



MINUTES

President and Board of Trustees
Village of Arlington Heights
Committee-of-the-Whole
Virtual Meeting
Arlington Heights Village Hall
33 S. Arlington Heights Road
Arlington Heights, IL 60005
January 25, 2021
7:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this Committee-of-the-Whole meeting will be held virtually, which permits the public to fully participate via their computers or by using their phones.

To participate in the virtual meeting, please review these instructions.

If members of the public prefer, they can comment or ask a question pertaining to the meeting by emailing rhume@vah.com by 3 p.m. on January 25. Please limit your email to 200 words and if your question relates to a specific Agenda item, please note that in the email. Emails will be read at the meeting

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

President Hayes and the following Trustees responded to roll: Padovani, Baldino, Schwingbeck, Rosenberg, LaBedz, Scaletta, Canty, and Tinaglia.

Also present were: Randy Recklaus, Nancy Kluz, Charles Witherington-Perkins, Michael Mertes, Cris Papierniak and Becky Hume.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

President Hayes acknowledged, with sadness, the passing of Jack Whisler, a longtime public servant in Arlington Heights.

- A. Arlington Alfresco/Summer Event Evaluation Discussion

President Hayes introduced the Arlington Alfresco/Summer Event Evaluation Discussion. He said it was difficult to predict where the Village will be in relation to Covid-19. The Board will do the best they can with their planning and processes.

Presentation

Mr. Recklaus explained the pandemic forced the Village to think about its Downtown differently. There is no indication when the Village will reach Stage 5, whereby we can have large gatherings. The immunization process has been slow so far and it is difficult to assess where we will be in the summer. Most communities are making only tentative plans at this time for special events. Frontier Days is also making tentative plans.

Today, we'll be discussing continuing Arlington Alfresco for this year and it's potential in future years. This also leads to the discussing of other downtown events. There will need to be a sustainable way to fund Alfresco if it moves forward on a permanent basis, as it is a costly endeavor.

Mr. Perkins said in April 2020, Staff evaluated a series of business assistance accommodations as well as opportunities for increased outdoor dining for restaurants. Options included full street closures, half street closures, urban island dining in select locations, and the use of private parking areas for additional outdoor dining. These opportunities and ideas were explored as downtown sidewalks are too narrow to accommodate social distancing and outdoor dining.

Staff is looking at landscaping and enhancing the gateways to the Alfresco area moving forward. Improved signage and dressed up entrance ways would improve the ambiance. To help with these costs, the Village Board adopted a resolution authorizing the Planning and Community Development Department to submit a \$2M ITEP grant application for enhanced streetscape improvements within the Arlington Alfresco and downtown area

Next, staff looked at financial affects. It cost the Village, not including administrative staff time, \$205,000 of which \$71,000 was a one-time cost. The set up and take down cost could be managed for about \$30,000 in the future. Weekly maintenance is estimated between 2,000 to \$3,000. In a non-pandemic year, the costs are estimated at a low of \$110,756 to a high of \$219,764.

Mr. Perkins reported data was obtained for 11 downtown retailers from April through September for 2020 and 2019. Four retailers saw increased sales during this time period over 2019 sales while all others experienced declines. April through May saw (23.4) % decline in sales year over year while June through September saw a 1.7% increase for the group of businesses. The Downtown Restaurants experienced various prohibitions for indoor dining while other businesses were allowed limited capacity for customer sales. A total of 38 restaurants and entertainment venues were analyzed. Between

April and May 2020 their sales declined (53.4) % or just over \$3 million. Between June and October all downtown restaurant sales increased in 2020 over 2019 by 4.7%, although Non-Alfresco restaurants as a group declined (11.1) %

Four surveys provided feedback from the community, Downtown residents, customers and Mane Event/Taste of Arlington Participants.

Community Feedback (53 responses)

- 64.4 % responded that the impact of Arlington Alfresco on their business was Very Positive or Positive.
- 84.1% responded yes to Arlington Alfresco as an annual experience.
- 43% preferred starting in March, 25% April and 20% May.
- 48.7% responded yes to live music every day of the week.
- 40.5% had concerns regarding skate boarding and bike riding.
- 37.8% had concerns about lack of mask wearing.

Downtown Resident Survey (485 responses)

- 91.4% responded that Arlington Alfresco was Very Positive or Positive, only 3.3% were negative.
- 85.1% responded Arlington Alfresco should be an annual experience.
- 85.6% cited Greater Downtown energy as benefits.
- 83.7% cited Unique Ambience as benefits.
- 62.9% cited less vehicular traffic as benefits.
- 78.5% had no concerns about live music from restaurants, 6.8% had significant concerns. Residents in Metro Lofts had the most concerns about music.
- 80.7% had no concerns about traffic, 5.3% had significant concerns.
- 33.1% had some concerns about skateboarding and bike riding.
- 281 residents responded that their out of town guests "loved" Arlington Alfresco.

Customer Survey (5,963 responses)

- 90.5% attended Arlington Alfresco.
- 98.3% responded that their Arlington Alfresco experiences were Very Positive or Positive.
- 0.7% responded negatively.
- 94.9% responded Arlington Alfresco should be an annual experience.
- 36.3% cited some concern over lack of mask wearing.
- 21.5% cited some concern about skateboarding and bike riding.
- 77.9% had no concern about parking.
- 3.2% had significant concerns about parking.
- 95.7% had no concern regarding live music.
- 0.7% had significant concern over live music.
- Very positive responses were received regarding ambiance, downtown energy and improved pedestrian walkability.
- 77.4% were Arlington Heights residents of which 10.9% were downtown residents indicating some possible overlap between this survey and the downtown resident survey.

Mane Event and Taste of Arlington Heights Participant Survey (19 responses)

- 63.1% responded that the events were worthwhile for their business to participate in.
- 26.3% indicated the events were somewhat worthwhile for business participation.
- 47.3% derived direct sales or significant business from participating.
- 31.5% responded cancelling events would significantly impact their business

Mr. Perkins noted that improvements suggested were: a greater police presence/enforcement, enhanced entries, improved streetscape and better pedestrian signage. The Village Green and Wing Street Condominiums do not want businesses or trucks using their private loading area and parking lot. Concerns also included: parking, mask wearing, bicycles, skateboarding, and pet walking.

As is evidenced by the survey results, a strong majority of respondents would like this to be an annual event. The Mane Event/Taste of Arlington is also an important event. There was less support for the Promenade of Art but perhaps a new location could be developed. Businesses reported that the Art Fest actually hurts their business. The Sounds of Summer could be conducted in addition to Alfresco and Downtown residents and businesses indicated they would like to see that. There is continued concern from Metro lofts residents regarding music noise. The Chamber would like to see Taste of Arlington/Mane Event to continue as it is a large revenue source for them.

Mr. Recklaus said staff recommends that the Village Board provide input into the Arlington Alfresco evaluation, and authorize the Village Manager to implement and execute the appropriate documents necessary to implement Arlington Alfresco as follows:

1. Approve Arlington Alfresco as an annual experience/event and to be continually monitored and reviewed.

A. For 2021 during the pandemic allow Arlington Alfresco to begin mid-March, weather permitting and conclude November 2. If the Board concurs with a mid-March opening staff recommends further zoom meetings with the businesses and downtown residents before finalizing said start date. Allow live music subject to the Village Managers approval and modifications. Staff will continue to monitor live music during the pandemic and if problems persist then option b (on page 10) shall be required of restaurants. Staff will also develop a security plan and budget.

B. In non-pandemic years commencement should be mid-May. Staff will develop criteria for live music days, hours and other standards to be implemented post pandemic for Board discussion with feedback with downtown stakeholders. Staff will also examine and develop alternatives for security in a non-pandemic environment.

C. Concur with continued allocation of resources and expenses to

maintain and manage Arlington Alfresco as outlined above. Including staff's resolution on issues pertaining to operations.

D. Acceptance that a future budget amendment will be needed for the purchase and implementation of short-term improvements to the entries, signage and other reoccurring operational costs.

2. Acceptance that Mane and Taste of Arlington Heights will no longer occur as normal. Discussions should continue to determine appropriate alternatives. Direct staff to work with the Special Events Commission, Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders on the development and analysis of alternative summer event concepts for Board consideration.

3. Sounds of Summer would continue in non-pandemic years and subject to further discussions with the Special Events Commission and other stakeholders.

4. Acknowledgement that the pandemic makes it unlikely that large events can occur during a significant portion of 2021 and the Village will need to make decisions fairly soon on whether or not any events (other than Alfresco) should be cancelled in 2021. Staff will continue to monitor State rules and will need to be in a position to make recommendations on cancelling individual events as the situation dictates.

5. Re-authorize the administration to waive minimum parking requirements for outdoor dining for private property, as well as waive other code requirements, for the remainder of 2021 during the Coronavirus pandemic to assist businesses outside of the Arlington Alfresco pedestrian area.

6. Continue to encourage restaurants outside of the Alfresco pedestrian area to develop outdoor dining concepts and pursue cooperative ways to promote all businesses.

Mr. Recklaus said staff would rather take the risk of having Downtown closed down because of some early snow than miss some nice warm weather days during March. He noted that Public Works has developed a concept that is workable. As far as music, compliance got better as the summer went on. If we have problems, then we suggest going with limits on the music for certain days/times. Staff will develop a cost-effective option for police security. It makes sense to also explore developing a plan for non-pandemic years.

Village Board Comments

President Hayes liked the suggested motions and recommendations as a road map. He said he is in general agreement to proceed with Arlington Alfresco this year in March but would like to consider an earlier end date in mid-September for an end of the year event like Taste of Arlington/Mane Event. He didn't have a problem with eliminating the Promenade of Art. Trustee Tinaglia recommended starting early enough to make it viable. He

agreed with Mayor Hayes that mid-September could be the end of Alfresco to allow for the celebration at the end of the season, perhaps a three-day event. Hopefully there will be more indoor dining by then.

Trustee Canty also agreed with starting earlier and suggested a phased approach like a soft opening in the spring, which leads to a traditional summer kickoff and a traditional end of the season and a soft closing to give the restaurants Downtown as much use of the outside space as they can. She also suggested a stronger emphasis to have residents walk/bike into town during Alfresco. Increased bike parking would help alleviate the stress of lost parking.

Trustee Padovani said Alfresco was a bright light in a dark year. He said the Village should build on its new brand and image. He asked Staff to improve on the rough edges, especially around closing time. Trustee Padovani suggested that before we put a lot of investment into the streetscape, look at the numbers one year after Covid to make sure it is worth it in a non Covid environment. He said the end of the year event is important because it is a showcase for all the businesses of Arlington, not just the Downtown.

Trustee Schwingbeck said starting early is important. As far as the end date, once Alfresco is broken down, that is, it. It would be important for Alfresco to stay open as long as possible. He suggested moving the other events to another area of town. He would like to give the other restaurants a chance to showcase, but not at the expense of the Downtown restaurants. There were a lot of rules on the signs. If we are going to have rules, we need to enforce them.

President Hayes said if we can have an end of the season event, the Village would be in Phase 5 and the restaurants would be fully open and not need an outside dining component.

Trustee Baldino agreed with Trustee Schwingbeck. He said the ambiance and draw are important for Alfresco. The Alfresco atmosphere should be kept going as long as possible. The end of the year event is important, but let's set it up in lot E, close to Alfresco, it could look like one big event.

Trustee LaBedz said she would like a greater and stronger police presence at closing and afterwards. People gather and get loud on the tables set up after closing time. We need to put money to have that covered. She wants staff to focus on traffic issues, drop-offs, pick-ups and stations for Uber/Lyft drivers. Trustee LaBedz said she is okay with a mid-March start and recommended going into early October. Parking will need to be addressed as commuters will be coming back. She said she was concerned with accessibility for those with mobility issues. Trustee LaBedz supported working on the delivery issues. The cleanliness and aesthetics are important to her and she was glad to see something more attractive on the barricades. She highlighted the need to clean up things like cigarette butts and noted that business owners will have to assist.

Trustee LaBedz said she would like there to be equity for businesses outside of Downtown so that the Village is helping them too. Easing parking restrictions makes sense. She said she did not want to hear complaints on music. There was some improvement at the end of the summer when the battle of the bands got toned down, but she is still really concerned about it. She stressed it is important for all to coexist.

Trustee Scaletta said he wants to see Alfresco continue this year. There was a parking issue Downtown prior to Alfresco when we had 100% occupancy inside restaurants. Now there is improved signage in the parking lot and real counts going on. There will be a lot of value in the data going into 2022. Trustee Scaletta asked where the commuter parking went. Mr. Perkins said during the pandemic commuter parking was significantly reduced. The lots west of Vail and the garages absorbed the parking. There is adequate garage space available for commuter parking regardless of Alfresco.

Trustee Scaletta agreed that additional bike racks would help and encourage people to ride bikes downtown. He would like to have handicapped and elderly drop off spaces identified as those people did not participate much last year, but this year will be different. He said he was willing to start in mid-March as long as all the businesses understand what goes with it. Trustee Scaletta said Alfresco is now a brand. He said now is the time to use Village reserves, it makes sense to spend \$200,000 to save our Downtown. Lastly, he agreed that Alfresco doesn't need to go through to November, but he wasn't sure when the sweet spot was. There is an opportunity for some kind of Oktoberfest or to combine it with the Autumn Harvest event. He is concerned about moving the Taste of Arlington outside of Downtown because people need a good place for people to congregate and businesses set up a temporary kitchen outside of their restaurants. If you move it, they would have to relocate to another area and abandon Alfresco.

Trustee Rosenberg said he was in favor of starting in mid-March. If they want to go to November, he is okay with that. He wasn't sure it was right to have an annual event which would divert restaurant resources away from their outdoor dining at that time. He agreed with Trustee LaBedz on increasing security and cleanliness. He also agreed that we can forgo the Promenade of Art.

Trustee Tinaglia said only a handful of places sponsored music. If it becomes more widely acceptable, it would get loud. He asked how this would be handled. Mr. Recklaus said Sounds of Summer probably won't happen in 2021. Outdoor music was allowed in 2020 because it was pivotal to certain business. If we are in a non-pandemic environment, music can go back inside. On non-Sounds of Summer nights, the Village could be open to music, but that would be after 2021.

Trustee Schwingbeck said music used to be indoors for patrons only. When it comes outdoors, it should still be only for their patrons. You shouldn't hear music 5 restaurants away. Mr. Recklaus said staff will work with them. For

downtown residents, this was not a widespread issue.

Citizen's Comments

Metropolis' Executive Director Joe Keefe said they enthusiastically support Alfresco. Metropolis hopes to return to live production in June or July.

Jim Bertucci said the street space of Campbell between Dunton and Evergreen might be a good place to station "Taste" restaurants that are not in Alfresco. From a parking standpoint, the parking shortage was a perception rather than a reality. There were plenty of spaces in the parking lots. Once the streets were closed, suddenly, parking wasn't a problem.

Dave Parulo of Meet Chicago Northwest congratulated the Village on a successful pivot. He said a very unique brand was created and raised the image of the Village. It's a no brainer to keep it going in 2021. In the long term, this is a unique situation, and he suggested leaning into it. He said to consider wayfaring signage and infrastructure.

Marilyn Smith of Metrolofts Board said they support Arlington Alfresco, but are concerned about the bike and mask regulations. She noted that with tables and chairs on sidewalks, some residents had difficulty going from the parking garage to their building. She said operators need to make sure chairs are not crowding the sidewalk to honor the ADA guidelines. As far as music, even if it just our buildings' concern, it is important. She said they would like speakers at each individual table and it should be required if there is outdoor music. If self-monitoring had worked last year, we would not still be discussing it. She said it shouldn't be us always having to complain.

President Hayes said the staff recommendation is for staff to monitor the noise, not to have it be self-monitoring.

Laurie Mitchell, Chair of the Special Events Commission, said the Commission wants to see Alfresco continue. They will help host all the events that they are able and are willing to make changes to their events in the future.

Diane Woznicki said if you compare the noise, trash, traffic and late nights, Alfresco was not worse than summer nights in previous years. This is the first year she didn't call the police after late night shenanigans. She thinks Alfresco should go all year round and staff could be creative with different kinds of events.

Jon Ridler of the Chamber of Commerce agrees with starting it as early as possible. He recommended planning towards Phases 4 and 5. The Chamber will need to make plans quickly as things will get booked up. The Taste of Arlington and Mane Event give so many businesses exposure. Thirteen participants were outside of the Alfresco footprint. The event is not primarily

a fundraiser for the Chamber, the money raised supports the businesses. The sponsors cover the costs. Mr. Ridler said it could be a 3-day festival but the Chamber needs a financial commitment from the Village of \$75,000. He suggested the third day feature non-profits and local artists. The Chamber would like to discuss options, but needs the Village to make the decision quickly to plan the event.

President Hayes said he was not willing to disrupt Alfresco prior to the fall. He said the Board won't be able to answer Mr. Ridler's questions this evening but will continue to talk and plan for some kind of event.

Trustee Rosenberg said there is a possibility of showcasing the outside-of-downtown businesses and restaurants. Booths for them could be set up on a weekly basis as a feature. He said he was not willing to commit funds to something that might not occur to avoid losing deposits and the like.

Mr. Ridler said the volume in one weekend is not the same as the numbers coming through for a festival. At Taste there are 10,000-15,000 people coming through.

Cathy Powers, President of the Wing Street Condo Association, said her 215 residents agree with continuing Alfresco. Their worries were speeding on Wing and the many near accidents. She said there was increased garbage in their parking lot and a lot of late-night visitors who made noise. They sustained damage to the surface of parking lot from delivery trucks to the restaurants and some damage to their garage. They would like those issues addressed in future years.

Debbie Smart represents several buildings Downtown and is on the Campbell Court Board. She said Alfresco will not be the only game in town in coming years. Other towns will be creating alfresco situations. No one knows what people will do post pandemic. Our Village was smart in making these buildings mixed use but there needs to be neighborhood balance. Acoustic or venue-only music would solve most of the problems regarding noise. Trash in and around the area needs to be addressed. Masks, glass, party favors, and such were strewn about. The Village Green loading zone had a \$70,000 repair to their lot due to weight of trucks for an extended period of time. That area will be closed this summer to have this work done. She said the devil is in the details. Alfresco needs comprehensive oversight to prevent future injuries.

Chip Brooks of Hey Nonny said Alfresco saved them. It reflected so well on the Village and government. He agreed with Ms. Smart regarding trash and balance. He said they are working with the Village on sound and did change their system and conversations can be had while patrons are eating. If it snows, they will be closed in March. Alfresco creates a new environment that allows for new ways of thinking about annual events.

Discussion of Motions

Trustee Scaletta recommended a close look at parking. Right now, Metropolis is not open, the Ballroom is closed and restaurants are at 25%. There is plenty now, but once we are back to 100% occupancy, that is when it will be a challenge. He asked staff to talk to the restaurants regarding employee parking. There will be more staff next year than last year.

1. Trustee Padovani moved, seconded by Trustee Tinaglia to direct Staff to draft operational preparations and an amendment to the 2021 Budget to restart Arlington Alfresco for 2021 beginning mid-March, weather permitting and conclude November 2 (*or an earlier date if a downtown festival is to be planned post Alfresco*) as described in the Staff Memo, including the development of a security plan.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. Trustee Canty moved, seconded by Trustee LaBedz to waive of minimum parking requirements for outdoor dining for private property, and other code requirements, as needed, for the remainder of 2021 during the Coronavirus pandemic to assist businesses outside of the Arlington Alfresco pedestrian area and encourage them to develop outdoor dining concepts and pursue cooperative ways to promote all businesses.

The motion passed unanimously.

Trustee Scaletta asked if Mr. Recklaus still had the power to shut down the music. Mr. Recklaus said he would prefer to work with businesses. If there is one offender, he wouldn't want to punish everyone. Trustee Scaletta asked if the motion from last summer still in effect. Mr. Recklaus said option B was added so the businesses understand what happens if we can't get this work. Wouldn't be jumping to B unless it was a widespread problem. President Hayes said the motion had enough to be effective.

Trustee Rosenberg asked for clarification, there will be music 7 days a week, unless there is a problem, then it could be limited limits it to Thursday-Sunday with specific hours. Is it still subject to the manager's approval and modifications? Would Mr. Recklaus have the general ability to shut down music at a location? Mr. Recklaus said option B is a default failsafe. The hope is that will motivate businesses to keep it manageable.

Trustee Scaletta said he wanted Mr. Recklaus to have the ability to stop/cease music at a locations or locations.

Trustee Baldino noted that this is only until we reach Stage 5.

Trustee Schwingbeck said the motion allows any restaurant to have live music. Are there restrictions? Mr. Recklaus said it will be the same as last

year, but new rules can be established. This is a grant of authority between board meetings. Mr. Perkins said music will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

3. Trustee Scaletta moved, seconded by Trustee LaBedz to allow outdoor live music within the Alfresco zone subject to the Village Manager's approval and modifications. Staff will continue to monitor live music during the pandemic and if problems persist, pursue option B shall be required of restaurants. The Village Manager retains the authority granted by the Village Board last summer to halt music in a venue if it is deemed too loud and the operator is not in compliance with the sound directives.

Mr. Recklaus explained that staff wants an idea of what this might cost moving forward when it is not an emergency response. This would direct staff to come up with multiple options moving forward and what will it mean in the budget on a permanent basis. Staff will develop different scenarios.

Trustee Tinaglia said it is important to have a financial plan above and beyond this summer so when we are voting in November, it is more real. Mr. Recklaus said the budget is not developed in a vacuum. To put together a balanced budget, it's important that the Board understand this would be part of an overall plan.

Trustee LaBedz suggested that early May is a better time to capture Mother's Day. There was general discussion about the best time for Alfresco to start. As this is a budgeting plan, the timing can be modified and staff can present different scenarios.

4. Trustee LaBedz moved, seconded by Trustee Canty to develop an operational plan and budget for a post pandemic annual Alfresco concept beginning 2022 commencing in May including criteria for live music, hours, security and other standards. The motion passed unanimously.

Trustee Tinaglia said he hoped the Special Events Committee, Arlington Economic Alliance and Chamber can all be involved so that proper planning can happen for the end of year event. President Hayes agreed and said the September date gives all enough time. Trustee Baldino noted that the AEA said they would not make a recommendation unless asked. Mr. Recklaus said the AEA is considered one of the stakeholders and will be included in the discussion.

5. Trustee Scaletta moves, seconded by Trustee Baldino to direct staff to work with the Special Events Commission, Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders on the development and cost and operational analysis of alternative downtown special event concepts to take place at the conclusion of Arlington Alfresco on an annual basis and, if possible, in 2021 for Board approval.

The motion passed unanimously.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

VI.ADJOURNMENT

**Trustee Padovani moved to adjourn at 9:55 p.m. Trustee Canty seconded the motion.
The motion carried.**