

**MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE
PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES
VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS
BOARD ROOM
MONDAY, JULY 13, 2026 7:00P.M.**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: President Tinaglia; Trustees: Bertucci, Dunnington, LaBedz, Manganaro, Santa Maria, Schwingbeck and Zyck

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Trustee Gilbert

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Randy Recklaus, Village Manager; Cris Papierniak, Public Works Director; Mila Tsagalis, Health & Human Services Director; Greg Czernecki, Deputy Chief of Police and Kim Peterson, Recording Secretary

President Tinaglia called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Minutes

A. Committee of the Whole 06/22/26

**Trustee LaBedz moved, seconded by Trustee Schwingbeck, to approve the June 22, 2026 Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes.
The Motion: Passed**

Ayes: Dunnington, LaBedz, Manganaro, Zyck, Santa Maria, Schwingbeck, Tinaglia

Nays: None

Passed: Bertucci

New Business

A. Discussion of Illicit THC, Kratom, Tianeptine, and Other Unregulated Psychoactive Substances

Mr. Recklaus advised that this is an issue that staff has had its eye on for some time and has been working with the Health & Human Services Department, the Board of Health, Village Manager's Office and the Police Department on this. In recent months the state and federal government have taken some action regarding the regulation of THC derivatives and other psychoactive substances, however there are still substances that are sold at Village gas stations and vape shops that have yet to be regulated. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to give a little history on this and where the

regulations stand tonight, as well as give the Board some options.

Mr. Cascone advised that his presentation is strictly in regards to illicit THC, Kratom, Tianeptine and similar unregulated psychoactive substances. Staff is not proposing any additional regulations to the sale or possession of regulated THC or similar products that are commonly found in cannabis facilities.

The Village Board expressed interest in having staff research the prohibition, sale and possession of illicit THC and other unregulated psychoactive substances like Kratom and Tianeptine and their derivatives. The Village Manager's Office collaborated with the Health & Human Services Department and Police Department, and also received some input from the Board of Health and the Youth Commission. The geographical basis that they looked at for the surrounding communities were the feeder communities into District 214 and how they are regulating these similar topics.

Mr. Cascone advised that there has been a rapid increase in the sale of unregulated and untested products derived from industrial hemp and other psychoactive substances. These products produce similar or more advanced effects and they are not always subjected to the same regulatory oversight. Mr. Cascone referred to photos of these products and stated that the packaging for these products can be very colorful and look similar to other types of candy or energy drinks. A federal bill recently passed that prohibits hemp derived products that contain more than a certain volume of THC per container and banned the majority of the existing hemp derived THC products. At the state level, a bill was recently passed that immediately banned the sale of intoxicating hemp products to anyone under the age of 21 and will soon require intoxicating hemp products to follow the same regulations that are set forth for the state's cannabis laws. Staff does not believe that a local THC ordinance is needed because it's already being addressed at the state and federal level. However, when it comes to Kratom, Tianeptine and other similar psychoactive products, the Village may want to take action, as these items can be easily found in gas stations, liquor stores, convenience stores and smoke shops.

Mr. Cascone explained how Kratom is a botanical substance from southeast Asia with psychoactive properties. It is legal in the State of Illinois for individuals over the age of 18 to possess and use, but it is not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) classifies synthetic Kratom as a Schedule 1 drug. Tianeptine is a synthetic compound that affects the brain in similar ways to opioids, and is also known as gas station heroine. It is not currently approved by the FDA. Mr. Cascone advised that four out of the seven 214 feeder communities prohibit Kratom and two of the seven prohibit Tianeptine in some form.

Ms. Tsagalis advised that the Health & Human Services Department, Youth Commission and Board of Health discussed Kratom and Tianeptine at past meetings and found that neither one of these products are FDA approved and they are concerned with the lack of regulations and their impacts on youth. In regards to Kratom, the Health staff and Board of Health members are supportive of local regulations to prevent underage access and consumption, and at the very least are in support of raising the minimum age to 21. In addition, packaging, labeling and testing

is of concern. In regards to Tianeptine, it also not approved by the FDA and warnings have been issued about the serious adverse effects of it. There are significant addiction and overdose concerns with Tianeptine and currently there is no state or federal minimum purchase age on this product. The Health staff, Youth Commission and Board of Health members emphasize the importance of prohibiting the sale of Tianeptine across all age groups.

Deputy Chief Czernecki advised that from the Police Department's perspective, they are very concerned about the packaging and youths being drawn to them. In regards to Kratom and Tianeptine, the Police Department has received numerous notices from their federal partners regarding the dangers of these products. Tianeptine is acts very similar to opioids and people can overdose from it, which can result in death. These products are psychoactive substances, which can alter a person's behavior and make them more aggressive, which impacts the way the police respond to these situations.

Mr. Cascone next discussed the options staff is proposing for the Board's consideration, beginning with the sale of Kratom, Tianeptine, and other similar psychoactive substances. The first option is an outright prohibition of the sale of these substances in the Village regardless of age. The second option is permitting the sale of these substances in all or certain businesses in the Village. The Board may also decide to permit the sale either wholly or in part for one of these substances and not the other, or take them all together. The third option is to take no regulatory action at this time. In regards to possession, the first option is an outright prohibition of the possession and use by all individuals in the Village regardless of age. The second option is to permit the possession and use of these substances by individuals who are at least 21 years of age, or whatever number the Board decides. The third option is to take no regulatory action at this time. The last consideration for the Board is the implementation timeline, should the Board decide to take any regulatory action that permits or prohibits these substances. Staff is seeking feedback and direction from the Committee of the Whole, and if they choose to explicitly permit or prohibit any of the three options, Staff recommends that the Committee direct staff to draft an ordinance that reflects their decision and place the ordinance on an upcoming Village Board Meeting Agenda for final consideration.

President Tinaglia asked what staff's recommendation is, which Mr. Recklaus advised that staff thinks this is something that they should be looking at as a community and if this is something that they want to regulate or not. There are clearly concerns form the law enforcement community and the public health community. President Tinaglia advised that many things are currently regulated, including alcohol and marijuana, and is only sold at certain establishments with age restrictions. Some of these psychoactive substances are not regulated at all and can be purchased by individuals as young as 18.

Trustee Dunnington asked for clarification in terms of the neighboring communities prohibiting Kratom and if that applies to everyone, which Ms. Tsagalis advised that she believes it does. Trustee Dunnington stated that she feels strongly about considering a ban for those under 21, at the very minimum.

Trustee Santa Maria asked if there is any data of how many incidents have occurred in

Arlington Heights where the police have been called, an emergency room visit, or a school needing to get involved due to these products, which Deputy Chief Czernecki advised that it is very difficult to discern these synthetic drugs from opioids, although there are many calls for service. Trustee Santa Maria also asked if there have had any discussions with Live4Lali and where they stand on this, which Deputy Chief Czernecki advised that they are having open dialogues with them. Trustee Santa Maria advised that while she firmly believes in a ban, she also thinks that one of the unintended consequences is that there could be an increase in addiction and overdose because it's going to go somewhere else. She stated that she wants to ensure there is a plan in place to provide services to residents who may need to safely go through withdrawal. Deputy Chief Czernecki advised that the CARE program would be a valuable resource for anyone who does need assistance.

Trustee Schwingbeck stated that when a resident first came before the Board a few months ago to speak on these products he knew nothing about them and would like to hear what some of the individuals in the audience have to say, as they may learn a few things from them.

Trustee Bertucci advised that he has received several emails regarding synthetic Kratom versus natural Kratom and asked staff if they have any insight on this, which Ms. Tsagalis advised that the synthetic product that you hear most about is 7-OH, which is completely synthetic, and the natural form of Kratom is derived from a plant. The FDA is treating both products the same right now. Mr. Recklaus advised that one of the challenges is the lack of information and the neutral and objective data from the federal and state agencies is missing. Trustee Bertucci questioned if they should ban the synthetic because it is so bad and allow the natural with age restrictions. Deputy Chief Czernecki advised the synthetics are very unregulated and highly potent.

Trustee LaBedz advised that she has a pretty strong opinion on this, as she has viewed some trusted medical sites and is very concerned. She stated that she is very skeptical and is currently leaning towards a ban.

Trustee Manganaro stated that there should be separate discussions when it comes to Kratom and Tianeptine, as they are very different substances. He is much more concerned about Tianeptine and asked if it responds to Naloxone, which Deputy Chief Czernecki advised that it does, but there have been instances where two or three doses of Naloxone is needed. Trustee Manganaro stated that he agrees with Trustee Santa Maria that this is something that should be approached from a harm reduction standpoint. He asked if there is a life risk from synthetic or natural Kratom, which Deputy Chief Czernecki advised that there have been reported deaths and overdoses from the synthetic version.

Trustee Zyck asked if it is known who is actually selling these products in Arlington Heights right now, which Mr. Recklaus advised that it is unknown, as it is unregulated. Trustee Zyck stated that he unsure where he stands right now and believes more research is needed, as there are a lot of unknowns right now. His initial thought is that the second option makes the most sense to him, as he thinks some sort of a regulation on where it's being sold is important.

President Tinaglia advised that the common theme when reviewing all of the emails he has received on this topic is that Kratom is not the root of the evil and it has some basic benefits for some people who would like to use it medicinally. President Tinaglia advised that he was going to let those in the audience speak and reminded the Board that it is their job is to listen to the residents and think about those they represent.

Dr. Heidi Sykora, retired nurse practitioner and Chief Scientific Officer of International Plant and Herbal Alliance, advised that she has no financial ties to Kratom and became interested in Kratom when she found out how it was helping people. Dr. Sykora stated that the reason why natural Kratom has never been banned is because of the concern of the unintended consequences, as it does not cause respiratory depression like opioids do, which is why some people use it for opioid and other drug withdrawal. A possession ban would be devastating and deadly.

Craig Katz, Government Relations and Compliance Manager for CBD Kratom, stated that the really important distinction to make here is the natural leaf versus synthetic 7-OH products. His company is the largest distributor of natural Kratom products in the United States and they have taken steps to self-regulate, including not allowing anyone under the age of 21 to enter their stores, packaging their products in unattractive packaging and providing detailed descriptions of what exactly is in each package. President Tinaglia asked if they are in the Tianeptine industry as well, which Mr. Katz advised they are not and are against all synthetic products. The FDA and DEA have recognized that natural leaf Kratom is not a dangerous product, like 7-OH.

Ilya Webster advised that she is elderly and cannot take anti-inflammatories or Tylenol because of their side effects, therefore she takes Kratom to help manage her pain. She doesn't take it every day and only takes it when she needs it, which is why she thinks it works so well. President Tinaglia asked her where she buys it from, which she stated online.

Dhaval Patel, owner of True Essence Dispensary, stated that the decision to choose where this will be sold is very important and thinks that there needs to be controls on where the supply chain is coming from. He knows exactly where his products come from and thinks if establishments are allowed to continue selling these products, they should know where they are coming from as well.

Trustee Schwingbeck referred to the picture Mr. Cascone presented that contained examples of the packaging used for some of these products and stated that the first thing he thinks of when he sees these are fancy marketing to young people. He also explained that from his perspective, it seems as if Kratom is less harmful than Tianeptine, which Deputy Chief Czernecki advised that it depends on what version of Kratom you're getting. If it is the synthetic version, you don't know what you're getting. Trustee Schwingbeck referred to the neighboring communities that have taken some sort of action when it comes to these products and stated that he was surprised to see that some of them banned Kratom but did not take any action when it comes to Tianeptine. Mr. Cascone advised that they don't know if these other towns took up both options and may have only taken up Kratom. Trustee Schwingbeck stated that if the synthetic product is that dangerous for 18- and 19-year-olds, it's just as dangerous for those in their twenties, therefore he would be in favor of

prohibiting the synthetic products across the board.

President Tinaglia advised that he is looking for a motion that limits the places these products could be sold and doesn't think there is any need for the synthetic period.

Trustee Dunnington asked the owner of True Essence if he sells natural Kratom, and if not, is that something he would be interested in selling. Mr. Patel advised he does not sell Kratom and would not be interested in selling it at this time, as there is not a good supply chain for it.

Trustee LaBedz advised that they are focusing on the sale of these products, but they also need to consider the options when it comes to possession and use. She is unsure how you would ensure that the possession and use is done appropriately.

Trustee Manganaro asked what the other psychoactive substances are, which Mr. Cascone advised that these products are being developed all of the time and it's hard to determine what the next product will be, therefore it is a catch all. Mr. Recklaus advised that there has been a proliferation of unregulated psychoactive substances and the idea is to provide an avenue for the Board to have more of a blanket coverage or more narrow focus, if they choose to. Trustee Manganaro asked if the ban on the synthetic version of Kratom eliminates the candy like products, which Mr. Recklaus advised that they don't know that for sure. He also asked if they have gotten any input from the businesses that sell these products, which Deputy Chief Czernecki advised they have not. Trustee Manganaro stated that he continues to lean towards banning Tianeptine and other unregulated substances and drawing a line between the natural and synthetic until they know more. He prefers not to dismiss the potential benefits of Kratom with what they do tonight.

Trustee Zyck asked about the enforcement aspect of this if the Board chooses to regulate these products, which Mr. Recklaus advised that they can look at some of the best practices in the industry and talk to the Village Attorney's Office and determine what enforcement might look like, whether it be complaint based or the police department conducting compliance checks. Mr. Recklaus advised that it may not be that easy for a police officer to determine what is synthetic and what is natural.

President Tinaglia asked Mr. Katz if any of his products are synthetic, which he stated they are not. He prefers to see all synthetic products banned, as you don't know what's in them. President Tinaglia asked if staff needs a motion on this, which Mr. Recklaus advised they don't technically need one, as he could just state what he is hearing from the Board and if anyone objects to anything, they can discuss it more. Mr. Recklaus advised that he is hearing that there is interest and support for some sort of local ban on synthetic psychoactive substances, interest on regulating age at the point of sale for natural Kratom products and potentially possession of natural Kratom products. In addition, staff can look at some of the sample ordinances that have been provided to them as they conduct their research.

Trustee Bertucci agrees with where Mr. Recklaus is going in terms of prohibiting the synthetic products first and foremost and then listing the specifics for natural Kratom.

Trustee Dunnington advised that she mostly agrees with what Mr. Recklaus is saying, but if the Village does allow natural Kratom, she would like to know where it would be sold. In addition, she agrees that the sale of natural Kratom should be age restricted.

Trustee Schwingbeck advised that if natural Kratom is going to be age restricted and controlled, they need to know exactly where it's being sold, so if they are going to do compliance checks, they will know where to go.

Trustee LaBedz asked how officers will know the difference between synthetic and natural leaf Kratom, which Deputy Chief Czernecki advised that the natural product should contain some sort of licensure on it. Mr. Recklaus advised that the Village can require labeling on the packaging. Trustee LaBedz asked if anyone would be able to apply for a license to sell Kratom, which Mr. Recklaus advised that could be one of many options for the Board to consider.

Trustee Manganaro advised that he sees this as two separate ordinances, one that would ban the possession, sale or use of synthetic Kratom, Tianeptine and other unregulated psychoactive substances and the second being the regulation of the natural Kratom products. Trustee Manganaro questioned whether or not it would make sense to use liquor licenses as a means of regulation and control. President Tinaglia stated that this is not a liquor store product and more of a pharmacy product.

Trustee Zyck advised that overall, he agrees with the approach, and if the sale is licensed, it at least gives the Village some control. In terms of the time frame and when this should go into effect, he thinks it should be immediate, as the dangers associated with the synthetic products scare him.

President Tinaglia asked if staff has enough direction to craft an ordinance, which Mr. Recklaus stated they do.

B. Downtown Ice Rink Discussion Update

Mr. Recklaus advised that the Mayor has been talking for a while about the potential of a new ice rink in the downtown area and they recently discovered that the Park District has been looking at installing some mechanically chilled ice rinks throughout the community, therefore they joined forces to install the first rink in the downtown area as part of a pilot program. Staff has been working with the Mayor and Park District on some different sites and agreed on Eastman Street, between Arlington Heights Road and Evergreen Avenue, next to North School Park. This site is large enough for two rinks, it has ready access to power, ample parking and provides another reason to enjoy North School Park.

Mr. Recklaus advised that they talked with the Park District and agreed to work together to have this up and running in time for the tree lighting ceremony this year. Phase one of this project, which is a pilot program, will allow for the installation of a single rink in 2026. Eastman would be shut down to traffic, power would be provided by the Village and the Park District would manage, promote and operate the rink. The program would then be reevaluated in a year to determine if it was a success, and

then perhaps consider adding an additional rink, with an overhead plaza to help protect it from the sun.

Mr. Papierniak advised the ice rink would be 80' x 40' and discussed the extra space available for tents, ice skate rental, food trucks and potential future expansion. The north parking garage entrance will be partially closed, with the possibility of adding an additional entrance on Miner Street in the future.

Mr. Recklaus advised that if a second rink is added in the future, additional power will be needed, which would be a cost consideration, as well as the cost to relocate the secondary garage entrance. The evaluation of flattening of Eastman would be an additional cost. The Village would evaluate fundraising potentially for sponsorships for the roof pavilion and a more permanent skate rental shack. Mr. Recklaus advised that they are still in the midst of negotiating terms with the Park District on who would do what, although many of the responsibilities and associated expenses have already been determined. The opportunity to access grant funds will certainly be researched for this project.

Mr. Recklaus advised the next steps in the process would be the development and approval by both boards of an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for the project, exercise an agreement to rent the equipment and the development of a coordinated schedule to try and get this going by the tree lighting. This is up to the two boards to determine if this is something they want to pursue. No formal vote tonight is needed.

President Tinaglia advised that for almost two years he has been hoping they would get to this point and this site on Eastman is the most logical selection. He explained that this is a big project, but is hopeful that it will be up and operational from November thru February without mother nature interfering. If this does become a permanent plaza and this section of the street is permanently closed, with a free-standing pavilion that's wide open, it can be used for other things year-round.

Trustee Bertucci stated that he likes it but thinks it would be cheaper and serve the public better to have one big rink, which President Tinaglia advised that after this first season and the pilot program proves to be a success, they can certainly do this.

Trustee Dunnington stated that she thinks this is a really fun idea and likes the idea of permanently closing Eastman for events in the summer as well. She asked if the pavilion needs power, can they install solar panels, which Mr. Papierniak advised that is possible. She proposed the idea of possibly designing a ribbon style skating rink, similar to what they have at the Maggie Daley Center.

Trustee Schwingbeck stated that he does think this is a great idea, but proposed Curling as an alternative if the ice-skating rink is not deemed a success.

Trustee Santa Maria stated that she loves it and fully believes that between the Park District and the Village, the right people are in place to make the decisions about what it should look like and what it should be for the Village.

Trustee Bertucci advised that Trustee Gilbert would probably be in favor of this, as he

freezes his yard in the winter for his kids and the kids in the neighborhood to skate.

Trustee LaBedz advised that she would be sad to lose that access to Arlington Heights Road, although she would not stand in the way of this. Trustee LaBedz asked if there will be heated porta potty's, which Mr. Recklaus advised that for the first year, there may not be, but moving forward, if it is successful, they will certainly look into it.

Trustee Manganaro asked what the cost will be for this project, which Mr. Papierniak advised that phase one costs for the are minimal and include concrete soft labor costs, \$15,000 in electric costs for the Village. The Park District has budgeted for the purchase or rental of an ice rink, with off-setting revenues. Phase two costs will depend on the IGA. Trustee Manganaro advised that given that it really has no impact on the budget, he loves the idea of proceeding with the pilot.

Trustee Zyck stated that overall, he likes the idea, as it enhances the community, but thinks a few more of these rinks on the southern and northern ends of town would be nice as well. Trustee Zyck thinks the Board does need to keep in mind future costs if the project is a success this year, and would like to have more of a projection. Mr. Recklaus stated that they do think there is real potential for sponsorships and they do not have to do the other phases until their comfortable, or not do them at all. Trustee Zyck asked if the revenues collected by the Park District would go towards the overall costs, which Mr. Recklaus advised that they could. Trustee Zyck asked if a traffic study should be done to see how the closure of Eastman Street could affect traffic.

Trustee LaBedz asked who will pay for the porta potty rentals, which Mr. Recklaus advised that they are still working on that. Trustee LaBedz stated that if Eastman is closed down permanently, she would be reluctant to put an entrance\exit on Miner, as there is too much traffic there, and thinks that if it's possible to just have the one entrance\exit on Evergreen. Mr. Recklaus advised that it is probably desirable to have another entrance\exit for emergency vehicles, but they will look into it if needed.

Other Business

None.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Trustee Schwingbeck moved, seconded by Trustee LaBedz, to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m. Upon a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.