

**MINUTES OF THE VIDEO GAMING TASK FORCE OF THE
VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS
September 24, 2025**

Chairperson Jim Bertucci called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Bertucci, Village Trustee & Task Force Chairperson
Tom Schwingbeck, Village Trustee, Mayor Pro Tem & Task Force Co-chairperson
Diana Mikula, Deputy Village Manager & Staff Liaison
Terry Ennes, Plan Commission
Brian Roginski, Owner of Cortland's Garage & Member of Arlington Economic Alliance
Peter Demarakis, Owner of Jimmy D's
Bill Cooney, AH Resident & Retired Dir. of Community Development in Mt. Prospect

TASK FORCE MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Mayor Jim Tinaglia

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. The goal of this task force is to issue a report on the pros and cons and factors for the Village Board to consider regarding the Village permitting local establishments to engage in video gaming.**

Task Force members introduced themselves.

Mayor Tinaglia explained that the Village has a list of several important decisions for the community to make. Therefore, Mayor Tinaglia asked different Trustees to work on these work groups/task forces. The purpose of these groups is not to find the solution or to make a recommendation, but rather to find the answers – the pros, cons and expectations. The members of the work groups have experiences that will help gather the answers and they also know who to reach out to in order to gather the information. Then the information can be submitted to the Village Board, without a recommendation, and then each Trustee can then make their own decision on whether or not to support each issue.

Mayor Tinaglia also explained that all comments and input are welcome. He invites the community to be part of the process. The goal of this group, as well as the other groups, is to find the facts, without a recommendation, and to be transparent with the community. Mayor Tinaglia thanked everyone for participating.

Chairperson Bertucci mentioned that Trustee Tom Schwingbeck will be added as the co-chair of this Task Force.

Co-chairperson Bertucci read into the record the letter from Village Manager Randy Recklaus to the Village Board that outlines this task force.

Mayor Tinaglia asked me to forward the following directive regarding the Video Gaming Taskforce. Diana Mikula, as Staff liaison can work with the Chair on an agenda, meeting room location, and date and getting it on our system.

Goal- *To issue a report on the pro's and con's and factors for the Village Board to consider regarding the Village permitting local establishments to engage in video gaming to the Village Board. The Village Board is not seeking a recommendation on the issue, merely a report.*

Scope of Work- *Group will discuss the issue of Video Gaming in Arlington Heights, examining existing sources of information such as existing financial data, existing region surveys, and the perspectives of members of the group to reach the goal, and identify other sources of information that the Village Board/Staff should consider before making a decision. Issues such as signage regulations, acceptable locations, revenue, administration of the project, and police enforcement may be covered.*

Deliverable/Timeline- *Issuance of a report that meets the goal within the defined scope of work. Report should be issued no later than November 30, 2025.*

Co-chairperson Bertucci summarized the rest of the letter indicting that it lists the initial members of the Task Force and it mentions how the task force was created per the advice of the Village Attorney.

Mayor Tinaglia asked the Task Force to give the Village Board updates and then opened the floor for questions for him.

An audience member asked how extensive Video Gaming will be. Mayor Tinaglia envisions that IF this is approved, he suspects video gaming would be licensed to specific locations - similar to liquor licenses where individual businesses would need to apply, and be approved, for a license.

An audience member asked if the community is allowed to give input or if the Village Board will just make the decision. Mayor Tinaglia emphasized that community engagement is encouraged at both these Task Force meetings and at Village Board meetings. He further explained that this is an open dialogue so the information can be gathered, the Village can learn from our neighbors and the Village can get this right. The plan is to talk to neighboring towns that have Video Gaming (their Police Departments, their Finance Directors, and their establishment owners who are licensed for Video Gaming) so we know what we could expect.

An audience member mentioned that having slot machines at the track, years ago, was voted down. Mayor Tinaglia explained that that was a different situation since it was one specific space.

An audience member, Keith Moens, mentioned that the process for forming these groups doesn't follow the code and should be more democratically formed. Mayor Tinaglia mentioned again that these groups are open to the community for their input and he is following past practice.

Co-chairperson Bertucci asked Deputy Village Manager Diana Mikula to review procedures for this task force to follow. Ms. Mikula summarized that the Task Force is not the same as a Special Committee as identified in Village Code but these task force groups do need to

follow the Open Meetings Act. Therefore, the agendas will be posted and published to the public. There are agendas, minutes and reports in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, as well as the opportunity for Public Comment at each meeting.

Chairperson Bertucci said he would like to give Peter Demarakis and Brian Roginski the opportunity to talk about what they would like to see and then have Bill Cooney give some background from Mt. Prospect. Then the group can define where they want to go, what the next steps are, what kind of information they have and what they can access.

Mr. Demarakis explained that the restaurant industry is a tough industry and one must constantly adapt. A supplemental income, not at the expense of downgrading their business, would be a benefit. He has regular customers that come in every day but they now go to other establishments for video gaming first and then come to his business. He feels that he is losing revenue to other businesses, not just because of the money spent on gaming, but because of what they would have had to eat or drink at his business while gaming. Since video gaming is in towns all around us, it is affecting his business.

Co-chairperson Bertucci asked Ms. Mikula about the American Legion. Ms. Mikula confirmed that the American Legion has a Video Gaming License and is permitted to have a maximum of six slots. She further explained that this is a state decision that allows Fraternal organizations to have a license and that pre-empts the Village ordinance. Co-chairperson Schwingbeck asked if the revenue from those machines go to different charities. Ms. Mikula will look into the revenue side.

Mr. Roginski agrees with Mr. Demarakis and said that his business is experiencing the same issues as Mr. Demarkakis' restaurant. Customers have the option of going across the street where Video Gaming is allowed, so he is losing that business and those customers. The supplemental income from video gaming would also help his business financially, rather than having to add more tables. Mr. Roginski mentioned that he agrees with the State's rules which require the gaming to be in a private area or upstairs and that people must be 21 or older. He believes businesses can make it look classy and the income will help the Village, too.

Mr. Cooney gave some background on what was done in Mt. Prospect. He explained that the Chamber of Commerce asked the Board for Video Gaming years ago, but originally the Mt. Prospect Board voted against it. Ms. Mikula said that the state adopted the Illinois Gaming Act in 2009 so Mr. Cooney thinks the idea of Video Gaming in Mt. Prospect was first presented 10-15 years ago. The Chamber of Commerce pursued the idea with the Village Board. Mt. Prospect's Board set up rules that Video Gaming is only allowed in restaurants that had been operating for over a year in their town. Each business was reviewed individually and the liquor licenses were modified to allow gaming. There were approximately 20 restaurants with those special licenses and the top restaurants were each making over \$20,000 per month. Smaller restaurants made about \$2,000 per month.

Mr. Cooney said that the Administrative Assistant in the Village Manager's Office runs the liquor licensing process and worked through the individual applications. She and the Building Commissioner conducted site visits. Mr. Cooney is not aware of any problems. The only negatives he's heard is that some people don't like gambling and they don't like looking at slot machines. He said that some restaurants aren't a good fit for it, but for others it makes sense.

Co-chairperson Bertucci asked Mr. Cooney if there was a limit in Mt. Prospect to the number of establishments that could have a Video Gaming license. Mr. Cooney replied that there wasn't a limit except that each business could have up to six machines, per State rules.

Co-chairperson Bertucci then asked Mr. Cooney about the tax revenue. Mr. Cooney explained that the "pot" is split roughly 30-30-30 between the state, the restaurant and the Video Gaming machine company, and then the Village gets 5%-10%.

Co-chairperson Bertucci asked Ms. Mikula to give some background. Ms. Mikula stated that the Gaming Act was enacted in 2009 by the State. The State regulates the Video Gaming Terminals (VGTs) and there is a Gaming Board. Municipalities receive 5% of the net income from VGTs. There may also be licensing fees, annual fees, etc. Every municipality around Arlington Heights does have Video Gaming. Ms. Mikula read the following information to give an idea of municipal revenues: Buffalo Grove has 13 establishments with Video Gaming, Palatine has 11 establishments, Rolling Meadows has 8 establishments, Wheeling has 28 establishments, Schaumburg has 22 establishments with \$289,776 in revenue generated in 2024, Mt. Prospect has 23 establishments and generated \$349,872 in revenue in 2024, Elk Grove Village has 23 establishments and generated \$655,507 in revenue in 2024 and Hoffman Estates has 31 establishments and generated \$725,826 in revenue in 2024. The Average Municipal Share for 2024 from all of those municipalities with their 5% share was \$417,926.

Ms. Mikula further explained that the establishment must have a liquor license for consumption on premise. Video Gaming is restricted to persons 21 or above. The establishment can't be within 100 feet of a school or place of worship, which mirrors the liquor license requirements. The municipality has some input as to the placement of the VGTs since they have to be in an area for persons 21 years or older and the entrance to that area must be in the sight of an employee who is over 21 years old.

Terry Ennes asked if the State has a website where the public can look at the revenue generated. Ms. Mikula responded that the information is available on the Illinois Gaming Board Website which shows the different revenue sources.

Ms. Mikula commented that over the years, many establishments in Arlington Heights have asked for Video Gaming and have expressed that customers are going to other towns. She mentioned that just today a new liquor license holder asked about Video Gaming and a few days ago a gas station reached out about having a gaming café.

Co-chairperson Schwingbeck asked Mr. Cooney if they controlled signage in Mt. Prospect. Mr. Cooney answered that at first the Village didn't allow any signage. Later on, they allowed small signage, but no flashing lights or banners.

Mr. Roginski presented documents with his research about regional benchmarking which estimates that if Arlington Heights licenses 25 establishments for Video Gaming, the projection is \$487,000 in one year that would go to the Village of Arlington Heights. Wheeling, with 29 establishments is projected to generate \$652,000 which shows that adding a few more establishments will generate more revenue.

Co-chairperson Schwingbeck asked about licensing fees. Mr. Cooney explained that there is a specific gaming license fee, much like liquor licenses, and there is a per terminal tax as well. Ms. Mikula commented that in Buffalo Grove, there is a one-time \$250 initial application fee and the annual license fee is \$1000 per terminal.

Co-chairperson Schwingbeck asked about compliance checks to ensure those using the machines are not underage. Mr. Cooney confirmed that they do these checks.

The Task Force will formulate next steps.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS - none

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Audience member Jim Elgas said that a bar in Buffalo Grove used to have “pull tabs”, but once they got the machines, they weren’t allowed to have those “pull tabs” anymore. He is wondering if Arlington Heights allows those “pull tabs” and if that is something that needs to be thought about. Mr. Roginski commented that the Village doesn’t allow those pools. Ms. Mikula mentioned she was not familiar with “pull tab” rules but mentioned that some raffles are allowed with a permit.
- Audience member Colin Gilbert thanked the Task Force for doing this work. He has spoken to many business owners who are looking for this. Though Colin doesn’t gamble, he is for allowing Video Gaming. He said that he sees people gambling on their phones in establishments anyway but nobody is getting revenue from it. People are already doing it, so let the businesses and Village gain something from it. He expressed that the Village should do this now since January and February are slow months for restaurants and this could help them through that time of year.
- Audience member Mark Giannecchini, owner of Arlington Lanes, mentioned that the Task Force missed listing some villages such as Long Grove, Lake Zurich and Prospect Heights. He mentioned that Tap House, which used to be Crave, is unincorporated Arlington Heights where they have had Video Gaming for years and it is only a few blocks from his establishment. He said the businesses need some help! He pays \$210,000 in property taxes for his 40-lane bowling alley on 4.5 acres. He said you can gamble on your phone and on your laptop. He said that businesses are not trying to make this community the first for gaming – it is in last place. He explained that the business owners carry the economy in town but they need some help. Video Gaming is everywhere, including Long Grove.
- Audience member Brent Khazei from Bird’s Nest congratulated some of the other business owners at the meeting for the longevity of their businesses. He explained that the restaurant business is very difficult. He wants to advocate for Video Gaming and mentioned that every other town has it. He says the restaurants here in town support each other and help each other. He has been told that people opt to go to establishments in other towns specifically because of the option for Video Gaming. Mr. Khazei further explained the downside to not having Video Gaming when everyone else does is that new restaurant owners won’t look at opening their business in Arlington Heights. He said the time has come.
- Audience member Ernie Rose, a resident, said that there are some restaurants in town who don’t support this from an image perspective and that needs to be discussed. He also said this is a very economic conversation and this committee should bring someone in regarding mental health and addiction issues and researching if those issues have been a problem in other towns before presenting this to the Village Board. He said that Chip Brooks was not able to attend but is interested in being on this committee. Co-chairperson Bertucci asked Mr. Rose to ask the restaurants opposed to Video Gaming to send Co-chairperson Bertucci an email. Co-chairperson Bertucci emphasized that they would like to hear different perspectives and they welcome input from business owners, residents and professionals dealing with the consequences of Video Gaming. Mr. Giannecchini said Mr. Rose brought up an interesting point that there are restaurants or

- residents who don't want it and would like to hear from them and their reasoning. Mr. Rose said that Mr. Brooks would be a good person to talk to.
- Audience member Keith Moens, a resident, said his concerns are not in regards to Video Gaming. He is concerned about how this group was put together. He said that a majority vote by the Village Board is required to set up a special group like this and that there was no majority vote at the Committee of the Whole meeting on August 11. Co-chairperson Bertucci explained that they went to the attorney before setting this up and they trust the attorney that this was set up properly. Discussion ensued as to whether this group is considered a Special Meeting, a Special Committee or an ad hoc Task Force and how they are set up. Co-chairperson Bertucci suggested that Mr. Moens speak to an attorney.
 - Mr. Giannecchini from Arlington Lanes said that he can bring to the committee feedback from hundreds of bars that he does business with because he knows owners who have establishments in other towns such as Niles and Hoffman Estates.

Co-chairperson Bertucci closed Public Comments and discussed next steps. He reiterated the goal and purpose of the group is to create a report of pros and cons. He summarized that good economic information was presented, some pros and cons were presented and the process was explained. A Task Force member commented that gaming cafes should not be allowed because they are not good for image and that signage for gaming isn't necessary. There should be no huge signage or bright lights in order to keep the Village classy.

The group plans to lay out pros and cons and reach out to other people to speak at the next meeting. Mr. Cooney mentioned that, if this goes through, there will be a lot of interest from gaming cafes. Mt. Prospect had the rule about having to be a business in town for at least a year in order to be considered for video gaming. Based on his experience, he expects people will ask for exceptions to bypass that rule.

Mr. Ennes said that he is not a gambler, but in preparation for this meeting, he spoke to someone who has a golf course in McHenry County. That person has six machines at his clubhouse and says that is the most profitable square footage he has. Mr. Ennes summarized the hardships of residents with the property tax reassessment and inflation and the hardships of bars and restaurants. Co-chairperson Bertucci explained that Mr. Ennes is on the Planning Commission but is also a past president of the Chamber of Commerce and is a retired property tax consultant so he understands a lot of the tax aspects of the town. Co-Chairperson Bertucci also mentioned that Mr. Cooney was in charge of Community Development in Mt. Prospect so he did the Economic Development of their downtown area and Randhurst. Mr. Cooney also remarked that he is not a gambler, but he did see the significant economic impact Video Gaming had on the businesses. As for the cons, Mr. Cooney said it is an image thing and there are people who suffer from gambling.

Ms. Mikula summarized the pros:

Revenue generation: On the municipal side, it can help with Social Services programs, off-set general fund revenues/losses. For businesses, they could draw in customers who would stay longer and the businesses would have the competitive edge/level the playing field with other towns.

Control: The Village can control who receives a license, location, signage, visibility and enforcement.

Ms. Mikula summarized the cons:

Social and public health cost issues: Ms. Mikula reached out the Health and Human Services Department. They provided a document with the consequences of Video Gaming in Illinois from the lens of Health and Human Services. The information says that the cost of addiction is costly.

Image: This was brought up as a concern.

Law Enforcement: Video Gaming would need to be regulated, so research must be done to find out how much enforcement will be needed and what the costs are associated with enforcement and regulation.

Co-chairperson Bertucci asked Ms. Mikula to distribute those notes as a report to the committee and asked if it would be appropriate to talk with someone from Health and Human Services. Ms. Mikula mentioned that they wouldn't be experts since we don't have Video Gaming but they did put together the report. Co-chairperson Bertucci asked Ms. Mikula to get a similar report from the Police Department. Co-chairperson Bertucci spoke to Mt. Prospect Police and didn't hear anything concerning but wants a more formal and comprehensive report.

Co-chairperson Schwingbeck received quite of bit of information from a former elected official who is now in Springfield. The people who will benefit the most is the State of Illinois, the establishments and the people supplying the equipment. Since he doesn't gamble at all, he asked what games these machines have. Mr. Cooney mentioned that some games are video poker and some are slot machines. Co-chairperson Schwingbeck understands that the Village receives only a small portion of the money but it will still be helpful. He is open to hearing the pros and cons so he can make the best decision for our town. He knows that signage is limited in Arlington Heights anyway but he wants to make sure the Village stays classy. It is important to explore the cons side so the best decision can be made. Co-chairperson Schwingbeck reminded the group that, years ago, our liquor code didn't allow restaurants to serve alcohol on Sundays until later in the day, which meant that our restaurants were losing business to neighboring communities who could offer a mimosa with brunch. The Village changed the code to help our businesses and level the playing field.

Co-chairperson Bertucci remarked that the group is very open minded. He is a financial advisor so is not a gambler, but he doesn't judge anyone who chooses to do so. He asked for the reports to be distributed to the group so everyone can read the materials before the next meeting. They will also reach out to those who may offer more cons.

The next Video Gaming Task Force meeting will be Wednesday, October 15 at 3:30pm

VIII. ADJOURNMENT – Mr. Ennes moved, seconded by Mr. Cooney to adjourn.
The meeting adjourned at 4:53 pm.