshore islands as a way to address the issues at Elder
30 Beach and Centennial Beach as well as for neighboring property owners.

31
32 Irene Smith, a 39-year resident, referred to three illustrations she provided to the Commission of various
33 beach views with and without a massive breakwater as well as the beaches south of the breakwater that
34 disappeared entirely. She read the remainder of her statement into the record in opposition to the
35 application.

36
37 Melissa Mizel referred to the Park District's responses to the Commission's pages of questions from the
38 January 2025 meeting with regard to ADA restrooms not being included in the proposal. She also referred
39 to the Commission's questions for the applicant which addressed the community's concerns and the Park
40 District's response which she described as counterintuitive, unwarranted and irrational. Ms. Meizel asked
41 for the Commission to recommend denial of the special use permit.

42
43 Ted Wynnychenko commented on the engineer's conflict of interest. He stated a dog beach is not
44 appropriate and commented on the lack of the Park District's response to a request for an opinion. Mr.
45 Wynnychenko also stated there has been no public support for the application and asked that the request
46 be denied. No additional comments were made at this time.

47
48 Chairperson Danley closed public comment and stated the Commission would take a five-minute break

1 before the applicant's presentation.
2

3 Christina Codo, Park District Commissioner, summarized the background and proposed plans for
4 Centennial Park and Beach which she described as the Commission's first public municipal beach project.
5 She then described the applicant's expectations with regard to the proposal and identified specific aspects
6 mentioned at prior Village Council study sessions as current best practices to hold sand and protect
7 beaches, that 85% of Illinois shoreline is armored and anticipated erosion, among others which she read
8 into the record. Ms. Codo asked the Commission to consider the application in its role as an advisory body
9 with regard to evaluating it based on special use standards and to consider expert testimony differently
10 than compared to public comment. She referred to littoral drift challenges and for the Commission to
11 stipulate to national and state level building codes, safety codes and ADA codes. Ms. Codo then referred
12 to applicable items from the Winnetka Futures 2040 Plan and introduced the applicant's team to the
13 Commission.
14

15 Shannon Nazzal, Park District Executive Director, stated the applicant would provide the Commission with
16 a summary of the project's goals, regulatory alignment, design decisions, site access and how the proposal
17 met Village requirements for the special use, as well as how community input and governmental
18 organization shaped the final plan followed by their response to the Village's special use standards.
19

20 Costa Kutulus referred to the PowerPoint presentation and summarized the project overview. Scott Freres
21 summarized the aligned mission of the proposed plan and referred to the Village's Winnetka 2040
22 Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Nazzal then outlined the engineering and regulatory compliance and described
23 how the design engineer's expertise and consultation guidance were applied to the project. Mr. Kutulus
24 addressed the concerns raised with regard to the pier structure and its design with regard to the rubble
25 mound revetment and explained in detail how the modification worked in terms of how the aesthetics
26 would work for the beach site. He also identified the references used whose focus was being on shoreline
27 design and engineering, bluff erosion protection and public site access/open clear sight lines. Ms. Nazzal
28 summarized the discussion on the decision to keep the dog beach at Centennial Beach.
29

30 Bill Loftus, SPACECO Principal and member of the firm's executive leadership team, described his
31 background and summarized the scope of their work with regard to the design access to Centennial Beach.
32 He then responded to the concerns raised with regard to the ADA compliant ramp and explained the
33 design process in substantial detail. Ms. Nazzal provided further information with regard to the references
34 applied to the project in terms of ADA accessibility.
35

36 Peter Lemmon, Kimley Horn, summarized the parking and public access components of the plan as well
37 as the applicable Comprehensive Plan pillars and special use standards. He then referred to the suggested
38 conditional options for approval if the Commission Members did not agree the proposal met the special
39 use standards. Adam Simon, Park District attorney, referred to the numerous concerns raised by the public
40 which he stated are not identified in the special use standards or relevant to the scope of the
41 Commission's approval purview. He then explained in detail how the proposal met all of the special use
42 standards. Mr. Simon concluded by stating the application represented a thoughtful, expert-led design
43 which is responsive to community needs and input and weighed the long-term benefit of investing in the
44 lakefront versus taking no action. He then asked if there were any questions.
45

46 Chairperson Danley asked the Commission Members if they had any questions. No questions were raised
47 at this time. She then called the matter in for discussion.
48

1 Mr. Bradley summarized the ZBA's consideration of the application of the plan presented in that they
2 were in favor of the steep slope exceptions and that they felt standard nos. 1,2, 4 and 5 were not met
3 with the testimony lacking in that regard to move it forward. He identified several of the grave concerns
4 raised with regard to the pier and the attention it would draw, safety and the encouragement of
5 interaction between dogs and children with the project not benefitting a majority of the residents. Mr.
6 Bradley concluded that the ZBA voted unanimously against a recommendation 0-7 and that the plan as
7 presented left open the burden to complete their standards.
8

9 Ms. Case stated based on the testimony and comments, as a whole, she is not convinced that the steep
10 slope zoning exception for the walkway is a good plan and lacked a detailed engineering plan with regard
11 to a risk mitigation strategy to ensure year-round safety for ADA users and presented physical risks to all
12 users. She described the 10-foot-wide ramp as being massive in scale which appeared better on paper
13 than in practice. Ms. Case then referred to page 10 and commented the proposed beach improvements
14 which are not consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the proposed pier would install a significant
15 structure into the lakefront which has historically been preserved as a passive-use space. She also referred
16 to the various concerns raised relating to parking, safety, etc. and described the proposed project as an
17 overreach. Ms. Case then stated with regard to the standards, the applicant did not adequately address
18 how the proposed pier is necessary and stated there would be an increased public safety risk and there is
19 not a sufficient emergency or safety plan. She stated standard nos. 1, 4 and 5 were not met and the
20 proposal conflicted with the Village's shoreline and environmental goals. Ms. Case also stated the
21 hardship for not having a dog beach in this location has not been met and the proposal is incompatible
22 with the neighborhood character. She concluded she would not recommend voting in favor of the
23 proposal.
24

25 Mr. Simon referred to prior testimony with regard to lifeguards and the safety program they planned to
26 implement. Chairperson Danley confirmed the Commission is now deliberating and not taking additional
27 comments.
28

29 Mr. Alt stated the issue is safety and the proposed pier would not be safe and he would vote against an
30 approval recommendation for the proposal. He described the proposed plan as unsafe. Mr. Subawalla
31 agreed with the comments made and stated he is not convinced there is not a more subtle and effective
32 solution. He also referred to the difficulty to navigate the ramp and commented he did not believe the
33 effect on the neighbors in terms of the scale, proportion, etc. was addressed by the applicant.
34

35 Mr. Enck agreed with the comments made and stated he is concerned with regard to standard no. 1 in
36 terms of safety and although there is a necessity for erosion to be addressed, he referred to the walkway
37 and commented it did not serve a positive purpose. He stated there would be safety risks especially when
38 lifeguards are off duty as well as the difficulty of ensuring security at night. Mr. Enck then referred to
39 standard no. 2 and giving up half of Centennial Beach for those who have private beach access and having
40 a dog beach would limit the use of half the beach for that specific purpose. He concluded by stating the
41 safety aspect is the biggest concern.
42

43 Ms. Kunkle stated she appreciated the comments and testimony and referred to the standards the
44 Commission is to abide by. She stated while she has concerns, she did not like characterizations that are
45 presented without a factual basis. Ms. Kunkle described the project as over-engineered and stated while
46 she understood the applicant's attempt to balance the steep slope issues with residential uses, she is also
47 concerned with the proposed pier and described it as an attractive nuisance. She suggested the project
48 be scaled back to be more in line with its surroundings.

1 Chairperson Danley stated while they agreed that Centennial Beach needed to be improved and
2 protected, it appeared that the proposed plan did not satisfy the standards. She referred to the
3 presentation as a dichotomy in that if the proposed plan is not approved, nothing will be done, which is
4 not what the Commission is saying. Chairperson Danley stated the Commission understood the proposed
5 plan and it is not an issue of a lack of understanding on the part of the Commission or lack of education
6 on the issues. She referred to the amount of work the Commission spent on the Comprehensive Plan and
7 the standards. Chairperson Danley agreed with the comments made and stated the proposal did not meet
8 the standards for granting a special use permit. She then stated with regard to the Park District's goal of
9 getting the project moving forward, the Village Attorney prepared findings of fact for the Commission to
10 review and vote on to help the applicant move through the process.

11
12 Peter Friedman provided the findings of fact to the applicant for their review. Chairperson Danley asked
13 the Commission Members if they had any questions. No questions were raised at this time. Mr. Friedman
14 then explained the findings and recommendation and noted a motion to approve and adopt the findings
15 and recommendations of the Commission for Case No. 24-08-SU to recommend to the Village President
16 and Trustees denial of the special use and exceptions requested in the application for the proposed
17 improvements and exception improvements. Ms. Case moved to make the motion as stated by Mr.
18 Friedman. Mr. Alt seconded the motion.

19
20 Mr. Simon asked the Commission to separate the motion for the exceptions from the special use permit.
21 Mr. Friedman informed the applicant the Commission is recommending the denial of both.

22
23 A vote was taken and the motion unanimously passed, 6 to 0:

24 AYES: Alt, Case, Danley, Enck, Kunkle, Subawalla

25 NAYS: None

26 NON-VOTING: Apatoff, Bradley

27
28 Chairperson Danley advised the applicant that they would next present to the DRB followed by the Village
29 Council.

30
31 **New Business.**

32 a. June 25, 2025, Meeting – Quorum Check.

33 The Commission Members discussed their availability.

34
35 **Adjournment:**

36 Chairperson Danley asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Bradley. The
37 motion was seconded by Ms. Kunkle. A vote was taken and the motion unanimously passed, 7 to 0:

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

39 NAYS: None

40 NON-VOTING: Apatoff

41 The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

42
43 Respectfully submitted,

44
45 Antionette Johnson

46 Recording Secretary